



AGENDA

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Julie Kusiek
Board Chair

Jan Sawyer
Board Vice-Chair

Dawn Hancock
Marsha Nelson
Sherri O'Keefe
Saadiq Sumar

The Board of Trustees of Edmonton School Division
One Kingsway
Edmonton, Alberta

CFE McCauley Chambers
Tuesday, April 15, 2025
2 p.m.

Board Meeting

- A. Land Acknowledgement
- B. O Canada
- C. Roll Call
- D. Approval of the Agenda
- E. Communications from the Board Chair
- F. Communications from the Superintendent of Schools
- G. Recognition
 - 1. Confirmation of Principal Designations
(No Enclosure)
- H. Approval of the Minutes
 - 2. DRAFT – Board Minutes – April 1, 2025
 - 3. DRAFT – Special Board Minutes – April 9, 2025
- I. Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives on Items on the Meeting Agenda
(NOTE: Pre-registration with the Board Office [780-429-8443] is required by 12 p.m. on Monday, April 14, 2025, to speak under this item.)
- J. Reports
 - 4. Letter regarding Standards for Special Education
(Recommendation)
- K. Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives on Educational Issues – 4 p.m.
(NOTE: Pre-registration with the Board Office [780-429-8443] is required by 12 p.m. on Monday, April 14, 2025, to speak under this item.)
- L. Other Committee, Board Representative and Trustee Reports
- M. Trustees and Board Requests for Information
- N. Notices of Motion
- O. Meeting Dates
- P. Adjournment

MINUTE BOOK**Board Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Edmonton School Division of Alberta held in the Centre for Education McCauley Chambers on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 2 p.m.

Present:**Trustees**

Dawn Hancock
Julie Kusiek

Marsha Nelson
Sherri O'Keefe

Jan Sawyer
Saadiq Sumar

Officials

Angela Anderson
Todd Burnstad
Grace Cooke
Andrea Cooper

Karen Mills
Kathy Muhlethaler
Kent Pharis
Nancy Petersen

Cliff Richard
Darrel Robertson
Ron Thompson
Liz Yule

Board Chair: Julie Kusiek

Recording Secretary: Catherine Angeles

A. Land Acknowledgement

The Board Chair called the meeting to order and called upon Vice-Chair Sawyer to provide a land acknowledgement.

Vice-Chair Sawyer said that as we gather here today, we pause to reflect on the land we occupy, acknowledging the traditional territories of the Cree, Blackfoot, Nakota Sioux, Saulteaux, and Dene peoples, as well as the Métis Nation of Alberta. We honour their enduring presence and the relationship they've held with this land for thousands of years. In this season of spring, when nature awakens and new life emerges, we are reminded of the cycles of renewal, growth, and healing. Spring represents a time when the earth refreshes itself, and this renewal also invites us to reflect on our role in nurturing relationships, both with the land and with one another. Just as the plants and animals return to life, so too can we embrace the spirit of reconciliation, respecting the wisdom and traditions of Indigenous communities while creating space for a more inclusive future. As we see the buds bloom and the days grow longer, let us be reminded of the importance of stewardship and responsibility. Indigenous peoples have long understood the sacredness of the land and the need to protect it for future generations. Their teachings guide us to care for the earth with intention and respect. Let this spring be a season of growth in our commitment to learning, understanding, and healing together. May we all contribute to a future rooted in respect, mutual care, and the flourishing of all peoples.

MINUTE BOOK**B. O Canada****C. Roll Call: 2:04 p.m.**

The Superintendent advised that all Trustees were present.

D. Approval of the Agenda

Trustee Sumar requested Item 3 report (Advocacy re: Jordan's Principle Funding and Operating Procedures) be tabled until after the upcoming Federal Election and be moved to the May 6 Board meeting.

MOVED BY Trustee Hancock:

**"That the agenda for the April 1, 2025, Board meeting be approved as amended."
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

E. Communications from the Board Chair

The Board Chair extended a warm welcome back to support staff. She acknowledged and expressed deep appreciation for support staff's ongoing work in supporting student success across our Division. Board Chair Kusiek also thanked Superintendent Robertson for his leadership and the entire bargaining team, including Vice-Chair Sawyer, for their work during this difficult process.

The Board Chair shared that on March 19, several members of the Board joined the Ministers of Education and Infrastructure at an important school infrastructure announcement. Representatives from local councils and school boards surrounding Edmonton all attended. The thousands of people new to Edmonton are seeking the high-quality public education Edmonton Public is known for. She said we're ready to meet that demand and we're ready for new schools as fast as the Province can provide them. Edmonton Public Schools received funding for five school projects, for either planning or design. These projects include:

- An expansion to Dr. Anne Anderson School, bringing much needed relief to high school space in southwest Edmonton
- Two elementary schools - one in Hawks Ridge, another in Silver Berry, and
- Two new high schools - one in The Grange and one in Castledowns

The Board Chair said this is a critical investment into public education infrastructure and the Board is grateful for it. As we look to the future, we know there is still an urgent need to invest in public education. Our Board is committed to continuing our work with the province to meet the demands of our growing school division in a growing city.

