

Alberta School Councils' Association

Response to the Task Force for Teaching Excellence Report

Introduction

The Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA) is an independent society, funded primarily by Alberta Education through a conditional grant to support school council effectiveness. ASCA's members are school councils, and the organization's directions, positions, policies and board of directors are formed and endorsed by school council parents through exercising their vote and voice at annual general meetings of the association.

This response to the Task Force for Teaching Excellence Report and recommendations has been informed by the following:

- ASCA policy
- ASCA's core values and principles
- Member input into ASCA's submission to the Task Force
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- Member input and feedback on the Task Force Report and recommendations
- ASCA Board of Directors analysis of the Report and recommendations and their subsequent discussions

Analysis

The Task Force for Teaching Excellence Report and recommendations are aligned with Association positions and are supported by ASCA. The Association agrees in principle with the elements contained in the report's four distinct areas – Practice Standards, Enabling Teaching Excellence, the Role of Leaders in enabling teaching excellence and Assuring Teaching Excellence.

For example, ASCA has heard from school councils and parents that teachers should have their performance assessed and evaluated regularly. Recommendation 21 speaks to ASCA's belief, as stated in our submission to the Task Force, that there should, at regular intervals throughout their career, be a process for teachers to maintain their certification. Additionally, ASCA heard that parents feel they should be able to provide input, when appropriate, into teacher performance reviews. We were pleased to see that Recommendation 11, Teacher's annual professional learning plan includes support for feedback from parents used to identify and inform a teacher's plan goals.

Although ASCA's submission did not specifically reference school or system leaders, it does recognize that school principals needed to be empowered in order to accomplish evaluations of teaching performance. ASCA's submission states: "Empower principals with tools to support formal assessment of teaching excellence; implement policies, structures and promote practices to deal with those individuals who do not aspire to or demonstrate teaching excellence over time." This same principle obviously would apply to those who evaluate the principal – the superintendent (or designate).

Additional Comments

ASCA recognizes that many of the recommendations, while supported by the Association, are of a controversial nature and will require careful consideration and discussion. We believe further discussion is in order, not on the recommendations themselves, but on the issues underlying them.

ASCA believes the Task Force Report contains a package of inter-related recommendations that should be considered as such. Although there is a temptation to isolate and select some recommendations due to ease of implementation, it is the connectedness of the recommendations that support positive change – from the intake of those who aspire to become teachers, to their preparation for teaching, their career-long support, and the checks and balances required to assure that only the very best, and those who continually aspire to bettering their practice, are the ones who engage our children in their learning. The order of their implementation and the associated timeline schedule needs careful consideration.

We encourage the Minister of Education to embrace these recommendations, and seek, with the assistance of education stakeholder organizations, the means to implement them fully in the coming years.

Alberta's students deserve no less.

Submitted by President Brad Vonkeman and the ASCA Board of Directors

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School Councils' Association**

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