

Administrative Procedure 129

SCHOOL BASED DECISION MAKING

Background

School based decision making involves collaboration between the Principal, Superintendent, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, and the community in keeping with the Policies of the Board of Trustees.¹ Since school based decision making is predicated by the belief that those most closely associated with decisions about students can make the best decisions on their behalf, as a process it enables schools to be as responsive as possible to local learning needs. Effective school based decision making improves student learning, maintains accountability for all associated results, and enhances the Board's ability to fulfill its education plan for all students within the school division. All procedures contained within are dedicated to ensuring that autonomy is clearly enough defined so that the interdependent interests of government, Board, and school will be associated with all school based decision making processes.

Value and Core Commitment Link

"Excellence in Learning"

- "We provide opportunities for each and every student to discover and become the person God created him / her to be. If something doesn't work, we will try something else."

"Our Collaborative Culture"

- "We encourage and appreciate the active involvement of all who share in the mission of educating students in our schools."

"Stewardship"

- "We ensure that our resources and efforts best serve the educational needs of all our students."
- "We are accountable to our supporters and will operate in a fiscally responsible manner."
- "We ensure that decisions are both fact and Policy-based."
- "We support and provide process, which promote fair and objective decision-making."
- "We communicate in an open and transparent manner."
- "We are receptive to our stakeholders."

¹ *School Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

Procedure

1. Belief Statements

- 1.1 Decisions will be made in the best interests of students, the manifestation of their gifts, and the improvement of their learning.
- 1.2 All decision making is subject to the roles and responsibilities prescribed by law, contracts of employment, Policy, and Administrative Procedures.
- 1.3 Decisions will be made by those affected by the decision, and responsible for its result.
- 1.4 Where ever possible, the home community of a student will provide equity of opportunity for education so that the student benefits from similar programs offered elsewhere in the division.
- 1.5 As schools innovatively respond to local economic, cultural, demographic and educational needs, they demonstrate their distinct and unique natures.
- 1.6 All revenue in the school division is revenue of the Board. The amount of allocation for a school is based upon the equitable allocation of resources to demonstrate that the Board's investment in students is being well served.
- 1.7 All revenue must be allocated to schools to further their capacity to meet the Three Year Educational Plan of the School Board.
- 1.8 School Education Plans, which identify divisional and complementary school goals and priorities, must be addressed by annual budgets.
- 1.9 Demographic and achievement related data will inform budgetary considerations and the divisional and school levels.
- 1.10 Decisions relevant to budgetary expenditures must be in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, and the recommendations of auditors for the school division.
- 1.11 School Principals are responsible for enabling school councils to fulfill their advisory role regarding school education plans, continuous improvement plans, budgets, and school based rules and procedures.²

2. Budgeting

- 2.1 Once allocations to schools have been agreed to by divisional Principals and the School Board, the Principal will establish collaborative processes to engage school based and school council leadership in developing the school based budget.
- 2.2 School based budgets must reflect the goals, priorities and directions of the Board's Three Year Education Plan and the school's Education Plan.

² School Council Regulation 113/2007, Section 13

3. Communication

- 3.1 Schools are responsible for establishing two-way communication links with members of the school community.
- 3.2 Communication links should address both the internal school community (eg. staff meetings, leadership teams, e-mail, bulletin Boards) and those external to the day-to-day operation of the school community (eg. newsletters, school council meetings, handbooks).
- 3.3 All matters concerning critical incident, emergency response, or issues management are to be referred to the Superintendent or designate prior to additional communication channels being exercised.

4. Roles

- 4.1 Two components of educational emphasis in Alberta have a significant impact on furthering learning for students:
 - 4.1.1 School Based Leadership: which sees Principals as instructional leaders who work with school based leadership teams to enhance professional and student learning.³
 - 4.1.2. School Councils: which give a voice to parents in advising school based leadership in its work conducted for the benefit of students.⁴
- 4.2 Roles and Responsibilities for the key players in education (students, teachers, Principals, parents, Superintendent, and Board) are outlined in the School Act and Holy Spirit Policy and Administrative Procedures.
- 4.3 All roles relevant to such documents form the basis of the interdependent and shared responsibility to assist with decision making in schools. As such, three assumptions about shared decision making must be in place:
 - 4.3.1 All roles and responsibilities in education are interrelated.
 - 4.3.2 Clarifying roles and responsibilities will strengthen relationships and consequently improve the quality of education.
 - 4.3.3 Given the context and authority behind decisions and the governance model of the Board, such decisions, depending on circumstance, may be collaborative, consultative, or independent in nature.

5. Planning

- 5.1 By June 1, each school community will develop a School Education Plan which acknowledges system directions and reflects local needs.