The Board Chair shared that the Alberta School Boards Association co-led with the Ministry of Education a closed business meeting with Board Chairs and Superintendents. This was an excellent opportunity to

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share directly with the Minister of Education and several Assistant Deputy Ministers the perspectives of our Division, including budget, capital planning and more. Chair Kusiek looks forward to future sessions to provide accurate, timely and candid feedback.

The Board Chair shared that it was an honour and privilege to attend an Iftar dinner with the Honourable Salma Lakhani, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. Guests were encouraged to come together as a community over dinner, and to have conversation with other guests they may not have met before. It was humbling to meet and re-connect with leaders from across Edmonton's communities and she was deeply touched by the opportunity and re-energized to continue to build bridges in service to the community.

The Board Chair stated that after serving with the Division for more than 30 years, and for 12 years as Superintendent, Darrel Robertson will be retiring in August. The Board has initiated a search for a new Superintendent of Schools. They will be conducting a national search for this role using an external executive search firm, Leaders International. The Opportunity Profile will be available on the Division's careers site, Leaders International site, as well as on careers pages on several relevant school board/association websites. Edmonton Public Schools is a fantastic Division and she hopes that we see many excellent, qualified candidates come forward who will continue building on our success.

F. Communications from the Superintendent of Schools

The Superintendent thanked everyone here today, including those watching online. He said that the past weeks have been challenging for our entire Division. Valued support staff make such a difference in our classrooms and offices every day. He knows that families, students and coworkers are happy to see them back. The Division has missed our support staff and are grateful to see them every day, injecting joy and support in our worksites.

The Superintendent shared that last month, the province's Auditor General released a report that recommended Alberta Education "improve the consistent application of its school authorities annual report compliance assessment process." While the recommendation was made to the provincial department, he wanted to assure the Board that no areas of deficiency have been identified to Edmonton Public Schools. As the Board knows, the Division submits our comprehensive Annual Education Results Report to the province annually and, following that submission, we meet with officials from Alberta Education so we can answer their questions, provide additional context, etc. Additionally, the Division has a transparent budgeting process, which includes an audit committee which has two external auditors as members, and we work with an internationally recognized audit firm to make sure we are meeting all requirements. Our audited financial statements are posted on our website and discussed in-depth annually at a public Board meeting. The Division is open to any new or additional processes that Alberta Education might be considering and are happy to work with them as they develop them.

The Superintendent said that last month he gave an update on the status of the 2025 budget. The Division received our funding profile from the provincial government, which confirms what he shared last month: a status quo budget for our Division. While funding is certainly going up for the 2025-2026 school year, we know that it will be used to support organizing for instruction for the projected 5,000 additional students

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who enrol in the Division from the end of September of 2024 to the end of September of 2025. The Division has an upcoming meeting to talk about the Distribution of Funds, where funding will be unpacked a little further in the coming weeks.

The Superintendent thanked parents and families for registering and pre-enrolling for next year. The Division is grateful for everyone doing that, so we can get ready for the 2025-2026 school year. He knows that our schools will be looking forward to welcoming everyone into the Division in September.

G. Approval of the Minutes**1. Board Meeting – March 4, 2025**

Trustee Sumar stated that he was not present at the March 4, 2025 Board meeting and asked that his name be struck from the Trustees listed as present in the Board minutes.

MOVED BY Trustee O'Keefe:

**"That the minutes of the Board meeting held March 4, 2025, be approved as amended."
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

H. Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives on Items on the Meeting Agenda

The Board of Trustees heard from five registered speakers for this item.

I. Reports**2. Proposed Three-Year Capital Plan 2025-2029****MOVED BY Trustee Nelson:**

"That the proposed Three-Year Capital Plan 2026-2029 be approved for submission to the provincial government."

IN FAVOUR: Trustees Hancock Kusiek, Nelson, O'Keefe, and Sawyer

OPPOSED: Trustee Sumar

(CARRIED)

There was a short break in the meeting.

3. Advocacy re: Jordan's Principle Funding and Operating Procedures

This report was deferred to the May 6, 2025, Board meeting.

MINUTE BOOK**4. Class Size Information**

An update was provided on the the Division's 2024–2025 class size reporting results, along with two years of historical data.

J. Other Committee, Board Representatives and Trustee Reports

Trustee Sumar wished Navroz/Nawruz Mubarak to all those observing this day on March 21st. He also wished Eid Mubarak to those who observed Eid-al-Fitr over the weekend.

