Top Themes by Question

What is important to your school community?

1. **Funding, Fundraising & Resource Inequities**
   - High costs of playgrounds, outdoor structures, and facility upgrades
   - Restrictions on casino funds and inequitable fundraising capacity across communities
   - Pressure on school councils to fund basic needs
   - Confusion about how Boards allocate funds and how to prioritize spending
   - Desire for grants, partnerships, and clearer communication about funding rules

2. **Parent Engagement, Communication & Volunteerism**
   - Difficulty reaching families through current communication channels
   - Need for more inclusive, flexible, and creative engagement strategies
   - Volunteer recruitment challenges, especially for casinos
   - Desire for stronger school–council relationships
   - Hybrid meetings, feeder school connections, and community-building events

3. **Student Well Being, Safety & Inclusion**
   - Bullying, bathroom safety, safe commutes, School Resource Officers (SROs)
   - Trauma-informed environments and trusted adults
   - Mental health supports
   - Inclusion for English as Additional Language (EAL) learners, Indigenous students, and students with complex learning needs
   - Cultural awareness and belonging

4. **Learning Conditions: Class Sizes, Staffing & Programming**
   - Large class sizes and weighted complexity
   - Need for specialist teachers (gym, music, librarians)
   - Support for EAL students, students with complex learning needs
   - Desire for arts, sports, and extracurricular opportunities
   - Air quality, HVAC, and adequate learning spaces

5. **Facilities, Playgrounds & Outdoor Learning Spaces**
   - Playground lifespan, cost, inclusivity, and replacement
   - Outdoor classrooms, gardens, naturalized spaces
   - Shade structures, pergolas, and CBE approval processes
   - Safety and maintenance of school grounds
   - Overcrowding and the impact of split communities

What creates community at your school?

1. **Events, Celebrations & Shared Experiences**
   - School-wide events: BBQs, dances, movie nights, fiestas, craft fairs, danceathons
   - Fun lunches, snacks, potlucks, food trucks
   - Free or low-cost events that include all families-cost events that include both local and bused families
   - Seasonal or cultural celebrations (ornaments, hoop dancing, Bhangra)

2. **Supporting Students, Families & Staff**
   - Gift cards, clothing, community pantry
   - Teacher appreciation efforts
   - Donation options to help cover student fees
   - Zen corners, exercise bikes, safe/welcoming spaces
   - Helping families in need, especially after December holidays

3. **Collaboration Between Parents, Staff & Administration**
   - Principal, teacher, and parent participation in events
   - Special speakers at council meetings
   - Clear communication about school happenings
   - School council networking across wards
   - Community user groups (badminton, language schools) sharing the space

4. **Student Belonging, Leadership & Cross-Grade Connections-Grade Connections**
   - Student created banners, grade highlights, leadership roles
   - Clubs, extracurriculars, band, sports, arts programs
   - Opportunities for older and younger students to connect
   - Activities that celebrate diversity and identity

5. **Communication, Accessibility & Welcoming Environments**
   - Social media updates, shareable calendars, community TV
   - WhatsApp groups, playground meetups, after-school time
   - Safe, welcoming entry practices for parents
   - Hybrid meetings and flexible engagement options

What are the most important topics for your school council?

1. **Funding, Resource Allocation & Financial Stewardship**
   - Class size funding, per student funding, and supports for students with complex needs
   - Casino funds, general funds, and how to distribute money fairly across grades
   - Unpaid student fees, food insecurity, breakfast/lunch programs
   - Facilities issues (washrooms, windows, furniture, HVAC)
   - Funding for playgrounds, buses, technology, library updates
     ASCE grant usage and co-hosting events to maximize funds

2. **Parent Engagement, Volunteer Recruitment & Council Participation**
   - Low parent engagement and small council sizes
   - Difficulty recruiting volunteers for casinos and events
   - Strategies to increase involvement (events, varied meeting formats, feeder school outreach)
   - Clarifying the purpose of school councils and amplifying parent voice
   - Tools like Konstella app, newsletters, social media, and teacher presentations

3. **Communication & Transparency Across the School Community**
   - Communication from council to parents and from school to families
   - Principal reports, Q&A with trustees, curriculum updates
   - Marketing-style opt-in communication, shareable calendars-in communication, shareable calendars
   - Transparency about how funds are used and what councils contribute

4. **Student Safety, Well Being & School Culture**
   - Bullying (especially in bathrooms), supervision, safe pickup/drop-off-off
   - Safety inside and outside the school, including jaywalking and traffic issues
   - Culture of belonging, no bullying expectations, welcoming environments
   - Addressing food insecurity and supporting vulnerable students
   - Ensuring facilities are safe, functional, and comfortable

