

APRIL 18, 2024

Chair's Report

RECENT EVENTS

Board Chair Cathy Allen highlighted recent trustee events:

- On April 5, trustees attended the Fort Saskatchewan and District Chamber of Commerce State of the City Luncheon, with Mayor Gale Katchur. Topic highlights: Fort Saskatchewan's strategic plans, economic development opportunities and revitalization efforts for the downtown.
- On April 8-9, trustees took part in a Board Retreat to discuss the Board's direction, priorities and work plan for the upcoming school year.
- On April 12, Vice-Chair Susan Miller and Trustee Jacqueline Shotbolt attended the 2024 Great Canadian Trade Fair and Sale opening ceremony, hosted by the Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce. The event was well attended and offered an opportunity to meet and network with local decision-makers.
- Chair Allen met with Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, the Parliamentary Secretary for Settlement Services and Ukrainian Evacuees and Alberta's member of the legislative assembly for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. Overall, it was a productive meeting focused on shared concerns and advocacy priorities.
- On April 17, trustees attended the Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce State of the County address, with Mayor Rod Frank. Topic highlights: The outlook for the region, focus areas, economic growth and development plans—overall, a positive forecast.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

National Volunteer Week takes place this week, from April 14-20. Year-long, within Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS), hundreds of volunteers work in the background, offering their time and expertise. Collectively, these efforts help support the success of EIPS schools and make a difference in students' lives and their learning environments. In recognition of National Volunteer Week, and on behalf of the Board of Trustees, Chair Allen thanked all EIPS volunteers for the many ways they give their time, skills and resources to the Division.

TRUSTEES' SCHOOL TOURS

On April 11, trustees visited James Mowat Elementary, Rudolph Hennig Junior High, SouthPointe School and Win Ferguson Elementary as part of the Board's 2023-24 Trustees' School Tours. The Board extends thanks to all the staff and students at each school for hosting the tours. Everyone enjoyed learning about the schools and the programs they offer.

Superintendent's Report

RECENT EVENTS

Superintendent Stoddard highlighted several recent events:

- On March 22, she attended a meeting with the Strathcona Christian Academy Society and the two schools' principals. She's pleased to share the Division resigned its five-year lease agreement.
- On March 27, she met with the Elk Island Logos Society to discuss junior high programming and how to increase program enrolment.
- She also joined trustees at the Board Retreat, which focused on the Board's future work plans, public education and upcoming priorities.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

In honour of National Volunteer Week, April 14-20, Superintendent Stoddard thanked the many volunteers within EIPS—parents, caregivers, families and community members—who offer their time, expertise and hearts to the Division on an ongoing basis. These are individuals who often work behind the scenes to support students, staff and schools. Collectively, they make EIPS schools better places to be.

Association and Employee Relation Reports

ASBA ZONE 2/3 MEETING

Trustee Susan Miller presented highlights from the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Zone 2/3 meeting held on March 22. Highlights include:

- The Zone thanked school boards for submitting nominations for the Edwin Parr Teacher Award and the Friends of Education Award—the event takes place on May 24.
- The President’s report included highlights from the Alberta Teaching Profession Commission’s annual report and recent meeting updates about school nutrition programs, immigration, Budget 2024 and new school project announcements.
- The Vice-President’s report focused on the recent engagement hosted by the Advocacy Committee, and its plans for future sessions.
- Members reviewed the Zone’s financial statements and proposed position statements.
- Various action items were assigned, including survey response followups, bookkeeping information and upcoming events and deadlines, such as:
 - April 29: emergent position statements and bylaw amendments;
 - May 15: ASBA Speaker’s Corner; and
 - June 3-4: ASBA spring general meeting.

