

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 22, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee D. Colburn, Trustee Aboriginal Education Task Force
Trustee K. Gibson, Trustee Aboriginal Education Task Force
Trustee D. Williams, Chair, Trustee Aboriginal Education Task Force

SUBJECT: Trustee Aboriginal Education Task Force: Recommendation Report

RESOURCE
STAFF: Donna Barrett, Gloria Chalmers, Lorna L'Hirondelle, Noella Steinhauer

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education Policy (Appendix I) be considered for the first time.
- 1.2 That proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education (Appendix I) be considered for the second time.
- 1.3. That in accordance with the provisions of section 69 of the School Act, proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education (Appendix I) be considered for the third time at this meeting.
- 1.4 That proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education (Appendix I) having been considered three times at this meeting, be approved.
2. That the administration provide information to board with regard to the implementation of IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education Board Policy and IAA.AR - Aboriginal Education Administrative Regulation prior to December 2007 to enable the board to consider staffing and other implications for the 2008-09 budget.
3. That the administration provide an annual Aboriginal Education report to board regarding progress as it relates to IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education Board Policy and IAA.AR - Aboriginal Education Administrative Regulation.
4. That the board and administration advocate to Alberta Education that changes be made to the Attendance Board to better serve the needs of Aboriginal students and families.

5. That, based on the work done under contract to Alberta Education and submitted to them on March 31, 2004 entitled *Infusing Aboriginal Perspectives into Alberta Core Curriculum*, the board and administration advocate to Alberta Education (i) that identified perspectives be incorporated into core curriculum and (ii) that teaching resources be identified and developed to support the implementation.
6. That National Aboriginal Day be celebrated by the board every year at the board meeting closest to National Aboriginal Day.

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Background: In January 2006, the Board of Trustees approved the creation of a Trustee Aboriginal Education Task Force with the purpose of identifying ways to strengthen and encourage relationships between the board and the Aboriginal parent and student community it serves. It also was intended to increase board awareness and understanding of Aboriginal education needs, opportunities and priorities to guide the board's education policy leadership and political advocacy efforts in support of improved Aboriginal student achievement.

The task force brought interim reports to board in November 2006 and March 2007. These reports provided trustees with a discussion and background paper outlining past and current district initiatives, information about the individuals and groups consulted and a summary of the broad, rich and varied suggestions, perspectives and observations received.

A policy was drafted based on the consultation and a review of policies in other jurisdictions. The draft policy was posted on the district website for a month. All participants in the consultation process were provided with a copy of the draft policy and encouraged to respond on the website, in writing, or by attending a meeting with trustees. All principals were advised of the opportunity for input and asked to advise their staff as well. The trustees reviewed the draft policy with Elders.

Approximately 30 individuals attended the meeting with Trustees dedicated to providing input on the draft policy. Forty-four responses regarding the policy were received on the website posting. General comments ranged from excellent, impressive, good first step to a poor process, not enough detail and not ready to be adopted. Based on the input, the following modifications were made to the policy as posted on the district web site:

- The definition of "Aboriginal" was expanded to include "non-status." This reflects the new understanding of FNMI as First Nations, Non-status, Métis and Inuit.
- The category "families" was added to the explanation of "Aboriginal community" to recognize the critical role played by grandparents and other extended family members.
- The sentence "This policy acknowledges their role as the first peoples." following the first sentence in the philosophical foundation statement to emphasize the rationale for having an Aboriginal policy.
- All references to people was changed to "peoples" to clarify that Aboriginal people are not a homogeneous group.

- The term “honours” was added to the first sentence in paragraph three under philosophical foundation statement as Aboriginal Elders indicated that honouring children is of critical importance.
- In the section on increasing understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures by all, the word “ongoing” was added to clarify that the sense of grief and loss is still felt. As well, the words “individual” and “systemic” were added preceding racism.
- In the final sentence of the philosophical and foundation statement, “perspectives” was changed to “ways of knowing.” which is broader than perspectives.
- Under B. Community Involvement, number two, families was inserted prior to community agencies and organizations.
- Under C, Staffing and Professional Development, number one, the term “beliefs was added at the request of the Elders.
- Under F, Programs and Programming, “community support” was deleted and “interest” added to clarify that broad community support is not required to implement programs. If there is interest sufficient to offer a program, it can be offered.
- Under F, Programs and Programming, number 2, the sentence was rephrased to better express the intent. It now reads: “The Board expects that supportive learning environments for Aboriginal students will be provided in all schools.
- The heading H. Prevention and Intervention was replaced with “Enhanced Supports for Learning.” Prevention and Intervention was interpreted in a negative manner.

The stakeholder input from the website survey is provided in Appendix II.

The input from respondents also provided specific suggestions regarding actions. These suggestions were considered in the development of the draft Aboriginal Education Administrative Regulation (Appendix III) which supports the implementation of the policy. Board policy clearly states the board’s position and provides direction to the administration. Administrative regulations identify key directives for action in the implementation of policy.

The task force spent approximately \$5,100 or about 43% of the allocated budget. The expenditures covered honorariums and tobacco for Elders, books as gifts to schools, snacks and light meals at meetings with parents, students, staff and community groups as well as printing costs.

This report, which concludes the work of the task force, recommends approval of an Aboriginal Education policy as well as a number of other recommendations developed based on input received, as well as a review of policies and practices in other jurisdictions.

Reflections: The task force provided an excellent opportunity for trustees to engage in meaningful dialogue with some of the Aboriginal students and families served in the district and with staff and community members who also serve Aboriginal peoples.

It has deepened the district’s connection with the Aboriginal community. It reinforced the understanding that Aboriginal peoples are not a homogenous group. It confirmed that their needs and aspirations vary widely. It marked the beginning of a shared journey to respond, on an ongoing basis, to the evolving needs and hopes of Aboriginal families and the Aboriginal communities.