5. **Learning Environments: Class Sizes, Supports & Educational Quality**
   - Advocating for smaller class sizes and balanced complexity
   - Supports for students with complexity
   - Curriculum discussions and access to educational resources
   - Learning spaces that are functional and conducive to growth
   - Opportunities for enrichment: sports, arts, clubs, leadership

Calgary Board of Education

COSC Breakout Session Comments – By Wards
January 21, 2026

Below you will find all comments as they were written. Comments have not been edited for grammar, sentence structure, truncation or otherwise. Comments have been edited to ensure anonymity. We also edited or omitted abusive, discriminatory and otherwise inappropriate comments.

Wards 1 & 2

1. **What is important to your school community?**
   - School Playgrounds
     - Usually 25 year life
     - Costs up to $500K not $250K as it states in the Handbook
     - Can't use casino funds but parks foundation matches $175K but from hard funds
     - Playground companies can provide grants to organizations
     - Look to make playgrounds inclusive (wheelchair accessible, etc.) but they cost more
     - Fundraising and things that go with it, et. Vehicle accident damage
     - Can add on playgrounds (not attached) have different lifespans
   - Gardens, natural playgrounds, outdoor learning, classes
   - Green sustainable spaces – act as different environment for learning (what grants award)
     - Some outdoor spaces have no shade so trees, pergolas might make them more usable
     - Outdoor structures (pergola) needed CBE approved/committee
   - Common agreement on teaching kids skills, e.g. Swimming that can be done through CBE costs borne by councils
   - Can we leverage YMCA / City partners with EducationMatters to put these kinds of experiential activities more prominently as a board of schools
   - How do Boards manage funding priorities / choosing how to split funds between buckets
   - Communicate and feedback from parents on how to allocate funding to buckets, hard to reach via Facebook, Instagram, Emails

2. **What creates community at your school?**
   - Fundraise based on principal needs
   - Support kids in need (gift cards, clothes for staff to give out)
   - Grade highlights each meeting
   - Creating sense of belonging to students – banners by students
   - Exercise bike, Zen corners in library
     - Encourage students to feel belonging
   - School parties / events for community
     - Valentines dance, year-end BBQ – food trucks
   - Fun lunch / snacks – more than / lunch snack per month considered too much be CBE
   - Makers Market – each kid made their own items to sell (K-5 school)
   - Ward wide council networking event for councils to share ideas, self organize

3. **What are the most important topics for your school council?**
   Communication - council to community
   - To school
   - To parents
   - Principal – emails – school focused
     - Marketing based (opt-in)
   Q&A with CBE Trustee
   - Educational supports for kids who need it
   - Class sizes and funding per student

Wards 3 & 4

1. **What is important to your school community?**
   - Health of teachers
   - After school activities
   - Lack of extra curricular activities
   - Literacy
     - Read-a-thon pledges
   - Concern of huge class size
     - Lack of connection opportunities for student: trusted adult
   - Air quality HVAC
   - Class caps phoned in over years and weighted complexity scale to create balance classes
   - Lots of conversation around fundraising
   - Provincial school funding related to
     - Trying to build a playground
     - Complex needs students and staffing for such
   - Language (English Second Language)
   - Parent Engagement
     - How to best communicate with parents
     - How to engage volunteers
   - School council budget is practically more than principal, budget (i.e. Casino funds)
   - Having a facility (grounds and school (that is in a shape that can accommodate activity and hosting
   - Maintaining a good relationship between school administration and school council to encourage generosity in donations.
   - Safety
   - Small classes, consistent principal, minimal screen time, more time to eat and play!

2. **What creates community at your school?**
   - After school activities
   - Parent enjoyment card
   - Community pantry within school
     - Put food in staff rooms for teacher food insecurity
     - After Dec – put towards families
   - Pitch in for teacher appreciation weekly
   - Add "donation button" on fun lunch to help with child fees
   - Community TV advertises what council does (internal building)
   - Kids making ornaments enmame to enjoy families with school council
   - Clubs
   - Community user groups also use schools
     - (i.e. badminton, Chinese school, etc.)
   - Special speakers at council meetings
   - Fun events like dance-a-thon that has lots of volunteers
   - Collaboration, participation from principal, teachers and parents
   - Events like family fiesta with food trucks, Move it May fundraiser, Family movie night, what's app group chats, afterschool playground time.
   - Collaboration, participation from principal, teachers and parents

3. **What are the most important topics for your school council?**
   - Influence principal on funding asks
     - Building a decision-making framework
   - Concerns about how small the councils are
     - Lack of parent engagement

