

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Emery Dosedall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Professional Development and Professional Improvement Leave

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RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

Background

As a result of the last collective agreement, a letter of intent was signed between Board of Trustees Edmonton School District No. 7 and Edmonton Public Teachers Local #37 to address issues related to professional development and professional improvement leaves. The Letter of Intent specifies that the following be examined:

- alternative approaches to the allocation of the professional improvement leave funds identified in clause 14.5.5 of the collective agreement, and;
- teacher concerns related to professional development.

Process

A committee consisting of equal numbers of representatives of the Edmonton Public Teachers Local #37 and representatives of Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees met on eight occasions. The parties recognize the importance of professional development opportunities for teachers and the importance of supporting professional growth for teachers.

A survey was developed jointly by the committee members and distributed to all teaching staff in the district in January 2001. One thousand, five hundred and ninety-six certificated staff responded to the survey. This is 35 percent of all certificated staff in the district, including those on leave.

Across divisions, representation by level was: 51 percent elementary, ten percent elementary/junior high, 15 percent junior high, 20 percent high school and four percent other certificated staff. This representation correlates to the total number of staff in these groups across the district.

Additional comments were submitted by 41 percent of those responding, or 658 respondents.

Executive Summary of Survey Findings – Professional Development

For the purpose of the work of the committee, professional development is defined as individual or school-based professional development opportunities including activities such as conferences, inter-school visits, and inservices, but not including teachers' convention.

The survey results revealed the following information.

Opportunity for Professional Development

- Over all, 81 percent of respondents are satisfied with their opportunity for professional development. Junior high and high school staff are less satisfied than other respondents at 78 percent and 70 percent respectively.

How Dollars are Allocated

- Forty-seven percent indicated that they are allocated a specific amount of money for professional development. Thirty-three percent do not receive an individual allocation and 18 percent did not know whether or not they received an individual allocation.
- Of those receiving a specific amount, the mean funding rate for individuals was \$390. Seventy-three percent of individuals in this group indicated that the cost of a supply teacher is included in that allocation.

The chart illustrates the mean allocation and range of allocation for those that indicated that they received an individual amount.

Mean allocation	Percent respondents in that category
\$ 0 – 199	5%
\$200 – 299	19%
\$300 – 399	28%
\$400 – 499	15%
\$500 and more	32%

- The data indicates that elementary teacher respondents receive the least individual allocation for professional development but indicated the highest level of satisfaction with funding.
- The data indicates that high school and junior high school teacher respondents receive a greater allocation for individual professional development, but indicated the lowest level of satisfaction with funding.

Funding Arrangement

- Whether or not staff are allocated an individual fund, overall, 73 percent of respondents are satisfied with the funding arrangements.
- The majority of professional development for teachers is paid for out of school funds.

- Of those respondents who receive an individual allocation for professional development, 88 percent are satisfied with this arrangement and of those who indicated they do not receive an individual allocation, 76 percent are satisfied with this arrangement.

When Professional Development Takes Place

- Professional development such as conferences and inter-school visits takes place during school hours.
- Inservices are held both after school and during school on an almost equal basis.

Equitability

- Eighty-three percent of those responding believe that individual professional development opportunities are equitable in their school. Staff in junior high and high school are generally less satisfied than other groups at 70 percent.
- Forty-nine percent of respondents believe that professional development opportunities in the district are equitable. Only 34 percent of high school respondents believe that professional development is equitable in the district.

Adequacy of Funding

- Principals are generally more satisfied than teachers with opportunities and funding for professional development.
- Sixty-two percent of respondents believe that there is adequate funding for professional development in their school. Staff responding from junior high and high schools were less satisfied that funding was adequate at 58 percent and 50 percent respectively.

Decision Making About Individual Professional Development

A wide range of decision making processes are used across the district for deciding on individual teacher professional development opportunities, activities and funding.

