

DATE: April 10, 2012

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Michael Janz, Chair Policy Review Committee
Trustee Heather MacKenzie, Policy Review Committee
Trustee Catherine Ripley, Policy Review Committee

SUBJECT: Board Policy: IA.BP Inclusive Education

ORIGINATOR: Tanni Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE STAFF: Danette Andersen, Janice Aubry, Monika Lukas, John Macnab, Leona Morrison, Ann Parker, David Piercey, Heather Raymond, Stephen Wright

REFERENCES: [HA.BP - Student Programs](#)
[IC.BP – Student Accommodation](#)
[School Act Sections 8\(1\), 20\(e\), 45\(1\)\(2\)\(3\)\(7\)\(8\), 47](#)
[Standards for Special Education - Amended June 2004](#)
[Setting the Direction Framework, June 2009](#)
[Setting the Direction Framework: Government of Alberta Response, June 2010](#)
[Setting the Direction: Moving Toward an Inclusive Education System in Alberta, revised November 2010](#)

ISSUE

To further the work of developing a district-wide inclusive education system, the Board’s 2010-2011 Special Needs Task Force recommended the creation of a new Board Policy, IA.BP – Inclusive Education.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the new Board Policy IA.BP Inclusive Education (Attachment I) be considered for the first time.**
- 2. That the new Board Policy IA.BP Inclusive Education (Attachment I) be considered for the second time.**

BACKGROUND

At the November 16, 2010 Board Meeting, the Board passed a motion to “establish a task force to review and make recommendations on special needs education in order to enhance the education and outcomes for all special needs students”.

Work subsequently completed by the Task Force, under the stewardship of Trustees Cleary, Johner and Spencer, and with administrative support provided by John Edey, Managing Director, Consulting Services, resulted in the June 14, 2011 Task Force’s Recommendation Report to Board. This report also included a draft of a proposed new policy, IA.BP – Inclusive Education.

Policy development is guided by Board Policy CH.BP – Policy Development and Review. Edmonton Public Schools will post proposed new policies, or proposed changes to existing policies, on the District website and invite input. The Superintendent of Schools will make recommendations on policies identified through the review process.

RELATED FACTS

- The June 14, 2011 Board Report included the recommendation “that the proposed Board Policy IA.BP – Inclusive Education be referred to the Policy Review Committee for consideration and subsequent recommendation to Board.”
- The 2010-2011 Policy Review Committee reviewed the draft policy on June 21, 2011.
- In accordance with District policy review procedures, a web survey was conducted and was open for public and staff input from September 6 to October 4, 2011.
 - The policy review web survey received 137 responses: 66 parents, 13 community members, three community/professional organizations, 14 principal/decision unit administrators, 39 staff members, and two which did not report their affiliation. A majority of respondents (52.3 per cent) indicated they believed the policy required clarification; 69.2 per cent indicated that additional elements should be considered; and 74.4 per cent indicated that there were elements in the policy about which they had concerns.
 - One hundred ten respondents chose to add comments to the survey questions. An item analysis revealed the following key themes: choice, training for staff, funding, placement in the regular classroom, strength-based assessment, and criteria/authority for inclusion. Many of these themes speak to practice, as opposed to policy, and are addressed in a new administrative regulation that is being prepared.
 - There were differing concerns expressed whether a policy referring to inclusive education was a mandate to place all students with special education needs into regular classrooms. The proposed policy continues to allow for choice in a variety of program options.
- As significant changes were made to the original wording of the Task Force’s proposed policy, the Policy Review Committee reviewed a revised draft on January 12, 2012, and asked for some further revision.
- The subsequent revision was reviewed by the Policy Review Committee on March 8, 2012, and approved.
- The policy review process has resulted in the version as provided in Attachment I.

CONSIDERATIONS & ANALYSIS

The public policy review process generated significant interest, and revealed a wide range of attitudes about how students with special education needs should be included within public schooling.

