

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 11, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee S. Huff, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee C. Ripley, Planning and Policy Committee
Trustee K. Shipka, Chair Planning and Policy Committee

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

RESOURCE

STAFF: Karen Bardy, Gloria Chalmers, Anne Sherwood

RECOMMENDATION

That revised and renamed board policy ACB.BP – National Anthem and Flag (APPENDIX I) be considered for the third time and approved.

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Current Board Policy ACB.BP – Multiculturalism and National Identity (shown in strike-out in APPENDIX I) was reviewed by the Planning and Policy Committee. The Committee concurred that the policy continues to reflect the Board's belief that as a multicultural nation, cultivation of patriotic sentiment through recognition of Canada's national symbols, the national anthem and flag, contributes to a climate of mutual trust and respect conducive to effective learning. However, the Board recently underwent a consultation process to flesh out the Board's desire to support programming for its increasingly diverse community which culminated in the approval of new Board Policy, ACBA.BP – Multicultural Education (APPENDIX II). In light of the new and separate policy on multicultural education, the Planning and Policy Committee eliminated the reference to multiculturalism in the actual title of policy ACB.BP but maintained the original intent of the policy, renaming the policy National Anthem and Flag. As well, the Committee did some minor re-wording to emphasize the educational rationale for promoting national identity.

Revised Board Policy ACB.BP – (renamed National Anthem and Flag) is an over-arching belief statement about the unifying nature of national identity, whereas the new policy on Multicultural Education (ACBA.BP) speaks more directly to expectations for programming and supports for students. Therefore, subject to approval of revised Board Policy ACB.BP – National Anthem and Flag, Board Policy ACBA.BP – Multicultural Education (APPENDIX II) will be recoded HGAB.BP – Multicultural Education and moved to section H of the Policy manual related to student supports, curriculum and instruction. The corresponding Administrative Regulation is currently coded HGAB.AR – Multicultural Education.

The proposed revised Board Policy ACB.BP – National Anthem and Flag was posted to the district website from February 3, 2010 to March 3, 2010 for on-line stakeholder input. There were 143 responses of which 142 were in favour of the concept of the policy and 34 respondents had comments, many commending the Board for a policy on this topic.

Approximately half the comments made (17) related to concerns or discomfort with the words “encouraged to conduct regular singing” and expressed the desire to “mandate” the daily singing of the national anthem at schools or the desire for detailed protocols. There are detailed administrative regulations which outline Canadian flag protocols HNDB.AR which is included in the references for the policy. Most elementary schools and junior high schools do conduct daily singing of the anthem and high schools include the singing of the national anthem at assemblies and gatherings of all students and do play a recording of the national anthem over the school sound system on a more frequent basis. The wording of the policy is intended to convey the Board’s expectation that regular singing of the national anthem will occur but still provide schools flexibility in how they organize for instruction.

In addition, several concerns were expressed about how schools handle conscientious objections based on religious grounds. Section 50 of the *School Act*, which is noted in the references to the policy, provides for the parent of a student to request in writing that a student be excluded from religious or patriotic instruction. In those cases the student will be permitted to leave for the duration of the instruction or exercise or to remain without taking part in the instruction or exercise.

In light of the comments received and in order to better convey that regular patriotic exercises can include the “playing” of the national anthem, one additional change was made to the revised policy to include the “playing” of the national anthem or the “singing” of the national anthem as shown in bold in Appendix I.

Revised and renamed board policy ACB.BP – National Anthem and Flag was considered for the first and second time at the April 27, 2010. A revision was approved at that meeting to change the word in the last sentence from “encouraged” to “expected.”

