

**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, December 10, 2024, at 2 p.m.

**Present:****Trustees**

Trisha Estabrooks  
Dawn Hancock  
Marcia Hole

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:** Catherine Angeles

The Board Chair called the meeting to order and called on Trustee Nelson to provide a land acknowledgement.

Trustee Nelson said as we gather for this upcoming special season, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, the traditional gathering place of Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, Métis, Inuit, and many other First Nations peoples. We honor their histories, languages, cultures, and ongoing connections to this land. We extend our gratitude to the Elders and Knowledge Keepers who have cared for this land for generations, and to those who continue to do so. She encouraged everyone to incorporate gratitude into their gathering through:

- **Shared Gratitude:** Taking a moment and share what you're grateful for this year. This can include family, health, experiences, or anything else that brings joy.
- **Honor Traditions:** Share stories about family traditions and the significance they hold. This can be a way to connect with your heritage and pass it on to younger generations.
- **Cultural Exchange:** If you have guests from different cultural backgrounds, consider sharing a cultural dish or tradition. This can be a way to learn about other cultures and create a more inclusive gathering.

In the spirit of reconciliation, she encouraged folks to:

- **Research Local Indigenous Communities:** Learn more about the specific Indigenous communities in our area and their history. This can help you to deepen your understanding and appreciation for the land and its people.

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- Support Indigenous Businesses: Consider purchasing gifts or food from Indigenous-owned businesses. This helps to support local economies and promote Indigenous culture.
- Educate Yourself: Continue to learn about Indigenous history, culture, and current issues. This can help you to be a better ally and advocate for Indigenous rights.

By incorporating these elements into your Christmas/Winter gatherings, you can create a more meaningful and inclusive celebration that honors the land, its people, and your family traditions.

**A. O Canada****B. Roll Call: 2:05 p.m.**

The Superintendent advised that Trustee Estabrooks was absent and all other Trustees were present.

**C. Approval of the Agenda****MOVED BY Trustee Hole:**

**“That the agenda for the December 10, 2024, Board meeting be approved as printed.”  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**D. Communications from the Board Chair**

The Board Chair acknowledged concerns expressed by staff, families, and students regarding overcrowded classrooms, insufficient provincial funding, and the potential impacts of Bill 27, particularly those related to the teaching of sexual health and student rights regarding preferred names and pronouns. Board Chair Kusiek reiterated the Board’s commitment to continue advocating for the best interests of students and the Division.

The Board Chair shared that last week the Board met with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. On behalf of the Board, she also met with the NDP Education Critic. The Board appreciated the opportunity to have these discussions and to raise further awareness and understanding of the great work that Edmonton Public Schools is doing every day for pathways to student success. It was an opportunity to propose areas where the province can provide additional support to meet the needs of our students and school division.

The Board Chair, on behalf of the Board, also met with Ambassador Martinez of the Kingdom of Spain. She thanked Superintendent Robertson and Division staff including Rita Sarrate who supported this meeting and school tours. They highlighted the Spanish Bilingual Program offered at EPSB and discussed the energizing possibilities that public education paired with international collaboration can create.

The Board Chair expressed a sentiment of hope and happiness for everyone at Edmonton Public Schools. She said everyone is doing a great work for students every day, and students continue to inspire us all to

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be motivated, creative and energized by the calling of public education. This is seen through the many projects where student voice has instigated positive change and learning in our schools and community. Together, at Edmonton Public Schools we're a community that is there for one another, sees one another's contributions, supports one another through collaboration and celebrates our successes. She said public education is a beautiful and necessary element of a robust, caring and democratic society and thanked everyone for all they do. She wished everyone a restful and joyful winter break.

### **E. Communications from the Superintendent of Schools**

The Superintendent thanked everyone attending the meeting in person, including SCOPE principals Mike Morison and Stacy Fysh, and those watching online.

The Superintendent shared that the Division is preparing to get students registered and pre-enrolled for the 2025-2026 school year. Combined dates for new student registration and returning student pre-enrolment start on Monday, February 3, 2025, and close on Wednesday, March 19, 2025. To help families get ready to choose a school for the 2025-2026 school year, open houses will run throughout February and March, giving families and students a chance to learn a little more about what a school has to offer, from alternative programming, to complementary courses, extracurricular activities, sports teams, a taste of school culture and a chance to see the space. Information about these dates will be available in January on [epsb.ca](https://epsb.ca). If families have any questions, reach out to the school principal for more information.