The new policy has been created at a time when special education in Alberta, Canada, and North America is gradually being transformed. It has been created in response to a variety of influences; not only to the Task Force and its mandate, but also in response to provincial government initiatives *Setting the Direction, Action on Inclusion*, and *Inspiring Action*. The policy is timely and responsive, and consistent with current law and practice.

Key Changes IA.BP

To clarify the intentions of the proposed policy, changes to the Task Force's wording have been made.

1. An opening paragraph has been added, affirming the Board's commitment to inclusive education, and with placement in the regular classroom as the first option considered relocated to this paragraph.
2. Four new bulleted statements have been added in the District section of the Philosophical Foundation Statement; one to express the District's commitment to choice, two to include other recommendations from the Task Force, and one to replace two previous bullets that were worded somewhat redundantly.
3. One new bulleted statement has been added in the Schools section of the Philosophical Foundation Statement to indicate how parents are to be involved in planning and decision making.
4. The former concluding paragraphs have been removed. Instead, the first paragraph has been reworded as a new bulleted item in the District section of the Philosophical Foundation Statement, and the second paragraph has been relocated to appear within the first paragraph of the policy.
5. A new concluding paragraph has been added, stating an expectation for an annual report to Board on district progress in inclusive education.

NEXT STEPS

1. Pending approval of first and second considerations, proposed Board Policy IA.BP – Inclusive Education will be brought to Board on May 8, 2012, for third consideration and final approval.
2. In September 2011, the Administration created a working committee, using a project charter model, to address the full set of recommendations arising from the Board's 2010-2011 Special Needs Task Force. The results of this committee's work will be communicated to Board in May 2012 as part of the annual report on special education.
3. Work is underway on an Administrative Regulation, IA.AR – Special Education, to address the recommendations arising from the Board's Special 2010-2011 Needs Task Force and the key themes that emerged from the policy review process.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Proposed Board Policy IA.BP – Inclusive Education

ATTACHMENT II June 2011 Version with Revisions

DP:dp

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: IA.BP
TOPIC: Inclusive Education

EFFECTIVE DATE:
ISSUE DATE:
REVIEW DATE:

The Board is committed to inclusive education. The Board expects the District to be an inclusive education system with its values reflected in District programs, operations and practices. The attendance area school is the guaranteed point of entry for all students, and the regular classroom shall be the first placement option considered.

An inclusive education system is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, all students. Inclusive education is a values-based approach to accepting responsibility for all learners, whether registered in District early years or school age learning environments. It is founded on the belief that all students can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching, and appropriate resources. An inclusive education system supports every student to be included in their greater school community. The success of an inclusive education system relies on the engagement, collaboration and involvement of students, parents/guardians, staff and community.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

The Board believes that the District, as an inclusive education system:

- welcomes, respects, accepts and supports parents/guardians and their children;
- provides for families a range of options in programs and programming choice;
- demonstrates an ongoing commitment to meet the needs of the diverse student population;
- actively recruits qualified staff with academic training that supports an inclusive education system;
- provides staff with continuing opportunities for professional learning in support of achieving an inclusive education system;
- provides each student with the relevant learning opportunities necessary to enable each student to achieve success;
- provides a continuum of specialized supports and services to students that is consistent with the principles of inclusive education;
- maintains a high standard of responsiveness, open communication, and accountability;
- continually develops partnerships with community organizations.

The Board believes that schools, as inclusive learning environments:

- visibly demonstrate the qualities of an inclusive education system;
- provide welcoming, acceptance and belonging for all parents/guardians and their children;
- work in partnership with parents/guardians in planning, problem solving and collaborative decision making;
- emphasize the achievement of learning outcomes for all students using effective instructional practices and specialized supports based on the learning needs of each individual student;
- model strength-based programming and assessment practices based on individual student needs.

