

Metro School Boards Study Part II

An Analysis of the Relationship Between
Metro Boards and the ASBA

September 7, 2006

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A steering committee consisting of representatives from each of the metro boards provided guidance and direction for the conduct of the study. The members of the steering committee were:

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ASBA	Maureen Kubinec, President of ASBA (Ex-officio)

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Throughout this document, the term “public boards” will refer to both separate and public school boards, unless otherwise specifically noted.

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Background

At the 2004 Spring General Meeting (SGM) of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA), the Metro Caucus requested that a study be undertaken to examine educational issues impacting upon the metro boards. In particular, the study was to assess the impact of the *Renewed Funding Framework* upon the metro boards and to examine the relationships between the metro boards and the ASBA. Specifically, the study was directed to:

1. Identify the impact of the recent changes to the fiscal framework,
2. Identify recommendations for further changes to the fiscal framework (e.g., special education, complexity, administrative costs),
3. Identify how the ASBA can advocate for metro boards,
4. Consider metro representation (voice) option within the ASBA, and
5. Identify the advantages of ASBA membership for metro boards.

The ASBA agreed to undertake the study and have it brought before the Board of Directors upon completion. For part one of this study, a Steering Committee consisting of two representatives from each of the metro boards was put into place to guide the conduct of the study and to ensure that the objectives were met. The selection of the board representatives was left to the boards themselves. The ASBA President attended as ex-officio, as is provided for in ASBA Bylaw 6, section 6.

The four metro boards then requested that part two of the study be initiated and that ASBA resource this second part of the study. The structure, mandate, guiding principles and

timelines approved by the ASBA Board of Directors at their March 2006 meeting were as follows:

Structure:

- Each metro board will have one representative serve on the steering committee.
Each metro board is responsible for selecting their respective representative.

Mandate:

- Identify ways metro boards' relationship with ASBA can be enhanced including identification of metro boards' future within ASBA. (Note: this point was not in original mandate statement.) (Note: The committee is using the Relationship Touch-Points paper as a guide in its work.)
- Identify how ASBA can advocate for metro boards.
- Consider metro representation (voice) options within ASBA (internally within ASBA).

Guiding Principles:

- The metro boards recognize that they may not always agree but have common issues where supportive actions have and can be taken.
- The metro boards are committed to finding a positive future for metro boards within ASBA.
- The metro boards recognize that they are ASBA and that ASBA is membership-driven.

- The metro boards' unique needs, interests, and modes of operation are driven by their size and complexity.

Timelines:

- Terms of reference approved by board of directors March 2006.
- Initial draft report May 15, 2006.
- Feedback from metro boards SGM 2006 (Caucus hosted by Calgary Catholic).
- Presentation to board of directors September 2006.
- The Board of Directors determine the venue to address identified issues:
 - Deal expeditiously with those issues which are within the Board of Director's authority to address;
 - Refer issues to the ASBA governance review which fall within the purview of this study;
 - Place before the membership those issues which in accordance with the ASBA Governance Handbook are required to be addressed by the membership.
- The Board of Directors will have responsibility for distribution of the report.

Executive Summary

The Steering Committee identified a number of positive aspects of metros boards' relationship with ASBA including:

- Board development workshops at FGM and SGM and subsequent opportunities for information and dialogue such as the High School Completion Rates session
- Advocacy, when it can be done in the interests of all boards, such as AISI, curricular issues, etc.
- Quality specialized services provided on a fee-for-service basis

The Steering Committee believes the following are issues that are relatively less complex and might be addressed in an expeditious fashion by the Board of Directors:

1. ASBA structure opportunities for metro boards to meet more frequently, such as prior to FGM and SGM, re: policy issues.
2. Adjust the scheduled Caucus time for FGM.

The Steering Committee believes the seven, more complex recommendations in the following pages identify the position of the metro boards. Some of these recommendations might best be addressed by the Board of Directors, while others would require action of the membership. The latter would be the case where bylaw amendments are required. The Steering Committee recognizes that the recommendations in this report relate directly to the ASBA's *Governance Review* currently under way, and that this report should be considered as part of this *Governance Review*.

Recommendations to Achieve Metro Boards' Preferred Future in Regard to Their Relationship with ASBA

The following would facilitate the preferred future the metro boards desire:

Recommendation #1: Create a structure for metro board representatives to meet on a more regular basis.

Rationale/Background:

Metro boards believe the ASBA's *Metro School Board Studies* have increased the four boards' working relationship with each other and have added value.

Recommendation #2: That the ASBA Governance Review examine means to ensure that actions taken by the ASBA executive are informed by and respect metro perspectives.

Rationale/Background:

The executive performs important work, such as making appointments to committees or appointing committee representatives, meeting with the Minister, etc. Metro boards, given the complexity of their operation and the number of students they represent, have an interest in ensuring that metro's perspectives are known and respected as this work is done.

Recommendation #3: Change the voting structure such that each board that attends the general meeting is entitled to a weighted vote based on a jurisdiction's student enrolment. This would not inhibit individual trustees from speaking to any issue at the AGM/business meetings of the association.

Rationale/Background:

The first concept inherent in the above recommendation is that boards, rather than individual trustees, would cast votes. The second concept advocated is that board votes be weighted. In the appended research, it is evident that many organizations struggle with providing appropriate voice and vote when the organization consists of members who are not homogeneous. This is true with our federal government dealing with provinces which vary widely in population. It is similarly true at the provincial levels across Canada, and is evident in the organizations examined in the appended research. As is noted, various alternatives have been examined in order to honour all members when organizational members are not homogeneous.

Currently, metro boards account for 23% on a weighted vote within ASBA. Such weighted votes occur, for example, in approving the Association budget. If voting were determined only by student enrolment, metro boards would account for in excess of 45%.

Recommendation #4: Adopt a double majority voting system.

Rationale/Background:

The concept of double majority voting is another mechanism to deal with the matter of weighting of votes where the members in an organization are not homogeneous. Details regarding double majority voting are contained in the appended research.

Recommendation #5 (Increase Clarity): Where specific metro representation is required, clarify in the terms of reference for ASBA committees the expectations held for the metro representative regarding:

- a. whose interests are to be primary in providing advice and input
- b. the steps which will be taken to keep the metro boards informed of committee developments and clarify the following:
 1. The purpose of caucus meeting minutes or notes taken at general meetings,
 2. The purpose of the board chairs meeting,
 3. Special board chair meetings, and
 4. Whether input requested is to be given from a personal or a corporate perspective.

Rationale/Background:

Transparency and clear communication from representatives to the metro boards in this and other areas is required. For example, the decision to circulate reports after each *Renewed Funding Framework* meeting is appreciated.

Recommendation #6: That metro boards in zones be allowed to vote for zone director positions.

Rationale/Background:

Metro boards do not believe that metro trustees should be allowed to run for the position of zone director; however, since metro boards are a part of the zones, there is a belief that they should be able to vote for the zone director.

Recommendation #7: That the ASBA host a Canadian Metro Congress in 2007 on a cost recovery basis. This conference would provide professional development opportunities for metro trustees.

Rationale/Background:

This recommendation contemplates that the Metro Congress would be held in conjunction with CSBA Congress, would be one day in length, and that this would be viewed as a pilot, which may well be repeated in future years if successful. It is noteworthy that CUBE, which is the American association of large urban boards attached to the National School Boards Association, holds their annual conference as an add-on to the NSBA conference. Metro boards appreciate that work is already underway to make this recommendation a reality in 2007.

