EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 10, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

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RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #163, NOVEMBER 25, 2008 (TRUSTEE COLBURN)
PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE FEASIBILITY OF THE BOARD
ADOPTING A PAPERLESS FORMAT IN CONDUCTING ITS BUSINESS (COSTS,
ETC.):** In order to provide the Board with information on what a "paperless format for
board business" might be and what costs may be involved, the Administration did some
general research on "paperless meetings" and issued a request for information to all Alberta
public and separate school boards. A summary of the information gathered and the
implications of adopting a paperless format for board meetings is detailed in Appendix I for
Trustee information.

In summary, paperless is synonymous with electronic and a paperless system would
encompass not only electronic access to board agenda packages but also an electronic records
and a meeting management system. The survey of other boards indicates that while many of
them are doing various aspects of their work in electronic format, similar to our District, none
are truly there yet. Most are simply providing access to agenda packages for meetings
electronically and using laptops in their meetings.

Board meeting agenda packages are currently available electronically from the District
website and Trustees could choose to review and participate in board meetings using their
laptop computer to access the electronic agenda package.

Among the implications of going to a truly electronic format for the conduct of board
meetings would be updates in the wiring for McCauley Chambers, individual small screens
for trustee viewing presentations, a video/sound mixer to feed from the video projector to
screen, and integrating board records into the District electronic records management system.

Should the Board choose to formally adopt an electronic format for the conduct of its board
meetings, a systems analysis would be recommended to determine the Board of Trustees
requirements

RESPONSE TO TRUSTEE REQUEST #177, JANUARY 13, 2009, (TRUSTEES HUFF AND GIBSON) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE RECIDIVISM RATE OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE RECEIVED OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS. ALSO PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING DISTRICT AND SCHOOL POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO SUSPENSIONS; E.G. WHAT ARE THOSE SCHOOLS THAT HAVE IMPLEMENTED NO SUSPENSIONS DOING IN LIEU? It is not possible to retrieve centrally information from the Student Information System (SIS) related to recidivism and student suspensions. Each school would have to review Student Records for the year(s) in question.

It would be expected that recidivism for suspensions would vary greatly from school to school, and from year to year, and that lower recidivism could not be directly linked to individual school practices.

Reports from principals over the years enable us to indicate that the number of reported suspensions in a school is influenced by many factors, including:

- A consensus that, on a continuum of consequences, suspensions are viewed as a "last resort."
- The use of a variety of alternatives to in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS) including problem solving, community conferencing, and restorative justice techniques.
- Students behaving in such a manner as to not require an OSS.
- The use of ISS where the students receive school work and work under the close supervision of the principal or assistant principal; ISS, while recorded as an attendance code in SIS are not reported as suspensions.
- The key theme to appropriate student behaviour and conduct is relationship building, putting the right teacher in front of the students and the ability of that teacher to build positive relationships with their students. Communication with the parents is a key factor in preventing escalating behaviour concerns.

An Alberta Education document entitled *Supporting Positive Behaviour in Alberta Schools*, which was sent to all schools, provides excellent information related to student discipline, suspensions, and alternatives to suspensions. This document does not suggest implementing a "no suspensions" policy in school, but rather speaks to practices and conditions that schools may consider to increase positive student conduct in school.

The parameters for student suspensions are set by the *School Act*. Section 24 gives principals the authority to suspend students. There is no provision in the Act for appeals of student suspensions. This is reflected in Section 3 of Board Policy IGD.BP, Student Suspension and Expulsion. Other district policies and regulations which govern student suspensions include:

IGD.AR	Student Suspension and Expulsion
IG.BP	Student Behaviour and Conduct
IG.AR	Student Behaviour and Conduct

