

Handout provided at the "The Parent Voice in Bluewater Policy" Workshop at the PIC School Council Networking held on November 21, 2013

## **"The Parent Voice in Bluewater Policy"**

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From the Education Act:

**169.1 (1)** Every [school] board shall,

- (a) promote student achievement and well-being; ...
- (d) develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that,**
  - (i) promote the goals referred to in clauses (a) to (c), and**
  - (ii) encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals;**
- (e) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board under clause (d) in achieving the board's goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies; ...**

For the BWDSB, topics covered by policies and procedures, the BWDSB sometimes has a standalone policy, a standalone procedure, or a policy with an associated procedure.

So let's go to the website. Select policies and procedures, or the policies under review under the "About Us" tab. See below.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Bluewater District School Board website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/>. The website header includes the tagline "Preparing Our Students Today for the World of Tomorrow" and navigation links for "BWDSB Home", "Translate", and a search box. The main navigation menu includes "About Us", "Schools", "Parents / Community", "Students", "Teaching & Learning", and "Trustees". The "About Us" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of links: "About Us Overview", "Administration - Senior", "Board By-Laws", "Board Meetings", "Board Reports", "Character Development", "Contact Us", "Departments", "Enrolment Projections", "Organizational Chart", "Policies & Procedures" (highlighted with a white arrow), "Policies Under Review", and "Strategic Plan". To the right of the dropdown menu is a large image of two young girls smiling. Below the image is a "Director's" section with the year "2013" and a "More >>" link. On the right side of the page, there are several blue buttons: "Board Meetings", "Bus Cancellations", "Careers", "Contact Us", and "News Room". At the bottom, there are two sections: "Front and Centre in the News" with a headline "Students Excel at Regional Skills" and a "Spotlight" section with "Volunteer Opportunity for BWDSB Audit Committee" and "Notice of Meeting - Amabel-Sauble CS JAC". The browser's status bar at the bottom shows the URL [http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/director/Policies\\_Procedures\\_Index](http://www.bwdsb.on.ca/director/Policies_Procedures_Index) and a zoom level of 100%.

### What's the difference between and policy and a procedure?

Refer to BP-1601-D, **Policy – The Development and Implementation of Board Policy.**

2.1 of the Policy: Policy development is a key responsibility of the Board as policy-making impacts the entire organization as well as the students, families and communities of Bluewater District School Board.

2.3 b) of the Procedure: The Director of Education will be responsible for communication and implementation of the policy. This will be accomplished by developing Administrative Procedures.

Paraphrased: Policies establish general expectations and objectives. The implementation details are captured in the administrative procedures.

### What does the policy standing committee do?

Trustee representatives and staff review suggestions for new policies, revisions to policies and sometimes associated administrative procedures. The policy standing committee is supported by the Director's office. Recommendations made by the committee are reviewed and voted on by the board of trustees.

### Tips:

- For "Policies Under Review" locate these under the "About Us" tab.
- For searching on a topic, do a "ctrl + f" (hold both keys down together) to search on the "Policies & Procedures" site. For example, try "ctrl +f" and enter "school council" in the search box.
- Open up the policy (BP-1620-D) or the associated administrative procedure (AP1620-D) by clicking on it. Easy.

### How does the review process work?

This is described in AP1620-D. Look up the details there. New policies get drafted first by staff, then approved by trustees to go out to our various "partners" such as school councils. The feedback is garnered and considered by staff. Feedback summaries are provided to trustees, then we collaboratively put together a finished version. (This is the Coles Notes version of the process. See the procedure for the details.)

### Can trustees impact the administrative procedures?

Yes, but this is the exception, not the norm. This request goes through the Director of Education, normally at the policy standing committee. That committee might want changes that would then go to the board. Two examples of important procedures that trustees and staff have wrestled with are the field trip procedure and the accommodation review procedure. Again – a collaborative effort between staff and trustees.

### How can a parent influence decision making?

Great question. Ask around. Talk to others. Talk to the principal. Bring up issues at the school council table. Consider forwarding any question or concern to your local trustee. Maybe we might need to create a new policy? Or revise an existing one? And you can certainly make a delegation to the board at one of the two meetings per month. Probably the most exercised way

to influence decision making is to comment on policies that are out for review. Please see the next question on school councils.

Does a school council have any special leverage?

Another great question. I believe the answer is yes. Regulation 612/00 identifies some key consultation and response expectations. Check out the excerpt, below:

Regulation 612/00 [on School Councils and PICs, etc.]

CONSULTATION BY BOARD

**19. (1)** In addition to its other obligations to solicit the views of school councils under the Act, every board shall solicit the views of the school councils established by the board with respect to the following matters:

1. The establishment or amendment of board policies and guidelines that relate to pupil achievement or to the accountability of the education system to parents, including,
  - i. policies and guidelines established under subsection 302 (1) of the Act with respect to the conduct of persons in schools within the board's jurisdiction,
  - ii. policies and guidelines established under subsection 302 (5) of the Act respecting appropriate dress for pupils in schools within the board's jurisdiction,
  - iii. policies and guidelines respecting the allocation of funding by the board to school councils,
  - iv. policies and guidelines respecting the fundraising activities of school councils,
  - v. policies and guidelines respecting conflict resolution processes for internal school council disputes, and
  - vi. policies and guidelines respecting reimbursement by the board of expenses incurred by members and officers of school councils.

ADVISORY AUTHORITY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

**20.** A school council may make recommendations to the principal of the school or to the board that established the council on any matter. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 20.

DUTY OF BOARD TO RESPOND

**21.** The board that established a school council shall consider each recommendation made to the board by the council and shall advise the council of the action taken in response to the recommendation. O. Reg. 612/00, s. 21.

So this completes the 20 minute "policy is wonderful" info session. The information that I have provided is based on my experiences and is supported by some references that I feel are important. As is always the case – an individual trustee, myself included, cannot speak on behalf of the board. The Chair is the only official spokesperson for the board. All comments, including any mistakes in this document, are mine to own. But I hope there aren't many!

Any questions – Don't hesitate to contact me, or others. At your school, don't be afraid to tap into the expertise of your principal.

Hope this helps. Kevin