Trustee Sumar thanked the Clara Tyner School Council for welcoming him to their last meeting.

Trustee Sumar also thanked the organizing committee at Public Interest Alberta for the conference held on March 27th and 28th. He met lots of advocates from various areas including school staff, parents of school children, city staff, city councillors and others. It was a great event and he's already looking forward to some great advocacy work between now and next year's conference.

K. Trustees and Board Requests for Information

Vice-Chair Sawyer submitted a Request for Information regarding Specialized Learning Supports:

Can Administration please provide a summary report to the Board of Trustees that outlines the range of supports, services and programming for students requiring specialized learning supports. Please include information on financial support for these services both from the Provincial government and the Division budget. Please also include information on the range of choice for families relative to full integration or partial integration in a regular classroom setting, Division centres and the potential of an Autism Centre for Excellence.

L. Notices of Motion

Board Chair Kusiek gave notice that she would be making the following motion:

Further to the Board's September 10, 2024 letter to the Minister of Education regarding the timelines for an update to the Standards for Special Education, I move that the Board of Trustees write a follow-up letter *to further emphasize that school boards, educators, students and families be meaningfully consulted, to inform a fulsome Provincial update to the Standards for Special Education.* The letter must also emphasize:

- That the Province provides adequate ongoing funding to fully meet the diverse range of needs for students requiring special education supports within a variety of settings
- The rate of enrolment growth for students requiring specialized learning supports is outpacing the rapid growth of overall enrolment in the Division

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- That services for students who require specialized learning supports must be enhanced within provincial standards and funding to facilitate students' transition to life beyond the K-12 education system.

M. Next Special Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2 p.m.

N. Adjournment: 4:19 p.m.

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting.

Julie Kusiek, Board Chair

Karen Mills, Director Board and
Superintendent Relations

MINUTE BOOK**Special Board Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Edmonton School Division of Alberta held in the Centre for Education McCauley Chambers on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2 p.m.

Present:**Trustees**

Dawn Hancock
Julie Kusiek

Marsha Nelson
Sherri O'Keefe

Jan Sawyer
Saadiq Sumar

Officials

Angela Anderson
Todd Burnstad
Grace Cooke
Andrea Cooper

Karen Mills
Kathy Muhlethaler
Kent Pharis
Nancy Petersen
Cliff Richard

Darrel Robertson
Carrie Rosa
Ron Thompson
Liz Yule

Board Chair: Julie Kusiek

Recording Secretary: Karen Mills

A. Land Acknowledgement

The Board Chair called the meeting to order with recognition that we are on Treaty 6 Territory, a traditional meeting grounds, gathering place, and travelling route to the Nehiyaw, Anishinaabe, Niitsitapi, Métis Otipemisiwak, Denesųłiné, and Nakota Sioux. We acknowledge all the many First Nations, Métis Otipemisiwak, Inuit whose footsteps have marked these lands for centuries.

B. Roll Call: 2:01 p.m.

The Superintendent advised that all Trustees were present.

C. Approval of the Agenda

MOVED BY Vice-Chair Sawyer:

**"That the agenda for the April 9, 2025, Board meeting be approved as printed."
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

MINUTE BOOK**D. Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives on Items on the Meeting Agenda**

The Board of Trustees heard from one registered speaker for this item.

E. Reports

1. 2025-2026 Distribution of Funds (Recommendation Report)

MOVED BY Trustee Hancock:

**“That the Distribution of Funds for the 2025-2026 Budget be approved.”
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

F. Adjournment: 4:17 p.m.

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting.

Julie Kusiek, Board Chair

Karen Mills, Director Board and
Superintendent Relations

DATE: April 15, 2025

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Julie Kusiek, Board Chair

SUBJECT: Proposed letter for robust engagement regarding Standards for Special Education

REFERENCE [Standards for Special Education](#), amended June 2004

ISSUE

At the April 1, 2025 Board meeting, Board Chair Kusiek gave notice that she would be presenting a motion requesting that the Board write to the Minister of Education regarding the Standards for Special Education.

BACKGROUND

In September 2024, the Board [wrote](#) to the Education Minister asking that he share the timeline as to when the Standards for Special Education will be updated, including when consultations with stakeholders (e.g., school divisions, families of children with disabilities, and professionals who support students with disabilities) will take place and when the new standards will be released.

In October, Minister Nicolaides responded that in 2019, the Government of Alberta committed to updating the 2004 Standards for Special Education. In 2020 and early 2021, a draft Standards for Inclusive Education System was developed, and stakeholder engagement was held. Prior to the release of the draft standards, some stakeholders expressed concern and requested further engagement take place prior to implementation. In addition, the education system was focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to these concerns and the pandemic, the release of the standards was delayed. He stated that further research was underway, including work to update the policy and associated guiding documents, and that additional information would be shared as it became available.