- Approximately one-third of respondents who received a specific amount of funds indicated that professional development is decided by administrators.
- Approximately one-third of respondents indicated that professional development is decided by the individual.
- Approximately one-third indicated that professional development is decided upon by committees or other combinations of individual, administration, departments or staff consensus.
- Eighty-three percent of survey respondents are satisfied with who determines how funds for individual professional development are allocated.

Decision Making About School-wide Professional Development

- A wide range of decision making processes exist to determine the focus of school-wide professional development opportunity, activities, and funding.
 - Thirty-three percent of respondents said this is decided by committee.

- Seventeen percent of respondents said this is decided by the administrator.
- Twenty-three percent of respondents said this is decided by staff consensus.
- Twenty-five percent of respondents said this is decided by other.
- Two percent of respondents said they don't know how school-wide professional development is decided.
- Regardless of the processes for decision making for school-wide professional development 83 percent of respondents are satisfied with the arrangements.
- While decisions for school-wide professional development were made more often by committee in junior high and high school, staff are less satisfied than elementary teachers with this arrangement.

Survey Respondent Comments

The committee reviewed the comments and noted the following.

- Forty-one percent of teachers surveyed responded with comments. Most respondents commented on the decision making process and raised issues regarding choice for professional development.
- Of the comments received issues varied from availability of supply teachers and preparation, to issues of changing administration as well as changing focus both at the school and district level.
- Other comments concerned sources of funding for district initiatives and school-wide and/or district professional development that does not address the needs of all staff members.

Joint Committee Suggestions for Further Consideration

Overall, there appears to be a high degree of satisfaction with professional development. However, to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to take full advantage of professional development it is suggested that:

- all staff be made aware by appropriate personnel of the decision making process regarding professional development opportunities
- all staff be made aware by appropriate personnel of the process for allocating and accessing professional development funds

In addition, the demand and availability of substitute teachers continues to impact professional development. This is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Executive Summary of Findings – Professional Improvement Leaves

For the purposes of this report a professional improvement leave is defined as Leaves of absence for professional improvement granted to teachers by the superintendent on behalf of the board. These leaves are granted in accordance with board-approved criteria and Clause 23 of the Teachers' Collective Agreement which guides specifics such as:

- allowance, benefits and increments

- length of application period
- eligibility
- maximum fund limit and maximum number of leaves which may be granted

The data from the survey indicated the following.

Staff Who Take Professional Improvement Leaves and Process

- The longer teachers have been in their current location and the teaching profession, the more likely they are to be familiar with the process for applying for a Professional Improvement Leave.
- Principals are more familiar with the process for applying for Professional Improvement Leaves than teachers (98 percent compared to less than 50 percent).
- Less than 40 percent of principals and less than 12 percent of teachers responding have ever applied for a Professional Improvement Leave.
- Of the staff who responded to the survey, only 13 percent have ever taken a Professional Improvement Leave.

Very few staff responded to the questions regarding Professional Improvement Leaves. Three groups that expressed interest in increased flexibility of Professional Improvement Leaves are:

- high school staff
- Central Services staff
- teachers with 15 or more years experience.

Staff indicated that the most important considerations in pursuing further education were, in the following order of priority:

- finances
- professional growth opportunities
- time commitment/workload
- career plans/financial growth
- individual growth

Joint Committee Recommendations for Alternative Approaches to Professional Improvement Leaves

In reviewing the responses from the survey, the following suggestions are recommended.

- that the information process for applying for Professional Improvement Leaves be communicated more widely and the process made more user-friendly.
- that the application and selection for an A, B, C or D Professional Improvement Leave be clearly communicated to all interested applicants
- that there be broader flexibility for accessing time and allocated funds
- that a secondary process be established for individuals to access remaining Professional Improvement Leave funds

- that the Board of Trustees Edmonton School District No. 7 and Edmonton Public Teachers Local #37 explore the feasibility of providing successful candidates with benefits, pensionable service and the cost of tuition.

JB/rl/cmm

APPENDICES:

- Professional Development and Professional Improvement Leave Survey with Aggregated Results
- Graphs of responses to survey questions