- Konstella app
  - Optional parent sign up
- Collaboration councils
  - All school council in community gather and share ideas
- Food insecurity
  - Is "brown bagging" needed in your school?
  - Breakfast clubs of Canada
- The school being in disrepair becomes a negative vibe for the community
  - A building in better shape would communicate better that 'Education is valued' while a poor appearance speaks the opposite.
- Also, building structure and equipment is so poor that building users are uncomfortable.
  - Unusable washrooms, windows not opening, etc.
- Large balances of unpaid student fees that the school may be on the hook for
- Safety inside and outside of school
- Curriculum
- Culture of school
- No bullying
- Small class sizes and weighting of complexities to not overwhelm teachers' abilities to support growth.
- Safety inside and outside of school
- Curriculum
- Culture of school
- No bullying

Wards 5 & 10

1. **What is important to your school community?**
   - Being seen, heard
   - Cultural aware
   - Responsive
   - Building wider community networks throughout the community
     - Community association
     - Partnerships with groups within the wider community
   - Meeting parents where they are at
     - Hybrid meetings
   - Having the community overflow schools creates 2 communities, not one big one
   - Student safety
     - Bullying, scared to use bathrooms
     - Community resource officers (SRO)
   - Create warm, caring, safe spaces
   - Safe trauma informed environment
   - Equity funding
     - Fundraising is harder in some areas
       - We are now funding basic needs out of our council / casinos
   - Unnecessary barriers put up by schools

2. **What creates community at your school?**
   - Actually engage to become culturally aware
   - Potlucks/food trucks/ times to break bread
   - Food always brings people
   - Open to the whole community not just the school community
   - School council chairs meeting up and working together in areas
   - More COSC meeting at board in-person 4 max

- Beginning of year, part way through and end of year
- Community – community of schools
  - Community within schools
  - Community larger sense
- Feeling safe and welcoming schools for parents

3. What are the most important topics for your school council?
- Safety – concern especially in bathrooms
- Lack of volunteers
- Not being able to move forward because of no cash rule
  - Bank issues – no efts
- Bully – it is blurred across all lines
  - Resources to help parents
  - CBE is not clear when they call or don't
- Advocating for small class sizes
- Advocating for proper supports

Wards 6 & 7

1. What is important to your school community?
- Teacher morale (can impact of strike on students and their activities)
- Assessment results (and what is done with them)
- Parent engagement (e.g. Volunteering in and out the classroom)
- Attendance at school council meetings
- Junior high feeds to three different high schools (ward boundaries)
  - Causes separation of community
- Self-identified Indigenous students feel accepted, safe and important – principals and APs do a great job of supporting it.
- Grateful for Bridges Program, seamless transition into school
- Connections / opportunities with different age groups
- Environmental focus / geodome
- *Class sizes*
- *Learning spaces*
- Arts / music / drama offerings
- Support for ELL & learning disorders / behavioural (complexity)

2. What creates community at your school?
- Relationships
- Diversity of programming / clubs / extracurriculars
- Administration involvement
- Geodome
- Art / music / drama programs
- Teachers! – extra hours, volunteering in extra curriculars
- Connection with older / younger students
- Special events (dances, craft fair, BBQs)
  - School wide events

3. What are the most important topics for your school council?
- Addressing complex needs in classrooms
- class sizes
- learning spaces
- Where to allocate our money (casino / general $)

- Transportation routes – had to take 20-25 minutes out of lunch/recess because of adjusted bell times
- Spreading $ fairly across all grades

Wards 8 & 9

1. **What is important to your school community?**
   - Safety
   - Inclusion
   - Clean space
   - Technology
   - Have input in the bus schedule
   - Maximizing resources parent engagement
   - Parent connection
   - Proper lunch / recess time
   - Class sizes
   - Schools in the community
   - Overcrowding. Safe active commutes for school families.

2. **What creates community at your school?**
   - Free community events.

3. **What are the most important topics for your school council?**
   - ?

Wards 11 & 13

Summary

Our tables decided to combine so that we could hear from more voices and have more time with our trustee.

A round table introduction uncovered that we had a high number of first-year school council participants in our group. We initially started with the prepared questions, however the conversation took a more organic direction after that.

Key topics were:
- Funding
- Purpose of school councils
- Parent engagement strategies
- Communication
- Volunteer recruitment
- Sports Direction
- School welcoming environment

Funding

Key funding concerns included school facilities (being noisy and having outdated furniture/fixtures), playgrounds, school-owned buses. Fundraising activities were also discussed, primarily focusing on casino fundraising and volunteer needs. The use of the $500 engagement funding from ASCE for speakers or workshops was discussed, as well as the potential for co-hosting events with other high schools to maximize these funds and increase attendance across more schools.

