E D M O N T O N   P U B L I C   S C H O O L S

February 26, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee K. Gibson, Conference Committee Chair

SUBJECT: <u>Report #5 of the Conference Committee (From the Meeting Held February 19, 2008)</u>

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Report #5 of the Conference Committee from the meeting held February 19, 2008 be received and considered.

2. That the attached protocols (Appendix I) and their inclusion in the Trustees' Manual to serve as a guide for future Boards be approved.

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Appendix I – Trustee Protocols

Trustee Protocols

The following mutually agreed upon expectations for Trustee behaviour will contribute to team cohesion and positive team dynamics by establishing predictability and trust, and they will serve to clarify and improve relations between Board and administration.

Conduct

- Trustees will respect the confidentiality of private conversations.

- Trustees will be respectful of everyone's time; their own, staff, and community members.

- Trustees will model respect and courtesy in their choice of words, body language, and actions.

- Trustees will model ideals of democracy, particularly at public board meetings, by engaging fully in debate in which they are open to the ideas and opinions of others and present their own ideas as accurately as they are able.

- If a Trustee or the Superintendent has concerns about a Trustee's behaviour or comments, the matter will first be addressed with the Trustee directly. If the matter is not successfully resolved, the matter may be discussed with the Board Chair who may call a meeting for a full Board discussion. All staff concerns would be expressed through the Superintendent.

Ward/School Relationships

In order to align our practice with the Board Role and Responsibilities policy (page 1, Trustees' Manual), which states that two roles include "representing the interests of the community and reflecting the values of the community in its decision making" and "serving as a communication bridge between the community and the district", building positive relationships and being active in our schools and wards is important. All such activities will be based on the following principles:

1. Trustees will be respectful of the time and ongoing activities of staff and students.

2. Any Trustee communication (verbal or written) in a school/ward will be reflective of Board policies and priorities, avoid personal agendas, and be respectful of site-based decision making.

3. Trustees recognize that requests are requests; we will not direct the actions of any staff member and will ensure that our requests (regarding meetings, building space, etc.) are reasonable and mutually agreeable.

Visits

- Visiting schools can be a good way to learn about the school community. As a courtesy, Trustees will ask principals in advance about visiting the school and agree upon a suitable time.

- Trustees will inform the ward Trustee prior to contacting or visiting schools or school councils in wards other than their own.

Newsletters

- School newsletters are a good vehicle for Trustee invitational or informational pieces. If Trustees make a request to share information in this way, Trustees will respect newsletter deadlines, preferred formats, and possible space restrictions.

School Council

- Recognizing that the School Council acts as an advisory body to the Principal and operates under its own rules and regulations, school council meetings can be a good venue to promote Board initiatives and work, and also to understand and learn about particular school communities. Through Communications, Trustees have access to School Council contact e-mails and are free to use them. If no contact is available through Communications, Trustees may contact School Councils c/o the school's e-mail or by sending a letter through the district mail service.

Events

- Ward Trustees will have the first opportunity to accept invitations to school specific events (e.g., graduations); invitations to district-wide events that are being held in a school will be sent to the ward Trustee and Board Chair.

Communication

Board Decisions

- Prior to Board decisions, Trustees will refrain from expressing in the media, websites, or blogs, how the Trustee will vote, but will be free to discuss the various considerations that will inform the upcoming discussion.

- Following a Board decision, Trustees will respect the Board decision but within a 24 hour window Trustees may explain their position in the debate. Thereafter Trustees will support the corporate decision when asked about a Board debate or decision on a certain topic. Trustees will impartially reflect the discussion, demonstrate support for the decision (wisdom) of the Board, and focus on next steps.

- Trustees will avoid speaking for the Board in areas where the Board has not yet taken a position.

- Public statements will avoid criticism of the intentions or actions of other Board members, current or former.

- When speaking, Trustees will communicate as accurately and specifically as possible.

E-mails

- The Board Chair will respond to e-mails addressed to all Trustees within 48 hours. Note: The first response may be just to acknowledge receipt of the e-mail and to advise that a full response may take some time. Trustees will be advised of the Board Chair's response by way of cc or TM.

- Similarly, Trustees will each respond to e-mails sent directly to them within 48 hours. If Trustees are on holiday or away, Trustees will set up an "auto" response to that effect.

- As a general rule, Trustees do not respond if they are cc'd in an e-mail.

- Trustees will bring forward for discussion any requests/letters/ideas that they feel needs a Board response and/or are unsure about. The time to do this is within the first hour of the monthly "Trustee Meeting", or, if of a more urgent matter, ask the Board Chair for advice.

- Recognizing that e-mail is not a secure communication vehicle, Trustees will not use e-mail to pass along sensitive or confidential information.

- Trustees agree that e-mail is an effective way to share information. Trustees will be respectful of others in the volume of e-mail sent to colleagues and they will endeavour to read information sent by colleagues. Trustees agree that discussion and debate is best in a face to face meeting and ideally, will avoid debate by e-mail.

- If Trustees are sharing information pertinent to an upcoming debate or meeting, Trustees will consider the timeliness of sending the material.

Blogs/Websites

- Personal blogs and websites generally will be reflective of Board policies and priorities and respect confidentiality. Trustees acknowledge that the expression of personal opinion may impact the range of feedback received or the perception that Trustees are going into a debate with an open mind.

- Trustees will moderate personal sites, e.g., preview the material going up on the site before posting.

- Trustees will consider the timeliness and accuracy of all posts before posting and of the website itself.

External Relations

As Trustees travel about their daily routines, Trustees will consider the potential for building relationships with other organizations as a way of increasing support for the district and public education. If Trustees think there is merit in exploring a deeper relationship with a particular group, Trustees are encouraged to invite administration to review the idea and provide pertinent background information. Trustees can also use the existing conference agenda item "Other Trustee Reports" to report on such meetings or proposed activities.