To date the Board Chair, on behalf of the Board, has participated in some initial conversations with other school boards and government officials to provide feedback to the Standards for Special Education. However, the need for robust consultation and a strong engagement plan with all stakeholders is essential to ensure that all voices are heard and the best possible outcome is arrived at for students with specialized learning needs.

RELATED FACTS

- In the Premier's Mandate Letter to the Minister of Education, the Premier wrote the following statement:
"And importantly, as we grow new opportunities for students, we must address the growing needs of students with mental health and other learning challenges. These children must be provided with every opportunity to flourish in our education system and economy. We need them to be successful, fulfilled and fully participative in building our province."
- The Standards for Special Education were last amended in June 2004.
- Both the Teaching and Leadership Quality Standards were updated in April 2023.
- The enrolment rate of students requiring specialized learning supports is outpacing even the

Division's record-breaking overall enrolment growth.

- The Division provides choice to families in how to meet the educational needs of their child, including full integration within a regular program or alternative program, partial integration paired with enrolment in a Division centre program located within a community school setting, full-time enrolment within a Division centre program or, in some cases, enrolment in a specialized school designed to meet the unique needs of that student.
- The Board of Trustees chooses to distribute funds to schools in a way that recognizes that specialized learning supports require additional funds in school budgets. Through a weighted enrolment allocation, the Board of Trustees ensures that students who require higher levels of learning support are funded at a higher rate than students who require lower levels of support.
- Overall, the targeted funding the Province provides for classroom complexity is insufficient to cover the current levels of support required. The Division supplements classroom complexity funding and specialized learning supports grants over and above base funding allocations by approximately \$30 million each year.

RECOMMENDATION

That, further to the Board's September 10, 2024 letter to the Minister of Education regarding the timelines for an update to the Standards for Special Education, the Board of Trustees write a follow-up letter to further emphasize that school boards, educators, students and families be meaningfully consulted, to inform a fulsome Provincial update to the Standards for Special Education. The letter must also emphasize:

- **That the Province provides adequate ongoing funding to fully meet the diverse range of needs for students requiring special education supports within a variety of settings.**
- **That the rate of enrolment growth for students requiring specialized learning supports is outpacing the rapid growth of overall enrolment in the Division.**
- **That services for students who require specialized learning supports must be enhanced within provincial standards and funding to facilitate students' transition to life beyond the K-12 education system.**

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

Families with students requiring specialized supports have spoken directly to Trustees of the Edmonton Public Schools Board. Many of these families have expressed frustration with the current financial limitations and a desire for additional support and accommodation for their children. The following are barriers to providing students with specialized learning needs with more robust support:

- rapidly growing enrolment and lack of space, which leads to larger class sizes that makes integrated classrooms more challenging
- lack of space, which limits the addition of new Division centre programs
- funding, targeted government grants do not cover the full cost of accommodation for students with specialized learning needs
- outdated provincial standards, which do not acknowledge the evolving practices, school environments or increased complexity that exists today.

The Division is aware of families who seek an education with Edmonton Public Schools because of the range of choice we offer to students with specialized learning needs. The rate of enrolment of students with specialized learning needs is growing faster than that of overall Division enrolment. There is a clear need to have meaningful solutions-focused conversations with the Province on how to meet the evolving needs of students within Edmonton Public Schools.

As the Ministry of Education begins to re-engage in conversations with Boards about updating the Standards for Special Education, it is critical that our Board advocate now for a robust consultation and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders, including the families we serve at Edmonton Public Schools and the partners we know are essential to building the community support required for student success.

Robust consultation and meaningful engagement could lead to important conversations around topics such as:

- How can we ensure that families retain their ability to choose the learning environment they feel is best for their child, ranging from full integration to fully specialized programming, within the public education system?
- How can we, as a Province, bring together families, partner organizations, school boards and government to an agreed-upon understanding of what the Standards for Special Education should look like to support students to be successful, not only in their K-12 journey but in setting them up for their life after high school?
- What funding is required to achieve these standards and how can we build public support for public investment and expenditure on the public education of children?
- What information don't we have right now as part of the conversation that could be helpful?
- How can we work together to better support inclusion in the wider community during the student's K-12 education journey and once it is completed?
- How can we tie support for students requiring specialized learning supports into career pathways, encouraging and helping to build a path to success for every child to reach their full potential whether that be preparation for further studies, volunteering, the world of work or engaging with community in other meaningful ways?

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this recommendation, the Board Chair will write to the Minister of Education on behalf of the Board.

JK:km