The proposed policy and recommendation provide the administration with a clear sense of direction for the work in coming years. Once the policy is approved, the superintendent will sign off the administrative regulation (Appendix III). The regulation commits the administration to monitoring progress in a number of areas, to involving community and to investigating areas of concern. It also provides guidelines to schools in their work with Aboriginal students and families.

Rationale for Recommendations: The proposed board policy (Recommendation 1) recognizes that Aboriginal peoples are descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada and, consequently, have a unique historic relationship with Canada. This is their country. It is here in Canada, their home, that they must preserve and evolve their cultures and their languages. As a public school system, we must play an integral part in enabling them to do so. Therefore, the policy acknowledges their uniqueness, the role of their community to be meaningfully involved in decisions affecting their communities and the negative effect of past practices. It makes a commitment to move forward valuing, honouring and respecting the cultures and beliefs of Aboriginal peoples in support of success for Aboriginal students in school and in life.

Implementing the policy and the regulation will have implications for staffing and for alignment of resources. To address this anticipated need, on April 10, 2007, trustees approved as part of the planning base framework for 2007-08, resources to support this policy. Recommendation 2 further recognizes the resource need by requiring the provision of information to trustees prior to their budget deliberations in February 2008 for the 2008-09 school year. This will enable the board to consider resources required in the next year to support implementation of the policy and the regulation.

Recommendation 3 ensures that the administration is accountable to the board for the implementation of the Aboriginal Policy. It provides a means for trustees to remain informed and to continue to provide clear direction in the area of Aboriginal Education.

As there was broad consensus regarding the need to inform all students about Aboriginal peoples and to make changes to the Attendance Board because, as currently constituted, it is not meeting its intended purpose, Recommendations 4 and 5 propose advocating to Alberta Education. Alberta Education has responsibility for curriculum and for the Attendance Board. These recommendations also recognize that advocacy was part of the terms of reference for the task force. The regulation includes reference to using other avenues for dealing with attendance issues in the interim.

Recommendation 6 completes the circle. It formally and symbolically recognizes the unique place Aboriginal peoples have in Canada. If this recommendation is approved, the intent would be to begin this tradition at the June 12, 2007 board meeting. This would symbolize the beginning of the next phase of continued support for Aboriginal education in the district.

Next Steps: The recommendation report and information regarding the disposition of the recommendations will be provided to all participants in the Aboriginal Education Task Force discussion groups. It will also be provided to the Urban Aboriginal Accord, representatives of Treaty 6, Treaty 8, the Métis Nation and the Aboriginal Education Branch at Alberta Education. As well, the policy and regulation will be provided to school principals and they will be asked to share them with staff and parent council. Communications will prepare a media release. It will post a copy of the report on the district's external website, prepare a

camera ready item for the Superintendent's Memo with a link to the report and a camera ready piece for schools that could be included in school newsletters. Information will also be provided in the district Keynotes newsletter.

GC:ee

Appendix I Proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education
Appendix II Stakeholder Input on Policy via District Web Survey
Appendix III Draft Administrative Regulation IAA.AR - Aboriginal Education

Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: IAA.BP
TOPIC: Aboriginal Education

EFFECTIVE DATE: **Draft May 17, 2007**
ISSUE DATE:
REVIEW DATE:

DEFINITION

Aboriginal is defined as First Nation, **Non-Status**, Métis, Inuit, who are descendents of the original inhabitants of Canada.

Aboriginal community refers to Elders, **families**, parents/guardians, children and other representatives of the Aboriginal children who attend Edmonton Public Schools.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION STATEMENT

As Indigenous peoples of North America, the Aboriginal community has a unique historic relationship with Canada. **This policy acknowledges their role as the first peoples.**

Edmonton Public Schools recognizes the significant historic contributions of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. The district also understands the important role that the Aboriginal community plays today and into the future.

Edmonton Public Schools **honours and** believes in the ability of Aboriginal students. It respects the desires and aspirations of Aboriginal students to achieve success in schooling and in life. The district believes the success of Aboriginal students is a shared responsibility and is committed to working in partnership with the Elders and the Aboriginal community to build an educational environment that honours Aboriginal peoples and their cultures and is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal students.

Edmonton Public Schools and the Aboriginal community recognize the need to strengthen program delivery for Aboriginal students by:

- Enhancing the educational experience of all Aboriginal students within the district.
- Establishing and maintaining positive interactive relationships based on trust between Edmonton Public Schools and the Aboriginal community.
- Establishing learning environments that respect and include Aboriginal peoples and their cultures.
- Providing quality educational opportunities that support success for all Aboriginal students in school and in life.

Edmonton Public Schools and the Aboriginal community also recognize the need to increase understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures among all students and staff by:

- Valuing, honouring, and respecting, Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and learning.
- Recognizing displacement of Aboriginal peoples in Canada as an historical fact that contributes to a sense of ongoing grief and loss felt within the community.
- Addressing individual and systemic racism and its negative impacts on learning.
- Considering the whole child approach (spiritual, emotional, physical and mental) to teaching and learning.

Edmonton Public Schools seeks to improve the success of Aboriginal students while respecting their goals of schooling. It recognizes the need to develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships with Elders and the Aboriginal community and to increase knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures among all students and staff members in order to operate in a manner that is inclusive of Aboriginal ways of knowing.

A. RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

- 1 The Board recognizes the traditional and fundamental importance of Elders in the Aboriginal Community.
- 2 The Board supports actions which acknowledge and promote understanding, respect and recognition of Aboriginal values and cultures.

B. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 1 The Board values an ongoing relationship with Elders and the Aboriginal community in our schools and across the district.
- 2 The Board recognizes the need to work collaboratively with families, community agencies and organizations to maximize opportunities for Aboriginal student success in schooling and in life.

C. STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1 The Board expects all staff to understand and respect Aboriginal values, beliefs and cultures.
- 2 The Board supports the active recruitment of qualified Aboriginal staff in all classifications to develop a workforce which is representative of the communities within its jurisdiction.

D. ACHIEVEMENT

The Board is committed to supporting and empowering Aboriginal students to improve their achievement and high school completion in order to reach their full potential.

E. CURRICULUM

The Board supports the infusion of Aboriginal outcomes in the core curriculum to promote better understanding of, and knowledge about, our Aboriginal peoples by all students.

F. PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMMING

- 1 The Board, as an advocate of choice, supports the provision of Aboriginal culture and/or language-based alternative programs based on **interest**.
- 2 The Board **expects** that supportive learning environments for Aboriginal students **will** be provided in all schools.

G. ASSESSMENT

- 1 The Board supports the use of a range of bias-free and culturally appropriate assessment instruments and practices.
- 2 The Board is committed to finding culturally appropriate and meaningful ways to demonstrate growth of students.

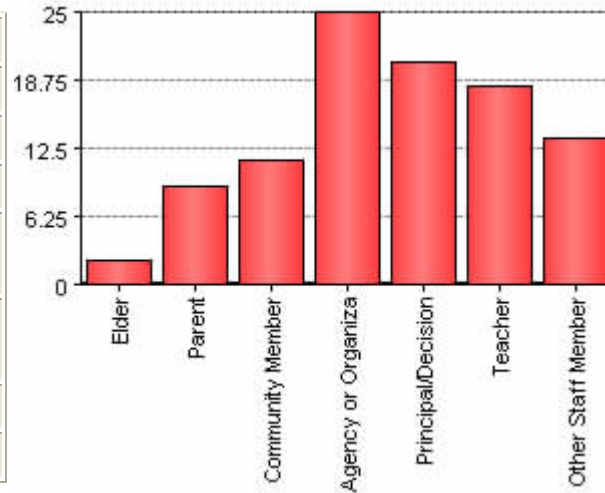
H. ~~PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION~~ **ENHANCED SUPPORTS FOR LEARNING**

- 1 The Board recognizes the value of early learning to enhance literacy and numeracy growth opportunities.
- 2 The Board recognizes the importance of transition programming to support students moving from school to school, division to division, and to post-secondary or the world of work.

Reference(s): IAA.AR

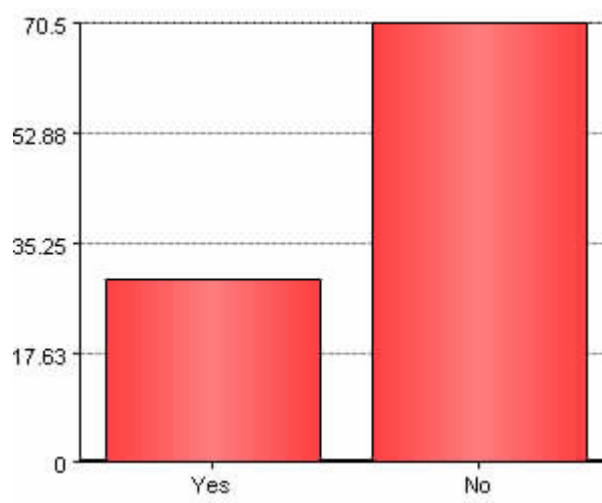
Question 1: Please select the one identifier that best describes the perspective from which you are providing feedback: (N=44)

Choices	Count	Percent
Elder	1	2.3
Parent	4	9.1
Community Member	5	11.4
Agency or Organization Representative	11	25.0
Principal/Decision Unit Administrator	9	20.5
Teacher	8	18.2
Other Staff Member	6	13.6



Question 2: Please indicate if you participated in discussions with the Aboriginal Education Task Force: (N=44)

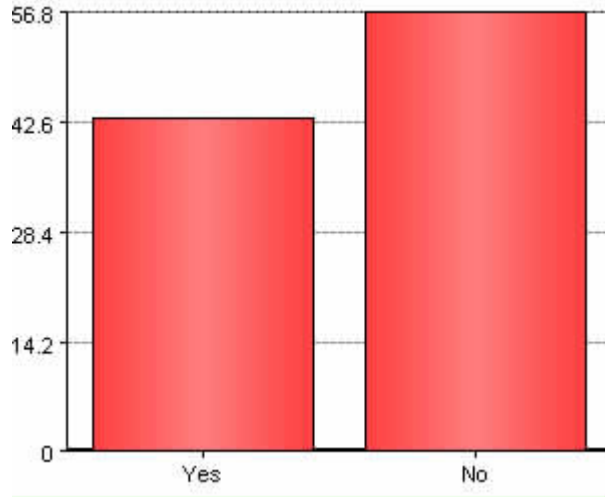
Choices	Count	Percent
Yes	13	29.5
No	31	70.5



Question 3: Are there any aspects of Proposed Board Policy IAA.BP – Aboriginal Education which require clarification? (N=44)

Choices	Count	Percent
Yes	19	43.2
No	25	56.8

[Show "If yes, please list below:"](#)



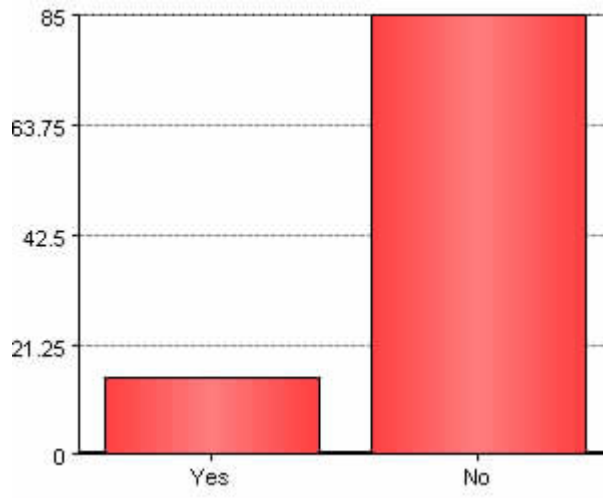
Question 4: As the purpose of the policy is to set direction for the district, what if anything should be added to the Foundation Statement and/or policy statements?

