

# *AYSCBC*

## *School Council EXIT SURVEY*

SUMMARY OF INPUT  
from some outgoing  
SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS  
(completing their terms of office October 2012)

**Researched and compiled by**  
*Association of Yukon School Councils,*  
*Boards & Committees*  
*(AYSCBC)*

**January 2013**

**SUMMARY OF INPUT from  
'EXIT SURVEY' FOR SCHOOL COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
(completing their terms of office October 2012)

**BACKGROUND**

Since the Yukon Education Act was proclaimed in 1990, the number of people running for seats on their local School Councils has fluctuated considerably over the years. Elections are held every two years and nominations are open to every person who:

- ▶ is a Canadian citizen;
- ▶ is 18 years of age; and is either:
  - ▶ a resident in the attendance area for the School Council for at least three months, **OR**
  - ▶ a parent of a child in attendance at a school in the attendance area.

The criteria for eligibility also preclude a person from holding a seat on a Council for a school in which they are employed.

While the ebb and flow in the number of candidates as well as voters has been a topic of discussion for several years, no real investigation had ever been conducted into this situation. In order to determine some of the reasons for the changes, particularly any decrease in candidates, the first 'exit survey' was developed and circulated by the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees (AYSCBC) to those outgoing members who were not seeking re-election in October 2004. This transition time seemed to provide a prime learning opportunity. The feedback that the Association received indicated that respondents appreciated having the opportunity to provide some comments and suggestions. With this in mind, the exit survey has been circulated every 2 years to outgoing members not seeking re-election for the next term of office.

In the interests of increasing parent and community involvement in education, and specifically in the role of School Councilors, information about the motivators and detractors that some members experience during their time as School Councilors has been gathered for analysis and future planning.

**METHODOLOGY**

In order to gather input, the brief survey, originally developed and circulated in 2004, was updated and circulated by post and email to all outgoing School Council members who had not put their names forward to run again in the election that took place in October 2012. The cover letter explained that their input would assist in establishing a better understanding of the reasons why people do not run again for Council seats, with the added purpose of ensuring that energy could be focused on addressing any situations and issues that were identified. Any individual personal identifiers would be deleted in the final summary of input.

**The purpose of the survey was identified as:**

- Providing an opportunity for School Council members to raise important issues*
- Providing an avenue for School Council members to have a voice for frustrations, provide constructive suggestions and comment on things that did work.*
- Identifying areas needing support and change for School Council members*

Those surveyed were assured anonymity and advised that a summary of the input would be generated and shared with those that AYSCBC could reach electronically, including respondents, School Councils and others involved in education and local governance. During each survey period, the return rate of completed and returned surveys was generally less than 20%

Great appreciation is extended to all for their contribution of time, attention and information.

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY INPUT

On the survey, respondents had the choice of several options provided as possible reasons one might not run again, as well a category marked 'other'. Comments could be entered in response to any or all categories.

### **I DID PLAN TO PUT MY NAME FORWARD FOR NOMINATION TO A SCHOOL COUNCIL BUT DID NOT COMPLETE THE PROCESS.**

Yes

Comments:

☞ I did not understand the process in which to complete the nomination papers—I am waiting on an appointment now.

### **SOME OF THE REASONS PEOPLE DID NOT CHOOSE TO RUN AGAIN FOR A SEAT ON A SCHOOL COUNCIL---**

Time commitments 🕒

Comments:

☞ It was difficult for me to commit more than the once a week meeting as I am on a number of boards.

☞ Partially

☞ To adequately prepare for all of the issues and without adequate administrative support, the reading and research time is very large. Each school needs a dedicated ½ time staff to assist School Council with the interaction of the administration of the school and the School Council.

☞ My child moved to high school so have no current thoughts for council until I meet the school and experience function/quality. Job promotion leaves me less energy time.

☞ This was a factor for me.

☞ As Chair, it did prove to be a significant commitment of time. I chair another committee as well, so something had to give.

☞ Being pulled in too many other directions in my life.

☞ No

☞ Not really an issue however that are so many other committees that it is unreal to ask people to dedicate time like that when nothing at all changes. If it made a difference, sitting on the committees-yeah!

☞ I have taken on extra responsibilities this year and just found I was not going to have enough time to commit and till be fair to others on Council, although prior to these new commitments occurring it had been my intention to run again.

