

**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, October 8, 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 upon Vice-Chair Sawyer to provide a land acknowledgement.

Vice-Chair Sawyer shared that as we gather here today, she acknowledged that we are on Treaty 6 territory, the traditional lands of the diverse Indigenous peoples who have stewarded this land for centuries. This includes the Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Métis, Dene, and Nakota Sioux. We recognize the significant cultural, spiritual, and historical contributions of these nations to the land we now call Edmonton.

Vice-Chair Sawyer said that as we approach Thanksgiving, a holiday often associated with the celebration of harvest and gratitude, we are reminded of the importance of recognizing the complex history of this land. While Thanksgiving can be a time to reflect on what we are grateful for, it’s equally an opportunity to pause and consider the colonial context in which this holiday exists. The truth is that Indigenous peoples have long celebrated and sustained the abundance of this land, and their knowledge and connection to the land continue to shape our environment today.

Vice-Chair Sawyer said that with Orange Shirt Day just behind us, we are reminded of the painful legacy of residential schools. The phrase “Every Child Matters” serves as a call to remember and honour the thousands of Indigenous children who were taken from their families and communities, and to recognize the long-lasting impact of this trauma on survivors and their descendants. Orange Shirt Day encourages us to reflect on the importance of reconciliation and the ongoing need to support healing and understanding.

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Vice-Chair Sawyer said that on this day, and every day, we are called to actively work toward reconciliation. This means acknowledging both the past and the present — not only the deep and enduring connection Indigenous peoples have to this land but also the systems that continue to affect Indigenous communities today. It’s our responsibility to educate ourselves, to challenge the narratives we’ve been taught, and to stand with Indigenous peoples in creating a future based on respect, truth, and justice.

Vice-Chair Sawyer said that as we reflect on Thanksgiving, let us commit to a deeper understanding of our shared history, and as we remember Orange Shirt Day, let us reaffirm that Every Child Matters. May we all contribute to the ongoing process of reconciliation in meaningful ways.

**A. O Canada****B. Roll Call: 2:06 p.m.**

The Superintendent advised that all Trustees were present.

**C. Approval of the Agenda**

**MOVED BY Trustee Estabrooks:**

**“That the agenda for the October 8, 2024, Board meeting be approved as printed.”  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

**D. Communications from the Board Chair**

The Board Chair extended her congratulations to Trustee O’Keefe for successfully completing the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Trustee Governance Program through the University of Calgary Continuing Education. The ASBA Trustee Governance Program is designed to enable and empower member school board trustees to expand their professional knowledge. This program integrates theory and practice of leadership and effective governance. She thanked Trustee O’Keefe for dedicating her time and energy to furthering her own knowledge of governance as a publicly elected school board trustee. Board Chair Kusiek said she is looking forward to learning from Trustee O’Keefe as she continues to bring her experience and leadership to the Board’s collective work as the Board of Trustees for Edmonton Public Schools.

The Board Chair said that last Wednesday Mayor Amarjeet Sohi proclaimed October as Learning Month in Edmonton. The City of Edmonton is a proud member of the UNESCO Global Networks of Learning Cities, which is an international organization encouraging learning and collaboration. Throughout October, partner members, like Edmonton Public Schools, celebrate the many forms learning takes: formally in the classroom, in our community and in homes. Board Chair Kusiek thanked Vice-Chair Sawyer and Division staff for attending the kick off event.

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The Board Chair shared that yesterday, she had the opportunity to attend the READ IN Week kick off event at Richard Secord School, along with other special guests like Oilers alumni Chris Joseph and representatives from Edmonton Fire Rescue Services. This year's theme is *Reading is for everyone!* Board Chair Kusiek expressed gratitude to all schools that are welcoming guests in for the coming days.

The Board Chair advised that last week the Premier shared on social media that the province intends to bring forward legislation for student pronoun use, as well as an opt-in provision for the teaching of sexual health in schools. The Board is waiting for more information and clarity about the proposed legislation. Edmonton Public Schools' current practice is to notify parents when the teaching of a sexual health unit is coming and what the outcomes from the government-approved curriculum are. Parents have the choice to opt their child out of the sexual health unit (or portions of the unit) and alternate activities are planned for students.

The Board strongly believes that a student's sense of belonging in their school is critical to a safe and caring learning environment. In June of 2024, the Board of Trustees reviewed, updated and passed an updated [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression](#) policy. The Board did this work because they care about students who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The work the Board is doing is essential to help students feel safe and cared for, especially when they come to school. The Division has students who wish to use a pronoun that differs from their birth-assigned pronoun and the Division honours those requests, always encouraging students, when the time is right and if they haven't already done so, to have a conversation with their family. The Board's goal is to always engage parents as partners in their child's education. In February, the Board of Trustees released their position on the proposed legislation, including an invitation to meet with the province to discuss the legislation. Our position is available on [epsb.ca](#). The Board remains committed to having discussions with the province to ensure all students have safe and caring learning environments.

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

The Superintendent thanked everyone attending the meeting today, and those watching online.

