

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 23, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee C. Ripley, Public School Boards Council (PSBC) Representative

SUBJECT: Upcoming Topics of Discussion for April 8-10 PSBC Meeting

INFORMATION

This report is to inform the Board of the topics that will be discussed at the April 8-10, 2010 PSBC meeting. If individual Trustees have comments or questions to assist me in representing the Board at this meeting, they are invited to do so.

The agenda includes:

- Tour of selected public schools in Stettler and area
- Remarks by Danielle Smith, Leader of Wildrose Alliance, and Q&A
- Foundation Program – final consideration of the clarified and consolidated version, now titled “The E4 Framework: Essential Elements of Excellent Education for Alberta’s Public Schools” (See Attachment #1 for summary version)
- *School Act* Review – 1) consideration of the revised draft (new) Whereas clauses and 2) consideration of two questions relating to Natural Persons Power (see below).
- Consideration of motions, re: communications protocol and remote alternate schools (now being withdrawn with new versions to come forward to the Spring Assembly)
- New Resolution Process for the Association (for bringing substantive motions to the PSBC)
- Discussion of how MLAs prefer to be contacted with information, comments, questions.
- The introduction of the new Executive Director

The full agenda package can be accessed at:

<http://www.public-schools.ab.ca/Public/association/PSBC.htm>

The Foundation Program, now titled The E4 Framework

Please note: If approved by the Council, the Foundation Committee is urging member Boards to use *The Framework* as the basis for its decision making and to use it to have further conversations about excellent education in our respective local communities.

School Act Review/ Consideration of the New Whereas Clauses Recommended by the PSBAA Executive

Based on comments made by boards in February, a set of new Whereas Clauses are proposed (see Attachment #2). These reflect some of the EPSB suggestions, but not all.

School Act Review/Natural Person Powers

The Executive wishes to know:

- 1) If the new *Act* permits natural person powers, are there any clauses in the *Act* that need to be carried forward?
- 2) If the new *Act* does not permit natural person powers, what pieces of the *Act* would you like to see modified, retained, or done away with?

As your representative, I propose to base my comments on the *School Act* submission sent by EPSB to the Minister last October 30, 2009 (APPENDIX III).

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Attachment #1 - http://www.public-schools.ab.ca/Public/association/PSBC_E4_draft_2010Apr.pdf
(pages 3-6)

Attachment #2 - http://www.public-schools.ab.ca/Public/association/PSBC_ProposeWhereasClausesRevised2010Mar.pdf (page 3)

Attachment #3 - Edmonton Public Schools Submission to the Minister of Education for the *School Act* Review

Introduction

Core Beliefs of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

The Public School Boards' Association of Alberta (PSBAA) believes that "public schools are the first choice of our communities, where all children learn and live the values of democracy together, reflecting our hope and shaping the future of our communities." Because they are the most important social institutions of any democracy, the PSBAA is committed to ensuring that public schools remain inclusive and responsive to the ever-changing needs of their students, the communities they serve, and the world. The PSBAA further believes that public education is best governed by locally elected representatives making decisions about education on behalf of, and with, their communities – ideally as close to the student as possible.

Background

To this end, in Spring 2008, the PSBAA established The Standing Committee on the Foundation Program (the Foundation Committee) to research two questions:

What can Albertans reasonably expect all children to demonstrate when they graduate from high school?

Given those expectations, what are the foundational or essential elements of education to which every child must have access, no matter where they live?

Over the last two years, the Foundation Committee has encouraged discussion of these questions in communities across the province. In addition, Committee members researched best practices in community engagement and public school governance, developed a resource manual and discussion guide (*Straight Talk*), and took part in the Minister of Education's "Inspiring Education" dialogue held from Spring – Fall 2009.

Introducing The E⁴ Framework

The Foundation Committee is now pleased to present *THE E⁴ FRAMEWORK: The Essential Elements of Excellent Education for Alberta's Public Schools*. The Committee believes that The E⁴ Framework provides clear direction for all communities in Alberta about what education is required for each child to grow into a skilled, caring, and responsible adult citizen – a good citizen. At the same time, the framework allows for local discretion about how to deliver these elements in the most appropriate way.

In brief, all children in Alberta, regardless of circumstance, should have the right to access the essential elements of an excellent education. This access will give them the opportunity to develop the attitudes, character, knowledge, skills, practical wisdom, self- and social-awareness, and positive relationships they need to engage successfully in their future roles as individuals, family members, and community stewards for the next generation. It is the responsibility of the current adult generation, through its locally elected government

representatives, to ensure these essential elements of excellent education are provided to all children while reflecting the local priorities of Alberta's diverse communities. The primary accountability for achieving this outcome falls to public school trustees.

