

CAPSC REPORTING STRUCTURE DISCUSSION

January 15, 2013 • Education Building

Roughly 45 people attended this meeting, including Alberta Teachers' Association rep Heidi Dotneir, Trustees Hehr, Hurdman and Stewart, and CAPSC executive members.

A BACKGROUND ON INSPIRING EDUCATION **(Information Presented by CAPSC Executive)**

Most parents are asking why changes to the reporting structure are being suggested. *Inspiring Education* is the Alberta government's vision for education. In 2009, stakeholders discussed what children need from the education system to be thriving citizens in 2030. Suggestions and improvements from this process are now driving Alberta Education. Students need not only core skills like reading and math, but also competencies.

Old Model	New Model
Memorization Reciting facts Tests, exams Individual performance Do as you're told	Deep understanding Show what you know Use knowledge Teamwork, collaboration Critical thinking Innovation Communication Digital literacy
<i>Model of compliance</i>	<i>Model of independence</i>

Inspiring Education suggests that students should take responsibility for their own learning.

Summative Assessment	Formative Assessment
Snapshot Point in time Evaluation After learning is complete Grades, marks, percentages Report cards Rank and sort	Ongoing assessment Feedback to students in progress Feedback to teacher on what needs to be taught Descriptions, rubrics, examples, portfolio, conferences Guiding the learning journey
<i>Teacher-centered</i>	<i>Student-centered</i>

An example of combining formative and summative methodologies:

Assignment 1: A description of the work to be done is provided; feedback and suggestions are given during the process.

Assignment 2: The same process is repeated, and the student expected to build on what has been accomplished.

Assignment 3: An evaluation is done and a mark provided.

School boards are free to set their own report card structure. The CBE now has 26 different report card formats from K-9. The current goal is to align with the vision presented in the redesigned curriculum.

Parents were directed to provide feedback to their principals, and to send a copy to their trustee. CAPSC will also share feedback from this meeting with the Chief Superintendent's team.

AT THIS POINT IN TIME, PARENTS PARTICIPATED IN 3 EXERCISES **Comments made during this time period**

Comments re the model changes

- The model we grew up with was designed to contain unruly kids
- Far more diversity is now allowed in the system
- Inquiry – more about doing than reflecting back what teacher has said – using technology to effectively express what you have learned through research, etc. – marked in four different areas, with more feedback on every assignment
- Is this system appropriate for younger kids?
- More diversity allowed in school – how does this translate in practice?

Comments re the skills

- Core skills such as spelling, times tables are not being emphasized
- Kids are being taught two or three ways to do one thing, rather than just one way
- Are these changes detracting from basic skills students will need
- Suggest that acquisition of skills should be the focus in elementary school, with more reflective methods of teaching being used in higher grades
- Concerns about focus on competencies rather than skills – the ability to think critically may be lacking
- Concerns about basic skills and how to assess competencies – whether thinking and process are there
- Suggest that acquisition of skills should be the focus in elementary school, with more reflective methods of teaching being used in higher grades

Comments re teachers

- Considering class size, special needs, and resources available to teachers, is this a practical solution in terms of teacher workload?
- Teachers need to initiate communication with parents – for various reasons (language, culture, personality, shyness) parents find it difficult to approach them
- Schools are brimming – does this system create more work for teachers?
- The work of the teachers is how to accomplish all of this with every student
- Union representative says that never before have they had teachers phoning them in tears to ask how to do report cards and now this is the case – teachers have not been part of the conversation and don't know what they are meant to do in the new report card situation
- The methods of communication between parents and teachers needs to improve – that the CBE didn't want to take part in this discussion suggests there is something to hide
- Lots of anxiety and change – both parents and teachers are confused

Comments re parents

- The critical component of feedback to parents is lacking
- Parents don't know the criteria of the rubric and are left out of the loop
- Parents are very passionate about their child's education
- Formative assessment may be clear to kids – the breakdown is in the communication of that process with the parents
- Importance of individualized comments at the end of the report card – this is often the most valuable part for parents as it gives an idea of how to provide support at home and where a child needs help

