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Eastern School District

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March 17, 2010

Mr. Bill Whelan, President
PEI Home and School Federation Inc.
PO Box 1012
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7M4

Bill
Dear Mr. Whelan:

Thank you for your letter received May 5, 2009 regarding the resolutions passed at your Annual General Meeting. Please accept my apologies on the lateness of this reply. The trustees of the Eastern School District have asked me to respond as follows:

Resolution 1/09 - School Fees

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provided additional funding for the 2008/2009 school year to eliminate band fees and mandatory graduation fees for Eastern School District students. The Board adopted a motion on September 10, 2008 that supported the Department's request for no new fees for curriculum based equipment and supplies. Also, schools have access to an Equal Chances for Learning Fund to support students in financial need. Currently, the Board's Policy and Planning Committee have conducted a review of student fees and will be making recommendations to the Board.

Resolution 2/09 - School Bus Safety: Student Numbers

Bus drivers report to the Transportation Supervisor whenever their bus has too many students for the safe transportation of students. The actual configuration depends on the size of the students; therefore, it is difficult to determine a standard seat configuration.

Resolution 3/09 - Safe Schools

The Eastern School District has a comprehensive *Use of Electronic Devices* policy which states:

Students are prohibited from the unauthorized use of electronic devices (above) in schools at all times. This includes classes, corridors, offices, libraries, cafeterias, labs and specifically, areas where there is an increased expectation of privacy such as change /locker rooms and washrooms.

Excellence in Education

When not authorized for use, all electronic devices must be turned off and out of sight while in the school building.

Schools in the Eastern School District have been directed to adhere strictly to the policy, and only those students who have been authorized by the school principal to use such devices, can do so.

Should a violation occur the policy states:

Staff may confiscate any electronic device - unless authorized for use - that is visible, that rings or beeps, or is otherwise in use in the school building or on any bus runs. If an electronic device is confiscated, it may be returned to the student at the end of the day or it may be held by the school until a parent is able to pick it up.

Many schools are already involving parents in the application of this policy, by requiring that parents appear with the student when the device is recovered. Repeat offences result in greater and more severe consequences for the student, often with mandatory parental involvement. The Eastern School District will revisit this policy with a view to strengthening the parental involvement aspect.

At this point the Eastern School District would be opposed to a zero tolerance response to the use of electronic devices. There are some students who legitimately require such devices in order to access the curriculum; others may have emotional needs which necessitate the authorized use. A blanket zero tolerance statement would negate the principal's option of allowing use of electronic devices for those students requiring these interventions.

Resolution 4/09 - School Closures

The School Board passed resolutions regarding school closures at their May 29, 2009 School Board Meeting.

Resolution 5/09 - Hand Washing

The Eastern School District concurs with the observation that proper handwashing is an effective practice in the prevention and transmission of infectious illnesses, and to this end schools have been instructed to teach and model proper handwashing techniques to their students particularly before eating and after using the washroom.

The ongoing concern over H1N1 and its impact on the student population has resulted in the Department of Education, the Department of Health and provincial school boards coordinating a strong effort to promote the hand washing message. Increased signage, information brochures for students and parents on proper hand washing techniques, and hand sanitizing stations have been developed for use in our schools to promote hand cleanliness.

Resolution 6/09 - Ban on Flavoured Tobacco Products

The Eastern School District supports the resolution to ban flavoured tobacco products as this would support our efforts to prevent the use of any tobacco products by our students. The appeal and accessibility of these products target our youth population, and with what we know about their addictive and harmful nature, a ban on the sale of these products would benefit our society.

Resolution 8/09 - Establishing One English Language School Board

The School Board of the Eastern School District does not support this resolution. It is our feeling that the distance to be covered by one English Board would be a barrier to the work of the Board. It could also be a barrier to parents, staff and the general public. This being the case, the distance barrier could have a negative impact on the students we serve.

Most operations of one Board do not impact on the other. One Board would negatively impact the work of our trustees. The balance between too few and too many trustees is a delicate balance. At this time, we feel there is proper representation among trustees and the public they serve.

There is one aspect of Board governance that could have a stronger link. The development of Board Policy could have a formalized collaboration among staff and trustees if in the view of our educational partners, this consistency would be seen as having a positive result.

We also wish to point out the importance of having elected trustees. As elected trustees, we have a direct accountability link to the electorate.

Resolution 9/09 - Exam Exemptions Pilot Project

The exam exemption pilot has been approved by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Eastern School District. The pilot will be evaluated. The Senior Director of Education and the ESD Superintendent will determine the scope of the research. The Senior Director has contracted the Dean of Education at UPEI, Dr. Tim Goddard, to complete the evaluation. A copy of the exam exemption pilot proposal is attached for your information.

Thank you for the opportunity to consult on these important matters. Please feel free to contact me if there are questions.

Sincerely,



Robert Clow
Board Chairperson

/cjm
Att.

Pilot Exemption Policy

Appendix E of the final report on the study of Exemption and Attendance Rules (May, 1998) refers to the NASSP Bulletin which suggests schools, "provide incentives for good attendance" and "reward good attendance". This Exam Exemption policy is a strategy to reward good attendance.

The goal of this policy is to improve student engagement and student achievement by promoting better attendance and completion of 100% of course work. This policy applies to high school courses where final exams are used as an authentic form of assessment. It is understood that an exam exemption is a reward for students who have met the criteria set out in this policy.

To qualify for an exemption students must meet the following criteria:

1. Students must be enrolled in and complete four 110 hour credit courses.
2. Student absences (including excused and un-excused) must not exceed set levels and students must maintain a minimum grade in each course.(see #5) An absence has been defined by the *Student Records Management Steering Committee* as anytime a student misses more than 50% of the scheduled class time.
 - a. **The following absences will be used to determine exempt status:**
 - i. **AS - Sickness. E.g. cold, flu, hospital**
 - ii. **AE - Excused Appointments. E.g. Medical, dental**
 - iii. **AX - Extra Curricular. E.g. PEISAA teams, band, leadership, exchanges**
 - iv. **AF - Family approved. E.g. Hair cuts, vacations, hockey tournaments**
 - v. **A - Un-excused. E.g. skipping, no parental contact or approval**
 - vi. **Z - Out of school suspension**
 - vii. **ZI - In-school suspension**
 - b. **The following absence will not be used to determine exempt status:**
 - i. **AC - School approved absences. E.g. Curricular field trips which are required to meet the outcomes of a course, meetings with counselors or administration.**
3. Students have completed all course work and assessments as assigned by their four subject teachers.
4. Student behaviour must meet the expectations of their teachers, school (Code of Conduct), school board (Caring Places to Learn Policy, etc.), and the *School Act*. Administration reserves the right to veto an exemption if the behaviour of the student is not acceptable.
5. **To qualify for an exemption students must meet one of the following criteria in all four courses:**
 - a. **no more than 6 absences and a minimum grade of 60% or**
 - b. **no more than 12 absences and a minimum grade of 80%.**

Notes

- Students may be exempt for up to 2 exams per semester;
- Students are not eligible for exemptions in both Math and English in the same school year,
- Students are not eligible for exemptions in Math or English in consecutive years.

Pilot

With Department of Education and School Board approval Colonel Gray would like to pilot this policy for two school years.

Evaluation

Linda Lowther and Sandy MacDonald will determine the scope of the research. Colonel Gray will provide the Department access to the data required to answer the research questions.