TRUSTEE REQUEST #178, JANUARY 13, 2009 (TRUSTEES HUFF AND GIBSON): PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHAT CHANGES WOULD NEED TO BE MADE TO REACH OUR GOAL OF ONE-HOUR ONE-WAY RIDE-TIME FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS STUDENTS INCLUDING THE COST IMPLICATIONS. ALSO, PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL CHOICE ON RIDE-TIMES AS WELL AS THE EXPECTED IMPACT ON RIDE-TIMES OF THE NEW SCHOOLS OPENING IN SEPTEMBER 2010: Currently the Student Transportation Service Review, being conducted by Stantec, will review all aspects of district student transportation. Specifically as the review relates to meeting the goal of a one-hour one-way ride-time, the terms of reference include a requirement to provide recommendations specifically targeted at minimizing ride-times for all transported students. This requirement is in line with the current Board Policy EEA.BP, Student Transportation, which states that the Board's goal for district-arranged transportation services shall be to minimize the number of students who have a one-way ride-time of more then 60 minutes. In addition to recommendations, the cost implications to implement this standard for all students will also be provided.

Parental/student choice often result in students attending sites which are not close to their home, lengthening the ride-time. Recent changes to student transportation procedures, such as the establishment of clearly defined areas of transportation eligibility for regular and alternative programs, has resulted in a significant reduction in ride-times for most fixed route students. Work is under way to develop a process that ensures both programming needs and transportation requirements are fully considered prior to directing students to specific sites. The impact expected as a result of the Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement (ASAP) schools opening will include reductions in ride-times and the elimination of the need for bussing in the affected areas. As well, it is expected that there will be a reduction in the transportation grant related to the ASAP school openings.

JB:BC:TP:ja

APPENDIX I – Backgrounder for Paperless or Electronic Board Meetings

Backgrounder - Paperless or Electronic Board Meetings

In order to provide the Board with information on what a "paperless format for board business" might be and what costs may be involved, the Administration did some general research on "paperless meetings" and issued a request for information to all Alberta public and separate school boards.

In the on-line literature, paperless is synonymous with electronic board meetings and, while this approach can result in less paper being used it does not totally eliminate it. Many municipal governments have equipped their council chambers to facilitate the use of technology in their business sessions and use electronic meeting management systems which tie into their records management programs. There are a number of software companies that offer electronic board meeting programs and some have modified them for school board use but would need to be modified further to reflect Alberta legislation. As well, several American state school board associations have developed meeting management software which they have made available to member boards.

A meeting management system addresses the entire life cycle of a board meeting from report approval, scheduling on an agenda, agenda package compilation and dissemination, electronic voting on motions, building the minutes, to tracking follow-up from a meeting.

What Other Alberta School Boards Are Doing

Wolf Creek School Division was referenced in connection with this request for information as an example of a school district going to a paperless format. Wolf Creek School Division is taking a system-analysis approach to moving to an electronic board meeting. It is examining the entire system process to:
- clearly articulate the system outcomes
- identify end-user needs
- determine policies and procedures that will need to be addressed (e.g. data security, report templates, presentation platforms that will be supported)
- test various approaches to choose the most cost effective tools (e.g. reliable hardware, software, connectivity for all users)
- determine staff and user training required
- determine what reconfiguration of the board meeting room may need to be made to accommodate the new format.

A request for information was made of other public and separate school jurisdictions in the province to find out whether any have adopted a paperless format for board meetings and, if so, the methods they are using, and any other considerations they would suggest.

Of the 31 boards that responded, all use e-mail to communicate and to varying degrees send correspondence to Trustees. In addition to Wolf Creek, which is conducting the systems analysis, only 14 are solely using an electronic format for sending board agenda packages to Trustees and to varying degrees conduct meetings based on the electronic package. All 14 boards currently using an electronic agenda package delivery system chose to do so to address travel and distance issues in rural areas. Prior to this method, many had to send agenda packages by mail 10 days in advance of meetings, necessitating many walk-in reports and additions to the agenda at the meetings.

Most are using a very simple method of converting or scanning documents to .pdf format and e-mailing packages as attachments or with a link to the document package housed on a server or website -- similar to what the District does when it posts its agenda to the District website. Several jurisdictions have a document management system which hosts the items in the agenda package and allows for secure access to confidential documents.

