

Council to Improve Classroom Conditions

Student Attendance Policy

Recommendation, April 18, 2017

Since the March meeting, a working group of four Council members (representing elementary, junior high/middle, senior high, and guidance) revised the attendance policy with a goal of ensuring:

- teachers and principals have a policy with a clear expectation of attendance and accountability for non-attendance and late arrivals (“teeth”)
- school-based, team decisions cannot be overturned by the school board
- students and families who need support get support
- teachers have flexibility to use their professional judgment to recognize special circumstances

Council also recognized the past consultations and pilot project, and the expectation that a policy needs to be in place for September. Therefore, they want to have a targeted policy review to collect feedback before the Council makes final recommendations on the policy in May.

Outside of the targeted policy review, the Council is interested in reviewing research, best practices from other provinces, and experience from pilot projects on how to most effectively improve attendance through outreach from the school and community to families of students with high absenteeism.

Recommendations/changes	Rationale	Additional Council Comments
Problem: Teachers and principals have waited a long time for an attendance policy		
Request EECD to release the draft policy immediately, to gather and return feedback to the Council before the May 17 meetings, to communicate the policy to schools in June, and to take effect in September.	A lot of consultation has already occurred. This is intended as a final system check before implementing the policy in September.	Feedback to be complete and returned to Council by May 9 .
Problem: Need a final system check on the policy before September implementation		
Ask principals to share the policy with staff and school advisory councils and encourage feedback to Council members or the department’s website.	The principal’s voice in the final policy is critical and having them, as instructional leaders in their schools, encourage feedback is important to inform Council decisions.	Feedback to be complete and returned to Council by May 9 .
Problem: Need for outreach to families to determine reasons for absences and steps to improve attendance		

<p>Request EEC and school boards to bring forward research and best practices on outreach workers or other supports and accountability measures to increase attendance. This would support discussion around the potential of a pilot project.</p>	<p>Various models for support exist, and research will support testing the right model. This also helps share the responsibility of improving attendance beyond the school and the individual teacher.</p>	<p>This will be dealt with at the May meeting.</p>
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