Recommendation #8: That the research and investigation section from this review be utilized by the ASBA *Governance Review*.

Rationale/Background:

The appended research reveals that it is not uncommon for organizations to consist of members who are not the same size. Several organizations similar to ASBA have taken steps to address issues of voice and vote to accommodate such differences. Metro boards believe that this information would be instructive for the ongoing ASBA *Governance Review*.

Appendix I: Research and Investigation

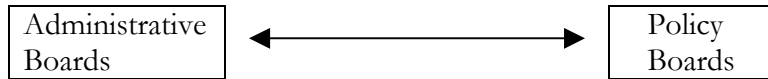
The Steering Committee identified four areas that they believed required research and investigation.

1. What are the areas of commonalities and differences regarding board and trustee roles in metro and non-metro settings?
 2. How do other school board associations and other similar provincial organizations (AUMA, AAMD&C, and ATA) handle representation and decision-making? How do they deal with the issue of voice?
 3. Examine the current practice in ASBA of votes by trustees rather than boards.
 4. Examine the feasibility of an annual ASBA-sponsored metro congress.
- **What are the areas of commonalities and differences regarding board and trustee roles in metro and non – metro settings?**

This is a complex question that needs to be addressed through a discussion of concepts like governance models, the work of school boards, and the particular issues addressed by metro boards

Governance models

At its simplest, one can view the question of governance models as a continuum. On one end of the continuum are administrative or operating governing boards and on the other end are policy-governing boards.



Both types of governing boards “govern” the affairs of the organization. The administrative governing board “governs” the organization and does most, if not all, of the day-to-day work. The organization has no CEO or senior staff and, as such, working committees are common. In short, the administrative board both sets and implements the vision and mission of the organization. At the other end of the continuum is the policy governing board. A policy governing board leads and governs the organization through establishing direction and setting policy. In the words of Alberta’s Auditor General, these boards focus on what to do and not how to do it. Staff is hired to implement the board’s direction and to manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization. Board and staff roles are clearly differentiated and separated.

Both types of boards have ultimate responsibility and accountability for the organization’s future and health. The difference lies in how the organization’s purpose and mission is implemented.

Alberta’s school boards have significant flexibility and choice in determining their own governance structure. While not natural persons under law, school boards, given the delegation of responsibilities of the *School Act*, can organize themselves in a variety of ways. As such, it can be said that no two school boards in Alberta “look” and “act” in exactly the same way, even though all are obligated to operate under the standards and requirements of Alberta’s *School Act*.

While one has to be careful with generalizations, most school boards in Alberta operate towards the policy end of the governance continuum. For example, unlike some small not-for-profit organizations, all school boards have a CEO and generally delegate significant operating responsibilities to the CEO and his/her staff. Additionally, all Alberta school boards see the development of policy as one of their key responsibilities.

The type of governance model adopted by a school board is often, but not always, directly related to the size of the school system. Large metro school jurisdictions, for example, given the number of daily student, staff and parent issues, will, of necessity and choice, function on the policy side of the governance continuum, while smaller school jurisdictions often function more towards the middle of the governance continuum, assigning themselves both operating and policy responsibilities.

The work of school boards

Education has often been described as the most important function in which a society can engage. Given the importance of a sound education system to the development of individuals and societies, the work of those charged with overseeing and governing the education system is important indeed. In Canada, education is a delegated provincial responsibility. All provinces, in turn, have delegated much of the governance of the local education system to locally elected trustees. School boards are essentially guided by three imperatives or forces in the fulfillment of their duties:

1. The legal or statutory framework of their province. School boards operate in partnership with the provincial government in the governance of the school system. The legal framework under which school boards operate is the *School Act* and its attendant regulations and related policies.
2. Local and provincial traditions and history. Locally elected school boards and their management of the local education system have been a way of life in Alberta since the late 1800's, well before Alberta officially became a province. While the work and focus of school boards has changed over the years, their importance to a strong and open education system hasn't. Today's school boards operate under the umbrella and guidance of over one hundred years of history. This history plays an important part in defining the structure and role of a school board.
3. Community wishes. While it is sometimes difficult to clearly articulate a community's wishes regarding the education of its young, it is nonetheless a key board role to listen and respond to community desires and wishes. As school boards are not natural persons under law, they can only "do" the things that have been expressly delegated to them and, as such, they must often balance community wishes against their delegated responsibilities. This is a political role that calls for advocacy and community engagement.

Given the three imperatives, the differing sizes of Alberta school jurisdictions, and the governance models available to school boards, it comes as no surprise that each school

board in Alberta is somewhat unique in terms of how it governs the local education system and the mechanisms it uses to turn its will into reality.

While no two boards fulfill their duties in exactly the same way, there are some common principles of operation that apply to all boards.

The first of these is that school boards are “government” and, as such, fulfill legislative, executive and judicial functions in relation to their mandated responsibilities. In other words, their role involves establishing the “rules” (policies, bylaws) of system operation, ensuring that policies and decisions are implemented in accordance with board wishes and acting as judge in the resolution of disagreements or disputes.

The second key principle of school board operation is that the board “speaks with one voice” to its administration. The board, as a whole, is responsible and accountable for the operation of the school district, not individual trustees – unless they have specifically been delegated the authority to act on behalf of the board. While trustees are expected to have different opinions on issues and are expected to discuss, debate and vote on questions, it is only the duly passed resolution that is the will of the collective board. An effective board, therefore, is able to encourage discussion and debate on different issues but, at the end of the day, is able to reach resolution. As such, a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure is essential for the effective operation of a school board. Parliamentary procedure provides the “framework” for school board decision-making.

Trustees are politicians and, as such, members of the public have a right to know how “their” trustee voted on a specific issue. Therefore, it is important for boards to discuss and arrive at an understanding as to how differing board opinions on an issue are communicated to their public.

The third key principle of school board operation is the concept of delegation. Recent revisions to the *Alberta School Act* have reinforced the role of the superintendent as CEO of the board and chief education officer. Under this structure, the board has only one employee, the superintendent. All other staff reports to the superintendent.

A fourth principle of board operation is accountability. The Alberta Auditor General, in defining accountability, writes:

Accountability arises when the one party delegates responsibility for a task, function or role to another party. Associated with delegation is...an obligation to account for how well that responsibility was carried out. Reporting is providing information (an account) of the exercise of responsibilities. One party is accountable to another in the sense that one of the parties has the right to call upon the other to give an account of how he/she has discharged delegated responsibilities...Delegation of authority without accountability is an abdication and can have disastrous consequences.

While school boards have choices in terms of what their exact role looks like, there appears to be a growing national consensus that the role of school boards should focus on a policy orientation and strategic direction setting or “what to do” rather than matters of day-to-day

management. Rather than managing inputs and processes, boards are increasingly concerning themselves with establishing direction and managing and monitoring results.

In defining their role and work, Alberta's school boards have a number of "governance models" available to them that help provide direction. A brief discussion of these is important in that the type of governance model chosen by a school board drives its definition of its work and responsibilities.

