

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Response to Delegation from the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR)

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE STAFF: Karen Bardy, Gloria Chalmers, Margaretha Ebbers, David Fraser, Veda Lastiwka, Betty Tams, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the district examines the issues raised by NAARR as part of its review of the Multicultural and National Identity policy.
2. That the district increases the accessibility of professional development in diversity for all staff.

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This report is provided in response to the recommendations presented at the September 27, 2005 public meeting of the Board of Trustees by Ms. Charlene Hay and Dr. Jennifer Kelly on behalf of the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR).

Response to Delegation

The overall responsibility of a public education system is to recognize the value of each student, to develop the potential of each student to the fullest extent, and to enhance the ability of each student to participate effectively in an increasingly multicultural and diverse society. Public education has a leadership role in creating and modeling learning environments that respect the diversity of cultures and experiences and value how diversity enriches the quality of life for students, staff, parents, and the community.

The district is aware that discrimination exists in society and consequently, that racial incidents may occur in any setting where people congregate. Schools are not immune from this phenomenon; however, the district through its belief statements, policies, and practices makes it clear that no form of discrimination will be tolerated. The district is committed to creating learning environments that respect and value the diverse cultures and experiences of all students and families.

The district has established a number of initiatives and supports to create learning environments that maximize the achievement of all students and promote cross-cultural understanding across the district (Appendix I). The Supporting Teaching and Learning framework has provided a foundation for a system-wide effort to promote the achievement of all students. The district has also developed a Character Education framework, established the English Language Support Services Centre, and made available staff professional development in cross-cultural understanding. An external audit of the district's hiring practices for teachers was completed and found that the practices were consistent with provincial Human Rights Legislation. This year, the district is establishing an advisory group of organizations that serve students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, and is beginning a review of its Discrimination and Harassment policy.

Although significant initiatives have been undertaken, the district recognizes that further actions are required; it will continue to identify approaches, strategies, and resources that are thoughtful and effective in moving forward in this work. This year, the district will begin a review of its Multicultural and National Identity policy and explore the feasibility of developing a comprehensive policy in relation to areas identified by NAARR. In this work, the district will be providing appropriate opportunity for consultation and involvement by stakeholders, as part of the Board's requirements for the development of policy (Appendix II). The district will obtain input from students, parents, staff, and community organizations such as NAARR, the Multicultural Health Brokers, and the Mennonite Centre.

As other Board policies are reviewed, the district will examine them from the perspective of promoting learning environments that maximize the achievement of all students and promote cross-cultural understanding. The district will also be determining how it can enhance the accessibility of its professional development in diversity for all staff and will be meeting with the University of Alberta to discuss the feasibility of providing a required course in diversity for students in the Faculty of Education.

Conclusion

The Board extends its appreciation to the Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations for its presentation as it provides additional insight into the needs of students and families in the district. The administration will provide updated information to the Board in the spring of 2006 regarding the actions undertaken in relation to the district's work on diversity.

KB:ee:wb

APPENDIX I - Summary of Policy and Practice
APPENDIX II - Board Policy CH.BP - Policy Development and Review

SUMMARY OF POLICY AND PRACTICE

Provincial goals, Board policy, and district priorities: The foundation for the district's work in supporting the achievement of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and in promoting cross-cultural understanding resides in provincial goals, Board policy, and district priorities:

- **Alberta Education Goals and Standards:** states that students should have opportunities to learn languages other than English and to attain levels of proficiency and cultural awareness which will help to prepare them for participation in the global economy
- **EPS Board Policy:**
 - **District Mission:** expresses its commitment to ensuring that all students achieve success in their individual programs of study
 - **Multiculturalism and National Identity:** provides important direction to the district by stating the Board's belief in the importance of promoting individual and group relations in which ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic similarities and differences are valued, respected, and exchanged
 - **Student Behaviour and Conduct:** indicates that all students should be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness by other students and staff
 - **Discrimination and Harassment:** indicates that the district is committed to providing and to promoting a learning and working environment for all persons that is free from discrimination and harassment
- **District Priorities 2005-08:** indicate that respecting individual differences and cultural diversity, and promoting the development of productive global citizens are part of the factors that combine to create a positive learning environment; the Board also recognizes the important role played by staff, students, parents, and the community working co-operatively to create these positive learning environments
- **Provincial curriculum:** emphasizes responding to cultural diversity and promoting social cohesion; this is evident in courses of study, such as Health, CALM, and Social Studies; the Social Studies program of study for example, emphasizes the importance of diversity and respect for differences, as well as the need for social cohesion and the effective functioning of society

District Initiatives and Practices: The district has put in place a number of initiatives that relate to building cross-cultural understanding across the district and to maximizing the achievement of all students.