ATA LOCAL REPORT

The Board received for information the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) Local No. 28 report from Deneen Zielke, the Local’s President:

- Recently, the ATA submitted feedback to the province about its new draft elementary social studies curriculum. Overall, the content did improve. However, the ATA is concerned with the limited teacher input included in the curriculum and the heavy emphasis on fact memorization versus critical thinking. Zielke encourages everyone to review the draft curriculum and share feedback with the province.
- On April 12, Zielke attended the ATA’s 2024 Collective Bargaining Conference, which included many informative sessions. The highlight: a session facilitated by Jim Stanford, an economist with the Centre for Future Work, who discussed wage indicators, inflation and the provincial and federal debt. According to Stanford, Alberta’s finances are the strongest of all the provinces, yet education spending is the lowest—which is a political choice, not an economic necessity.
- On April 12-14, the Local hosted an information booth at the 2024 Great Canadian Trade Fair and Sale—to build awareness around the importance of a strong public education system.
- On April 13-16, Zielke attended uLead 2024, an annual educational leadership summit that included keynote speakers, learning sessions and networking opportunities.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS GROUP REPORT

The Board received for information the Employee Relations Group (ERG) report from Michelle Miller, the committee’s Chair:

- Recently, the ERG welcomed a new member, Jesse Da Costa, who represents EIPS Central Services.

- On March 1, EIPS held its annual Classified Professional Learning Day—again a huge success. Post-event feedback is positive, with many attendees commenting on how much they enjoyed keynote speaker Lisa Vlooswyk, a Calgary-based motivational speaker who spoke about goal setting.
- On March 19, the ERG enjoyed joining the Board for a luncheon to share information about the group, successes and challenges, and ask questions.
- On April 16, the ERG meeting focused on EIPS' new educational assistant pilot program.

New Business

AMENDED BOARD OF TRUSTEE SCHEDULE: 2023-24

The Board approved the amended Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule for the 2023-24 school year (see pg. 10, "[Amended 2023-24 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule](#)").

POLICY AMENDMENTS

The Board approved amendments to [Board Policy 13: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters](#). Changes were made to Section 1, regarding suspension and expulsion appeals, and to Section 2.5 to better align with the *Education Act*. Other changes were made to strengthen the policies' clarity and readability.

ACCESSING DIVISION UNALLOCATED RESERVES: 2024-25

The Board approved accessing \$352,000 of the Division's unallocated reserves to cover staffing costs in the 2024-25 school year. EIPS now projects the Division Unallocated Reserve to be \$3.05 million by Aug. 31, 2025—well within the operating reserve limit (see pg. 28, "[Accessing 2024-25 Division Unallocated Reserves](#)").

2023-24 KEY BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

The Board approved the key budget assumptions for the 2024-25 school year (see pg. 30, "[2024-25 Key Budget Assumptions](#)"). The assumptions are based on the Board's mission and belief statements, the Division's [Four-Year Education Plan](#), Alberta's Budget 2024 and the provincial *Funding Manual for School Authorities 2024-25 School Year*. EIPS will use the approved assumptions to develop its 2024-25 spring budget, which helps schools and departments plan for the upcoming school year. As with all assumptions, changes such as funding, reserve usage, enrolment numbers and standard costs can significantly affect the budget.

ASSUMPTION HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2024-25

BUDGET PRIORITIES – Focus areas include classroom complexity, curriculum and resource development to support teachers, the Mental Health Strategic Plan, continued pursuit of the collegiate school and support for career pathways, equitable access to education—for both rural and urban schools, staff retention and artificial intelligence considerations.

ENROLMENT – The Division expects student enrolment to increase by 53 students by fall 2024—to 17,813 students from 17,760 students in fall 2023.

FUNDING GRANTS – For the most part, funding rates remain unchanged. Although, Alberta Education added a new element to the Program Unit Funding Grant. EIPS will now receive 50% of the funding for kindergarten, severe and pre-kindergarten learners registered between Dec. 2, 2024 and Feb. 2, 2025. The Capital Maintenance and Renewal Grant will increase to pre-pandemic levels to \$2.83 million from \$1.14 million. Meanwhile, the Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal Grant will drop \$200,000—to \$2.22 million. Also notable, while the System Administration Grant remains at 3.2% of expenditures, it will increase by \$359,000 because expenditures were higher in 2023 than in 2022. As well, the Mental Health in Schools Pilot Grant is discontinued—as of Dec. 31, 2024.