Next Steps

The PSBAA has always envisioned that a description of the platform needed to provide excellent education for all children in Alberta would evolve and need ongoing development. To move this work ahead, the Foundation Committee proposes the next steps should include 1) considering and incorporating feedback from readers, 2) encouraging the provincial government to reflect The E⁴ Framework in legislation (e.g. in the new Education Act scheduled for discussion in Fall 2010) and in a new funding model that would permit more autonomy for public school boards, 3) examining the roles and responsibilities of other key players in reference to The E⁴ Framework, and finally, 4) encouraging local school boards to use the Framework in its decision-making and to deepen the discussion at the local level. By continually looking at what public schools are doing to prepare children to lead successful personal lives as well as contribute to the flourishing of our communities, through the lens of The E⁴ Framework, the Committee hopes to contribute to improvement in public education on an ongoing basis.

Please Contact Us

After you have read and reflected on *The E⁴ Framework: The Essential Elements of Excellent Education for Alberta's Public Schools*, the Foundations Committee invites you into the discussion and welcomes your comments at any time. You can provide your comments by email to info@public-schools.ab.ca or in writing to us c/o PSBAA #3, 9359 - 67A St. Edmonton, AB T6B 1R7.

Dated April 2010 in Edmonton, Alberta

The Standing Committee on the Foundation Program

Chair Gitta Hashizume

(Trustee, Medicine Hat School District No. 76)

Patty Dittrick

(Trustee, Clearview Public Schools)

Ernie Grach

(Trustee, former Northland School Division No. 61),

Dianne Macaulay

(Trustee, Red Deer Public Schools)

George Rice

(Trustee, Edmonton Public School Board)

Sheldon Rowe

(Superintendent, Peace Wapiti School Division No. 33)

The late Bruce Moltzan

(Associate Superintendent /Corporate Secretary,
Chinooks Edge School Division)

THE E⁴ FRAMEWORK: In Summary

Albertans' Expectations for their Children

The PSBAA Foundation Committee believes that Albertans want to assist the development of children into citizens who will be:

- hopeful rather than fearful;
- purposeful, persevering, and energetic;
- self-respecting, confident, and courageous;
- healthy and well-balanced in body, mind, and spirit;
- honest and self-disciplined, always acting with integrity and accepting personal responsibility for their actions;
- independent, yet able, willing, and desiring to create positive relationships with others;
- respectful and inclusive of others, valuing both the uniqueness of each person and the diversity of humanity;
- compassionate and always ready to seek justice for themselves and others;
- committed and eager life-long learners;
- responsible stewards of our world, including the natural and built environments as well as our social structures; and last, but not least,
- active participants in our civil democratic community.

If all graduates were to embody these characteristics, the future for our local, provincial, national and global communities would be abundant and secure.

Essential Elements of Excellent Education (E⁴)

To produce such citizens, the PSBAA Foundations Committee proposes that the essential elements of an excellent education should include:

A public school as the primary and preferred place to provide education. Public schools enable socializing opportunities, the effective use of resources, and the modeling of a civil democratic community.

Access for all children no matter where they live in the province and no matter what their circumstances. There should be no pre-conditions (e.g., religion, ability) or barriers (e.g., fees, low numbers) to school attendance or participation in public schooling.

A commitment to the safety, health, and well-being of each child while in school, on the way to and from school, and during any school-sponsored activities.

A comprehensive diagnostic assessment of each child the first year he or she enters the public school system and periodically thereafter.

Reasonable travel time to school so that the child arrives ready to learn and relate well to others.

A certificated teacher as the educational leader of a child's team. In addition to teaching skills and knowledge in one or more areas of instruction, a teacher should have the time, expertise, and disposition to understand the whole child, help the child form and manage relationships, and be willing to lead the expertise of others in the best interests of the child.

An optimum student-teacher ratio. The student-teacher ratio affects the quality of instruction and more importantly, the quality of the relationship between a student and his or her teacher. Particular priority should be given to minimizing the class sizes for primary and middle year grades and whenever there is a significant special needs population within a classroom.

