

Edmonton Public Schools

Terms of Reference

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PARENT AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Effective Date: May 2012

Review Date: Spring 2018

NAME OF COMMITTEE

The Committee shall be known as the Inclusive Education Parent and Community Advisory Committee.

BACKGROUND

In November 2010, the Board voted to establish a Special Needs Task Force, with its purpose “to support the implementation of an inclusive education system, as envisioned in the *Setting the Direction Framework*, in Edmonton Public Schools and ensure greater consistency in serving the needs of students across the District.”

The Task Force membership consisted of Trustees, school and district leadership staff, and invited parents and community members. It operated in the period January–June 2011, with their work culminating in a June 14, 2011 Recommendation Report to Board. The Task Force then disbanded.

Recommendation #6 from the Task Force report stated:

That, to ensure community involvement, the Administration establish and maintain an external Inclusive Education advisory committee, and that the purpose of the committee be clearly outlined.

VISION AND PURPOSE

The Inclusive Education Parent and Community Advisory Committee shall be a structured vehicle to ensure continuing involvement of parent and community members in the District’s implementation of an inclusive education system. It will provide for two-way communication and dialogue between the Administration (i.e., central leadership) and Committee members, relating to district policy, regulation or practice regarding inclusive education.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Activities of the Committee will provide opportunities for the Administration to bring forward items for information and advice, and for parent and community members to bring forward items to inform the District of parent and community aspirations in inclusive education.

The work of the Committee shall be considered as enhancing the work of the District in its development of an inclusive education system, and as enabling parent and community voice to be included in this process.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE DISTRICT

Parent and community members serve in an advisory role, with the level of participation falling in the Consult and Involve ranges as defined on the Spectrum of Public Participation by the [International Association for Public Participation](#).

- Consult is defined as “to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.”
- Involve means “to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.”

The Committee has otherwise, no decision-making power or authority, as advice from the Committee to the Administration is to enhance understanding and consideration of parental and community perspectives.

Members of the Committee may neither assume responsibility for work of the District, nor represent Edmonton Public Schools, nor the Committee, in any other forum. Members of the Committee may not, in their role as Committee members, act as advocates or mediators in any individual situation.

All Committee members acknowledge that Edmonton Public Schools is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP), and will abide by the requirements of FOIP insofar as applicable to the operations of the Committee. Accordingly, no discussion of named students or parents/guardians or district staff shall occur within Committee discussions.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee shall consist of no more than ten parent and community members, and will include two members of the Administration, one of whom will be a representative from Inclusive Learning.

Parent and community members normally serve a two-year term. The composition of parent and community members shall change by about 50 per cent every two years, with no member serving more than two consecutive terms (i.e., four years).

Members representing the Administration normally serve a one-year term, though this may be dependent on other operational requirements. For continuity from year to year, it is anticipated that at least one member from the Administration continue membership into a succeeding year.

Application for Membership: Parents or community members interested in Committee membership shall submit a formal application, outlining their interest, related skills or abilities, affiliation(s) with community or advocacy groups, and include two character references that the Administration may contact.

As necessary, the Administration may solicit membership for the Committee by placing advertisements on the district website, in school newsletters or in local media, asking for applications from interested parents or community members. Advertisements would normally occur near the end of each two-year period, when the intentions of existing Committee members become known.

Selection, tenure and replacement of parent and community members shall be at the discretion of the Administration, using the preceding guidelines, and with the intent of seeking a balance of representation, both of parents with children currently attending Edmonton Public Schools, and of other interested community members. If a large number of applications are received, interviews may be arranged to assist in the selection process.

MEETINGS

Committee meetings will be chaired by a district staff member representing the Administration.

There will be no expectations around quorum for a meeting; however, each Committee member is expected to commit to attending each meeting during their membership period, and otherwise communicate any unexpected absences to the Chair in advance of the meeting. A member who misses more than two meetings in a year will be asked to withdraw from the Advisory Committee position. Individual circumstances will be taken into consideration when asking a member to withdraw.

Schedule of Meetings: The Committee will meet three times per school year (fall, winter, spring), with dates arranged at the discretion of the Chair. Meetings will normally last about two hours each, and be scheduled for early evenings (6:30–8:30 p.m.) in the Conference Centre at the Centre for Education. Duration of a meeting, however, may be occasionally extended, should a simple majority among all members vote for extension.

Structure of Meetings: The Chair will solicit agenda items beginning two weeks prior to each meeting, and an agenda will be prepared in advance for each meeting. Standing agenda items shall include information and requests for advice from the Administration, as well as issues, suggestions, or questions from parents and community members. Any Committee member may, with reasonable notice, propose agenda items to the Chair, including during the meeting start up, when the agenda is reviewed and approved.

Criteria for Agenda Items: Agenda items will include a balance of information and advice requests from the Administration, agenda items proposed by Committee members, and a round table sharing session with a time allotment for each Committee member to speak. Agenda items not covered (due to time) will be placed on the proposed agenda for the next meeting.

Role of Committee Members: To work constructively within the activities of the Committee. Edmonton Public Schools is committed to providing and promoting working environments that foster respectful and responsible behaviour. It is the responsibility of Committee members to contribute to creating a positive working environment in all activities of the Committee (source: Board Policy GBCA.BP - [Respectful Working Environments](#)).

Role of the Chair: To solicit and collect agenda items; provide agendas in advance of meeting dates; chair meetings; facilitate the orderly discussion of agenda items; ensure positive and respectful conversation; and distribute meeting summaries and an annual Committee activity summary to Committee members and Administration. At sole discretion, the Chair may remove, either temporarily or permanently, any member from the Committee who acts in contradiction to these Terms of Reference. The Chair has no voting privileges.

Role of Inclusive Learning Member: To act as a resource person to the Committee. The Inclusive Learning member has no voting privileges.

Decision-making: Advice from the Committee to the Administration shall be by group consensus and/or simple majority among the parent and community members. Minority opinion may, nevertheless, be recorded in the meeting summary, when requested.

COMMUNICATION

Names of Committee members and Terms of Reference shall be posted to the district website. Contact information (e-mail address, telephone number) of Committee members shall (with permission) be distributed to Committee members.

Meeting summaries shall be distributed to Committee members and to the District's Executive Team (i.e., Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendents, and Executive Directors).

An annual Committee Activity Summary shall be distributed to Committee members and to the District's Executive Team. The Committee Activity Summary will be provided to the Board within the annual Special Education Information Report.

Records and correspondence will be maintained by Student Learning Services. The district records retention schedule of three years for Committee records shall apply.

RESOURCES AND BUDGET

District commitment

- a. meeting space and public parking
- b. \$500 annually (estimated) for meeting costs
- c. \$500 every two years (estimated) for advertising costs

DURATION

The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the Committee towards the end of each district three-year planning cycle – with advice to make modifications, or to continue or disband the Committee – provided through the Chair of the Committee to the Administration for decision.

RELATED POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Related policies and regulations that may inform the work of the Committee include the *School Act*; Alberta Education's *Setting the Direction* (2009); *Action on Inclusion* (2010); *Inspiring Action on Education* (2010); Board Policy GBCA.BP – Respectful Working Environments, and other existing district policies and regulations. Board policy IB.BP – Inclusive Education, and Administrative Regulation IB.AR – Inclusive Education shall also be considered, as and when available.