

DATE: February 6, 2024

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Marcia Hole, Policy Review Committee
Trustee Jan Sawyer, Policy Review Committee
Trustee Saadiq Sumar, Chair, Policy Review Committee

SUBJECT: Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director, Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE

STAFF: Angela Anderson, Naimo Bille, Grace Garcia Cooke, Kelsey Duebel, Trish Kolotyluk, Bob Morter, Nancy Petersen, Wanas Radwan, Elizabeth Shen

REFERENCE: [Trustees Handbook](#) Section 5.4 – Caucus Committee
[Board Policy CH.BP – Framework for Policy Development and Review](#)

ISSUE

The Policy Review Committee (PRC) has reviewed Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar as part of its 2023-2024 work plan and is presenting the updated policy to the Board of Trustees (the Board) for first reading.

BACKGROUND

Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar provides direction on the development and approval of the Division calendar in accordance with collective agreement requirements, and applicable federal and provincial statutes and regulations. A review of Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar is an item on PRC's 2023-2024 work plan and includes direction to administration on the inclusion of diverse days of significance.

RELATED FACTS

- The PRC engaged in a focused discussion on February 22, 2022, to establish the goals and guiding values supporting the review of Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar.
- Questions related to the school year calendar were included in the 2021-2022 Division Feedback Survey to understand staff, family and student perspectives on the development of the calendar with a focus on the inclusion of days of significance.
- PRC discussed multiple policy options during a committee meeting on November 10, 2022.
 - After reviewing the benefits and risks for each option, committee members unanimously agreed upon an option to prioritize the inclusion of days of significance.
 - This option was shared with the full Board at the December 13, 2022, Caucus meeting and with the public at the January 24, 2023, Board meeting. Since then, the PRC has completed the work to support the development of a first draft of the revised policy.
- The revised draft of Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar continues to:
 - Provide direction for the school calendar to be used by Division schools across all grade levels (i.e., elementary, junior high and high schools). This consistency will continue to support

- collaboration across catchments, Division-wide professional learning opportunities and predictability for families with children in different schools across the Division.
- o Support families and their long-term planning by continuing to direct that the Division provide staff, students, parents and the public with access to the approved calendar in advance of the school year.
 - o Aim to provide a balance between the feedback shared by stakeholders and the external requirements that must be adhered to by the Division (i.e., collective agreement requirements, and applicable federal and provincial statutes and regulations) when providing direction for the scheduling of breaks in the school year calendar.
 - o Articulate that the Superintendent of Schools has the authority to modify the school calendar for specific schools on an annual basis if the approved calendar does not meet that school's needs.
 - The revised draft of Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar provides the opportunity to:
 - o Affirm the Board's commitment to developing a school year calendar that respects diversity, commits to anti-racism and supports a sense of belonging for all students.
 - o Include definitions that can improve the clarity and accessibility of the policy, support a greater understanding of days of significance and help stakeholders identify the various external requirements that are reflected in the establishment of the school calendar.
 - o Recognize that the first day of classes should be set to support flexibility throughout the remainder of the school year in order to meet the goals and requirements of the calendar.
 - o Articulate that the Board prioritizes alignment with diverse days of significance as the Division's primary consideration in the scheduling of the school year calendar's breaks for students, before the consideration of additional preferences for the placement of breaks.
 - o Outline the requirements that must be adhered to when developing the school year calendar.
 - o Highlight the additional tools and resources used by the Division to support the recognition of diverse days of significance.
 - Potential engagement methods, techniques and questions were discussed by the PRC at several committee meetings in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. The PRC agreed upon the following strategies:
 - o Develop a teaching tool to support engagement with staff, students and families. As suggested by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum for public engagement, a video has been created to inform the public about the various requirements and considerations framing the development of the school year calendar. To support accessibility, the video captions have been translated into several languages.
 - o Public engagement will occur through an online public survey that will be open for four weeks following the policy's first reading at the public Board meeting.
 - o Any potential further engagement opportunities will be considered after feedback received from the public survey is reviewed.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **That Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar be read for the first time and be approved for stakeholder feedback.**

OPTIONS

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. Approve first reading of the policy.
2. Provide the PRC with feedback to inform revision of the document to support approval of first reading at an upcoming Board meeting.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

The proposed policy revisions are intended to provide clarity for all readers of the policy and to provide the Division with the opportunity to include diverse days of significance as breaks in the school year calendar. The revisions have been informed by subject matter experts in the Division, feedback from community members around days of significance and by stakeholder feedback collected through the 2021-2022 Division Feedback Survey.

The PRC's 2023-2024 work plan includes a review of Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar. Approval to move forward with the draft of this policy will align with this timeline.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the recommendation, the draft policy and a public survey will be posted to the Division website for four weeks to gather stakeholder feedback.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Draft Board Policy GCA.BP Approval of the School Year Calendar

SS:wr

CODE: GCA.BP

EFFECTIVE DATE: (05-06-2014)

TOPIC: Approval of the School Year Calendar

ISSUE DATE: (dd-mm-yyyy)

REVIEW YEAR: (yyyy)

PURPOSE

To support the Board of Trustees' (Board) commitment to developing a school year calendar that respects diversity, commits to anti-racism and supports a sense of belonging for all students.

To outline the Board's direction for the development of the school year calendar in accordance with collective agreement requirements, and applicable federal and provincial statutes and regulations, as may be amended from time to time.

DEFINITIONS

Board Approved Non-instructional Day refers to a day in the school year when teachers and students are not present in schools.

Day of Significance is a day of spiritual, religious or cultural significance.

