EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Esslinger, Policy and Planning Committee
              Trustee Fleming, Policy and Planning Committee
              Trustee Gibson, Policy and Planning Committee

SUBJECT: Managing District Information

ORIGINATOR: R. MacNeil, Executive Director

RESOURCE
STAFF: Mike Falk, Denise Lamontagne, Betty Tams, Anne Sherwood

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This matter relates to information regarding:
- Draft policy being brought to the Board of Trustees for first and second reading.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That policy CN.BP, Managing District Information (Appendix I) be introduced.

2. That policy CN.BP, Managing District Information (Appendix I) be read for the first time.

3. That policy CN.BP, Managing District Information (Appendix I) be read for the second time.

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In accordance with the board's policy approval process, policy CN.BP, Managing District Information (Appendix I) will be brought for third and final approval to the next public board meeting.

The attached draft policy statement (Appendix I) is a proposed new policy to guide the management of district information as a valuable corporate asset. The policy statement is the crucial starting place for a strong records management program that is relevant and responsive to district needs and challenges. The proposed policy speaks to the board's beliefs and expectations with respect to:

- the district's ownership and responsibility for its records,
- the district's accountability for effective and efficient use of all its resources, including information, in carrying out its mandated responsibilities,
- the public's right to know and have access to the records held by the district as a publicly funded and accountable body, and
- the district's obligation to protect individual privacy.

The policy provides the philosophy that will guide administrative regulations, and day to day practices in an open accountability environment. Parents and students will be able to identify and understand the district's philosophy with respect to access to information and our practices for protecting their privacy.

Background

Although current policy JBG.BP – Retention of Records and Objects (Appendix II) implies general support for district records management, the policy was primarily designed to address records and objects destined for Archives and Museum. Under the district's site based decision making model, responsibility for the identification and safekeeping of records has rested with individual schools and decision units and there has been little overall district level coordination. Over the last 5 to 10 years, not only have school level administrative responsibilities increased, but the legislative and legal landscape with respect to record creation and retention has changed considerably with an increased emphasis on district-level accountability and reporting to the province, the advent of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP), and increased legal challenges. These changes place the district at risk with respect to compliance and legally defensible records management practices. Examples of increased responsibility relating to records management include:

- To comply with a FOIP request district staff must have a clear idea of where all records pertaining to the request reside.
- As a public body the district must have the authority to collect the information required for its business purposes as well as the authority to dispose of records as required.
- The district's educational and administrative practices are rapidly changing with the use of technology, requiring policies and standards related to the management of electronic records.
- Staff at individual schools and decision units require clear direction about which decision unit or school has the responsibility to maintain a specific records series. This will prevent duplicate records being kept, overcrowded file rooms for storage of transitory records, wasted staff resource time, and the potential for the inadvertent destruction of important district records.
- Secure temporary and permanent records storage facilities and consistent retention and disposition practices are essential for cost effective and efficient records management. Without efficient records management practices the district is not only vulnerable to breaches under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act,* but is also in a weakened position for meeting provincial accountability and reporting requirements and defending its position in legal actions.

As presented at budget and results reviews, the district began to investigate the issue of district records management in 2003. In 2004-2005, a District FOIP and Records Management consulting position was created and staffed to assist in developing and implementing a district information management program.

The objective of this project is for the district to have in place a strategically developed Records and FOIP Management Program that will:

- provide schools and decision units with tools to efficiently manage information assets and respond effectively to external obligations with minimal time and effort
- enable the district to meet its obligations under provincial and FOIP regulations
- make the most efficient use of district resources.
- create an environment and the infrastructure to manage information into the future.

Stakeholder Input

The district is unique in that it is heavily decentralized and therefore models for records management used elsewhere are not easily transplanted. Early into the process of developing this policy it was recognized that direct involvement of a broad spectrum of district departments and schools was needed to capture district culture and practice. A Records & FOIP Management Program Development Advisory Committee was created that includes representation from the FOIP head and consultant, a school principal, senior administration, and the managers of central decision units most affected by this policy.

The proposed policy was drafted with input from the afore-mentioned advisory committee, General Counsel as well as senior administration. The draft was reviewed by Superintendent's Council to gain a better understanding of the issues schools may encounter in implementing a district records management program. Principals gained a general understanding of the need for this initiative in light of the increased accountability of schools and central decision units for the manner in which records are maintained. A consistent district approach to the management of records will be of great assistance to schools in carrying out their responsibilities more efficiently.

In addition, the draft policy was posted to the district's website with an open invitation for stakeholder comment or response. Overall responses were supportive and positive. A specific comment was recorded identifying the issue of specific retention periods for records. This issue will be addressed in the development of records retention schedules subsequent to this policy's approval.

Next Steps

- In accordance with the board's policy approval process, policy CN.BP, Managing District Information (Appendix I) will be brought for third and final approval to the next public board meeting.
- The administrative regulations that provide district staff with guidelines in support of this policy will be refined and brought forward to the Superintendent for approval.
- Changes to existing practices will take place gradually over the course of the project implementation.

MF/AS/DL

APPENDIX I: CN.BP - Managing District Information
APPENDIX II: JBG.BP – Retention of Records and Objects

Edmonton Public Schools
Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: CN.BP   EFFECTIVE DATE:
TOPIC: Managing District Information   ISSUE DATE:
                                                         REVIEW DATE:

All records created in the service of Edmonton Public Schools, regardless of form or creator, are the property of Edmonton Public Schools.

A. The Board believes that:

1. district records are a vital district resource that must be managed effectively and efficiently;

2. staff should have access to the information necessary for them to carry out their work;

3. the district is responsible for documenting the activities and results for which the district is accountable;

4. parents, staff, students and the public have the right of access to records held by the district except where district or legislated requirements prevent.

B. The board expects that district records management practices and processes shall ensure:

1. open and accountable reporting to the public;

2. district records are maintained in a legally defensible manner;

3. accountability for managing and maintaining information is clear and well-defined;

4. information is managed through its entire life cycle from collection, record creation or receipt to final disposition through archival preservation or destruction;

5. the privacy of individuals is protected at all times during collection, use and disclosure of information;

6. the security, integrity and accuracy of information used and reported.

Reference(s):
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
School Act

Edmonton Public Schools
Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: JBG.BP   EFFECTIVE DATE: 08-02-2000
TOPIC: Retention of Records and Objects   ISSUE DATE: 10-02-2000
                                                           REVIEW DATE: 02-2005

The board encourages the collection and preservation of records and objects which form the permanent record of the district's philosophy, policy, people, and performance. Edmonton Public Schools Archives and Museum shall be the official repository and custodian of such materials. The board believes that records and objects assist in the interpretation of history, and that these materials should be accessible to district staff, students, parents, and the general public, subject to any restrictions imposed by law, or district policy and regulations.

Reference(s):
DJ.BP - Purchasing
EDC.AR - Publication and Authorization for Use of District Owned Materials
IO.AR - Student Records
JBG.AR - Retention of Records and Objects
JQ.AR - Research Projects
School Act Section 75
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act