Gill (2001) describes seven types of governing boards in his case study on twenty Canadian non-profit organizations. These seven types of governance models elaborate on the governance continuum and are seen as having discreet characteristics described as:

- a. Operational – The board does the work of the organization as well as governs it. This is typical of a board in the 'founding' stage and also organizations, such as service clubs, that have no staff and must rely largely on board members and other volunteers to achieve their aims.
- b. Collective – The board and staff are involved in 'single team' decision-making about governance and the work of the organization; board members may be involved in some of the work either in services or management functions.
- c. Management – The board manages operations but may have a staff coordinator. Board members actively manage finances, personnel, service delivery, etc.
- d. Traditional – The board governs and oversees operations through committees but delegates the management functions to the CEO. Committees are used to process

information for the board and sometimes do the work of the board. The CEO may have a primary reporting relationship to the board through the chair.

- e. Policy Governance (Carver) – the board governs through policies that establish organizational aims (ENDS), governance approach, management limitations and define the board/CEO relationship. It does not use committees. The CEO reports to the full board.
- f. Corporate – The CEO is a non-voting member of the board, carries substantial influence over policy-making, is viewed as a full partner with the board and has a relatively free hand at managing to achieve objectives established by the board. Committees are used for monitoring/auditing performance of the board, CEO and organization. Board members are selected for community profile, capacity to ‘open doors’ for the organization and may be used for selected tasks in their area of expertise.
- g. Constituent Representational – An approach used by publicly elected officials, federations or other constituency elected boards whose primary responsibility is to balance the interests of their constituents against the best interests of the overall organization. They may (and in the case of publicly elected officials do) carry grievance resolution/ombudsman functions. They may, as in the case of school boards, have prescribed responsibilities for public consultation and human resources (www.iog.ca, Gill, p. 10, 2001).

While each of the above models is distinct, many organizations manage using a mix of the models outlined by Gill. Alberta school boards, given the above framework and given their

unique statutory responsibilities, can be conceptualized as operating using a combination of representational, traditional and policy governance.

The policy governance model, as outlined by John Carver, is the model most often, but not always, employed by Alberta's metro boards and some urban and rural school jurisdictions.

The Carver model is based on three key principles:

1. Boards should use their policies to govern. Carver identifies four categories of policies. The first category outlines how the board does its work. The second category speaks to the board's relationship with its CEO, including evaluation of the CEO. The third speaks to delegation to the CEO and to the concept of "executive limitations". The fourth category is the "ends policies" that define what good is to be done for whom at what cost.
2. Boards should be focused on governing rather than administration.
3. Boards should not rubber stamp administrative decisions. If they can't say no they should refuse saying yes. They have no decision-making ability if they cannot choose either response.

The ASBA is encouraging all school boards to adopt a policy-oriented approach to governance, one that emphasizes strategic planning and public accountability. It has developed a model that attempts to clarify and provide substance to the concept of a "policy approach" to governance. The ASBA model provides a concrete example of what a policy approach to governance looks like, an example that illustrates "what to do".

At present, approximately 30 Alberta school jurisdictions use the ASBA model (or a modified version).

The fundamental goal of the ASBA governance model is to turn the will of the board, and by extension, the will of the community, into reality. The model is based on four pillars, eight areas of core board responsibilities and 16 policy issues. It further proposes five “power tools” that a board can use to help turn its will to reality.

The Four Pillars

The four pillars that form the base of the ASBA governance model are the pillars of clarity of roles, core functions, accountability and authenticity.

1. Clarity of roles. The model calls for the board to clearly establish roles of the board, trustees, the board chair and CEO. Clarity of roles provides the fundamental operating framework for “who does what” in the school jurisdiction. Clear role descriptions and expectations are a fundamental aspect of accountability.
2. Accountability. The Alberta Auditor General writes that “accountability arises when one party delegates responsibility for a task, function or role to another party” and that “associated with delegation is some discretion on how the responsibility will be exercised and an obligation to account for how well that responsibility was carried out.”
3. Core board functions. Though the role of the board is defined in legislation, that same legislation allows the board to delegate a large number of its responsibilities. The current Alberta *School Act*, for example, allows boards the ability to delegate all

but four functions. Very few, if any, boards in Alberta delegate to this extent. The ASBA governance model recommends that boards retain eight core responsibilities that reinforce a strong governance role for itself.

4. Authenticity. The notion of authenticity relates to core board functions and asks that the board live out its chosen role in specific ways at scheduled times. Authenticity builds predictability, credibility and trust in the performance of the board.

The Eight Core Responsibilities

The ASBA governance model proposes eight core governance responsibilities that a board should strongly consider retaining for itself. These core functions are described in the ASBA document titled “Board Job Description” and include the following:

1. Accountability to Provincial Government
2. Accountability to Community
3. Three-Year Education Plan (Increase Focus)
4. Policy (Increase Clarity of Boundaries and Processes)
5. CEO/Board Relations (Increase Potency)- Directing, monitoring, evaluating the CEO and maintaining a productive working relationship between the corporate board and the CEO.
6. Political Advocacy (Increase Influence)
7. Board Development (Increase Capacity)
8. Fiscal

The Sixteen Core Board Policies

The ASBA governance model proposes that boards maintain a small policy handbook separate from an administrative procedures and forms manual. The *Board Policy Handbook* is “owned” by the board and deals with matters the board approves, amends or delegates. The core board policies that should be included in the *Board Policy Handbook* include:

1. Division Mission, Vision and Values
2. Role of the Board
3. Role of Trustee
4. Role of CEO
5. Delegation of Authority
6. Trustee Code of Ethics
7. Role of Board Chair
8. Role of Vice Chair
9. Board Operations
10. Committees of the Board (if any)
11. Board Representation
12. Policy Making
13. Appeals Regarding Student Matters
14. Hearings on Teacher Matters
15. School Closures
16. Recruitment, Selection and Evaluation of the Superintendent.

The ASBA governance model also proposes five “power tools” that are available to a board.

These include:

1. Evaluation of the CEO
2. Policy processes
3. Strategic planning processes
4. Board evaluation
5. Accountability reports

Used wisely, these tools can greatly enhance a board's efficacy.

Many boards in Alberta have adopted the ASBA governance model. Three of the four metro boards use the Carver model to help define their role and method of operation. Still other Alberta school jurisdictions use a more traditional model that provides a great deal of board direction on a number of topics. The choices made by Alberta school boards have resulted in significant variation in how their roles are defined.

A quick review of some current board role descriptions illustrates this point and underlines the commonalities and differences in board roles. While most see their role as representing community and student interests, allocating resources, setting direction and priorities, developing policy and directing the superintendent; some boards are directly involved in issues like staff discipline, approving building change orders, approving changes to bus routes, making decisions regarding teacher resources, approving locally developed courses, approving field trips, and ruling on student disciplinary measures and student expulsion recommendations.

The issues faced by metro boards

While all school boards in the province deal with some common issues such as establishing the jurisdiction direction and priorities, developing policies, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, adopting the budget and establishing accountability mechanisms; metro boards, because of their size, face many unique challenges which are driven by complexity, student demographics, socio-economic factors and client expectations.

Metro boards, in addition to their unique challenges, educate 47% of the students in Alberta. Given their size and prominence, they are often expected to provide provincial leadership and direction. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* definition of metropolitan, for example, illustrates the central leadership role played by a metropolitan city:

Also called Metropolis, a major city together with its suburbs and nearby cities, towns, and environs over which the major city exercises a commanding economic and social influence. Literally construed, metropolis from the Greek means “mother city,” and by implication there are progeny or dependents scattered about the core area.