## X Uncomfortable with roles and responsibilities

### Comments:

- ☞ The structure of the Education administration has no real place for School Council. There is so much direct access by parents & stakeholders to the department that the role of SC is largely symbolic and without resources or influence.
- ☞ No, but the Education Act is limited in this guidance
- ☞ No
- ☞ To a certain extent. I disagreed with the principal on curriculum and whose role it was to advocate for curriculum changes (the parents or the staff)
- ☞ Less uncomfortable than unclear. Always felt like we were battling with administration around roles & responsibilities
- ☞ No real issue here either.
- ☞ No
- ☞ No issues here – our council worked very well together and had good communication/conflict resolution framework and skills.

## X My personal hopes and expectations of working with the Council and other key players in education were not met

### Comments:

- ☞ Decisions made by Council and school administration were not followed/carried out by teachers. Some policies we developed in our school were not adhered to. It became frustrating.
- ☞ No real input into school; just a funding source/manpower source; so much difficulty getting the transfer payment, not timely at all
- ☞ Citizen engagement (parents & community) is very challenging in elementary school setting in diverse neighbourhoods with small Councils. This is resource dependant.
- ☞ I found there was more emphasis at the Departmental level on maintaining the status quo than there was on learning and improving. It was my experience that superficial comments to the Department were greeted well, but more challenging comments and suggestions were greeted with a defensive attitude and sometimes animosity. Some significant questions asked of the Department remain unanswered to this day, despite several reminders. I also am concerned about a ‘divide and conquer’ attitude to School Councils from some at the Department.
- ☞ I enjoyed tremendously working with the council members, the staff, the department, however it was very difficult dealing with the school’s administration.
- ☞ I feel the Education branch has their own agenda and we are all there for lip service only. Several years on Council and the issues were not addressed.

☞ No

☞ While we worked well together, I had hoped for a bit more “action” and involvement with the school administration and school community. Try as we might we could not enlist parental participation in hardly ANYTHING which was saddening and disappointing. I wish we had been able to undertake some more successful projects that could have had some larger positive impact on the school but time did not always permit. Our guidelines in the Ed Act stipulate that we have the ability to encourage, direct and influence programming but I was quite disheartened that the change we supported didn’t happen because of some parents who seem to make no effort to be involved in their children’s education.

I certainly enjoyed my time spent with this council and school regardless but this left a very bad impression on me as to what is occurring within the school largely due to demographics. While I appreciate Administration’s efforts and that they have to work with what they have, I resent that those who are not struggling are being ignored in favour of the gross number of children who are having day to day challenges with education and coping. Everyone always claims schools say they need more, more, more resources and the retort is that there is not enough money...but something has to be done to further assist the Administration and Staff so that the vast amount of high needs children get the attention they need but also so that the others who are not high needs are not left to fend for themselves being ignored and unchallenged because all efforts are going to those who need either more guidance or who are extremely disruptive. I commend the Administration and Staff for trying to do the best they can with what they have...but it is not enough for particularly challenging school demographics. Overall, I have to admit I felt as though we had very little impact on the ability to influence any change for this school. It would have been nice to have a bit of a stronger (but not overbearing) voice to influence some changes but I think it was made clear we were there to hear what was going on, make a few comments but know that anything else was not our role.

### X Other

#### *Comments:*

☞ School Councils are essentially representatives of the interests of parents in the catchment area. With a large catchment area, there is no real ‘community’ to represent.

☞ I live on opposite end of town from where my child attends school. I only have my child half-time so time there is more important.

☞ I need to finish an online course I am taking and need to spend any extra time I have on that. I already have a lot of meetings in the evening through my job and it just became a bit too much. Also, I had put my name forward last year as they were short members. I no longer have a child in school and feel that those who do should be on Council.

☞ Although it was at times challenging, I had an overwhelmingly good experience working with the administration at the school level.

☞ Due to enrolling my child in a different school, I decided to not continue with the former School Council there.

☞ I have changed schools to one that I feel offers a better environment both on the whole and in the classroom and offers far superior programming opportunities and academic standards in my opinion. It no longer made sense for me to run for the same school as a result. If I had enough time I would have loved to have run for the school my child attends now as – I think serving on council is a wonderfully excellent opportunity to be involved so long as Council has a voice!! I wish I had more time to be involved ☺

**CAN YOU MENTION SOME THINGS THAT WORKED WELL FOR YOU AS A SC MEMBER AND FOR YOUR COUNCIL AS A GROUP?**

☞ Wonderful group, very caring and committed to school and children.