[Show Text for Question 4](#)

Question 5: Are there elements that should be deleted from this policy? (N=40)

Choices	Count	Percent
Yes	6	15.0
No	34	85.0

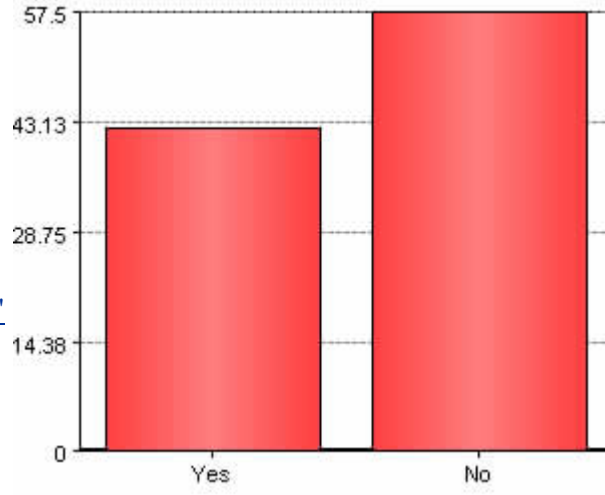
[Show "If yes, please explain and list below:"](#)



Question 6: Are there aspects of the policy that cause you concern? (N=40)

Choices	Count	Percent
Yes	17	42.5
No	23	57.5

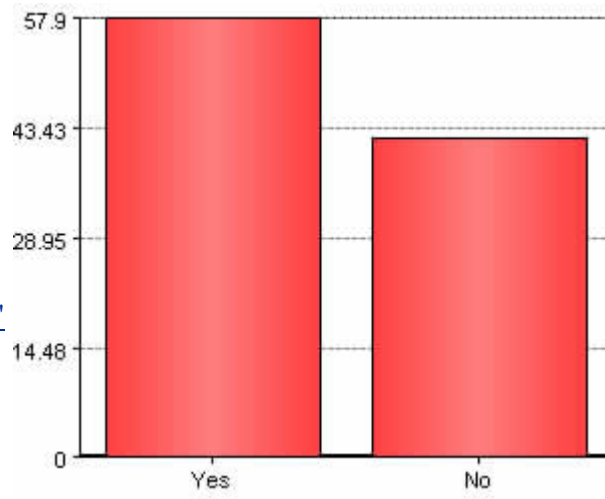
[Show "If yes, please provide below:"](#)



Question 7: Do you have any additional comments? (N=38)

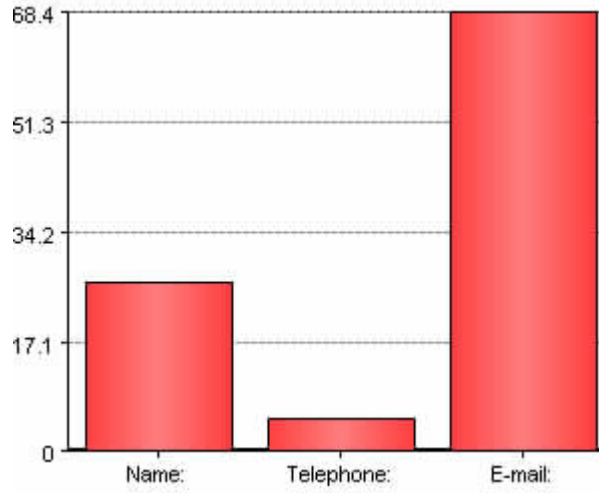
Choices	Count	Percent
Yes	22	57.9
No	16	42.1

[Show "If yes, please provide below:"](#)



Question 8: May we contact you if we require additional information? (N=19)

Choices	Count	Percent
Name:	5	26.3
Telephone:	1	5.3
E-mail:	13	68.4



Question #1

Please select the one identifier that best describes the perspective from which you are providing feedback:

- 11 from Agency or Organization Representative
- 5 Community members
- 1 Elder
- 6 Other Staff Members
- 4 Parents
- 9 Principal/DU Administrators
- 8 Teachers

Question #2

Please indicate if you participated in discussions with the Aboriginal Education Task Force:

- 13 YES (5 Agency or Organization Reps; 1 Community Member; 1 Elder; 3 Other Staff Members; 1 Parent; 1 Principal/DU Administrator; 1 Teacher)
- 31 NO

Question #3

Are there any aspects of Proposed Board Policy IAA.BP - Aboriginal Education which require clarification? If yes, please list below:

Comments from Agency or Organization Representatives:

- What sort of services will be implemented for Aboriginal students?
- The building of positive productive relationships between the Edmonton Public School Board, staff and management and the Aboriginal community will require much learning. Respectful communications and clarity comes with aboriginal awareness training for teachers, principals, councillors etc. This effort shows the Aboriginal people EPSB commitment and respect. To be able to demonstrate that your organizations has actually taken the time and made the effort is clearly, very much appreciated and is very effective. See www.ripplefx.ca - we have trained hundreds of EPSB staff in the past for a number of

years. A quote from Dr. Emery Dosdall (former superintendent) " have been involved with the education system for 40 years and there is not one thing that I heard today that I had ever heard of before-just excellent" .