The Board understands that creating an inclusive education system is complex and will take time. The provision of an annual report at a public board meeting on progress towards the strategic direction of this Policy will ensure accountability and demonstrate the District's commitment to inclusive education throughout this transformation.

Reference(s):

[HA.BP - Student Programs](#)

[IC.BP - Student Accommodation](#)

[School Act Sections 8\(1\), 20\(e\), 45\(1\)\(2\)\(3\)\(7\)\(8\), and 47](#)

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The Board is committed to inclusive education. The Board expects the District to be an inclusive education system, with its values reflected in district programs, operations, and practices. The attendance area school is the guaranteed point of entry for all students, and the regular classroom shall be the first placement option considered.

DEFINITION

An inclusive education system is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance of, and belonging for, all students. Inclusive education is a values-based approach to accepting responsibility for all students learners, including those with diverse learning or special education needs whether registered in District early years or school age learning environments. It is founded on the belief that all ~~children~~ students can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching, and appropriate resources. An inclusive education system supports every student to be included in within their greater school community ~~regardless of their programming needs or physical placement at any particular time.~~ The success of an An inclusive education system provides for relies on the engagement, collaboration and involvement of students, parents/guardians, students, staff and community, and honours family choice.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

The Board believes that the District, as an inclusive education system:

- welcomes, respects, accepts and supports students and families parents/guardians and their children in every school and program;
- provides for families a range of options in programs and programming choice;
- demonstrates an ongoing commitment to meet the needs of the diverse student population in all school settings;
- actively recruits qualified staff with academic training that supports an inclusive education system;
- provides staff with continuing opportunities for professional learning in support of achieving an inclusive education system;
- provides each student with the relevant learning opportunities necessary to enable each student to achieve success;

- provides for a continuum of specialized supports and services to students that is consistent with the principles of inclusive education;
- ~~provides equitable opportunity for all students to be included in any learning program operated by the district~~
- ~~provides educational and associated services to meet the diverse learning needs of all students~~
- maintains a high standard of responsiveness, open communication, and accountability;
- ~~provides appropriate supports for diverse learners within the curriculum~~
- ~~actively seeks~~ continually develops partnerships with community organizations.

The Board believes that schools, as inclusive learning environments:

- visibly demonstrate the qualities of an inclusive education system;
- provide welcoming, acceptance and belonging for all ~~students~~ parents/guardians and their ~~families~~ children;
- work in partnership with parents/guardians in planning, problem solving and collaborative decision making;
- emphasize the achievement of learning outcomes for all students ~~through using effective instructional practices and specialized supports based on the learning needs of each individual student~~; ~~incorporating assistive technologies into instruction~~; ~~ensuring delivery of specialized supports and services~~; and ~~utilizing collaborative decision making~~;
- model strength-based programming and assessment ~~activities~~ practices based on individual student needs.

~~The Board supports the targeted recruitment of qualified staff with academic training and/or experience in inclusive education.~~

~~The Board expects these values to be reflected in District programs, operations and practices. The community school is the guaranteed point of entry for all students, and, in alignment with *Standards for Special Education*, the regular classroom shall be the first placement option considered.~~

The Board understands that creating an inclusive education system is complex and will take time. The provision of an annual report at a public board meeting on progress towards the strategic direction of this Policy will ensure accountability and demonstrate the District's commitment to inclusive education throughout this transformation.

Reference(s):

[HA.BP - Student Programs](#)

[IC.BP – Student Accommodation](#)

[School Act Sections 8\(1\), 20\(e\), 45\(1\)\(2\)\(3\)\(7\)\(8\), and 47](#) Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000, Chapter S-3

- ~~Right of Access to Education Section 8~~

•—Responsibility to Students Section 45

[Standards for Special Education Ministerial Order \(#015/2004\) amended June 2004](#)

[Setting the Direction Framework, June 2009](#)

[Setting the Direction Framework: Government of Alberta Response, June 2010](#)

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