Purpose of School Councils

A central conversation revolved around the purpose of school councils and ensuring meaningful parent involvement. A speaker suggested the council's role was to hear the parent voice and that involvement in this group and the ASCA and utilizing available resources, was important and would be helpful for those new to the role. Advocacy, communication, and bringing the parent voice to the table were key themes under the purpose discussion.

Strategies for Parent Engagement

The largest pillar of discussion was parent engagement, covering how to encourage parent involvement. Ideas included hosting fun, community-building events like dances at the elementary level, using a detailed and meaningful agenda that moves beyond simple principal updates that could be sent via email or newsletter, and varying the days of the week for meetings. Other suggestions included connecting with existing school events like a welcome back barbecue, food trucks, or showing up on sports practice or band nights, and potentially planning these events with the principal to count towards school engagement hours for teachers.

Communication

Further engagement ideas involved utilizing various communication methods such as Facebook, email lists, and school newsletters. To generate interest, attendees suggested bringing in learning leaders or different teachers instead of just the principal, citing an example where inviting all the grade three teachers generated a lot of interest from parents. Other ideas included having staff or students from clubs or sports present on how funds were utilized, using red bows and signs on funded equipment during open houses to make parents aware of the council's contributions.

Volunteer Recruitment

A speaker suggested the idea of attending events at feeder schools to establish a presence and develop a succession plan with incoming parents. For casinos, it was suggested that schools partner with their community associations to support utilization of willing volunteers for both council and community casino needs.

Sports Direction

A topic briefly discussed was the CBE's direction on sports, with one independent council deciding to abstain and another expressing strong concerns, impact to their council and seeking more advocacy from the CBE. This group has parent volunteers actively writing letters.

School Welcoming Environment

One attendee noted a perceived decline in the welcoming nature of schools, mentioning difficulties connecting with staff on campus and differences in school entry policies (locked doors versus being able to ring the bell and enter the office) resulting in a feeling of disconnect

Roundtable Format Recommendations

The Roundtable was a great forum for sharing and brainstorming and while we did not stay on the question topics, I feel that participants felt the time was useful. Having the trustee voice at the table was great - as well as having some more seasoned/experienced participant voices.

In this format, sometimes quieter and more thoughtful voices are not heard… it might be a good idea to provide sticky notes for quick jotting down of individual thoughts before thoughts are shared with the group - and these stickies could be compiled on the sheets and inform discussion.

Additionally, if the COSC really wanted the 3 questions answered, a structured timeframe for each question may have better motivated participants to stick to the topics - or at least get back on track!

Wards 12 & 14

1. **What is important to your school community?**
   - Parent involvement, connection, engagement
   - volunteers
   - brining in families for connection
   - local and bused – making sure all feel connected
   - embracing diversity
   - Having all students feel safe & included
   - More funding, specialist teachers like gym and librarian, low class sizes and accurate reporting of data
   - How best to use the ASCE Grant
   - Transportation
   - Balancing numbers from feeder communities
   - Understand how best to use Casino funds

- Safety on roads at pick up/drop off
- Reducing class sizes / Special Classroom support
- Language Supports - ESL
- Mental health supports

2. **What creates community at your school?**
   - Local and bussed families feel included
   - Recognize diversity (hoop dancing, Bhangra dance)
   - Events – foot trucks, dance
   - Classroom champion
   - Community walks
   - Bike bus – morning bide ride thru community
   - Welcome back BBQ
   - Casino
   - All grades activities (school clubs)
   - Community events, volunteer opportunities
   - Clear communication and updates regarding school events and things happening at the school- Council Meetings, Social media posts
   - School events shareable calendar
   - Band
   - Dance - Special Events
   - Sports
   - Clubs
   - Leadership opportunities

3. **What are the most important topics for your school council?**
   - Updated resources – library (Indigenous resources)
     - Technology
   - Staff appreciation – potlucks
     - Monthly
   - Safety – pick up and drop off
     - Parents following the rules
     - Jaywalking
     - U-turns / and dual turns
     - Speed limits
   - Parent engagement, involvement
   - Funding
   - Getting more resources and funding for our school.
   - How to increase volunteer parent engagement
   - Transitioning Leaders
   - Principal reports - what's happening in the school/classrooms - teacher
   - presentations - special discussions about maths, science, tech, options….
   - Financial supports for learning opportunities
   - ASCE grant options
   - Association
     - Playground builds
     - Casino funds how best to distribute
     - Fundraisers