- Process: Inclusion of all nations and recognition of Protection of Ceremonies 2003. Written history comes from those that provide it not necessarily what the facts are.
- Assessment process - culture-free self-esteem assessment rather than trying to design a specific aboriginal assessment process.
- Appointment of elders mandatory languages.

Comments from Community Members:

- How is success defined? What are " 'their' goals of schooling?"- Is this something that will be assessed with consultation of the community at large or will it be flexible enough to work with individual circumstances/perspectives of 'success' and 'goals'?
- Saying "The Board supports" is not clear enough. You can support something, and still do nothing about it.
- You may want to consider (to avoid confusion and/or criticism) adding a definition of aboriginal community to accompany the definition of aboriginal, i.e. elders, leaders...

Comments from Elder:

- What is the real reason for this policy?

Comments from Other Staff Members:

- Under C. Staffing - the question would be "how" for both points 1 and 2. What commitment is the Board prepared to make to ensure this happens? Also, with D. Achievement - How do they intend to accomplish this?

Comments from Parents:

- The Board supports the infusion of Aboriginal outcomes in the core curriculum to promote better understanding of, and knowledge about, our Aboriginal peoples by all students. This appears to be an evasive and deliberately vague wording of something that desperately needs strong concise wording with procedures to back-up the policy. Something along the following lines would indicate a clearer message: The Board supports immediate inclusion of core curriculum materials which accurately depict the Aboriginal experience in all Edmonton Public School classrooms. Further to this, the Board will advocate on behalf of all Aboriginal students to help preserve local indigenous language by offering it to all students within every school of the Edmonton Public School system.
- Everything.

Comments from Principal/Decision Unit Administrators:

- How is this to be accomplished? monitored? Evaluated for success? As this is under PD, who will provide and pay for this kind of PD?
- Testing of Aboriginal students: Need to develop a list of culturally fair and bias free assessment instruments so that Aboriginal students are not over-identified for BD or Opportunity coding. There is a tendency for schools who use private consultants to insist on testing for money, and not check the work of the private consultants to see if it has been applied fairly to Aboriginal students. A list of approved tests would help stop such abuse of testing.
- How are we 'actively' recruiting and retaining aboriginal teachers?

Comments from Teachers:

- Programs and Programming #2 - The word "should" in that statement is a weak word giving permission for choice to not take the recommendation seriously.
- That the 'inclusiveness' to which this is referred is also involving other Non-first Nation students learning about the Aboriginal historical perspective and becoming aware of the past and present triumphs and tribulations.
- On Staffing and PD... There needs to be an area that includes bringing in Cultural role models, to staff and students to explain and encourage the Aboriginal cultural significance (including Elders) including an established data base of Aboriginal peers/ mentors for learners 2. The title Prevention and Intervention does not list or describe "prevention"... what are they trying to prevent from occurring? High incidences rates, early pregnancy, alcohol/ drug dependency?? etc ... to me this can appear to be read in a "negative" or derogatory context similar to a stereotype, because that is what I read.

Question #4

As the purpose of the policy is to set direction for the district, what if anything should be added to the Foundation Statement and/or policy statements?

Comments from Agency or Organization Representative:

- It's ok
- What about job equity more Aboriginal teachers and teachers aid and principals? Cross Cultural training be mandated to all teachers and principals and administrators.
- Seems very clear-- great objectives, now we just have to learn who these people are and why they are where they are to achieve measureable, positive outcomes.
- Nothing at this time.
- Philosophical Foundation Statement Statements in this document need clarity or they are meaningless, empty statements. For example, paragraph 2: ? significant historic contributions (to what?); ?today and into the future (in what?); paragraph 3: ? ability of Aboriginal students (to do what?); ? to achieve success (as defined by whom?); ? and their cultures (what parts?). Whenever Aboriginal people is used, it must be peoples. In paragraph 5 it is stated that Aboriginal ways ? will be respected, etc. but not included in education. It is recognized in the document that ?grief and loss? are felt ? emotions have been described but the losses due to colonization and exclusion up to the present are more complex than that. This paragraph names racism, which is very good, but we feel the types of racism need to be described. Paragraph six states ?while respecting their goals? ? ?their? is ambiguous. Where ?Aboriginal cultures? is stated, please replace with ?Aboriginal peoples?. Where ?Aboriginal perspectives? is used, this indicates an opinion, and we suggest that ?ways of knowing? replace it. This paragraph is the only one included on the web and one of our committee members didn't notice that it was linked with the complete policy. It is fair to say that many would not realize that and the link needs to be made more clear.
- Some issues are universal in impacting people...poverty...why treat anyone different...poverty affects humans the same across the board...associating poverty with a race is a form of racism.
- If the respect for diversity is important the main focus should not only be one Aboriginal nation (Cree Nation) but include the different Aboriginal nations in the city of Edmonton and surrounding areas.
- To use different nations other than just Cree as there is many nations around us.

Comments from Community Members:

- It's fine as is
- Introduce Policy 1.3 or amend Policy 1.2 to add "...the Board will recognize National Aboriginal Day at the Board meeting closest to June 21."

Comments from Other Staff Members:

- The policy statements use words such as "should", leaving it up to schools to once again determined their own course of action when it comes to Aboriginal learners. How about the word "expects" or "will ensure". These seem stronger and demonstrate more commitment (see F. - Programs).

