Effective: November 24, 2016

Policy: Policy Development

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Introduction to Policy Development

Policy is "a set of organizational statements, values and perspectives adopted by a Board, to direct a course of action." In our Catholic Board, clarity of integration with our faith tradition and gospel values is critical.

Thoughtful, carefully developed policy provides a framework for ethical decision-making and guides the operations of the Board. By giving final approval to all policies, Trustees ensure that decisions reflect Board values. At its highest level, policy helps to translate the vision and the intention of the School Board into actions for its students. This is how School Boards establish direction and give structure to their Boards.

The Education Act, in describing the authority of School Boards, sets out their specific authority to exercise power through policy. This authority rests with the Board of Trustees as a whole and represents the "voice" of the Board. Individual Board members demonstrate effectiveness through an ability to influence and help the Board come to decisions as a group.

Policy Statement

The Superior North Catholic District School Board shall adopt a program of policy management and governance, which ensures consistency in policy development, consultation, review and implementation. This will ensure that each policy fulfill the following purposes:

- explain why things need to change;

- communicate the Board's priorities and expectations in clear and easily understood language;

- informed judgment and ensure long-term planning throughout the system;

- help the Board to focus on what is important—student learning;

- improve decision-making by addressing issues central to authentic governance, such as the need to be accountable, or to address issues related to equity or safety;

- rely on evidence, analysis and evaluation;

- help the Board to manage risk by considering the impact of direction to people and organizations;

- are compliant with government mandates and requirements; and

- strengthen relationships by actively engaging the Board with its staff, parents and larger community, both to provide information and to communicate.

Process for Effective Policymaking – What makes a "good" policy?

Good policy aligns with the mission, vision and values, and strategic directions of the Board.

Good policy is beneficial. It creates public value. Policy change should benefit individuals, organizations and services. Analysis of intended and unintended consequences is a crucial aspect of policy work. The direction to be set, or the problem to be addressed, by policy change must be clear from the outset.

Good policymaking considers both the short and longer term systems' impact. It uses evidence and information as the basis for analysis, which should, in turn be rational, comprehensive, thorough and balanced. Quantitative and qualitative information should be applied.

Good policy is ethical. Board Codes of Conduct espouse principles of integrity, respect and accountability that everyone in the Board should apply to their work. Processes used to develop policy need to be clearly communicated and widely understood. The processes should engage from the outset those individuals and organizations who will be affected by policy change.

Good policy is intelligible. Clarity and economy are essential features of good policy. A good policy should be no more than two or three pages in length and in plain English. Policy should be described in as few words as possible with clear messages, which are readily understood.

All policy documents are constructed, published and written in a particular time and place. They should be reviewed, refreshed, abandoned and/or replaced as the Board moves forward.

Effective policy development and implementation aligns with Board milestones and targets, and responds rapidly to emerging challenges and changes of direction. It foresees the challenges of implementation and adapts to the shifting realities of operational environments.

Good policy is reviewed and evaluated. As part of its process, the Board of Trustees should establish an annual policy agenda with a schedule for regular review and monitoring of progress throughout the Board meeting agendas. Here again, this should be done with a view to aligning Board priorities and maximizing time for discussion and reflection.

Process

Identification of Policy Issues

The identification of the need for a Board policy or the need for review or revision of an existing Board policy may be initiated by Board members, constituent groups, a Board's policy committee, students, or staff members. The need for change could also be identified as a result of policy directives from the Ministry of Education, or as a result of regulations or legislation at the federal, provincial, or municipal level.

Development of Draft Policy

When the Board of Trustees makes a decision to develop a policy or revise an existing policy, a first step involves consultation with constituent groups who may have an interest in the policy. This could include students, parents, staff, employee unions and the broader community.

The School Board's senior staff prepares a draft policy that incorporates the input received. The draft is considered by the Board of Trustees or a committee of the Board to allow for more input. A final draft reflecting this input is submitted to the Board for approval. Once approved, the document becomes Board policy and goes into effect.

Implementation

The elected Board is responsible for implementing its own policies and is responsible for the formal delegation of authority to the Director of Education to implement its broad goals and expectations.

The implementation plan for a Board policy will include information about the administrative procedure that supports the policy in addition to a communication plan to ensure that all stakeholders are notified about the new or revised policy.

Policy Review

It is necessary to review policies on a regular basis to ensure their relevance to the current School Board environment and their compliance with applicable legislation and Ministry policy directives. At the time of adopting a policy, the elected Board usually specifies the date it will be due for review.

1. Identification of Policy Issue

2. Development of Draft Policy

3. Input by the Policy Committee, Executive Council and Final Approval

4. Implementation

5. Review of Policy

A Policy Checklist

Policy documents should be brief, written in plain English and include the following core elements:

Purpose/intention: a brief, clear and direct explanation of what the policy is intended to achieve and to whom it is intended to apply.

Definitions: of terms of reference

Guidelines: to whom and to what the policy applies, where the policy will have effect and the public value it will add.

Context: a brief description of the context within which the policy will operate, including connections with government directions.

Principles: a description of the principles that have shaped the development of the policy and their effect on the way in which it should be applied.

Responsibility: identification of whether the Board is solely responsible for the implementation of the policy (e.g., Governance Bylaws and Standing Rules, Board Operations, Board Members' Code of Conduct, Selection of the Director) or whether the Board has delegated responsibility to the director to implement the Board's expectations across the district (Board Vision and Goals, Board Expectations for Student Achievement and Well-Being).

Policy statement: the policy itself.

Legislative base: a reference to the legislation, other policies/administrative procedures that provides the authority for the policy statement.

Appendix A

Differentiating Between Policy and Administrative Procedure

The elected Board governs and the director manages the Board on a daily basis. The Board exercises its role through the adoption of policy, establishing goals, monitoring progress and engaging with its communities. The job of the Director of Education is to provide leadership in turning the broad directives of the Board into reality throughout all the operations of the district School Board. It is up to the director, through his/her staff, to develop appropriate procedures and processes to ensure effective implementation of policy and strategic plans.

Policy

Policies provide direction and signal the major intentions and priorities of the elected Board. They are few in number and broad in scope. Directional policy is expressed in the Board goals and strategic directions and is clearly aligned with government priorities. Directional policies signal long-term institutional commitments to student achievement and well-being, to values, and to fairness.

Administrative Procedures

A specific or prescribed course of action, emanating from Board policy, that must be taken by staff in a given situation and be standard practice.

Approval and Review Dates

Prior Date Approved: June 22, 2011
Policy Review Date: November 24, 2016
Next Review Date: November 2019
Reviewed by: Policy Committee, Administrative Council