The Superintendent said that as we prepare for a well-deserved winter break, he thanked staff, students and families for a wonderful, busy and rewarding fall. He said everyone is ready for a bit of a break, to rest, relax and spend time with those who are important to us.

The Superintendent expressed thanks to many Division staff who work throughout the winter break and for their tireless work to have our schools safe and ready for staff and students to return to classrooms on January 6. He also expressed thanks and appreciation to the Board of Trustees for a busy fall time and wished them all a warm and safe break as well.

### **F. Approval of the Minutes**

#### 1. Board Meeting – November 26, 2024

Trustee Sumar requested that Item J, Other Committee, Board Representatives and Trustee Reports in the November 26, 2024 minutes, be amended as follows:

*Excerpt:*

#### **J. Other Committee, Board Representatives and Trustee Reports—None**

*Acting Board Chair Sawyer advised the Board they would skip this agenda item due to time restraints.*

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**MOVED BY Trustee Hancock:**

**“That the minutes of the Board meeting held November 26, 2024, be approved as amended.”  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

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

There were no registered speakers for this item.

**H. Reports**

2. 2025-2026 School Year Calendar

**MOVED BY Trustee Hole:**

**“That Draft A of the proposed 2025-2026 School Year Calendar be approved.”**

**MOVED BY Board Chair Kusiek that the original motion be replaced with the following motion:**

**“That Draft B of the proposed 2025-2026 School Year Calendar be approved.”**

**The Board Chair called the question on the replaced motion.**

**IN FAVOUR: Trustees Hancock, Hole, Kusiek, Nelson, Sawyer, and Sumar**

**OPPOSED: Trustees O’Keefe**

**(CARRIED)**

3. First, Second and Third Reading of Bylaw to Require Criminal Record Check

The Board Chair stated that the next item on the agenda was discussion of a potential new bylaw. Bylaws are measures different jurisdictions can put in place that pertain to their own governance. She reviewed the process:

- Passing a bylaw requires three readings. The requirement of three readings for a bylaw comes from Section 6 of the Board Procedures Regulation, which states that every proposed bylaw must have three distinct and separate readings.
- The Regulation also requires that if all three readings are to take place at the same meeting, a motion to consider third reading must be presented and carried unanimously, prior to third reading taking place.
- This practice also aligns with the Division’s policy development and approval process.
- Often, readings happen at separate Board meetings to allow engagement and/or research by Trustees. Trustees were provided with an information report outlining details on the possibility of requiring criminal record checks for nominees at the November 5 Caucus meeting.
- The Board Chair also requested that this item not come to a Board meeting prior to the Alberta School Boards Association webinar on this topic on December 2, anticipating that there would be information in that session that may inform the Board’s understanding of the issue.

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- And, given that today is the only Board meeting in December and a bylaw must be in place prior to December 31 to be in effect for the 2025 municipal election, the Board will be considering all three readings today.
- For the first reading, the whole bylaw must be read.
  - Only the title or identifying number must be read for the second and third readings.
- First reading is typically a test of whether or not the Board wishes to consider an issue at all.
- Second reading is when Trustees usually debate the issue, make amendments, and vote again.
  - Note, however, that amendments can be introduced at any reading and the opportunity for questions and debate occur with every reading.
- Third reading is the last chance for debate, amendments and voting.
- If a bylaw fails any of the readings, it dies.

**MOVED BY Trustee O'Keefe:**

**"1. That Bylaw No. 2024-1 be read for the first time."  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**MOVED BY Trustee O'Keefe:**

**"2. That Bylaw No. 2024-1 be read for the second time."  
IN FAVOUR: Trustees Hancock, Hole, Kusiek, Nelson, O'Keefe, and Sumar  
OPPOSED: Trustees Sawyer  
(CARRIED)**

**MOVED BY Trustee O'Keefe:**

**"3. That the Board of Trustees proceed with the third reading of Bylaw No. 2024-1 at this meeting."  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**MOVED BY Trustee O'Keefe:**

**"4. That Bylaw No. 2024-1 be read for the third and final time."  
IN FAVOUR: Trustees Nelson and O'Keefe  
OPPOSED: Trustees Hancock, Hole, Kusiek, Sawyer, and Sumar  
(DEFEATED)**

Bylaw No. 2024-1 was not approved, therefore no changes to current election materials were made.

There was a short break in the meeting.