A well-rounded, experiential, and creative learning experience, which builds on a child's strengths and learning style. This experience should include (but is not limited to) knowledge, skill, and practice in:

- inductive and deductive reasoning, the recognition and anticipation of problems and opportunities, problem solving, risk assessment, critical thinking, communication, and appreciative inquiry;
- the English or French language as well as a second language;
- math and science;
- social studies (e.g., history, geography, cultural studies, etc.);
- fine and performing arts, including familiarity with at least one musical instrument, visual art medium, and form of physical expression (e.g., dancing or singing);
- personal health and well-being, including nutrition, exercise and an understanding of personal and social development;
- personal infrastructure (e.g., household maintenance, personal finances, accessing service providers, finding personal assistants, etc.);
- local, provincial, national, and global citizenship experiences.

An emphasis on pride of first culture while providing an understanding of, and commitment to, the common culture of Alberta and Canada with special consideration for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children, children from immigrant or refugee families, children who are illiterate in their first language, and children whose first language is not English or French.

Appropriate space, furniture, technology, and learning or teaching aids for children, and teachers, other staff, and volunteers.

Accountability by the locally elected school board to the local electorate for the attainment of all outcomes.

If all of these proposals are adopted, the resulting Preamble would look like this:

Preamble

Whereas excellent education for each and every person is the primary basis for free and effective citizens and for a strong and enduring democratic community

Whereas parents have a right and the ultimate responsibility to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children, bearing in mind the best interests and rights of each child

Whereas public school education focuses on the student in the context of the community, and public school education exists to serve, equally, the potential of the student and the community

Whereas it is in the public interest to provide public school education that is inclusive, and a deliberate model of a civil democratic community

Whereas in Alberta the Legislature of Alberta has exclusive constitutional authority to make laws respecting education and chooses to regard the government of community as being in two parts, provincial and local, and acknowledges and upholds the provisions of the Constitution that allow and enable separate and francophone education to be provided under the auspices of a civil education authority

Whereas in Alberta it is in the public interest to ensure substantial local self-government of public, separate, and francophone schools by trustees who are elected locally and accountable to their local electorate

THEREFORE HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, enacts as follows:...



Board of Trustees
 Don Fleming, Chair
 Sue Huff, Vice-Chair
 Dave Colburn
 Bev Esslinger
 Gerry Gibeault
 Ken Gibson
 George Rice
 Catherine Ripley
 Ken Shipka

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October 30, 2009

The Honourable Dave Hancock
 Minister of Education
 Office of the Minister
 Education
 224 Legislature Building
 10800 - 97 Avenue
 Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister Hancock

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the *School Act* review and the *Charter School Concept Paper*. The invitation to submit the Board's position proved to be an opportunity to review our values, consider options for the future and to express our commitments. Public education is the only publicly funded education system that welcomes all students, no matter their social, cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

We trust that the new *School Act* will strengthen the role of elected school boards, as the means of ensuring a responsive and responsible system for every student, parent and community member. Our Board has a long history of demonstrating these attributes in the Edmonton. The District has been an incubator for many educational innovations. We have established collaborative local, national and international partnerships with other education institutions and work closely with community organizations to coordinate enhanced services and supports for students and their families. We have a strong infrastructure for capacity building and knowledge sharing.

In relation to the *Charter School Concept Paper*, the Edmonton Public School Board has a long history of innovation, programs of choice and educational leadership, and as such, we support the return to a focus on innovation and creativity, not only in charter schools, but the entire education system. As a District we would welcome the opportunity to share what we have learned and continue to learn. We are committed to further involvement in a system that supports rigorous research and accountability for results.

Thank you again for the providing these opportunities to help shape the future of education in Alberta.

Sincerely,

Don Fleming
 Board Chair

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Enclosures: Response to Charter School Concept Paper
 Submission to the *School Act* Review

Bright futures
 begin here

Edmonton Public Schools
Response to Charter School Concept Paper
October 30, 2009

History

The Edmonton Public School Board believes that the history of charter schools as described in the Concept Paper is an accurate representation of the development of charter schools across the province. However, we dispute the claim that charter schools appear to have provided enhanced learning outcomes compared to other similar schools and compared to similar students enrolled in other jurisdiction types. We would be interested in the evidence that supports this claim. We know that, in the last decade, a number of education critics - especially those advocating a system of educational vouchers or charter schools - have argued that the most significant barriers to educational improvement are political or structural. It was believed that charter schools, that are largely freed from national, provincial, and district mandates and that have neither unions nor bureaucracy, would be able to achieve significantly improved student learning outcomes. There is yet to be any undisputed data that makes the case that charter schools are getting better results than conventional public schools with comparable populations of students. In fact, we maintain that the hope of charter schools has clearly been realized within our District, and that most of the charter schools in existence gained from our experiences as we shared significant information about our processes with them.