Comments re report cards/feedback

- There's a real difference between Alberta and other provinces, where everything is a letter grade up to high school – here it varies all the way through
- It is more important that students understand what they are being *assessed on* rather than the *style of measurement* used
- Exploring measurable and un-measurable aspects of education
- No real sense of how this will work on a practical level
- Concern that there's less feedback and more surprises when report cards do come out
- No concrete understanding on exactly what the proposed changes are
- Each school approaches curriculum differently – hard to define what reports will be like
- IRIS piloted as a tool to provide feedback – not as effective as hoped.

Comments re the approach to learning

Teamwork models were used in university – however, if one member doesn't pull their weight the whole team suffers – this wouldn't be tolerated in a work environment

- How do children know where they are going? What is the end goal?
- Higher-level learning – it is hard to know how to support this at home
- How will a day/week/term look in the classroom? Concrete examples needed
- Anxiety – don't understand end goal, lack of communication

FIRST GROUP DISCUSSION PIECE: WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU SEEN SO FAR?

Parents were divided into groups according to the grade level of their children, and asked to summarize the changes they have seen in comparison to how they received their education.

K – 3

Less feedback – more surprises

Curriculum moves with assessment – more 'doing'

Full picture of how you got a particular grade

Appropriateness of new curriculum for younger students

Feedback to parents may be lacking

How to support kids

How is new curriculum going to affect teacher workload?

IRIS – effective at this level? After more use?

Multiple methods being taught, which takes longer to learn but will show up later

How do I support 'higher level learning' at home

Parents need more education in the new ways

4 – 6

Children given multiple methods rather than just one way

Core competencies have less focus

More focus on teamwork

More diversity

More focus on 'how is this going to work?'

7 – 9

Programs – multi-focused

Competency focused

Less foundation in skills

SECOND GROUP DISCUSSION PIECE: **GRAPH AND VOTE ON ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNICATION ISSUES**

Again parents were divided into groups according to the grade level of their children (K-3, 4-6, 7-9). They were asked to write down thoughts related to assessment and communication on post-it notes, and put them on a two-plane graph. The two planes were 'More Important/Less Important' and 'Like/Dislike.' Once the ideas were graphed, parents voted on the issues most important to them. The items are listed in the order of importance indicated by parents.

K – 3

Dislike	More Important	Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of D2L – consistency amongst teachers - Not having grades (70% 80%) until high school or even grade 12 Will it affect scholarships like Rutherford Grade 10, 11, 12 – 80% = full scholarship - Communication with real information is lacking - Memo to parents – how do you give feedback on hearsay? What are the proposed changes? - 2 report cards (down from 3) - Will my children be able to compete outside Alberta? - How will I know that this new system will work - Is this system proven to have worked in other countries? - D2L – consistency in use – prefer e-mail (RSS feed) - Student-led conferences = not enough information on how student is doing - Our system was working well before – recognized as one of the top educational systems in the world. Why did we change? - How do I know this new system will work? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agenda communication = good thing! - How will our kids be assessed by universities and business owners if report cards don't reflect 'hard' skills - Open, honest communication with teachers - How are core competencies measured? Assessed? Graded? - Agenda - Rubrics – used – why not percentage grades?
		# of report cards – more frequent - better
Dislike	Less Important	Like

4 - 6

Dislike	More Important	Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can't fail - 2 assessments from 3 – too long without communication - Don't like move to 2 report cards – 3 are better (importance depends on other communication) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agendas as a two-way form of private communication - One conference between parent and teacher in mid-November - Report cards as primary method of communication – initiating conversation – teacher's perception – balanced with evaluation - Student-led conference - D2L and RSS feed (tech focused) instead of agendas - Blog/website for class 	
Dislike	Less Important	Like

7 -9

Dislike	More Important	Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Down to 2 report cards (some schools have interim) - Students can't fail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of technology – Homelogic – Edline – maybe for D2L or Iris if used well (10 dots) - Access to teacher – expectations have increased (6 dots) - 2 additional interim report cards (3 dots) - Parent-teacher interviews – more than twice a year (2 dots) 	
Dislike	Less Important	Like

THIRD GROUP DISCUSSION PIECE: WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND FEARS ABOUT THIS PROCESS?