4. Belonging and Safety Draft Framework

Ms. Muhlethaler introduced the report and asked that any questions be directed to Superintendent Robertson.

The Board of Trustees provided the following feedback:

- Trustees expressed appreciation for the work that went into developing the framework, recognizing the significant effort involved.

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- Trustees appreciated the positive framing of safety, emphasizing a focus on creating a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Trustees valued the focus on evidence of impact, which encourages schools to continuously improve their approaches to safety and belonging.
- Trustees appreciated the flexibility of the framework, allowing schools to adapt it to their specific needs and contexts.
- Trustees recognized the value of the five focus areas and how they interconnect to develop an integrated framework for safety and belonging.
- Concerns were raised about the opening sentence, which some felt placed the onus of feeling safe and belonging on students rather than emphasizing shared responsibility.
- Trustees look forward to learning about the successes and challenges encountered in implementing this framework through future Results Reviews.
- Trustees emphasized the need for a clear and shared understanding of what "safety and belonging" looks like for all students within the Division. This would involve considering the diverse needs and experiences of all student demographics.
- Some Trustees suggested a need for clearer and more accessible language, particularly for parents, students, and those with English as an additional language.

The Superintendent clarified that a formal report on the final version of the framework will not be presented at a public Board meeting. This work has been delegated to the Superintendent's office. However, the Superintendent expressed a desire to receive feedback from the Board members as the framework is being developed. He emphasized that there will be ongoing opportunities for discussion and feedback on the framework and its impact in the coming years.

There was a short break in the meeting

The Board Chair reconvened the meeting at 5:05 p.m. The Board Chair temporarily moved to a later agenda item prior to the Policy Review Committee 2024-2025 Work Plan to accommodate public speakers scheduled for 5 p.m.

### **I. Comments from the Public and Staff Group Representatives on Educational Issues – 5 p.m.**

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

#### **5. Policy Review Committee 2024-2025 Work Plan**

**MOVED BY Trustee Sumar:**

**“That the Policy Review Committee 2024-2025 work plan be approved.”**

**MOVED BY Vice-Chair Sawyer the motion be amended:**

**“That the Policy Review Committee 2024-2025 work plan be amended to remove personal mobile devices from the work plan.”**

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**MOVED BY Trustee Nelson:**

**“That the Board meeting be extended beyond 6 p.m.”  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**The Board Chair called the question on the amended motion.**

**IN FAVOUR: Trustees Kusiek and Nelson**

**OPPOSED: Trustees Hancock, Hole, O’Keefe, Sawyer, and Sumar  
(DEFEATED)**

**The Board Chair called the question on the original motion.**

**(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**J. Other Committee, Board Representatives and Trustee Reports**

Trustee Hancock shared that the Alberta School Board Association (ASBA) held their Fall General Meeting on Monday, November 18th. She thanked her colleagues Board Chair Kusiek, Vice-Chair Sawyer, Trustee Estabrooks, Trustee Hole and Superintendent Robertson for attending along with herself.

Trustee Hancock said that during the business portion of the meeting, one emergent position statement submitted by EPSB and six regular position statements were presented to members for discussion and to vote on. Of the seven position statements a total of five were passed which ASBA will submit as advocacy to the provincial government on behalf of the members. Trustee Hancock reported back to the Board the position statements that were passed at the FGM. She thanked Board Chair Kusiek for sharing the position statements Edmonton Public submitted in her remarks at the last board meeting on November 26. Trustee Hancock shared the remaining position statements passed:

Position Statements

**1. 2SLGBTQIA+ Rights - Emergent Position Statement**

WHEREAS board autonomy is one of the core principles of ASBA and whereas all members of a school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and harassment, a right guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Alberta Human Rights Act, and the Education Act, and whereas “opt out” sexual health education is a long standing practice that has helped educate students in Alberta,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT sexual health education remain an “opt out” option for parents in Alberta and that school board autonomy be respected with regards to their own sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression policies.

- Submitted by EPSB

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### **2. Increase Grant Funding Rates**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The Government of Alberta annually increases Grant Funding Rates proportional to inflation, to maintain the impact and value the Grant Funding is intended to have on supporting students for success.

- Submitted by EPSB

### **3. Increase Funding for Cybersecurity**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Alberta School Boards Association advocates for the Government of Alberta to increase funding specifically to offset the growing cost of cybersecurity and threat mitigation for school divisions.

