

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 8, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee B. Bonko, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee C.A. Dean, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee G. Gibeault, Planning and Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Board Policy ACB.BP – Multiculturalism and National Identity

ORIGINATOR: K. Dropko, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent of Schools

RESOURCE
STAFF: Anne Sherwood

RECOMMENDATION

1. That amended board policy ACB.BP – Multiculturalism and National Identity (Appendix I) be approved.
2. That current board policy ACB.BP – Multiculturalism be rescinded.

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Rationale:

The Minister of Learning has, on several occasions, made reference to his desire to have students sing O Canada as a regular part of the school day. Although the national anthem and patriotic exercises were a part of many of our school experiences, the district has not had a policy or regulation that mandated the singing of O Canada. The singing of O Canada was considered part of the cultural expectations. During the late 70's and early 80's it appears to have fallen out of favour.

Over the past 10 to 15 years, society as a whole and Alberta specifically vis a vis the "Taber" incident, has undergone a series of shocks and tragedies involving youth violence which have prompted many to question what is happening to our youth. In response to what is seen as irresponsible and destructive youth behaviours, character education has become a popular national movement over the past decade in the United States. The premise of character education is that the root of such behaviours is the absence of good character, self-discipline, and respect for others.

The board's own policy on Student Behaviour and Conduct (Appendix II) was developed to address a perceived increase in student violence and misdemeanors. It also addresses the student's rights and responsibilities.

In the same time period, the board's policy on "Multiculturalism" (Appendix III) was developed with the advent of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and prompted by a desire to inculcate values of tolerance and understanding in our students.

The desire to institute the singing of O Canada is prompted by more than a harkening to the past, but by the belief that it not only demonstrates respect for country, it cultivates feelings of patriotism, self-discipline, self-respect and respect for others. It is proposed that an additional policy statement dealing with national identity be added to the policy on multiculturalism.

The decentralized decision making model of the district provides for school principals to consider their community on such matters. Therefore, the policy statement "encourages" regular patriotic exercises such as the singing of O Canada rather than mandating a particular practice.

AS:mmf

- APPENDIX I - Proposed board policy ACB.BP – Multiculturalism and National Identity
- APPENDIX II - Board policy IG.BP – Student Behaviour and Conduct
- APPENDIX III - Current board policy ACB.BP - Multiculturalism