

Executive Director's Report 2020-2021

To say this year has been a challenge for many would be an understatement of epic proportions. Many schools experienced a reduction in funding and COVID made the limited resources available even more scarce.

We are still advocating for the same three initiatives we started our journey on which are:

- Mandatory early screening for learning and developmental challenges
- Enhanced teacher training for all learning challenges
- Class size and composition must be considered to properly resource a classroom with the appropriate supports to enable all learners to be successful.

We were able to re-schedule our event to host Shelley Moore that was postponed from March 2020. It was held on December 3, 2020 virtually with a grant celebrating International Day of Persons with Disability. The theme for this year was "Not all disabilities are visible". This event was made possible with the support of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and in partnership with the FSCD Edmonton Regional Parent Advisory Committee (RPAC). We had over 300 people registered for this event.

In June 2020 we launched a follow up to the inclusive education survey we had in April 2020 to see how Alberta parents, caregivers, and students were managing while we were nearing the end of the school year.

The survey was posted on our Facebook page and open to the public from May 28, 2020 to June 12, 2020. Of the 216 respondents to the survey, most students reflected in the survey were from pre-kindergarten to grade six, comprising 66% of the group. Also 92% attended public school, 5% attended private school, 3% home schooled and there were no responses from charter schools. Of the public school attendees, responses reflected 42 public school divisions, but also included one response from a francophone school division, 3 responses from private schools and 3 from home schoolers throughout the province.

We wanted to know if the announcement from the Minister of Education on March 28, 2020 that \$128 million dollars of K-12 education funding was being reallocated to support Alberta's COVID-19 response impacted supports available for children in school. The question we posed was "Have supports provided by your child(ren)'s school remained consistent since the launch of the new education delivery mode? Of the respondents, 63.4% stated that supports had not remained consistent and that they were reduced or eliminated all together.

We also asked parents what supports they felt their children needed to be successful with learning at home. The top three responses were educational assistants (73%), literacy supports (50%), and numeracy supports (42%). When asked if their children received the supports respondents felt their children needed to be successful, 78.1% responded no.

Overall, respondents to our survey felt they did not have the supports their children needed to successfully continue learning at home. A vast majority of parents felt that they had fewer supports than when online learning commenced in late March 2020.

In September because of the new education funding formula, there was a reduction in the amount of money allocated from the Provincial Government for PUF (Program Unit Funding) which resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of children that could receive the early intervention they needed which is crucial for their development to catch up to their peers. Many parents and school boards have been advocating for the funding to be restored so it is hopeful that more children will be supported in September 2021.

Over the last year we have helped answer 26 families' questions or direct them where they could have their questions answered when they reached out via messenger. We have grown our followers on our Facebook page to 3311, which for a small volunteer non-profit society like ours, makes us feel like we are somehow making a difference in your lives. Please continue to share our Facebook page and our website address so that the information posted might help other families.

We will continue to advocate as much as we possibly can so that every single child in Alberta has what they need to reach their full potential. If you can help our society through a donation, please visit our website at www.strategicalliance4abkids.ca. Any amount you donate is greatly appreciated and very much needed during these difficult times.

Sincerely,
Greta Gerstner
Executive Director