- EPSB voted in favour

### **4. Rural Student Inequities**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Government of Alberta addresses the challenges experienced by high school students, particularly those from rural and/or remote areas, when considering post-secondary studies, to ensure equitable access to higher learning.

- EPSB voted in favour

### **5. Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Regulation and Act**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The Government of Alberta prioritizes the prevention of youth smoking and vaping as a public health issue by:

- Updating the Tobacco, Smoking and Vaping Reduction Regulation to prohibit the sale of flavoured vaping products; and
  - Working with non-profit organizations and school boards to increase education opportunities on the detrimental physical and mental health aspects of vaping, nicotine and second-hand vapour aerosol.
- EPSB didn't vote in favour of this position statement as it is partially covered under the existing position statement 13.9, this is a provincial health issue and therefore out of scope, and is already addressed by government programs.

Trustee Nelson shared that Wrap and Roll at Kingsway Mall is a tradition for the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation (the Foundation), and they are so grateful to be back for another year. From December 13-23, 2024, the Foundation will be fundraising to support all 214 of our schools - and more than 120,000 students - by accepting community donations in exchange for gift-wrapping services. Kingsway Mall has graciously donated the facilities, and all wrapping supplies so that 100% of donations received come directly to the Edmonton Public Schools Foundation.

The event runs from December 13-23, 2024

Monday to Saturday: 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM

Sunday: 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Location: Kingsway Mall, Entrance 2, on the main level near Shoppers



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Trustee Sumar provided a Ward G update, where he attended several meetings and events over the last few weeks:

- Attended a meeting of the Edmonton Public School Advocacy Network which featured a presentation from Dr. Wing Li from Support Our Students;
- Attended the Public Education Exchange World Cafe to discuss and hear perspectives about the value of public education;
- He was grateful to have been invited to several school council meetings, share some Board initiatives, and hear directly from parents and guardians about their concerns;
- Expressed sincere thanks to the students and staff at J. Percy Page for hosting a School Council Leaders Network meeting that was held jointly with Trustee Hole. They talked about advocacy, school council best practices, and strategies to engage more parents and guardians;
- He was invited to attend the Inclusion Alberta Changing Live Changing Communities Breakfast. A lot of great work was profiled there including, in particular, the work at Queen Elizabeth High School with one student with complex needs.
- He stopped by the J. Percy Page Bike-a-thon where students raised over \$85,000 for the Erica Legacy Foundation, an organization dedicated to raising funds and providing financial support for the enhancement of suicide prevention programming and support.
- Attended the VISMIN Officer Induction ceremony and welcomed the new officers of the association who support the Filipino Community in Edmonton. He expressed his gratitude to both the outgoing and incoming officers of the association for their dedication to the community.

Trustee Sumar was incredibly impressed by the work that our schools and Division Central Units (DU) are undertaking during School and Central Results Reviews. He thanked all our schools and DUs for the hard work that they do and for the great conversations about successes, opportunities for growth, and how the Board can best support our schools and DUs.

Trustee Sumar shared a good news story to wrap up his report. Principal George at Malcolm Tweddle School hosts monthly Coffee Conversations with parents. It's an opportunity for parents and guardians to come into the school to discuss various topics and is supported by Intercultural Liaisons, who provide language support in six languages. Some of the topics covered through the sessions include access to SchoolZone, how the brain works, bullying and dealing with anxiety, presentations from the Newcomer Centre and a Public Health Nurse. The sessions are quite well attended and provide for great conversations and engagement between staff and parents and guardians.

Board Chair Kusiek shared a Ward F update, last week she participated in the Journey Towards EDI: Student Symposium hosted at Lillian Osborne Highschool. Students from 9 different schools plus administrators from additional schools joined in the afternoon's discussion. She said this is powerful work in support of the Division's Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan and she wanted to commend organizers of this event, including Assistant Principal David Tran at Esther Starkman School, as well as all students and staff who took part. Board Chair Kusiek said, 'I believe that together, we can build not only a more equitable and inclusive school experience but be leaders in kindness in the wider community too.'

Board Chair Kusiek shared that the next Ward F Coffee Conversation was on Friday, December 13, from 10 am to 12 pm at La Bosco Cafe.

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K. **Trustees and Board Requests for Information - None**

L. **Notices of Motion - None**

M. **Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 2 p.m.**

N. **Adjournment: 6:28 p.m.**

The Board Chair adjourned the meeting.

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Julie Kusiek, Board Chair

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Karen Mills, Director Board and  
Superintendent Relations