- **Supporting Teaching and Learning:** Professional development to support teaching and learning involves all schools in the district and is focusing on strategies that promote success for students who are not achieving at grade-level, which includes English Language Learners and Aboriginal students who are not achieving at grade level. In addition, schools are developing intervention plans for all students who are not at grade level.

- **The English Language Support Services Centre:** This centre was established in July of this year and offers services to all schools for English Language Learners and their parents, including interpreter help, assessment, orientation information pertaining to schooling, settlement services, and other family supports. These services are provided at no cost to schools.
- **Diversity:** The district is increasing its actions to support the achievement of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. As part of this work, the district is making information and resources from the community available to all schools, and establishing an advisory group on diversity, consisting of representatives from community organizations that provide service to students and families from a range of cultural backgrounds. Some of these organizations include: the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, NAARR, the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, the Multicultural Health Brokers, Edmonton Multicultural Society, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, the ATA, and the University of Alberta.
- **Character Based Citizenship Education:** The district has developed and made available to schools a framework of virtues, current research on Character Education, professional development, and resources which schools can use for enhancing the development of character and citizenship. One of the outcomes of the framework is "Respect individual and cultural diversity, and common Canadian values".
- **Professional Development for English Language Learners:** The district is making available to all schools professional development sessions regarding best practices for English Language learners. These include a focus on literacy strategies, supporting English Language Learners across the curriculum, and bringing multicultural perspectives into the classroom.
- **Aboriginal Education:** Aboriginal Education is focusing on providing school and district staff training, enhancing the Aboriginal Collection Online, and furthering the work on the implementation manual for the Cree Language and Culture program of studies and the project to infuse an Aboriginal context into the curriculum. The professional development offered by Aboriginal Education is focused on classroom practices that promote success for all Aboriginal students. Aboriginal Education is working with consultants throughout Consulting Services in identifying promising practices. In addition, Aboriginal Education has increased its staff this year in the area of educational programming as well as social work support. An additional education consultant and social work consultant have been added to the unit. The services of Aboriginal Education continue to be provided at no cost to schools.
- **Second Languages:** The district is recognized throughout North America for the number of second language programs offered. These include French Immersion, 7 bilingual language programs, and 11 second language programs. The district has also recently developed a Punjabi as a Second Language program at the division one level. These language programs serve to be inclusive of cultures within the school district.
- **Partnerships:** The district has established partnerships with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and Metis Child and Family Services in order to provide supports to Aboriginal students.

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: CH.BP
TOPIC: Policy Development and Review

EFFECTIVE DATE: 14-09-2004
ISSUE DATE: 15-09-2004
REVIEW DATE: 09-2009

Board policies establish direction and guide the desired operation of the Edmonton Public Schools. Policies reflect the values trustees bring as representatives of the community to a specific issue. In its interest to represent community values, the board welcomes the involvement of school, district and community members in the policy development process.

1. Board policy may be initiated by a board motion in response to a request from a trustee, the administration or the community.
2. Only those statements approved by the board as policy shall be recorded as board policy.
3. Criteria for Statements of Board Policy
 - a. All statements of board policy SHALL:
 - i. conform to the *School Act* and regulations set down by Alberta Learning;
 - ii. be within the scope of the board's authority.
 - b. All statements of board policy SHOULD:
 - i. create a framework within which the superintendent of schools can discharge assigned responsibilities;
 - ii. be capable of implementation, review and evaluation;
 - iii. be limited to a single policy topic and written in clear and concise language so that interpretation may be made without difficulty by staff, parents and the general community.
4. Policy Review
 - a. The board's Planning and Policy Committee shall be responsible for overseeing the policy review process in accordance with the following requirements:
 - i. Each policy statement shall be reviewed a minimum of every five (5)

years.

- ii. Stakeholders shall be provided with appropriate opportunity for consultation and involvement in the development and or review of policy statements.

- b. The superintendent of schools shall make recommendations to board for the revision, rescission, and-or reclassification of existing board policies identified through the review process.

- c. Each recommended policy, revised policy, or policy affirmation shall receive three distinct separate readings by the board before the policy is finally approved. Not more than two readings may be given at any one meeting unless the trustees present at the meeting unanimously agree to give the policy a third reading.

Reference(s):

JA.BP - Parent and Community Involvement

School Act