OTHER REVENUE – EIPS anticipates receiving provincial funding to cover its lease agreements and the Division’s Official Languages in Education Program. The Division will also generate revenue through School Generated Funds and school fees. Similar to last year, the spring budget won’t include funding for the Odyssey Language Program, as it’s unknown if the federal government will continue to support it, and the amount.

COMPENSATION – EIPS anticipates the overall certificated standard costs to increase by 1.79% and standard classified costs to change by (2.5%) and 4.2%. The increases are the result of higher employee benefits rates and salary grid movement.

INFLATION – EIPS anticipates non-salary inflationary increases—based on the overall consumer price index. These include higher costs for insurance, energy, construction labour and materials, fleet purchases and custodial services.

CARBON TAX – EIPS incurs increases in carbon tax costs based on the *2030 Emissions Reduction Plan*, a federal document outlining Canada’s plan to meet its 2030 emissions reduction target. Currently, EIPS pays a \$80 per tonne carbon tax. Annually, that will increase until it reaches the targeted \$170 per tonne in 2030. As a result, it will continue to impact the Division’s budget and remove funds from the classroom.

RESERVES—School Generated Funds are now included when calculating EIPS’ operating reserve limit for Aug. 31, 2025. As such, the limit increased to 6% of the prior year’s operating expenditures, or \$12.45 million. That’s up from the previous limit of 3.2%. What this means: As of Aug. 31, 2025, the Division must ensure its operating reserves are within 6% of its 2023-24 expenses. Any surplus of more than 6% must be returned to Alberta Education. Administration will ensure operating reserves are below that number.

EXPENSES – Administration developed a five-year capital projection that lists anticipated capital needs, including infrastructure technology, fleet vehicles, and careers and technology studies equipment. The list ensures planning occurs for sufficient funds in future years.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION FEES: 2024-25

The Board approved the Student Transportation fee schedule for the 2024-25 school year. Student Transportation offers an enhanced transportation fee structure. As such, all riders pay a fee for transportation services. It’s an equitable structure for riders and allows EIPS to maintain its current level of service. Thanks to a new provincial funding model for student transportation—introduced in 2023-24—which expands the rider eligibility distance and money to cover higher fuel and inflationary costs, some fees will decrease in 2024-25. The Division will also apply a 40% rebate to current Student Transportation riders—calculated and applied to 2023-24 fees. Additionally, Student Transportation will continue to offer a payment-plan option—available to families with fees of \$300 and more—paid over seven months. The approved 2024-25 student fee schedule is available online at [Student Transportation Fees 2024-25](#), as of May 1.

Committee Report

POLICY COMMITTEE

The Board received for information a report from the Policy Committee meeting held on April 3. The committee reviewed three policies—4, 13 and 24. Amendments to [Policy 13: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters](#) were approved earlier at the April Board meeting (see pg. 3, “Policy Amendments”). Meanwhile, the committee plans to review [Policy 4: Appendix – Trustee Code of Conduct Sanctions](#) and [Policy 24: Personal Communication Devices](#) with the Board at the next Caucus meeting in May. Artificial Intelligence (AI) guidelines were also reviewed. Ultimately, the committee determined AI use within the Division is not a governance issue, and guidelines for its use should be determined by EIPS administration.

STUDENT EXPULSION COMMITTEE

The Board received for information a report from the Student Expulsion Committee regarding four recent meetings—one on April 5 and three on April 12. The committee reviewed all relevant information and upheld the recommendations put forward by each school's administration.

Board Members

Cathy Allen, *Chair* | Susan Miller, *Vice-Chair* | Trina Boymook | Randy Footz | Colleen Holowaychuk | Don Irwin | Jacqueline Shotbolt | Ralph Sorochoan

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