☞ Cohesive group with varied expertise made us effective & supportive to administration.

☞ Our group, although we had differing opinions on some issues, did work well together – we respected each other’s points of view.

☞ We managed to get to a place where we could listen to each other’s varying points of view and at times simply agree to disagree.

☞ Positive thinking Council colleagues and school administration—they were a joy to work with. AYSCBC support, no, really, not sucking up!

☞ Working in sub-committees

☞ Got AP classes for the upper students that do not need any learning assistance.

☞ The group worked well together. Gave each other support. Very considerate of all input.

☞ Flexible meeting schedules and a willingness to work together to accommodate all of Council was amazing and helped a great deal with our success. While I know meetings were intended to be held at the same time very month that was just not realistic for our group and so everyone (council AND administration) worked at ensuring people’s schedules could be met – even if it meant shifting times and dates from time to time – immensely helpful for being able to be involved and also actively involved. Laid back group and great senses of humour and, for the most part, a good working relationship with the administration. Members were willing to divide up tasks to get things done and definitely worked collaboratively to seek solutions to issues if they did occur and come up with suggestions as a group. We also backed each other up without one or more people becoming the Voice of Dissent. We were always on the same page with made us a solid team in my opinion and made it easy to work together. People would certainly play devil’s advocate but never with a hidden or selfish agenda bit more to facilitate discussion and thoughtful decision making. But at the end of the day we would always go into any issue with one solid, unified voice. I feel very lucky to have had an opportunity to work with such exceptional people.

**A piece of advice I would pass on to School Council members is:**

- ☞ Try not discussing your own children or personal issues with Council members during meetings.
- ☞ Focus on a close positive working relationship with the principal and don't rely on the department for results.
- ☞ Engaging parents is key for an effective Council
- ☞ Be careful to identify the agenda (not necessarily negative) that each other Council member has and consider how that will interact with whatever you hope to accomplish
  
- ☞ Make yourself available to parents—contact info in newsletter, up at school, speak to every gathering of parents. Attend DOE functions (it keeps you in the loop and future thinking and engaged)
  
- ☞ Do not expect anything to change
  
- ☞ Be truthful and thoughtful
  
- ☞ Stay unified. Check your ego and more importantly, your personal agendas at the door. You are not there for you and what YOU want as an individual – you are there to make a positive impact on for the greater good by working together, not in spite of each other. As soon as you start making it about you and can no longer stand to reason or listen to the group it's time for you to leave. It is one thing to be invested in your school community, it is something very different to hijack it...work together as a team. Take advantage of the professional development opportunities and the twice annual council conferences – some of them are really great for providing support and resources so long as there is follow up post conference. Be champions for change and foster a GREAT relationship with the Principal and Staff. Better yet...get to know the staff as well (something that can be hard to do when you're like ships passing due to times of meetings). And best yet – foster a relationship with the STUDENTS and get to know them – invite them to meetings!! Because at the end of the day – they are the ones you are there for. Come up with great innovative ideas that will make your school the very best it can be and find ways to get those ideas implemented. And last, maintain a sense of humour – these meetings don't have to be formal and uptight – you CAN have a lot of fun at them and laugh yourself silly at times – and there is nothing wrong with being laid back and casual so long as your heart is in the job ;-)

**IF THERE ARE VACANCIES, WILL YOU CONSIDER PUTTING YOUR NAME FORWARD FOR APPOINTMENT TO YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL?**

  2   yes

  5   no

  2   undecided

*(Note: not all respondents marked this area)*

## What would make you run for a seat on a School Council again?

- ☞ More time
- ☞ If I had a child going into the school
- ☞ Possibly though not this year
- ☞ I would not run
- ☞ A change in tone /attitude from the Department of Ed
- ☞ Probably but I'm taking this year off.
- ☞ Definitely, but I need to step back for awhile
- ☞ Some changes in the main admin building.
- ☞ I would run again if I had the time to commit for sure

### Other comments:

- ☞ thank you for the opportunity to comment!
- ☞ what a great idea for this survey!