The ASBA, in May 2005, released its *Metro School Boards Study*, which analyzed the impact of the provincial *Renewed Funding Framework* on metro jurisdictions. The study, in support of its argument that the *Renewed Funding Framework* needs to include a “metro factor” which recognizes the complexities faced by metro boards, also commented on the unique nature of the metro board role and responsibilities. The study offers the following examples of issues unique to metro boards:

➤ Communication

Provincial and national media is concentrated in Edmonton and Calgary. Therefore, anything that might become an issue is quickly brought to the attention of the public. Boards are required to expend time, resources and energy to ensure that responses are made in a timely and professional manner.

➤ Government

Of the 83 provincial MLAs, 41 or approximately 50% are from Edmonton and Calgary. This by far exceeds the total number of elected school trustees. As such, metro boards need to spend significant time and resources building understanding and relationships with their many MLAs as part of their advocacy efforts on behalf of students and parents. A complicating factor is that the M.L.A.s in a trustee's ward can represent different provincial parties.

➤ Safety

Concern for student and staff safety is a significant consideration for metro boards. While all school boards deal with safety issues, metro boards, because of size and complexity issues, allocate significant resources to ensure student and staff safety and security.

➤ Programs of Choice

Metro boards, in response to community wishes, provide a wide range of educational programs and services to students. As such, metro boards have an increasing number of students who do not attend their neighborhood school. Parents expect and

demand choice. The provincial government encourages and supports school choice, yet is reluctant to financially support the extra cost of choice. As a result, metro boards are required to support school choice through the allocation of already scarce resources.

➤ Complexity of Governance and Information Systems

Trustees of metro boards have large constituencies they must build relationships with and represent. As noted, these constituencies are significantly larger than the constituencies of metro MLAs. As well, metro boards expend significant resources for hardware and software solutions related to information systems. Trustees require accurate and timely information for their decision-making. While all boards face the challenge of building relationships with their constituents and access to timely information, the challenge faced by metro boards is exacerbated by the issue of size and complexity.

A review of the research related to trends and issues in urban and metropolitan education supports the contention that the work of metro boards is qualitatively and quantitatively different than the work of non-metro boards. While much of the available research is based on the experience of metropolitan boards in the U.S.A, findings are applicable to the Canadian experience. In a 1998 study of trends and issues in urban education, report authors (Flaxman, Schwartz, Weiler, Lahey, 1998) discuss the following issues and trends prevalent in large urban settings:

- Multicultural education
- School choice

- Charter schools
- Smaller schools
- Schools with a focus
- After school programs for urban youth
- Parent involvement strategies
- The educational needs of language minority children
- Violence prevention

In a recent article (2006) about the challenges facing large urban school boards, the National School Boards Association makes the following points:

This is a tough time to be a school board member. Across the nation, Americans have proclaimed that education is their number one priority. Parents and others are concerned about how well schools are preparing children with the basic skills and higher order thinking skills needed to succeed in school, at work, and in life.

Employers are demanding that schools prepare students to contribute to workplaces where change is the only constant. Taxpayers are increasingly vigilant about the results of school spending. With rising frequency, ordinary Americans who are frustrated with the status quo are voting with their feet, signing on with alternative providers of education services. These and other issues challenge all school Boards, but none more than urban school boards and those who serve on them.

Outside school walls, the socioeconomic factors in urban centers – poverty, racism, crime, violence, changing family structures, and stretched community resources – all

have an impact on student achievement. These circumstances put urban children at risk of educational failure, schools at the center of interconnected social problems, and urban school board members on the front lines under extremely difficult conditions.

While the NSBA article paints a rather bleak picture regarding the difficult role of metro trustees, the challenges outlined in the article also provide significant opportunities for metro boards to provide positive leadership.

In conclusion, the evidence supports the contention that the work and responsibilities of metro school boards, given their size, complexity, demographics and leadership role, is both quantitatively and qualitatively different than the work of non-metro boards. While all boards have some role responsibilities in common, metro boards deal with a number of unique issues and challenges that sets their task and resource requirements apart from non-metro boards.

- **How do other school board associations and other similar provincial organizations (AUMA, AAMD&C, and ATA) handle representation and decision-making?**

This again is a complex question that has at its core the issue of “voice”. How do large and diverse organizations ensure that each of its members, taking into consideration their size and location, have ample opportunity to be “heard” and have their issues addressed in a meaningful way? To answer the question of voice and its related components, an analysis of comparable school board and municipal organizations provide some useful insights.

Before this analysis is undertaken, a quick comment on the issue of “voice” is necessary. The United Nations Development Program, in 1997, enunciated a set of governance principles that have gained significant international recognition and acceptance. These principles, in summary, are listed below in table No. 1:

Table No. 1

Five Principles of Good Governance	
The five Good Governance Principles	The UNDP Principles and related UNDP text on which they are based
1. Legitimacy and Voice	<p>Participation – all men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.</p> <p>Consensus orientation – good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.</p>
2. Direction	<p>Strategic Vision – leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is ground.</p>
3. Performance	<p>Responsiveness – institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.</p> <p>Effectiveness and efficiency – processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.</p>
4. Accountability	<p>Accountability – decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external.</p> <p>Transparency – transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.</p>
5. Fairness	<p>Equity – all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.</p> <p>Rule of Law – legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.</p>

As noted in the above chart, the issue of “voice” is the first principle of effective governance practices. How do organizations like the ASBA implement this principle in their governance structures and decision-making practices?

Organizations considered

In addition to the ASBA, the constitutions and operating bylaws of the following organizations were reviewed with regard to their practices in decision-making and implementing the principle of voice:

- British Columbia School Trustees Association – BCSTA
- Saskatchewan School Boards Association – SSBA
- Manitoba Association of School Trustees – MAST
- Ontario Public School Boards Association – OPSBA
- Alberta Urban Municipalities Association – AUMA
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties – AAMD&C
- Alberta Teachers Association – ATA

Governance structures and decision-making

➤ **BCSTA**

Membership:

BCSTA membership consists of all boards of public school trustees and Francophone education authorities upon application.

General meetings:

The association holds an Annual General Meeting (AGM) and “additional” general meetings may be called if deemed necessary by the board of directors. The AGM generally deals with the affairs of the association (-s) through the election of officers and the debate of resolutions and policies.

Board of Directors:

The president, vice-president, immediate past president (only for one year following the election of president) and directors (four in number for those years the immediate past president is an officer of the Association, and five otherwise) form the board of directors. The executive director is a non-voting member of the board. Any trustee of a member board is eligible for election as an officer of the association. The board of directors is responsible to provincial council for representing the policies of the association.

Provincial Council:

The provincial council consists of the board of directors plus one representative (or alternate) elected by each member board. Meetings of the council are held three times a year: once in conjunction with the AGM and twice between AGM's.

Provincial council approves the annual budget of the association, total fees collected from member boards and the criteria for determining individual member fees.

Provincial council can also establish interim policies of the association between AGMs, acquire or lease real and personal property, approve payment of honoraria and expenses, provide financial assistance to other non-profit organizations with similar goals and direct the board of directors regarding the investment of funds.

Standing Committees:

BCSTA has the following standing committees each with clearly specified duties and decision-making authority. Members are either appointed by the president or elected by branches:

- ◆ Legislative Committee
- ◆ Credentials Committee
- ◆ Finance Committee
- ◆ Education Committee
- ◆ First Nations Education Committee
- ◆ Other ad hoc committees as established by the Provincial Council or Board of Directors.