Each group was asked to come up with two or three top hopes and fears. Parents then voted to indicate the hopes and fears that most resonated for them.

HOPES	Number of Parents Agreeing
For responsible, well rounded citizens with some concrete skills (in reading, math, etc.)	23
Assessment to be meaningful and actionable	16
That our children leave the system with academic and citizenship qualities	16
That our system/government will value education as much as parents do	16
Take parent's input	12
Transparency (communication)	10
We hope the CBE knows what it is doing!	9
We hope that we will bring Alberta's math rankings back to the 2003 level	9
How will universities read these cards – some things are black and white / right or wrong	9
Parent-teacher involvement in decision-making process	7
Better communication	4
My child's strengths will be recognized – pride in individuality	4
Will my child have a solid foundation in core skills?	3
Reporting is meaningful and understandable	3

FEARS	Number of Parents Agreeing
Discovering too late there is a huge problem and dealing with it alone	22
Not being able to fail	18
Children not prepared for post high school	17
What communication process will replace that report card?	10
This new way will change implementation (very unclear so far)	8
Children will get pushed through school without learning basic skills	8
Not sufficiently conducive to university entrance	7
Special needs children will be lost in the system	7
Marks are tangible, words are not - anxiety	7
These topics built more distrust for the CBE – the public is concerned	6
We'll raise a society of idiots	6
Will this process lead to sound outcomes?	5
Children will not be able to compete outside Alberta	5
Children will not be able to succeed in university.	5
Moving from less objective assessment to more subjective assessment	2
Moving away from core skills	4
All schools have dropped in rank from 3 rd to 17 th in the last 10 years - we fear that we will continue to drop	1
Complete system meltdown	

AT THIS POINT, TRUSTEES WERE INVITED TO COMMENT

Trustee comments

- Thanks on behalf of the board of trustees for working through this process. You have been heard. Please take this information back to your councils and principals.
- Schools are at various stages in this process, which is still evolving.
- The idea is to keep the basics of education, and look at ways to support and augment.

Audience queries to the trustees

Questions arose concerning the current situation with the proposed report card changes. Why were the trustees not even versed in the changes yet? Who had approved the changes? Trustees clarified to parents their role and abilities in the system, and emphasized that they are the 'governance' body

Trustees were also asked why the CBE decided not to present tonight. They responded that a decision was made to present the information to the board of trustees before presenting it to the public, and that there was insufficient time to complete that process. This meant that the public presentation had to be postponed.

CAPSC OBSERVATIONS AND CONSLUSIONS FROM THE MEETING

There was definite challenge in bringing this meeting together given the cancelation notice 2 days earlier from the CBE planned presentation. We felt that the meeting was a success in spite of the change in plans. Parents were disappointed by the change of presentations, but they were very interested in submitting their observations and feedback on the subject. They were clear that they wanted this information to be shared with the CBE, so that changes could reflect their input.

One of the overarching points of the discussion was the challenge in communication that parents experience in issues such as this. It was a commonly expressed concern that communication between the school board and parents needs to improve. It was voiced that improvements in this area would alleviate much of the anxiety when it comes to proposals for change. Parents especially want to be part of the process of finding solutions to problems. They would like communication regarding areas of possible change earlier on in the process so that they can give input and have access to the information that is driving the decisions.

CAPSC is working hard to facilitate this improved communication process. This overview and summary are part of that effort to improve things on the part of the parents. We hope that it is helpful to you.