Comments from Parents:

- #1 as it was originally worded was extremely ambitious, many Aboriginal people do not have a clear understanding of their own culture, it is too much to assume and expect your own non-Aboriginal staff to achieve this kind of knowledge base. Instead I would encourage a great deal of knowledge sharing and tolerance teaching. One does not have to completely understand something in order to practice tolerance and respect of others customs and teachings. Giving your staff a basic working knowledge of common cultural protocols is a great foundation. Your staff does not have to strive to become Aboriginal in order to respect Aboriginal people. They should also clearly understand the difference between the Indian Act and Treaties. As well they should have a working knowledge of The Sixties Scoop and Residential Schools history and present day impacts.
- I need clarification of everything first before I can add anything. Why weren't notices sent home with students regarding this draft policy (send the a copy of the policy) and an invitation to complete this survey via other forms than just this one. I am very upset at finding this out four days before the end. This process is exclusive. Why weren't parents informed of a consultation process either (re: the discussions with the "Aboriginal Education Task Force"; who is on this task force?

Comments from Principal/Decision Unit Administrator:

- This is a 'respectful' document. In the area of Literacy and Numeracy, it has proven to be very difficult to get our Aboriginal children achieving at grade level due to the high record of absenteeism. Can this be addressed in the policy, or is it to be addressed elsewhere?
- We cannot take this on without understanding that this is a complex issue. It is obvious that a great deal of thought went into this and that the task force recognizes that social justice is part of the complexity. The statements that recognize "injustice" and "racism" are much needed and will be powerful to the next steps. The statements about "honoring ways" are also very significant up front and will serve to guide ensuing work. The statement that "all staff will understand and respect" is the most powerful and will really begin to drive the work and create possibility for real change. The question is, what about non Aboriginal students? Would it be possible to include a statement with the goal for all students to understand and respect. By doing these we would be setting the stage for real social change which in turn would set the stage for our Aboriginal students to be more successful. I understand the use of Aboriginal community to be inclusive and include parents but parents are critical to success. Are we diminishing the importance of the parental role by not naming them specifically. Would we do this if we were writing a policy for the community of white lawyers?

Comments from Teachers:

- That there should be an Aboriginal Elder sitting in on meetings who has a major background/ interest in Education.
- Under the Curriculum heading, with regard to "infusium" of the curricula, it should be amended to include "...as per Alberta Curriculum guidelines to Aboriginal Education..."
- Policy needs to reflect various levels of commitment including financial resources. The statements, while clear, do not provide sufficient detail for implementation.

Question #5

Are there elements that should be deleted from this policy? If yes, please explain and list below:

Comments from Agency or Organization Representatives:

- There is recognition of a diverse Aboriginal community but not inclusion of it. When we identify with one Aboriginal language and cultural avenue how are we different from residential schools requisite English language and culture? This should always remain an option.
- the inclusion of all Aboriginal nations - appointing elders by using community consensus - appointing elders of diverse Aboriginal backgrounds - appointing elders who have PHd's, education
- Inclusion of all nations appointing elders-using elders with PHD's in education not passing assessments to other schools.

Comments from Elder:

- Yes.

Comments from Parents:

- I have not had the opportunity to ask questions and get clarification so I cannot answer this question.

Comments from Teachers:

- Omit the word prevention or alter it to read a more suitable/ politically correct title.

Question #6

Are there aspects of the policy that cause you concern? If yes, please provide below:

Comments from Agency or Organization Representatives:

- Yes, see question 3, 4 and 7.
- Now we all know what must be done and why -- we must now focus on the who and how. I am sure we can help.
- The document is not completely inclusive, with regards to culture, epistemology (ways of knowing), or ontology (ways of being). It makes questionable assumptions about Aboriginal worldview, needs, and expectations; and by using the cover of policy, it has the potential of extending current marginalization and even effecting and even effecting new ones. As it stands, it would potentially be worse than having no policy at all. The group believes that this document does not include any objectives. The document as presented indicates that it speaks on behalf of the school board and the Aboriginal community. Not one person at this meeting was aware that a new policy was being created for Aboriginal students, and we also did not know who sat on the ?Aboriginal Task Force? with the board of trustees. We wondered what the criteria

were established for choosing the task force members and believe that it is crucial to include people who are not specifically chosen by the district. We would appreciate knowing who sat with this group and feel that their names should be included on the web-site and on question 2 of the on-line survey. The way Aboriginal community is defined is itself problematic. It was suggested that the definition be limited to parents and those concerned with the Aboriginal students who attend EPS. Consulting Aboriginal elders is not appropriate if they do not have education and training in Aboriginal education and those who do have these credentials must certainly be part of the group consulted. In section C, #2, we are very pleased to see reference to taking steps to include qualified Aboriginal staff, but we feel that "recruitment" needs to be followed by "hiring, retention, and promotion" as all good employment equity statements do. "representatives of the communities" needs clarifying. Section D of the document refers to improving achievement (good), but it needs to include a few words where this improvement could be measured. We also felt that a statement like the one we included in our draft policy: "Principals of antiracism and ethnocultural equity shall permeate and be manifest in all aspects of the boards organizational structure, including its mission statement and strategic plan, and all areas of the boards operations, policies, procedures, guidelines, programs and practices." (from Lakehead antiracism and ethnocultural equity policy) would go a long way to strengthening this document..

- There is a lot of data collected already and we need to start utilizing it, NAARR. There is a problem with an appointed elder committee. What about our Aboriginal Elders with Ph.D's in education why are they not being consulted?
- Assessments being transferred from one school to another - diversity not in practice - More Aboriginal teachers, counsellors, etc
- Appointing of elders assessments being transferred from schools more aboriginal teachers needed.