District Branch Associations:

BCSTA has nine “branch” associations that are affiliated with BCSTA. Branch associations draft their own constitutions and may submit motions to AGM and provincial council. The nine branch associations are:

- ◆ Fraser Valley Branch
- ◆ Kootenay Boundary Branch
- ◆ Mainline-Cariboo Branch
- ◆ Metropolitan Branch
- ◆ North West Branch
- ◆ South Coast Branch
- ◆ Northern Interior Branch

- ◆ Okanagan Branch
- ◆ Vancouver Island Branch

Voting at AGM:

Voting on motions is by show of hands by those present unless any 20 delegates call for a ballot vote. Ballot votes (weighted) shall be used:

- ◆ for the election of BCSTA officers
- ◆ on amendments to the constitution
- ◆ for the approval of an association petition to the legislature for changes in the BCSTA *Act of Incorporation*
- ◆ on the taking of a vote on a substantive motion when called for by any 20 delegates.

Weighted Ballots:

Weighted ballots are based on annual student enrollment:

- ◆ 1 to 249 pupils – 1 vote
- ◆ 250 to 999 pupils – 2 votes
- ◆ 1,000 to 1,999 pupils – 3 votes
- ◆ 2,000 to 5,999 pupils – 4 votes
- ◆ 6,000 to 11,999 pupils – 6 votes
- ◆ 12,000 to 17,999 pupils – 8 votes
- ◆ 18,000 to 23,999 pupils – 10 votes
- ◆ 24,000 to 29,999 pupils – 12 votes
- ◆ 30,000 to 35,999 pupils – 14 votes

- ◆ 36,000 to 47,999 pupils – 15 votes
- ◆ 48,000 to 59,999 pupils – 16 votes
- ◆ 60,000 and over – 17 votes.

➤ **SSBA**

Membership

School boards on payment of the annual membership fee.

Conventions and Provincial Assemblies (AGM)

A general convention of the association is held annually. Conventions are called for the purpose of electing officers, debating resolutions and passing or amending bylaws.

Officers

The officers of the association consist of;

- ◆ Honorary president (Minister of Education)
- ◆ The executive consisting of
 - The president
 - The vice president
 - A branch (constituency) representative from each of seven constituencies
 - a. Aboriginal Constituency
 - b. Central Constituency
 - c. Urban Public Constituency

- d. Catholic Constituency
- e. Northern Constituency
- f. Southern Constituency
- g. Francophone Constituency

Branch Organizations

SSBA currently has seven “constituencies” whose purpose is to provide opportunities for input to executive decision-making and member feedback on current issues, to facilitate communication from executive to members, to address regional issues, to provide trustee development opportunities at the regional level and to elect executive members.

Other “Voice” structures.

SSBA, through its bylaw structure, provides opportunity for a Catholic section (bylaw 8), councils (bylaw 9) and caucus groups (bylaw 9.1). Each of these mechanisms is designed to meet the particular “voice” needs of members. Current bylaws indicate that SSBA has a Catholic section and an urban public boards caucus. Each of these is considered a constituency and has representation on the executive.

Voting at AGM

Voting at conventions or provincial assemblies is by ballot except in cases of procedural matters where the chairman can call for a show of hands.

Board votes at convention and provincial assemblies are by weighted ballot derived by the following formula as outlined in bylaw no. 11.

(a)	<p>Subject to clause (b), boards of education having membership in the association shall be entitled to the following number of votes at the annual Convention or at a Provincial Assembly:</p> <p>(1) The board of education of a city school division or a school division which comprises an area greater than 1,295 square kilometers shall have the number of votes generated by the following formula:</p> $\frac{\text{membership fee of the board of education} \times 1500}{\text{total membership fees}} = \text{number of votes}$ <p>provided that in no case will that number of votes be less than the sum generated by adding the number of board of education members to the number of district boards of trustees within that school division.</p> <p>(2) Any other member board of education shall have the number of votes at Convention or a Provincial Assembly generated by the formula in sub-clause (1) provided that in no case shall the number of votes be less than two.</p>
(b)	<p>Where a school division or francophone education area has amalgamated with one or more other school divisions or francophone education areas, the amalgamated board of education may choose, for a maximum period of three consecutive years, to retain the number of votes equal to the sum of those votes which were available to the boards of education forming the amalgamation provided that the amalgamated board of education also pays its membership fees on that basis.</p>
(c)	<p>An accredited Convention or Provincial Assembly delegate shall be a trustee at the time of the Convention or Provincial Assembly.</p>
(d)	<p>Non-voting trustees and visitors may register at the convention upon payment of a fee determined by the executive. Non-voting trustees may participate in convention discussions. Participation by visitors will be at the discretion of the chairman.</p>

The bylaws indicate that all votes are by weighted ballot vote. Branch representatives are elected at branch meetings; the Catholic section representative is the section chairperson, as is the urban public boards caucus chair. A board of education may participate in the election of only one of the Catholic section, urban public boards caucus, rural or francophone representatives in any year.

➤ **MAST**

Membership

Membership is not defined in association bylaws.

Conventions and provincial assemblies

MAST holds an annual gathering. Additional conventions can be called on 14 days' notice to all members specifying the reason for the convention.

Officers (executive)

- ◆ President
- ◆ Two vice presidents (one from boards with 6000 or more students, and one from boards with fewer than 6000 students)
- ◆ Past President
- ◆ Seven (7) Directors (two from the suburban region and one from each of the other regions).

Branch Organizations (Regions)

MAST has six regions or “branches”

Region 1 Western/northwestern

Region 2 Central/South Central

Region 3 Interlake

Region 4 Northern

Region 5 Suburban

Region 6 Winnipeg

Duties of the regional organizations include the nomination of eligible candidates for Directors of the region to be elected at annual convention, the formulation of resolutions to be brought to annual convention, and other regional or association business.

MAST Bylaws do not make provision for other “voice” structures like caucus or section structures although standing committees are part of the decision making process.

Voting at AGM

Weighted ballot votes are used in the election of President and **for** Bylaws and Bylaw amendments. Individual trustee ballots are used to elect the Manitoba Director to CSBA, all members of the executive except president, and all non-bylaw resolutions. Voting on resolutions is by show of hands unless the chair or one delegate calls for a standing vote.

Weighted ballots are determined pursuant to the following formula:

- ◆ Each member school board shall be eligible to receive one board ballot.
- ◆ Boards will be eligible to receive one additional board ballot for each 1000 students enrolled in their district or division.

➤ **OPSBA**

Membership

Membership of OPSBA consists of:

- ◆ Member Boards
- ◆ Delegates of member boards
- ◆ Honorary life members
- ◆ Trustees
- ◆ Associate members
- ◆ Directors

AGM

The AGM is held at “such time and place as determined by the board of directors”.

The AGM deals with policy resolutions, receives committee reports and the auditors report as information. Each member board appoints a trustee to act as the delegate of the member board and to exercise all rights and privileges of the member board, including that of voting at the annual and general meetings of the association and at the meetings of the regional council to which the member board is assigned.

Board of Directors

The board of directors manages the affairs of the association including the appointment or removal of president, first vice president, second vice president (between AGMs) and executive director, the approval of budgets and financial statements, the amendments of bylaws, and the establishment of core issue work groups. Each school board that is a member is entitled to appoint one trustee to the board of directors. Each school board which has a student enrollment of more than five (5) percent of total enrollment of all member boards is entitled to appoint an additional trustee to the board of directors and each school board that has a student

enrollment of more than fifteen (15) percent of the total of all member boards is entitled to appoint a further additional trustee to the board of directors. In addition to directors, the board is comprised of the president, first vice president, second vice president, the past president, five regional vice presidents and “pupil enrollment vice presidents (each member board with a student enrollment of 150,000 or more is entitled to appoint one of its directors as a pupil enrollment vice president of the association).