We also believe that, while charter schools have become a well established part of the public school system, their establishment has been unequal across the province, and especially in the Greater Edmonton Region. The Edmonton Public School Board has been able to provide the kind of innovation in program delivery that charter schools in other urban areas provide. Thus the claim that charter schools have provided enhanced choice in the system particularly in large urban centres may be true for Calgary, but certainly not for Edmonton.

Lastly, the concerns in the rest of the Alberta school systems about charter schools are mainly centered on the exemption of charter schools from the requirement to offer programming for all students. This needs to be addressed in the new legislation.

Vision

The Board agrees that we need a transformational vision of schooling across the province. The District currently functions as an incubator for many educational innovations. We have established collaborative local, national and international partnerships with other education institutions and work closely with community organizations to co-ordinate enhanced services and supports for students and their families. We have a strong infrastructure for capacity building and knowledge sharing. For example, we have established international partnerships with China, France, Germany and Spain to enhance research, staff development and delivery of bilingual education.

Resources

We strongly support the provision of additional resources required to enable schools and groups of schools to pursue the research expectations of this initiative and we advocate that the allocation of resources be accessible to any successful applicant.

Governance

In terms of the governance, we are pleased to see that public boards and separate boards would also be able to submit proposals. In these instances, the governance role must clearly be held by the elected School Board. We strongly advocate that any changes to the *School Act* would be enabling by removing unequal regulations regarding governance, operations and mandate between public and charter schools (such as ensuring transportation funding for charter schools also be applied to District programs of choice). We believe that an equitable approach might mitigate the implied and unsubstantiated assumption of limited innovation within the public system. In addition, public/separate school jurisdictions may be far more willing to learn from their colleagues.

We suggest that a change in name from “Charter Schools” to “Schools of Research and Innovation” would communicate more clearly the province’s intended direction. We also believe that granting of charters should be prioritized in light of their potential to support the province’s three year business plan. For example, innovative programming to enhance achievement outcomes for First Nations, Métis, Inuit (FNMI) and English language students to assist the province in addressing a provincial need.

We are highly supportive of working with post secondary research partners, and have already been working very closely with a number of different faculties at the University of Alberta to assess the impact of alternative methods of program delivery. We believe in partnerships and would be interested in entering into joint proposals with other schools in the province. For example, a rural urban partnership might increase equity of opportunity for program choice across the province.

We support the notion of a flexible term for each charter in keeping with the educational challenge the applicants intend to address. We do have some concerns about the “options to renew a school’s charter” included in the Governance section of the report. We believe that items C and D, “achievement results as good or better than provincial results” and “parent satisfaction at least as good as results for similar schools within public or separate boards” are not sufficiently precise nor rigorous enough as measures.

We believe that comparisons among schools should take into consideration the precise social vulnerability of the student populations in combination with achievement of student learning outcomes. Thus schools engaged in the new innovation to explore alternative way of achieving increased student learning outcomes would be measured statistically against schools with very similar populations. This comparison, called “Statistical Neighbors” is currently an initiative of Ontario Ministry of Education, and would be a much more suitable measure for the effectiveness of any charter schools. In Edmonton Public Schools, we are in the process of developing such a system to enhance our ability to more precisely determine school success and improvement.

The new regulations must consider student population equity. The composition of schools across the province is diverse, which should be reflected in any charter school. As a charter school is a school of choice, the provisions for students entering these programs must be as broad and inclusive as possible.

The evaluation of charters should be based on the achievement of mutually agreed upon measures that are appropriate to the challenge. For example, while a charter school serving a significant population of very high needs students might not be able to achieve “results as good as or better than provincial results as a whole” it should be held accountable for demonstrating significant growth in student learning and compare favourably to schools serving similar populations.

Edmonton Public Schools
Submission to the *School Act* Review
October 30, 2009

The Board believes that three main areas need to be included in any new provincial education legislation: 1) Defining Public Education, 2) A Focus on Success for All Students, 3) Establishing an Enabling Framework.

Defining Public Education

Alberta Education has recently increased funding to private educational institutions, straining the current understanding of what constitutes public education. What is it that the Alberta Education understands the roles of private, public, separate, francophone, charter and home education to be? The Edmonton Public School Board, in existence since 1881, holds firmly to principles and values that are hallmarks of its operations and believes that these values and principles must be embedded in the new *Act*. The Board expects the new legislation to affirm a commitment to public schools, which are mandated to accept and welcome all children, regardless of ability, ethnicity, culture, faith, language, socio-economic status, gender, or sexual orientation, as the foundation to realizing the province's aspiration for an educated, responsible citizenry.