Comments from Community Members:

- It may just be the wording, but it seems that it should say, "The policy recognizes the need to develop and maintain mutually supportive relationships with Elders and the Aboriginal Community {in order to} increase knowledge, understanding and appreciation...", as opposed to saying, "...and to increase knowledge..." because someone has to decide what this knowledge is, and that should be decided by the Aboriginal peoples. In other words, inclusion should be in the structure (and the wording) of the policy (statement), not beside it. My reading of the above statement takes "understanding" to be 'cultural awareness', and "appreciation" to be an 'increase in value' of Aboriginal perspective. Although "knowledge, understanding, and appreciation" are valid goals, it may be of value to define them more clearly in the actual policy statement.
- You have not stated the unique ways that aboriginal need to be taught. In our culture we need to see and hear not only read and write. We need to have the wholistic approach to education. Yes add culture, but make some changes to the way you educate our children so they do not drop out. Be creative and interactive with sound, sight. Reading and writing that have been your way of educating do not fit us and this has been proven, so adding only a cultural under standing is not all that is needed.

Comments from Other Staff Members:

- It concerns me that Elders were not involved in drafting this policy.

Comments from Parents:

- The Board, as an advocate of choice, supports the provision of Aboriginal culture and/or language-based alternative programs based on community support. While it is nice and sometimes necessary to achieve community support, in some cases change must take place with or without it. In this case Aboriginal children deserve to have an Edmonton Public School board that not only advocates on their behalf but isn't afraid of making desperately needed changes with or without community support. If the south waited for "community support" would we still have slavery today?
- Who exactly is the "Aboriginal community"?

Comments from Principal/Decision Unit Administrators:

- Again, the C1 section; I think its unwieldy, possibly unmanageable to say "all staff will". What if some don't? Is the goal that our practice will be the respect of all peoples and their cultures?
- We state that we have a policy of hiring aboriginal candidates, but I am not sure that we have anything in place to support this initiative.

Comments from Teachers:

- Resources available for instructing the whole child.
- Only words that are strong in their meaning and which cannot be viewed as giving choices are to be used. See question and comment to #3.
- There are no First Nation/ Aboriginal organizations found under the EPSB that they can have direct consultation/ information working on educational aspects. This should be included as a 'future organization' such as the Aboriginal Students Union and Native Studies dept found at the Universities in Alberta.
- School level instructional leadership is essential to support teachers gaining new pedagogical skills and cultural knowledge in order to best serve the needs of aboriginal students.

Question #7

Do you have any additional comments? If yes, please provide below:

Comments from Agency or Organization Representatives:

- I think that the policy is a good first step at understanding diversity and tolerance of culture differences while promoting a workable solution for inclusion of other culture beliefs and practices.
- I understand EPS receives an extra \$1000 per Aboriginal Students. How will the Aboriginal Education task force make sure that these extra funds will be spent on Aboriginal Students?
- This is impressive. The challenge is always "making it real" and will come with the definitions, processes and timelines the Board will chose to use.
- Action Group for Racial Equity in Education? Public Schools Reaction to Aboriginal Education Policy. The committee was pleased to see this first attempt at developing a policy for the education of Aboriginal students, but felt strongly that it is not near ready for adopting at this time. We agreed that as it is, the proposed policy is a very good discussion paper that needs wide community consultation and discussion. Agree suggested that EPS have a formal Launch for this document to open the door for a deep consultation process, especially important given that this is a new policy. Such a process would fully develop the document and be a very useful process for Edmonton Public Schools and for the community. NAARR would be able to assist in such a

process. General comments -The document presents a set of circumstances as a fait accompli, which is not the case. It is crucial that statements on how the policy will be implemented and monitored must be included and such statements are included in good policy. Review phases should be specified, along with ongoing consultation over that period where other issues will arise to allow for ongoing change. Finally, we feel the document needs to include a statement that gives school principals the responsibility to educate parents about this, when it becomes policy. Many parents are not educated themselves and those people need the policy to be communicated to them in ways they will understand.

- The only concern I could have will be the implementation of the policy and who will monitor and evaluate. There are many policies on paper which has never been evaluated their effectiveness I hope this will be different. It would be helpful if there are outside monitoring agency who could oversee how it's implemented.
- Do we need to look at Culture Free Assessing? Dr. Jim Battle? I think bus tickets could be provided to support home and school. Reviewing the Richard Lavoie documentaries as an in service and recognizing ways that self esteem is nurtured and destroyed for all peoples. Have the percentage of Aboriginal teachers on board to match the percentages of Aboriginal students at schools. Storytelling, paying attention to context of child's background. Student assessment following children to other schools FOIP stereotyping....not always a healthy strategy.
- Research and data needs to include information from agencies like NAARR, various other agencies and aboriginal scholars.
- Hearing children's stories using story telling.

Comments from Community Members:

- I am in support of the proposed policy however I think it needs to be more clearly defined and worked through.
- Please insure that there all more aboriginal people working in all areas. This would help our children realize that they too can be part of this society. This policy is a good start but need to be in the curriculum?? Of the teachers to be more creative and supportive to bring up the self esteem in aboriginal children. Testing and extra help for our children with special needs. This is really needed. Asking family to help a child with learning disability is stupid the parent probably have disability them and have drop out of school. so more support and help to assist in this would be great.
- Just to say, good for Edmonton Public for seeing the benefit of a public written commitment!

Comments from Other Staff Members:

- I think it is very important for the district to address the uniqueness of Aboriginal education. This policy makes that possible.
- In the opening remarks, (top of page 2) the second of the four bullets begins with "Recognizing displacement... It may be better worded as "...as an historical fact that contributes to an ongoing sense of grief and loss within the community."

Comments from Parents:

- I applaud the Edmonton Public School board for their efforts towards achieving inclusion and support for the Aboriginal children in their schools. Please continue your efforts Aboriginal children are worth it, as well your own children are worth it as well. Having a tolerant supportive environment for all is what we would all like; of this I am sure.
- Would be nice to have a combination of mixed education.