Executive Council

The executive council conducts the affairs of the association between the meetings of the board of directors. It consists of the past president, the president, the first vice president, the second vice president, the five regional vice presidents, and the pupil enrollment vice presidents. All core issue work groups established at the annual meeting to deal with priority issues report to the board of directors through executive council.

Regional Structure

Regional structures are designed to “provide for the optimum expression of opinion” by member boards. Five regional structures are outlined in association bylaws:

- ◆ North – which is divided into two sub regions being north east and north west)
- ◆ West
- ◆ East

- ◆ Central East
- ◆ Central West

Each regional council elects a chair who becomes a vice president of the association.

Other “Voice” mechanisms

OPSBA bylaws allow for the establishment of “core issue work groups” and “ad hoc work groups” The purpose of both groups is to provide advice to the board of directors and executive council.

Voting at Board of Directors meetings and AGM

Every delegate (each board appoints one) who attends the annual general meeting is entitled to vote in favor of or opposed to any motion. This one vote is a weighted vote based on jurisdiction student enrollment:

- ◆ Each member board vote has a base weighting of one
- ◆ Enrollment of 1 to 10,000 students equals 2 weighted votes
- ◆ Enrollment of 10,001 to 25,000 equals 3 weighted votes
- ◆ Enrollment of 25,001 to 50,000 equals 4 weighted votes
- ◆ Enrollment of 50,001 to 75,000 equals 5 weighted votes
- ◆ Enrollment of 75,001 to 110,000 equals 6 weighted votes.
- ◆ Enrollment of 110,001 to 200,000 equals 7 weighted votes
- ◆ Enrollment of more than 200,000 equals 8 weighted votes.

Voting at board of directors meetings follows either a simple majority procedure (50% of the Board of Directors vote in favor of the resolution) or a “double majority” procedure described as:

- a. More than 50% of the directors who cast a vote, vote in favor of the resolution; and
- b. More than 50% of the total voting member boards’ full time enrollment vote in favor of the resolution.

Any five directors from five different school authorities or the executive council can trigger the double majority voting procedure by giving written notice to all members at least seven days in advance of the board of directors meeting.

➤ **A.T.A.**

Membership

Mandatory individual teacher membership defined pursuant to the *Teaching Profession Act*.

Provincial Assemblies

The ATA annual representative assembly meets once a year to determine general policy of the association, to receive reports and to deal with any matter brought before it by a local. The assembly consists of the provincial executive council and about 450 local representatives. Representation at the annual assembly is determined by the formula “local membership count divided by association active membership

count and multiplied by 425. Each local is guaranteed a minimum of two representatives.

Provincial Executive Council

PEC consists of the president and two vice presidents, the past president, the executive secretary and 15 district representatives elected by members from the 11 geographic districts. Edmonton and Calgary metro districts elect three representatives each to PEC. All other regions elect one each. The ATA defines the annual general assembly as the “legislative” arm of the association and PEC as the executive and administrative body of the association.

Branch organizations (Locals)

The ATA has 54 “locals” organized into 11 regions including:

- ◆ Calgary City
- ◆ Calgary District
- ◆ Central East
- ◆ Central North
- ◆ Central West
- ◆ Edmonton City
- ◆ Edmonton District
- ◆ North East
- ◆ North West
- ◆ South East
- ◆ South West

In addition, the ATA has 11 student locals connected to the provinces' post secondary institutions.

Other "Voice" structures

The ATA has 17 standing committees that assist in the business of the association. Each of these committees ranges in size from six to eighteen members. They include; Canadian Teachers Federation committee, Curriculum committee, Diversity, Equity and Human Rights committee, Finance committee, Professional Conduct committee, Complainant Appeal committee, Professional Conduct Appeal committee, Pension committee, Political engagement committee, Resolutions committee, School Administrator Issues committee, Strategic Planning group, Substitute teachers' committee, Table Officers committee, Teacher Education and Certification committee, Area Field Experiences committee, Teacher Welfare Services committee.

In addition to the standing committees, ATA also operates with a number of ad hoc committees. Membership on committees is open to practicing teachers on application to provincial executive council.

Voting

PEC: All active and associate members are entitled to vote for provincial executive council, namely the positions of president, vice presidents and district representative(s). These votes are conducted by mail out ballot.

ARA: Only provincial executive council members and elected local representatives can vote at ARA. As noted, locals send representatives to ARA based on the ratio of local membership to total association membership.

Bylaws: Provincial executive council, ARA or locals can propose amendments to bylaws. Bylaw amendments need to go through a two-step process. The first step is a mail out ballot to all locals who vote on the proposed amendment. The local is entitled to one electoral vote for each 50 members. The result of the electoral vote is reported to the next ARA where it is submitted for approval. A two-thirds vote is required from ARA to adopt any bylaw or amendment.

Municipal organizations

➤ **A.A.M.D&C.**

Membership

Full membership consists of councils of municipal districts and counties who have paid their membership dues for the year. Associate and affiliate memberships are available to organizations whose objects are similar to A.A.M.D&C.

Conventions

The annual fall convention is held in Edmonton upon dates selected by the executive and the annual spring convention is held at a place and time determined by the executive.

Any member may send any number of delegates to the annual convention but the number of delegates may not exceed the number of councilors. The executive meets prior to each convention “to deal with resolutions intended to be submitted to the convention.” They have the authority to “sort the resolutions according to their relative importance and when two or more are submitted on the same subject to offer a consolidated resolution in their place, provided, however, that any member shall have the right to demand the submission of its original resolution to the convention.” (Bylaw No. 1)

Executive Members

The following officers constitute the executive of A.A.M.D&C.

- ◆ President – elected for a term of one year at fall convention by a clear majority ballot
- ◆ Vice President – elected for a term of one year at fall convention by a clear majority vote.
- ◆ One Director from each of five regional districts. Directors are elected for a staggered two-year term on day two of the fall convention by a simple majority of members of their region.

Executive council manages the affairs of the association between fall conventions and report “all transactions of the year” to the annual convention.

Branch Organizations (Districts)

A.A.M.D&C. has five districts:

- ◆ Foothills/ Little Bow (12 counties and municipal districts in southern Alberta)
- ◆ Central (13 counties and municipal districts located generally north of Calgary and south of Wetaskiwin)
- ◆ Pembina River (consists of 13 counties and municipal districts generally west of Edmonton)
- ◆ Northern (14 counties and municipal districts generally in the northwest region of the province.
- ◆ District 5 (13 counties and municipal districts generally east of Edmonton)

Voting

Executive – The executive consists of a president and vice president, both elected at large each year, and five directors, elected to staggered two-year terms. All elections are by secret ballot by clear majority.

Resolutions- a majority vote decides all questions (with the exception of Bylaws and requested legislation). A minimum of 25 delegates may call for a ballot vote (not weighted) on any matter on condition they do so prior to the vote being taken.

Bylaws and request to change legislation – Changes to Bylaws require three months notice in writing to members and a three-fifths vote of the delegates present and voting at the convention.

➤ **A.U.M.A.**

Membership

Regular membership is available to any City, Town, Village, Summer Village or Specialized Municipality located in Alberta on payment of the membership fee.

Associate and Affiliate memberships are also available.