For the meetings, all are either providing paper copies of the agenda or projecting the agenda on screen. Some reported that paper copies of larger reports such as the Annual Report are provided at the board meeting for ease of navigation during the meeting. Some reported that individual Trustees and administrators prefer paper reports for readability, personal notations on the reports and navigation through materials at board meetings. Several boards indicated that they are exploring alternative electronic formats to enable Trustees the ability to make electronic notations. Server speed was noted as an irritant for some users when moving from agenda item to item. Downtime due to technical difficulties was reported as rare, however, additional technical support for meetings was recommended. Only one board reported that it is working at implementing an electronic meeting management program which would address the full cycle for electronic report preparation and approvals, agenda scheduling, compilation, dissemination, meeting management, follow-up and minute preparation. This same board has two Trustees that have volunteered to try going paperless at board meetings.

All provide Trustees with laptops for the meeting and the majority provide Trustees with a laptop and a printer for home use. Simple modifications to board rooms were required to provide electrical supply for laptops and wireless connections. Some board rooms have been equipped with permanent video projectors and presentations from the administration or delegations are projected onto a large screen or in one case a smart board. During the meeting, Trustees access the agenda packages from their own laptops.

What We Know

- The format, whether paper or paperless, should not hinder the Board's work. Individual working styles of Trustees is a consideration in whatever format a board adopts for doing business. For example, to what extent would participants want the ability to make electronic notations on a report or would users be satisfied to make personal pen and paper notations regarding a report.
- The agenda package must be electronically accessible to all participants of the meeting in advance of the meeting so that the participants can prepare.
- Confidential agenda items must be accessed from a secure site.
- Hardware and software solutions must be considered for all participants and observers at a meeting; e.g., laptops for Trustees and administrators, and paper copies of the agenda for observers.
- The hardware and software applications chosen will dictate the level of training required both for users and for the technical support.
- The meeting room must be configured appropriately to support access of the agenda package by electronic means in the meeting by all of the participants who require access. Electrical outlets for laptops for Trustees and administrators, wireless internet connectivity and speed, projector for presentations, screen and or individual monitors for participants to view presentations, mixer to feed video output to the number of screens/monitors required.

- Administrative processes must be adapted and or developed to most effectively and efficiently manage the board meeting cycle from preparation and scheduling of agenda reports, the compilation and dissemination of agenda packages, management of the electronic board meeting, follow-up to the board meeting and minutes.
- Board protocols, rules and procedures for conducting board business will need to address the implications of conducting board meetings and communications electronically. For example, all electronic communications become district records and in order to maintain the confidential status of local public body confidences under FOIP, Board members may need to be restricted to conducting board communications using district facilities.

What the District is Doing

McCauley Chambers
When McCauley Chambers was initially built, it was equipped for conducting board meetings with electrical supply to code, a sound system and screen for overhead and film projections. The sound system was replaced eight years ago and an automated vote registration system was incorporated into the Board Chair's panel with a voting button for each Trustee. The automated vote counting system was used for one or two meetings and abandoned by the Board of the day as it took more time and caused more confusion than a simple counting of hands by the Board Chair.

Other than the sound system being replaced eight years ago and the administration table being cut in half, little has been done to upgrade McCauley Chambers. As the Administration and schools became more sophisticated in their use of computers and DVD recordings for presentations, Building Operations contracted with an outside provider for rental of equipment and technical assistance to support the presentations. The contractor provides a video projector, other equipment as dictated by the presentation format, a large screen monitor in front of the board table so Trustees do not have to leave their seats for presentations to the Board, and technical support for the duration of the board meeting. Technical support includes consulting with presenters on the type of equipment needed, providing rehearsal time for presenters prior to the meeting and support during the board meeting. Building Operations bills Board Administration approximately $1,400 per board meeting for this service.

With the recent approval of funding for upgrades to the Centre for Education, Building Operations intends to purchase a video projector which will be permanently mounted to the ceiling of McCauley Chambers for presentations.

If Board Administration wishes to address a permanent solution for board viewing of presentations, individual monitors will need to be purchased and installed in the board table and a mixer purchased for splitting the video projector feed to the individual monitors and back stage screen for the audience. At this point, it is unclear whether the necessary wiring changes can be accommodated within the existing conduit or whether the cement floor will have to removed. The cost of the equipment and wiring changes could be significant.