³ School Act, Section 20

⁴ School Act, Section 22

- 5.2 By October 30, each school community will develop a Continuous Improvement Plan which acknowledges results achieved based upon system goals, celebrates successes, and demonstrates yearly plans for improvement.
6. Reporting
- 6.1 By November 30, each school will prepare and present an annual report for the school community which celebrates successes and stresses yearly plans for improvement. Copies of these will also be submitted to the Superintendent.
7. Accountability
- 7.1 The continuous evaluation of School-Based Decision Making is essential to ensure that this management / leadership model contributes effectively to a school environment where the students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church (Catholic Canons) and the Minister of Education (Alberta Education Policy)
- 7.1.1 Accountability to the Church (Compliance with Canons related to Catholic Education)
- 7.1.1.1 To the extent that Christ's faithful will consider schools to be the "Principal means of helping parents to fulfill their role in education:"⁵
- 7.1.1.1.1 Principals will establish parental communication processes so that parents can actively support the physical, moral, and intellectual development of their children.
- 7.1.1.2 To the extent that "teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings of parents are to be set up and held in high esteem:"⁶
- 7.1.1.2.1 Regularly scheduled parent teacher interviews and school council meetings will enhance parental ability to support the mission and vision of the school community.
- 7.1.1.3 To the extent that "formation and education in a catholic school must be based on the principles of catholic doctrine, and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life:"⁷

⁵ Canon 796

⁶ Canon 796

⁷ Canon 803

- 7.1.1.3.1 Processes regarding the recruitment, selection, retention, and faith development of certificated teachers must be a coordinated effort at the school and divisional levels.
- 7.1.1.4 To the extent that those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure “that the formation given them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area.”⁸
 - 7.1.1.4.1 Schools will engage within systemic processes derived by the province and school division to evaluate learning results and actively engage in processes that further the improvement of learning for students.
- 7.2 Accountability to the province (for Compliance with Alberta Education Policy 1.8.2)
 - 7.2.1 To the extent that school based decision making is applicable to all schools, but provides for flexible approaches to decision making:⁹
 - 7.2.1.1 Schools will deploy human and support resources to meet the educational interests of the student and parent community within schools
 - 7.2.1.2 Learning results determine the extent to which flexibility in decision making will be applied in schools
 - 7.2.2 To the extent that school based decision making is focused on teaching and learning:¹⁰
 - 7.2.2.1 Decision making will be based upon processes that support and encourage understanding of current research relevant to professional learning communities, student assessment, instructional strategies, and school improvement.
 - 7.2.3 To the extent that school based decision making encourages input from staff, parents, and the community into school based decision on programs, instructional services, extra-curricular activities and the allocation of funds to support them:¹¹
 - 7.2.3.1 School councils will serve as an advisory body to the Principal who regularly evaluates the instructional programs being offered to students.

⁸ Canon 806

⁹ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

¹⁰ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

¹¹ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

- 7.2.3.2 Principals, in consultation with the Deputy Superintendent will make decisions relevant to the supervision, evaluation, and deployment of staff.
- 7.2.4 To the extent that school based decision making includes goals, objectives, and expected outcomes:¹²
- 7.2.4.1 Principals, in consultation with school councils and additional school based leadership teams, will lead processes for the development of school education plans, continuous improvement plans, and annual reports.
- 7.2.5 To the extent that school based decision making determines those types of decisions that are made at the school level:¹³
- The following decisions, while not exhaustive, are made by school personnel, and are always dependent upon legislation, Board Policy, and divisional Administrative Procedures in determining the nature of their application, and those involved in the decision making process. These decisions have been categorized according to the kinds of decisions that are made and the roles associated with the decisions. The Board as corporation assumes responsibility for all decisions made on its behalf. All roles, as outlined function as agents of the Board. Senior administration refers to the Superintendent or designate within the Senior Administrative Leadership Team. Roles associated with decisions have been placed in brackets. The role that assumes responsibility for the decision under consideration has been underlined:
- 7.2.5.1 Collaboration (working together toward common goals). The larger decisions that relate to long term vision, mission, beliefs, school rules and procedures:
- 7.2.5.1.1 declaring the mission, vision, and values of the school (Principal, staff, school council, senior administration, Board)
- 7.2.5.1.2 approving the school handbook (Principal, staff, school council)
- 7.2.5.2 Consultation (an exchange of correspondence, a meeting, an exchange of ideas and information, or an opportunity for input prior to a decision being made)