Membership has a number of classifications:

- ◆ Cities over 500,000 population
- ◆ Cities up to 500,00 population
- ◆ Towns
- ◆ Villages
- ◆ Summer Villages

Annual General Meeting

Held at such time and place as the board of directors determines. A special general meeting of the association may be held at the call of five percent of the membership or by two-thirds vote of the Board. A.U.M.A. bylaws do not address the purpose of the annual general meeting. A review of the agenda of the latest AGM indicates that the meeting deals with resolutions, election of officers and educational sessions

Board of Directors

The board consists of the following positions:

- ◆ President
- ◆ Vice President of Cities over 500,000
- ◆ Vice President of Cities up to 500,000

- ◆ Vice President of Towns
- ◆ Vice President of Villages and summer villages.
- ◆ 2 appointed Directors from Calgary
- ◆ 2 appointed Directors from Edmonton
- ◆ Director of cities other than Calgary or Edmonton
- ◆ Director of Towns – East
- ◆ Director of Towns – West
- ◆ Director of Villages – South
- ◆ Director of Villages – East
- ◆ Director of Summer Villages

The president and vice presidents hold office for one year while directors hold office for two years (staggered). The board of directors has significant authority.

Association bylaws state that the board “has the authority and responsibility to carry out as appropriate, or delegate to its committees, the powers and duties conferred upon the Association.” (10.04) The board has authority to establish the budget, borrow money for capital projects and establish the basis for membership fees.

Executive Committee

The executive committee consists of the president and the vice presidents. It has all the powers of the board of directors between meetings of the board on emergent issues.

Voting

A.U.M.A. bylaws indicate that persons entitled to vote at any general meeting or special general meeting are “those elected representatives in attendance whose municipalities are regular members of the association in good standing.” (5.01) and that each person entitled to vote at any general meeting or special general meeting is entitled to one vote.

Election of Officers

Elections are held at the annual general meeting. Pursuant to bylaw 7.04, the election of:

- ◆ President shall be conducted among all of the persons
- ◆ Vice-presidents shall be conducted among all of the persons from the relevant classification
- ◆ Directors shall be conducted among all of the persons from the relevant classification.

Who are eligible to vote and are in attendance at the meeting.

Board of Directors: At board of directors meetings each board member present shall have one vote and, in the case of a tie, the motion shall be lost. (10.03)

Bylaws: Amendments to bylaws “shall not be made unless a three quarters (3/4) majority of the representatives of Regular Members in good standing present at the meeting vote in favor of the amendment.”

Summary of governance structures and decision-making compared to ASBA

A review of the governance structures and decision-making mechanisms of the seven provincial school boards, municipal and teacher organizations reveals significant similarities to structures and procedures outlined in ASBA bylaws with some notable exceptions.

Membership

Each organization has established “classes” of membership. Full membership in ASBA means a “board of trustees”. This is generally the case with the other organizations with the exception of the ATA, which defines membership individually, and OPSBA, which defines membership as member boards and “delegates” of member boards. This issue is significant in that all organizations, with the exception of ATA, pay a corporate membership, not individual trustee or councilor membership.

AGM

ASBA holds two general meetings, one in the fall (November) and one in the spring (June). Most other school board organizations hold one annual general meeting with provisions for a special general meeting if circumstances warrant. AAMD&C bylaws specify a fall and spring meeting while AUMA bylaws specify one annual general meeting with the provision for a special general meeting if needed. The purpose of annual general meetings is very similar amongst all organizations. The AGM is generally devoted to the election of officers, discussion and voting on policies and bylaws and “educational” sessions. The issue of “budget” is a key difference amongst the organizations. ASBA establishes its budget at the AGM. This is similar to the other organizations with the exception of BCSTA, OPSBA and AUMA. BCSTA establishes the annual budget and fees at the provincial council level,

OPSBA and AUMA at the Board of Directors level. All present financial statements to the AGM. In the language of governance, the AGM can be conceptualized as the “legislative” function of the organization.

“Voice Structures”

ASBA uses zones (branches), AGM “caucus sessions”, task forces and studies as well as the structure of the board of directors (five zone and four metro directors) to provide constituent voice opportunities. All organizations researched have governance structures that provide voice opportunities with the most common being branch or zone structures. Zone structures are either regional or a combination of regional and urban or metro. BCSTA makes provision for a “provincial council” which consists of the board of directors plus one representative elected by each member board. Provincial council has significant authority including the establishment of the association budget. This is similar to the OPSBA board of directors and the AUMA board of directors. Both OPSBA and AUMA board of director(s) structures are careful to include a wide representation of member types and sizes.

In addition to voice opportunities in zone and board of director structures which recognize geography and size, some organizations like BCSTA and SSBA have mechanisms that provide voice for the aboriginal constituency and some, like SSBA and ASBA (through board of directors observer status), provide voice opportunities for Catholic constituents. Standing committees and task forces are also common mechanisms used to study or deal with general issues or issues particular to rural or metro boards.

Voting

Voting policies in the organizations researched have many similarities and some significant differences. The following observations can be made:

➤ Weighted Ballot

All provincial educational organizations researched, including the ATA, use the “weighted” ballot notion at AGM to a greater or lesser extent. Some organizations like SSBA (other than for procedural matters) and OPSBA use only weighted ballots while others use a combination of weighted ballots or show of hands. Weighted ballots are used automatically for bylaw amendments in some cases or can be invoked on request by a specified number of delegates. ASBA appears to be the only organization that can request a ballot vote after a show-of-hands vote has been taken. Other organizations ask that a request for ballot vote occur before the vote is taken. Ballot weighting formulas are determined either by the jurisdiction’s student enrollment over total organization student enrollment or the jurisdiction’s fees over the total organizations fees.

AAMD&C and AUMA do not use a weighted ballot for any of their votes although AAMDC delegates can request a ballot vote (prior to the vote being taken).

➤ Election of Officers

The president and usually the-vice president is elected “at large” through ballot vote in all organizations researched. The branch elects branch or zone directors. Some organizations like AUMA and OPSBA have vice presidents elected on the basis of

membership size (enrollment vice presidents) and type (vice president of cities over 500,000).

➤ Board of Directors

All organizations researched have a board of directors and executive structure. The board of directors' structure is generally based on the size and type of member boards. ASBA, for example, has five geographic zone directors as well as four metro directors. The AUMA Board of Directors is structured around cities over 500,000 populations, cities up to 500,000 populations, Towns, Villages and Summer Villages.

Voting at board of directors meetings is generally on the basis of one vote per director or officer with the C.E.O. being a non-voting member. The one exception is OPSBA that has a "double majority" mechanism. The double majority vote can be triggered by any five directors from five different school authorities. A double majority is achieved when more than 50% of the directors who cast a vote, vote in favor of the resolution and more than 50% of the total voting members boards' full time enrollment vote in favor of the resolution.

➤ Bylaws and Bylaw amendments

All organizations require either a three quarter or four-fifths majority for bylaw amendments to take effect. The ATA uses a double voting procedure where bylaw additions or amendments are sent to locals first for a weighted ballot vote and then presented to the annual general meeting for a two-thirds majority vote.

- **Examine the current practice in ASBA of votes by trustees rather than boards.**

The issue of voting and voting procedures goes to the heart of any democratically managed organization. As such, care must be taken when voting methods are discussed to ensure any proposed revision resolves more issues than it might create.

The question of votes by trustees rather than boards can be examined from four points of view, these being historical perspective, governance principles, logical alignment and the practices of others.

