

Proposed Amendment to ASCA Policy 10-10.

Background:

Modular/portable classrooms are often delivered to schools too late to be ready for the first day of classes. Last year, the government acknowledged this problem and addressed it by announcing the approved modular/portable classrooms significantly earlier than usual, in January. Despite this, in Lethbridge some portables were delivered just a few days before the first day of classes, and we are aware that there were delivery problems in 2014 in Edmonton and Calgary at least. Clearly it is not possible for local Boards to ensure that modular/portable classrooms are ready for the start of the school year, under these circumstances. We need the government procedures to actually ensure that the modular/portable classrooms arrive at the approved sites in a timely fashion.

Students will benefit because their classrooms will be in place for the first day of school. This avoids stress, mid-year moves, and the use of common areas (eg. art room, music room, learning commons, gym) as temporary classrooms.

ASCA should continue to influence in this area because it is a province-wide issue affecting our kids' education. Districts cannot get portables ready for the first day of school with the current delivery dates from the province, and we need the government to know that this is not okay with parents. Although timeline requirements may vary district to district, it should be the province's responsibility to ensure that the classrooms are delivered at the appropriate time to each district, based on the time that district reports it will require to ensure local work is completed. We have seen that early approval and streamlined processes (as currently described in Policy 10-10) is not sufficient to ensure our desired end result of timely delivery.

Whereas ASCA Policy 10-10 presently addresses early approval and streamlined processes for the approval of modular/portable classrooms, but this is not sufficient to ensure their timely delivery, which has been an ongoing problem, and

Whereas after modular/portable classrooms are delivered to school sites, local districts need to arrange for permits, inspections, and finishing work that can take considerable time, and

Whereas it is stressful and disruptive for students to begin the year in crowded surroundings, and to move to a modular/portable classroom during the year, and

Whereas our children should not have to give up their common areas to be temporary classrooms while they wait for modular/portable classrooms to be prepared, therefore

Be it resolved that ASCA Policy 10-10 be amended to read:

P10-10 Timely provision of modular/portable classrooms to schools.

That Alberta School Councils' Association call on the Alberta Infrastructure, Alberta Education and other relevant Government ministries to work with local School Boards to ensure that the processes for approval, funding and timely delivery of modular/portable classrooms guarantee that the portable/modular classroom units each district requires are in place and fully functional on the first day of classes for students and that the processes and processes document are available on the Alberta Education website for access by all interested parties.

P 16-01 Consent as an addition to Alberta sexual education curriculum

Background:

This motion passed into policy at the Alberta School Boards Association Fall General meeting:
“That the topic of consent, as defined in the Canadian Criminal Code, be incorporated in the curriculum related to sexual education.”

As the Programs of Study are set by the Ministry of Education, it is important for parents to support this position from our own perspective.

The following “lay summary” of Section 273.1 of the Canadian Criminal Code is quoted from the ASBA policy background that was provided by Edmonton Public Schools:

- You can only consent for yourself.
- You actually have to be able to give consent. That means you have to be awake, conscious, and sober enough to make a clear decision.
- People in positions of trust, power, or authority can’t abuse their position to get sexual activity.
- If you imply no through your words or behaviours that’s just as good as saying, “NO.”
- You have the right to change your mind and stop anytime for any reason during sexual activity.

Although “human sexuality outcomes from Alberta Education’s Programs of Study for Health and Life Skills Kindergarten to Grade 9, and Career and Life Management on the teachingsexualhealth.ca website shows sexual health outcomes that allow for and promote the discussion of consent within the context of safety and responsibility, and healthy relationships” (ASBA policy background) so that individual teachers may and do cover it, it is not explicitly mandated at any point in the curriculum. While individual families may discuss consent with their children at a deep level, either directly or through the medium of a religious, ethnic, or other group, this opportunity may not be available to all students. Surely none of us would wish our children to be required to deal with other students who do not have an understanding at least of what is required to constitute a minimal standard of consent, according to Canadian law. This is laid out (for the purposes of defining sexual assault) in Section 273.1 of the Canadian Criminal Code, and includes examples of specific situations that do not constitute consent at law.

Understanding what does and does not constitute consent is fundamental to all kinds of human interaction. More specifically, in the context of sexual education, our children have the right and obligation to know how Canadian law defines and determines consent.

It is to all of our benefit if our kids understand how Canadian society and government have determined the law applies to their interactions. Since sexual education is always a touchy subject, it is important to show that parents are supportive of adding consent to the curriculum.

Whereas the Alberta School Boards Association has passed a motion asking the government to incorporate the topic of consent into the Alberta sexual education curriculum, and

Whereas sexual education is a very sensitive topic, making it important to show that parents are supportive of any proposed changes to the curriculum, and

Whereas it is important that our children have at least a basic understanding of how consent is defined by law, since consent is fundamental to many aspects of human interaction, therefore

Be it resolved that the Alberta School Councils' Association supports the Alberta School Boards Association in their efforts to have the topic of consent, as defined in the Canadian Criminal Code, incorporated into the curriculum related to sexual education.