Lunar Calendar refers to a dating system that uses the cycle of the moon to measure the passage of time throughout the year.

Lunisolar Calendar refers to a dating system that uses the position of the sun and the phases of the moon to measure the passage of time throughout the year.

Multi-faith Calendar is the Division-created calendar intended to support the recognition of faith-based days of significance. This calendar is shared by the Division annually as a planning and information tool.

Operational Day refers to a day when teachers have duties assigned by the Board. Operational days include instructional days (when students receive instruction) and non-instructional days (when students are not receiving instruction). The school year typically begins with an operational day and ends with an operational day.

Professional Development Day (also known as **Professional Learning Day**) is a day where Division staff have the opportunity to collaborate, learn new skills and strategies and connect with specialists and community partners about ways to improve their practice and enhance their knowledge.

School Year Calendar is the Board-approved calendar that is used by Division schools.

Teachers' Days-in-Lieu are Board approved non-instructional days provided in recognition of the time involved for reporting student achievement.

POLICY

The Board believes it is important that the school year calendar upholds a high quality education system, enhances pathways to student success and supports an inclusive and welcoming environment. When staff, students and families can see themselves reflected in the school year calendar, their sense of belonging, inclusion, well-being, and ultimately their growth, is supported.

These values are supported through the scheduling of operational days, professional development days, Board-approved non-instructional days and teachers' days-in-lieu. Therefore, the first day of classes should be set to support flexibility throughout the remainder of the school year. This flexibility will enable the intentional placement of breaks in alignment with Board values.

The Board recognizes that respect for diverse days of significance enriches the learning and working environments and is important to the sense of belonging, inclusion and well-being of staff and students. As such, the Board prioritizes alignment with diverse days of significance to be the Division's primary consideration in the scheduling of the school year calendar's breaks for students, before the consideration of additional preferences for the placement of breaks (such as, but not limited to, the grouping of days to create long breaks or the avoidance of mid-week breaks). The Board expects that all decisions related to the scheduling of the school year calendar are made in accordance with collective agreement requirements, and applicable federal and provincial statutes and regulations.

The Board expects that the Division will use available data and feedback from students and families to inform the selection of days of significance to be included in the school year calendar each year, with the recognition that:

- A. Some days of significance follow the Lunar calendar or Lunisolar calendar and do not occur on the same date every year (i.e., occur on floating dates); therefore, the ability of the Division to include days of significance in the school year calendar may vary each year.
- B. There will be times when breaks cannot be scheduled on days of significance because of collective agreement requirements, and applicable federal and provincial statutes and regulations that must be adhered to by the Division.

Requirements that must be adhered to by the Division include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. The *Education Act*, which directs the legal requirements that must be adhered to by all schools in Alberta.
- B. The *Guide to Education*, which communicates requirements for instructional hours, as mandated by the Minister of Education.
- C. *General Information Bulletins*, which communicate requirements for, and the scheduling of, diploma examinations, provincial achievement tests and provincial student learning assessments.

- D. The *Funding Manual*, which determines the expectations and timelines guiding school funding.
- E. The *Employment Standards Code of Alberta*, which outlines the general holidays that must be provided to employees.
- F. *Collective Agreements* for teachers, support staff, custodial staff and maintenance staff, which direct the terms and conditions of employment.
- G. *Terms and Conditions of Employment*, which communicate conditions of employment for exempt staff.

The Division will continue to use a range of methods to support the recognition of diverse days of significance for staff and students, including, but not limited to, the use of the Multi-faith Calendar to guide the setting of classroom assessment dates or assignments and the identification and planning of educational opportunities, events and activities across the Division.

EXPECTATIONS

The Board recognizes that the school year calendar impacts students, families and staff and believes that a consistent calendar allows the majority of the Division's students to start and end the school year and to be dismissed for breaks on the same dates. In addition, the Board believes that parents, students, staff and community need to be made aware of future planned school calendars to allow time to appropriately plan ahead.

During each school year, the Board will:

1. Approve an additional school year calendar, thereby giving staff, students, parents and the public access to approved school year calendars for two years after the current school year.
2. Approve any changes to any previously-approved school year calendar made necessary by information not available at the time the calendar was approved.

Should circumstances arise at a school where the approved calendar does not meet the school's needs, the Superintendent of Schools is given the authority to modify the school calendar for that school on an annual basis.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Superintendent will be responsible for implementing this policy through appropriate administrative regulations and communication with Division stakeholders, including staff, students and parents/guardians.

REFERENCES

Alberta Education *General Information Bulletin* - Alberta Provincial Student Learning Assessment
Alberta Education *General Information Bulletin* - Alberta Provincial Achievement Testing
Alberta Education *General Information Bulletin* - Diploma Examinations Program
Alberta Education - Funding Manual for School Authorities

Alberta Education - Guide to Education
Custodial Collective Agreement
Edmonton Public School Board - Multi-Faith Calendar
Education Act - Sections 7(4)(b), 33(1)(d), 60.
Employment Standards Code of Alberta
FBD.BP Designated Holidays
FCBD.AR Time in Recognition of Duties Related to Reporting Student Achievement
FLC.AR School Professional Development Days
GCA.AR The School Year Calendar
GCAA.AR Dismissal Times Before Vacation Periods
GCAB.AR Remembrance Day
GD.BP Instructional Time
GE.BP Organization for Instruction
GEA.AR Semester Changeover - Senior High Schools
HAA.BP First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education
HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity
Maintenance Collective Agreement
Support Staff Collective Agreement
Teachers' Collective Agreement
Terms and Conditions of Employment - Exempt Non-Management
Terms and Conditions of Employment - Exempt Management