Historical perspective

The Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) has a long and proud history. It was born in 1907 when then Premier Rutherford met with 60 school trustees to lay the foundation for the first provincial association of school trustees. In 1939, the association was granted its own operating statute with the passage of *The Alberta School Trustees Association Act*. The *Act*, on the advice of the Alberta School Trustees Association, was changed to *The Alberta School Boards Association Act* in July 1991. The key change in the *Act* was the change of name to the Alberta School Boards Association and the change in membership from trustees to school boards. While one can speculate as to the reasons for this change, the operating effect of the change was to re-conceptualize the association from a collection of trustees devoted to promoting the objects of public education to a collection of school boards promoting the objects of public education. Membership, as defined in the legislation and association bylaws changed from individual trustees to school boards.

While the name and the conceptualization of the association has changed from trustees to boards, voting on the basis of individual trustees and not “boards” has not. As such, it can be argued that the current voting method runs counter to the intention of the *Act* and association bylaws that define membership as “boards”.

Governance principles

Two related governance principles can be used to further our understanding of the issue of voting. The first principle, consensus orientation, outlined above under the five United Nations principles of good governance, supports the idea that “good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and where possible, on policies and procedures.” A related principle, referenced under question one of this report, is the notion that a school board speaks with “one voice”.

Both principles support the notion that good governance happens when individuals are able to openly and freely discuss their issues and differences, and through dialogue and the democratic process, come to a commonly supported board position. By extension, one could reasonably argue that member boards of ASBA should speak to ASBA policy issues and questions through one board position; then through the process of open dialogue and debate on the assembly floor, arrive at an overall association position.

Logical alignment

Both the ASBA *Act* and association bylaws clearly see school boards rather than school trustees as the legal operational unit. The ASBA *Act*, for example, provides the ASBA with the mandate to “provide a medium for expression of the views and suggestions of the school

boards of Alberta on matters pertaining to education” and to “render advice and assistance to its members (boards) on matters affecting them. ASBA bylaws consistently speak of member boards as the operational unit. Fees to ASBA are paid by boards rather than individual trustees. When it comes to voting, however, ASBA bylaws provide for both a “one voice board vote” and a divided vote. Bylaw No. 9, for example, states “each member board shall have the right to decide whether its allotment of votes shall be cast all by one of its delegates or by two or more of its delegates.” This statement is in direct contrast to the following statement that speaks to the election of the association president and vice president. Bylaw 9.9 reads:

It shall be the duty of each full member board to provide the Executive Director of the Association with the name of its delegate who shall have the power to cast the vote to which the board is entitled on the board's single ballots for the election of President and Vice President.

While this bylaw specifically addresses the issue of one vote per member board for the positions of president and vice president, one could argue that voting procedures and methods for all important questions, whether by weighted ballot or by single ballot, should be consistent and aligned with the principle of one board position.

Practices of other organizations

A quick review of the seven organizations researched in question No. 2 does not provide a consistent pattern with regard to the question of voting by trustees or boards. In summary:

➤ BCSTA

Voting on motions at the AGM is either by show of hands or by weighted ballot.

Bylaws do not address the issue of whether the ballot votes are “corporate” votes or whether they can be split. Provincial council meetings, in addition to association officers, have one voting representative from each board.

➤ SSBA

Each board appoints a trustee to act as convention delegate who votes on behalf of their board (weighted ballot).

➤ MAST

Member boards are eligible to vote, via board ballots (weighted), in the election for president, and on by-laws and amendments. Individual trustee votes are used for all members of the association executive except president, CSBA director and on resolutions other than bylaws.

➤ OPSBA

OPSBA membership includes “member boards” as well as “trustees”. Each board appoints a trustee to act as the delegate of the member board whose duty it is to vote at the annual and general meetings of the association and at the meetings of the regional council to which the board is assigned. Only delegates can vote or present or second a motion.

➤ ATA

Each local sends voting delegates to the annual assembly. The size of the local determines the number of delegates sent. Individual teacher ballot votes are used to elect members of provincial executive council including president.

➤ AAMD&C and AUMA

Each municipality can send all of its councilors as delegates to the AGM. Common practice is for municipalities to discuss resolutions before the AGM and have a corporate “position” on each issue but nothing restricts individual delegates from voting as they see fit.

In summary, arguments can be made for the position that school boards should speak from one position when voting on issues and bylaws at the AGM. While this goes contrary to a history that has emphasized the ability for individual trustees to cast a vote on questions raised at the AGM, it can be seen as a logical progression for an organization that has shifted its emphasis from service for individual trustees, to service for individual boards.

- **Examine the feasibility of an annual ASBA-sponsored metro congress.**

On March 26, 2006, the University of Saskatchewan College of Education will be hosting its Eleventh National Congress on Rural Education. The Congress will include a workshop titled “Cross Canada Check-Up on Rural Education: Issues and Initiatives”. This workshop will address the following questions:

- What are the challenges in rural education in Canada?
- What issues are common or different across Canada?
- What is being done to support rural education?
- What are some key initiatives?
- What leadership is being provided and by whom?

Registration for the Congress is \$275.00 per delegate and, if past experience is a teacher, the Congress will attract many hundreds of delegates from across rural Canada.

A Google search for conferences for metro or urban boards of education in Canada yields no similar results.

A search in the USA yields a number of organizations, chief among which is the National School Boards Association, which sponsor conferences targeted at the unique needs of large metro and urban school boards. The National School Boards Association has an affiliate council titled the “Council of Urban Boards of Education”. This council “serves the specialized needs of urban school districts...through conferences that address issues facing urban school districts.” The Council also publishes a quarterly newsletter titled the “Urban Advocate”, which addresses the “programmatic, fiscal and governance challenges of urban public schools.” The “Council of Great City Schools” operates from Washington D.C. and regularly reviews critical trends in urban education through its publications and conferences. Columbia University manages the “Institute for Urban and Minority Education”, supported by the Teachers College, government agencies and private foundations.

The point of the above is that while the United States has organizations devoted to furthering the cause of metropolitan and urban education, Canada has none. This is in spite of the fact that Canada is one of the world's most "urbanized" countries. The Canadian School Boards Association and its seven members provide a national voice for education issues generally but not for the issues faced by large cities specifically. A gap clearly appears to exist on the national landscape for a focused discussion regarding the many issues faced by large city school districts.

The hosting of a "metro" or "cities" congress by ASBA could begin the national conversation and dialogue for school boards that is currently occurring with large city mayors at the municipal level.

While the hosting of such a congress would require significant energy to overcome the current inertia, the potential advantages are obvious. These include:

- The creation of a national voice aimed at building understanding and awareness regarding the unique needs of Canada's cities and urban areas.
- The creation of an advocacy and sharing mechanism aimed at targeting the needs of the many children educated in Canada's cities.
- The strategic national leadership placement of ASBA and Alberta's metro boards.

While the hosting of a national metro congress would come with some risk in that no similar venture has been attempted in Canada to date, this risk could be mediated through careful planning using a broadly based steering committee, effective advertising and marketing, and a cost-recovery financial philosophy underpinned by corporate sponsorship. ASBA has a

strong history of successfully organizing and delivering large conferences and assemblies on a cost recovery basis. This expertise would be invaluable in ensuring a successful first national metro congress. CSBA will be hosting its national conference in July 2007 in Calgary. Linking a first metro congress with the CSBA conference could be an effective start-up strategy.