AS:mmf

- APPENDIX I - Proposed Revised and Renamed Board Policy ACB.BP – National Anthem and Flag
- APPENDIX II - Current Board Policy ACBA.BP – Multicultural Education (to be recoded HGAB.BP – Multicultural Education)

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: ACB.BP

EFFECTIVE DATE: 08-02-2000

TOPIC: ~~Multiculturalism and National Identity~~

ISSUE DATE: 10-02-2000

National Anthem and Flag

REVIEW DATE: 02-2005

~~The board believes in the promotion of individual and group relations in which ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic similarities and differences are valued, respected and exchanged.~~

~~Furthermore, the board believes that as a multicultural nation, Canada is identified by its national anthem and flag, and that cultivation of patriotic sentiment contributes to a climate of mutual trust and respect conducive to effective learning, personal development and social living. The board strongly encourages all Edmonton Public Schools to conduct regular patriotic exercises such as the singing of the national anthem and displaying of the Canadian flag.~~

Given that Canada is a multicultural and democratic nation identified by its national anthem and flag, the Board believes that patriotic exercises and the cultivation of patriotic sentiment contributes to a climate of mutual respect and trust conducive to student learning, personal development, social living and citizenship within a Canadian context. All Edmonton Public Schools shall display the Canadian flag and are ~~encouraged~~ **expected to play or** conduct regular singing of the national anthem.

Reference(s):

[ACA.BP](#) - Respectful Learning and Working Environments

[ACA.AR](#) - Respectful Learning and Working Environments

[ACBA.BP](#) - Multicultural Education (*will be moved to section H – HGAB.BP*)

HGAB.AR – Multicultural Education

[HNDB.AR](#) - Flying and Displaying Flags in Schools

[School Act](#) Sections 26 and 50

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: ACBA.BP (*HGAB.BP*)
 TOPIC: Multicultural Education

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09-06-2009
 ISSUE DATE: 11-06-2009
 REVIEW DATE: 06-2014

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

Edmonton Public School Board believes that Canadian traditions and values are enriched by the presence and involvement of a diverse, multicultural community of students, staff, parents, community members and groups. The Board wants all members of our diverse community to be welcomed, respected, to feel a strong sense of belonging and to participate fully in the District.

The Board believes that public education plays an important role in ensuring that all students develop an understanding of Canadian values and culture including an appreciation of the contributions of a diverse community to an evolving global society. The Board also believes that an environment in which there is equity of opportunity, and equity of access to programs, services and resources is critical to supporting all students and staff in realizing their full potential. The Board expects these values to be reflected in District programs, operations and practices.

The Board believes that racism is intolerable and has the potential to negatively impact educational, social and career outcomes for students and staff. Further, it damages relationships with families and community partners. As racism exists in society and therefore in our schools, the Board is committed to acknowledging, addressing, and eradicating racial incidents.

As community leaders, the Board believes that it has a role to play in working collaboratively with other agencies and levels of government to advocate for changes to support the development of a community in which all citizens have the opportunity to benefit from and participate fully in the cultural pluralism that is characteristic of Canada in the 21st century.

The Board believes that student learning is the core work of the District and recognizes the importance of continuing to strengthen program delivery and supports to realize success for all of our students. The Board believes that student success is enhanced by:

- Creating learning environments that support all students and their families to develop a sense of belonging.
- Ensuring students learn about the values and culture of Canada.
- Having high expectations for achievement and providing a range of supports to promote continuous growth in student learning.
- Providing responsive programming that includes the use of resources to reflect diverse cultural perspectives.
- Creating opportunities for students to share and celebrate their cultural heritage.
- Using culturally appropriate assessments to inform programming.
- Ensuring that racial and cultural issues are appropriately addressed.
- Using a proactive approach to student conduct.
- Enabling parents and families to be involved in and make informed decisions concerning their child's schooling.
- Attracting and retaining qualified staff from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Working collaboratively with community members and groups to increase intercultural appreciation and understanding.
- Working collaboratively with other educational institutions to promote successful transitions for students and improved pre-service training for staff.
- Providing professional development to increase intercultural appreciation and understanding of staff.
- Working collaboratively with community partners and other levels of government to advocate for the development of services to extend learning opportunities and supports.

The Board understands that change occurs over time and believes that the provision of an annual report at a public board meeting on progress related to each of the strategic directions identified in this policy will ensure accountability and demonstrate the District's commitment to supporting our diverse community.

Reference(s):

[ACA.BP](#) - Respectful Learning and Working Environments

[ACB.BP](#) - Multiculturalism and National Identity

[HGAB.AR](#) - Multicultural Education