¹² *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

¹³ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

- 7.2.5.1.1 setting Policies to govern school council activities at the school level (Principal, school council) [moved from collaboration section]
- 7.2.5.1.2 planning support activities that align with school council's purpose (Principal, staff, school council) [moved from collaboration section]
- 7.2.5.2.3 approving staff hiring decisions (Principal and senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.4 overseeing timetable and school organization (Principal, school staff, school council, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.5 assigning staff deployed to schools (Principal, staff, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.6 conducting staff performance reviews (Principal, staff, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.7 approving the new school calendar (Principal, school council, Superintendent)
- 7.2.5.2.8 approving liturgical plan of the school (Principal, staff, divisional religious education coordinators (DREC), parish, school council, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.9 approving continuous improvement planning (school based plans, Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) (Principal, staff, school council, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.2.10 approving annual resource allocation to schools (Principal, senior administration, Board)
- 7.2.5.2.11 choosing which advice to provide the Principal and Board on areas specific to the school council mandate (possible topics are included on pages 11 and 12 of the Alberta School Council Resource Manual, 2007 (School Council))
- 7.2.5.3 Independent (unilateral)
 - 7.2.5.3.1 ensuring teaching the courses of study and education programs prescribed by the *School Act* and the Board of Education (teacher, Principal)

- 7.2.5.3.2 authentically witnessing and modeling the faith dimension ~~of the school division~~ within the school (divisional staff, Principal, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.3.3 providing competent instruction to students (teacher, Principal)
- 7.2.5.3.4 promoting cooperation between the school and the community that it serves (divisional staff, Principal)
- 7.2.5.3.5 encouraging and fostering learning in students (teacher)
- 7.2.5.3.6 supervising the evaluation and advancement of students (teacher, Principal)
- 7.2.5.3.7 evaluating teachers and support staff deployed to the school (Principal)
- 7.2.5.3.8 overseeing the routine management of the school (Principal, head caretaker)
- 7.2.5.3.9 sustaining order and discipline within the school (Principal, teachers)
- 7.2.5.3.10 ensuring diligence to student attendance (Principal, senior administration)
- 7.2.5.3.11 overseeing contractual arrangements for staff and associated certification (exclusive of the Superintendent) (senior administration)
- 7.2.5.3.12 ensuring that students diligently pursue their studies (teacher, Principal)
- 7.2.5.4 Principals are expected to consult with the Superintendent or designate, should they be uncertain with regard to the role and nature of decision required to deal with the wide range of circumstances impacting the operations of a school
- 7.2.6 To the extent that school based decision making ensures through established criteria for funding an equitable allocation of funds which respects differences in school populations:¹⁴
 - 7.2.6.1 A committee of Principals, the divisional learning leadership team (collective of Principals) will recommend funding allocations to schools on an annual basis

¹⁴ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

- 7.2.6.2 The Board will ultimately approve funding allocations to schools based upon prescribed budgetary assumptions
- 7.2.7 To the extent that school based decision making defines the roles, responsibilities, and relationships with a focus on broad distribution of power and authority for decision making among all participants, Principal, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, school councils, the community, central office, and the Board of Trustees:¹⁵
- 7.2.7.1 Notwithstanding the roles, responsibilities, and decision making authorities developed in 7.2.5, the following additional roles must be understood by all who function within the governance framework of the Board:
- 7.2.7.1.1 Board of Trustees: Roles articulated in Board Policy 2 / Section 13 of School Council Regulation 113/2007
- 7.2.7.1.2 Superintendent of Schools: Roles articulated in Board Policy 9 / Section 113 of School Act
- 7.2.7.1.3 Principal: Administrative Procedure 442 / Section 20 of School Act / Teaching Quality Standard
- 7.2.7.1.4 Teachers: Administrative Procedures 403, 404, 406 / Section 18 of School Act / Teaching Quality Standard
- 7.2.7.1.5 Instructional Support Staff: Administrative Procedures 411 and 412
- 7.2.7.1.6 School Council: Section 22 of School Act / School Council Regulation 113/2007
- 7.2.8 To the extent that school based decision making provides for a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the decision making model within schools:¹⁶
- 7.2.8.1 School Principals will be required to lead the modification of school based decision making process based upon the quality of annual accountability results received.

¹⁵ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

¹⁶ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

- 7.2.9 To the extent that school based decision making provides for widespread communication and information sharing among stakeholders, including: appropriate involvement in school based planning, evaluating, and reporting processes:¹⁷
- 7.2.9.1 School Principals will be required to review the expectations of this procedure to staff on an annual basis and deploy personnel related responsibilities accordingly.
- 7.2.10 To the extent that school based decision making provides guidelines for inservice and professional development opportunities for staff and school council members to facilitate changes in roles and responsibilities including: problem solving, management, and communication skills of all stakeholders:¹⁸
- 7.2.10.1 School Principals will annually review the work of school council in relation to Ministerial Order (#033 / 2007) and Appendix E: Alberta School Council Resource Manual and recommend to the Superintendent inservicing opportunities based upon relevant needs.
- 7.2.10.2 The Capacity Funding Committee (CFC) and Learning Leadership Team will recommend internal accountability for budgetary and associated decision making processes on an annual basis.
- 7.2.10.3 Professional development for staff involving problem solving, management of resources, and communication skills will be provided through school specific professional development, or as requested / necessary through a broader divisional focus.

¹⁷ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education

¹⁸ *School-Based Decision Making* (Policy 1.8.2), Alberta Education