The Superintendent shared that READ IN Week is in full swing. It started yesterday and goes until the end of the week. He shared his gratitude to everyone who visits schools during this week specifically, and year-round, to share their love of literacy, reading and literature.

The Superintendent said that later this month our schools will begin catchment conversations. These conversations are invaluable. They're always rich in collaboration, sharing of best practices, looking at trends, building connections - all with the student success mindset first.

The Superintendent shared the current student count for the 2024-2025 school year. As of September 30, the Division welcomed 120,198 students, which is an increase of 5,022 students, or 4.4 per cent, when compared to the 2023-2024 school year. The Division is a little below our projection of 121,790 students, but we remain grateful to families for placing their trust in the Division to help their children succeed.

**MINUTE BOOK****F. Approval of the Minutes**

1. Board Meeting – September 24, 2024

**MOVED BY Trustee Hole:**

**“That the minutes of the Board meeting held September 24, 2024, be approved as printed.”  
(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. Caucus Committee Report (From the meeting held September 10, 2024)
3. Special Caucus Committee Report (From the meeting held September 24, 2024)

Information was provided regarding actions taken at the September 10, 2024, Caucus Committee meeting and the September 24, 2024, Special Caucus Committee meeting.

4. Proposed Distribution of Additional Funding for 2024-2025

**MOVED BY Trustee Hancock:**

**“That the proposed allocation detailed above to distribute the additional \$22.4 million of funding for the 2024-2025 school year be approved.”  
(UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED)**

There was a short break in the meeting.

5. 2023-2024 Division Feedback Survey Report

An update was provided on the results of the 2023–24 Division Feedback Survey. The results from the survey were compiled into a Division summary report that provided the results for all respondent groups (students Grades 4 to 12, staff and families).

Ms. Mills left the meeting at 4 p.m.

6. Bereavements

Vice-Chair Sawyer reported on the passing of Mrs. Vessela Ourdeva, Ms. Susan Wareing, and Mrs. Lois Bruce.

## MINUTE BOOK

### **I. Other Committee, Board Representatives and Trustee Reports**

Trustee O'Keefe expressed thanks to schools in Ward A for all the invitations to READ IN Week.

Trustee O'Keefe gave a huge shout out to the Kensington Parent Association. She had the honour of attending the grand opening of their inclusive playground. The vision for this playground came from a small but passionate group of parents who saw a need, not just for their kids but for an entire community. Trustee O'Keefe congratulated them on bringing their vision to reality.

Trustee O'Keefe expressed gratitude to CUPE Local 474 for inviting her to their annual Custodial Retirement Banquet. Trustee Hancock and Superintendent Robertson also attended the event with her. Trustee O'Keefe appreciated the opportunity to honour the careers of the dedicated custodians and celebrate their retirement.

Trustee Nelson shared an Edmonton Public Schools Foundation (the Foundation) update:

#### Chromebooks for Kids returns for 2024-25 School Year

- Chromebooks for Kids increases technology-based equity for the Division's most vulnerable students
- Since 2021, over 1,700 students from more than 80 schools have received their own Chromebook
- The Foundation is currently accepting referrals from principals for this year's devices
- This program is all made possible through generous community donations, which can be made online through the Foundation's website at any time
- More information can be found on the Foundation's website [foundation.epsb.ca](https://foundation.epsb.ca)

Trustee Sumar thanked Diversity Magazine for the invitation to attend and present at the Afro Caribbean Awards Night. The evening served to recognize members of the Afro Caribbean diaspora from Northern Alberta. He congratulated all of the nominees and award recipients.

Trustee Sumar expressed thanks to the Velma E. Baker School Community for the invitation to attend their annual pancake breakfast. He said this has historically been a popular event amongst former and current students and families and this year was no different. Trustee Sumar thanked school staff and school council for their hard work in putting this event together.

Trustee Sumar shared that he attended the 1st Annual Project Adult Literacy Society (PALS) Appreciation Breakfast. There were a number of speakers at the event speaking about their own experiences with this society. There are hundreds of folks from the community who have built skills in math and literacy and who are one step closer to realizing their dreams and being able to better engage in their communities. He expressed thanks for the invitation to this great event and congratulated them on their 45th anniversary.

Trustee Sumar expressed a big thanks to staff and parents from Grace Martin School for the invitation to kick off their school council meetings this year. There was a great turnout and he is looking forward to attending more school council meetings at Grace Martin this year.

**MINUTE BOOK****J. Trustees and Board Requests for Information**

Trustee Estabrooks submitted a Request for Information regarding the 2025 Municipal elections:

- Could Administration please provide an update on the anticipated cost for EPSB for the 2025 municipal election given the news that the province will no longer allow electronic vote counters?
- What additional cost will maintaining a voter register incur upon the Division?
- Prior to the decision by the provincial government to count ballots manually, how much was the Division budgeting for the 2025 municipal elections?
- Was the school division consulted by the provincial government on these changes?
- What work is being done by Administration to prepare for these anticipated budget implications?

**K. Notices of Motion - None****L. Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at 2 p.m.****M. Adjournment: 4:18 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