- I am extremely disappointed with this process. I would like the deadline extended so that parents, Elders, community members can respond fully and feel like they have been heard and that their feedback will be acted upon.
- Under "C" Staffing and Professional Development. An area of importance is the continued education of staff regarding Aboriginal cultures and their respective differences.

Comments from Principal/Decision Unit Administrator:

- I am wondering if professional development for EPS staff will be made available for those who do not have a strong understanding of native culture?
- This is an excellent beginning. There are many strong aspects to this - one that I want to commend specifically is the one about finding better ways to assess and measure growth!!!

Comments from Teachers:

- It is a great document which will help to give credibility to the issues and empower the leaders who work with our Aboriginal students to do what is right. It gives a strong, clear and precise message about the direction that must be taken.
- I would like to see a copy of this Policy (as I was not involved in the input previously). Where is this available? (copy was provided)
- I would like to be a part of this group if possible. I am teaching at the Keheewin Community Education Centre in Keheewin, AB. Please note: I was working with Treaty 6 Ed and the Confederacy of Treaty Six prior to my return to teaching this school year.
- In addition to working with the First Nations community, it would be helpful to draw on the expertise of aboriginal scholars who are experts in aboriginal education at the University of Alberta.

Question #8

May we contact you if we require additional information?

- **19 out of 44 responded positively to being contacted.**

Edmonton Public Schools

Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: IAA.AR
 TOPIC: Aboriginal Education

EFFECTIVE DATE: **DRAFT May 17, 2007**
 ISSUE DATE:
 REVIEW DATE:

A. RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

Schools are expected to provide opportunities for all students to become knowledgeable about Aboriginal values and culture and to demonstrate respect and recognition of Aboriginal values and culture. In fulfilling this expectation, schools may:

- invite Elders and other knowledgeable people into the classroom
- permit use of Sweetgrass and practice of Smudging in the school
- celebrate National Aboriginal Day on a yearly basis
- employ Aboriginal protocols in meetings with parents and in dealing with disciplinary matters
- acknowledge through permanent and rotating school displays of Aboriginal art, symbols and student work that Aboriginal students are part of the school community
- use district supports such as the Aboriginal Collection On-line, Aboriginal consultants and liaison workers.

B. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To ensure community involvement, the district will:

- maintain an external Aboriginal advisory committee
- establish alliances with Aboriginal agencies and organizations in support of shared goals for Aboriginal students and families
- develop and maintain alliances with post-secondary institutions to support effective transitions
- establish relationships with Treaty and Métis authorities
- employ strategies (e.g., family nights, Stepping into School) to encourage the involvement of Aboriginal families.
- support schools to develop and maintain respectful dialogue and partnerships with Aboriginal agencies and organizations, as well as others serving Aboriginal families, to provide resources that respond to the complex needs of some members of the Aboriginal community.

C. STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To assist all staff to become more knowledgeable about Aboriginal values and culture, the district will:

- provide Aboriginal cultural sensitivity training for all staff.
- for new hires to the district provide Aboriginal cultural sensitivity training as soon as possible but within two years of employment.
- provide opportunities for staff to participate in professional development regarding:
 - infusion of Aboriginal outcomes, including the resources that support the outcomes
 - practices related to the “oral tradition,” holistic approaches, hands-on experiences, and other research-based approaches found to be effective with Aboriginal learners.
 - working effectively with Aboriginal families

D. ACHIEVEMENT

For programming purposes and internal use, the district will:

- track the achievement of self-identified Aboriginal students, including graduation rates
- track the attendance and retention rates of self-identified Aboriginal students
- track the involvement of Aboriginal students in various alternative programs such as International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, Youth Apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship Program and special education
- disaggregate Aboriginal student achievement results at the school level for schools with sufficient numbers of Aboriginal students for reporting purposes
- report the tracking data to Aboriginal Education Standing Committee and Conference Committee on an annual basis.

All Schools are encouraged to nominate Aboriginal students for a Nellie Carlson award or other awards as appropriate.

E. CURRICULUM

The district will support the continued evolution, development and use of the Aboriginal collection on-line.

F. PROGRAMS AND PROGRAMMING

The district will annually consult with the Aboriginal community regarding the demand and support for Aboriginal language alternatives and develop programs as required.

- The district on an on-going basis will research and evaluate effective practices in Aboriginal education and provide this information to school and district staff.
- The district will encourage participation in research studies related to Aboriginal education.
- The district will sponsor workshops and seminars related to Aboriginal education.

G. ASSESSMENT

The district within its own decision units and in partnership with external groups (e.g., Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth and Families and

Misericordia Community Pediatric Research Group) will research and evaluate assessment instruments and practices as they relate to Aboriginal students and provide this information to school and district staff.

H. ~~PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION~~ ENHANCED SUPPORTS FOR LEARNING

1. The district will encourage and support effective transitions by:
 - establishing links with reserves in the region with the intent of developing practices that will support the transition of students between reserves and the district and between schools in the district
 - assisting schools to liaise and collaborate with Head Start programs, home visitation programs and child care providers to support the transition of students between early learning and district programming
 - establishing links with Aboriginal employment agencies, organizations and programs (e.g., Oteenow, Yellowhead Tribal Council) to support the transition of students to the world of work
 - collaborating with post-secondary institutions to support the transition of students to a range of post-secondary opportunities

2. The district will support a range of strategies to encourage and support students to stay in school, including
 - collaborating with community organizations to extend, establish and maintain a range of supports, including Aboriginal mentoring and role-model programs
 - investigating alternative provision of counselling through - Elders and Aboriginal agency staff
 - using alternatives to Attendance Board such as community conferencing.

Reference(s): IAA.BP