Local Governance

Throughout this document it is assumed that locally elected school boards are vital to a responsive and effective education system. Local autonomy related to education and the delivery of programs belongs in the hands of school boards to ensure attention and responsiveness to the character and needs of the local community.

Access to Quality Education

The principle of access implies that all students are welcomed and included in schools and school districts. It also implies that school jurisdictions do all in their power to prevent any restriction of learning opportunities within the available funding.

Choice

It is understood that students learn in different ways. They receive, process and express new information and experiences in ways framed by personality, values and habit. Families also hold values about the role of education, how it is delivered, and what the outcomes of the education system should be. The new *Act* must provide the framework within which school jurisdictions provide a range of learning opportunities from which families and students choose the most appropriate pathway to success.

Equity

It is recognized that students come from diverse settings and backgrounds. These variable experiences mean that students come to school systems in different states of readiness to learn and participate in schooling. The education system must reduce the gaps between students with enriched and impoverished personal backgrounds.

Another aspect of equity relates to fairness in funding, especially as it relates to charter schools. For example, an arts focused charter school receives transportation funding, whereas a similar school in a public school district does not. This inequity must be addressed in the legislation.

Diversity

The new *Act* must recognize and value the diverse make up of students, families and staff members in the community and recognize that public schools will welcome any child regardless of ability, ethnicity, culture, faith, language, socio-economic status, gender, or sexual orientation and create safe, respectful learning environments for all.

Citizenship and Character Development

The role of citizenship and character development is crucial to social coherence and success. The *Act* should recognize the role schools and school boards play in developing young people prepared to fully participate socially, economically, and politically in their communities. The *Act* should also identify and provide ways for working with government departments and other agencies to enhance citizenship education.

A Focus on Success for all Students

The education system must ensure that the conditions for the success of all students are established and met. The following elements must be addressed:

- Ensure that the new *Act* is primarily focused on students and their success
- Consider both lowering the entry and increasing the exit compulsory age for schooling (i.e. make kindergarten compulsory, increase compulsory age from 16 to 18)
- Ensure cross-ministry and inter-agency support for integrated services that sustain students and families (including early education services, mental health and health supports, child welfare, justice services, etc.)
- Recognize that students require flexible programs that are not bound strictly by time (i.e. students may advance their programs as they are able, or they may need longer to complete programs of study)
- Recognize flexibility in student demonstrations of knowledge and skills
- Define levels of student success:
 - including the ability to successfully participate in a global knowledge community through such skills as critical thinking, creativity, second language acquisition
 - recognizing learning growth
 - recognizing the whole child
- Ensure parental and community partnership and involvement in the education process

Establishing an Enabling Framework

The new *Act* should address the following areas:

- Provide “natural person powers” to all school jurisdictions (This means that a board could undertake any initiative unless there is a prohibition against it in a new *Act*, currently boards are only allowed to do what is defined within the *School Act* and nothing more.)
- Establish enabling framework, rather than highly restrictive or prescriptive provisions (Create substantial outcomes and allow school jurisdictions flexibility in achieving those outcomes. For example, allow districts to select and hire a superintendent, without ministerial approval, allow districts to determine school closure procedures, allow districts to manage infrastructure projects for greater flexibility)
- Define the roles, rights and responsibilities for:
 - Students
 - Parents/guardians
 - Teachers
 - Principals
 - Secretary – Treasurers
 - Superintendents
 - Trustees
 - Partners (e.g. community members, Elders)
 - Alberta Education
- Financial flexibility related to borrowing for specific projects and revenue generating mechanisms (tax levy, sale of assets and services, other sources of revenue, etc.)
- Flexibility for local decision-making (i.e. locally developed courses and programs)
- Responsibility and accountability for results
- Allow for greater flexibility in the school calendar (e.g. August to May school year)
- The new *Act* should replace the highly regulatory sections with overarching outcome statements. These sections would be addressed through a system of regulations as determined by Alberta Education.
- School jurisdictions should be enabled to create its own charters or partnerships with other school jurisdictions, government departments and agencies to enhance use of research, innovation and creativity for educational opportunities for students.
- Ensure flexibility of transportation funding as block funding (and provide appropriate walk limits for students at various ages.)
- Make the values and principles for government decision-making explicit