P16-02 Visual resources related to provincial assessments

Background:

Students that are visually impaired are able to complete provincial assessments in braille. Scribes and readers are currently provided in provincial assessments to assist students who require them for their learning success. Some students need other accommodations that are not routinely provided for assessments, though they may be available to the student in the classroom.

Children (especially those with Autism spectrum disorders) are sometimes given visual learning tools as a learning technique that assists them in understanding concepts. These visual learning tools may vary from classroom to classroom and from student to student, and currently students are not permitted to use them when completing provincial assessments. In order for visual learning tools to provide fair and effective assistance on provincial assessments to all children who use them, common visual learning tools should be centrally developed in conjunction with the curriculum. These common tools should then be made available to all students who need them during their studies. Furthermore, versions of the provincial assessments that include these visual tools should be provided to students who need them. This would increase the completion rate for provincial assessments by allowing these students to take the assessments, rather than being exempted.

As an example of a visual tool, when learning about settlement timelines, where most students might be expected to write the names of different ethnic groups in the order they arrived, a student requiring visual tools might have pictures of people from different ethnic groups that they sort into the correct order.

Whereas visual tools can be used for assisting children with Autism spectrum disorders and other disabilities, and

Whereas these visual tools assist the children to complete assessments successfully throughout the school year, and

Whereas the provision of common visual resources would allow students to be able to learn the program of study material throughout the year and then recognize these common visuals on the provincial assessments, enabling them to complete the provincial assessments rather than obtaining an exemption, therefore

We request that Alberta Education make provincial assessments accessible to all students by providing common visual resources to schools, to be used in learning and assessments.

We further request that Alberta Education provide versions of provincial assessments that incorporate these common visual resources.

P16-03 Individualized Program Plans (IPPs)/Instructional Support Plans (ISPs) and other outcome based tools

Background:

Programs of Study outcomes are in place at the beginning of each school year. For students with exceptional learning needs, the equivalent to a program of study often takes the form of something called an IPP or ISP. Unfortunately, these students may fall behind because there is often a delay getting an appropriate learning plan (such as an IPP or ISP) in place. It is unacceptable that some of our students are unable to achieve their learning outcomes because of these delays.

Students with exceptional learning needs are typically identified early. Their cases are usually detailed in extensive paperwork that follows them if they move. A great deal of discussion amongst their educators and parents usually takes place well before they transition to a new classroom and grade level.

Whereas for the most part, a school is able to identify which students will be in their classrooms for the beginning of a school year, in advance of the beginning of the school year, and

Whereas students with exceptional learning needs should be able to begin their learning plan at the beginning of a school year alongside their classmates, and

Whereas it is the responsibility of a school authority to ensure the programs of study are being delivered to each and every student, and

Whereas school authority and school planning for necessary resources occurs in advance of the beginning of a school year, and

Whereas IPPs and ISPs are fluid documents that can be changed as the child and teacher adjust to the new setting and grade level, therefore

We request that school boards allocate staff time so as to ensure that IPPs, ISPs, and related tools can be developed in advance of the beginning of a school year, except where extenuating circumstances make this impossible.

We further request that Alberta Education in collaboration with Alberta School Boards Association, the Alberta Teachers Association and the Alberta Association of the Deans of Education ensure that school support personnel and classroom teachers have the knowledge, skills and attributes to design relevant IPPs/ISPs (Individualized Program Plans/Instructional Support Plans) for students.

P16-04 LGBTQ access to information

Background: All school districts have been required to work on and update their respective policy(ies) relating to Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments to ensure that those policies encompass the needs of students who declare as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Queer (LGBTQ). This occurred on November 4th, 2015, when Minister of Education, David Eggen directly instructed each school board in Alberta to draft a transgender policy that adheres to provincial law by March 31st, 2016.

As this may be a controversial issue in a school community, parents/school councils wanting to become more knowledgeable on this subject, should not be limited or feel intimidated if they want to expand their scope of knowledge and to advocate or influence their local Board's LGBTQ Policies and Procedures.

Whereas parents/school councils would like to be able to easily access information in regards to LGBTQ Policies and Procedures from districts around the province, as well as best practice nationwide, and

Whereas parents/school councils should have access to an understandable, manageable, reference guide or "toolkit", and

Whereas this is a province-wide issue that may impact every school community, therefore

Be it resolved that Alberta School Councils' Association prepare an information package ("toolkit") containing resources, research, model policies and practices, and relevant legislation for school councils so school councils are supported should they wish to approach their school boards to engage and broaden the discussion around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) Policies and Procedures.