If Building Operations is no longer renting the presentation equipment, technical support will have to be provided by District Technology. Purchased equipment should pay for itself in saved rental costs over a couple of years but there will be a need to budget for upgrades as

the technology changes. Presentations platforms that will be supported will have to be standardized for the equipment available. Currently, schools bring their presentations in on whatever format they are using at the school and the contractor is able to accommodate them.

Board Administration Initiatives
Since 1999, the Administration has been electronically posting board meeting agendas and reports on the District's website. The intent of posting the agenda packages was to reduce agenda package printing and distribution costs to schools and external organizations. The documents were either scanned or converted to a .pdf format and posted and an e-mail advising of the posting was sent to all administrators. While, the District's website was not designed with records management in mind, Board Administration recognizes that the electronic board agenda packages archived on the District's website could have value if they could be incorporated into a records management system that would allow robust searches for information contained in the records. Board Administration has processes in place for managing board meetings and indexing and retrieving board records for research but continues to explore ways of automating and integrating systems for efficiency and to assist the Board in doing its work.

Approximately three years ago, the Administration examined several electronic board meeting programs being marketed at the National School Boards Association vendor fair. These programs ranged in price dependent on the size of the jurisdiction from $30,000 to $150,000 plus annual licensing fees. Any desired program modifications were an additional cost. The main benefit claim of such programs was making board agenda packages available electronically, which the District was already doing.

At that time, the District was just initiating work on a district-level records management program to address both paper records and electronic records and that is where the Administration believed the largest gains could be made in moving the District and Board forward in adopting an electronic format for doing business.

The Trustees' On-Line Reading Room was implemented in 2006 primarily as a means to ensure all Trustees would have ready access and reference to communications to the Board. Although this had the effect of reducing some of the paper provided to Trustees, many of the communications in the Trustees' On-line Reading Room are a duplication of what has already been provided in paper copy to Trustees. Much of the duplication is to address the individual working styles of the Board members. The intent is to ensure that the means or process of providing the information does not get in the way of the Board doing its business. When information is "pushed" out to Trustees in their Friday mail packages, it leaves responsibility for getting the information to the Trustee with the Administration. If the information is posted electronically, even when accompanied by a reminder e-mail that it has been posted, it leaves the responsibility for getting the information with the Trustee.

The 2007 Board of Trustees were provided with laptop computers, district e-mail accounts and provision for reimbursement of internet service and home office expenses to facilitate board communications and access to information.

For 2008-2009, an examination of the system requirements for a comprehensive board meeting management system, compatible with the District records program, was incorporated into Board Administration's Work Plan. District Records & FOIP Management and Board

Administration are currently exploring a $30,000 joint project for the upcoming budget cycle for board records which will address the integration and automation of a number of administrative processes for agenda preparation and dissemination; provide secure storage of and access to confidential documents by those authorized to have access; address the records currently archived on the District website and on the local server and hopefully move us closer to a fully integrated electronic meeting management program for the Administration and Board.

Feasibility

<u>In the Short Term</u>
Board meeting agenda packages are currently available electronically from the District website and Trustees could choose to review and participate in board meetings with the electronic agenda package. All Trustees are provided with a laptop computer and home printer and McCauley Chambers has wireless internet access. Given the limits of a laptop battery, electrical supply in McCauley Chambers would be necessary and can be accommodated. McCauley Chambers will be receiving some upgrading as part of the Centre for Education but an update to the electrical service is not included.

<u>Implications</u>
- McCauley Chambers will get a new ceiling mounted video projector as part of the upgrade.
- A proposal may be considered to include in the allocation to the Board Administration DU funds to cover the cost upgrades to the electrical, individual small screens for Trustee viewing presentations and a video/sound mixer to feed from the video projector to screens. The cost of this project may be considerable if the floor has to be jack-hammered to accommodate new wiring.
- Board Administration will be proposing a $30,000 joint project with District Records and FOIP Management for the upcoming budget cycle to address the integration and automation of a number of administrative processes for agenda preparation and dissemination; provide secure storage of and access to confidential documents by those authorized to have access; address the records currently archived on the District website and on the local server.
- Should the Board choose to formally adopt an electronic format for the conduct of its board meetings, a systems analysis would be recommended to determine additional board needs, the necessary processes and protocols and address any additional modifications to hardware and software that may be required.