



ASSOCIATION OF YUKON SCHOOL
COUNCILS, BOARDS & COMMITTEES

**Resource Document
for
POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND REVIEW
for
School Councils**

KNOW YOUR POLICIES

A policy is a statement of intent setting overall values and broad guidelines for action in a given area. Good policies create the stability, continuity and accountability that are essential for the efficient running of the education system. When a framework of clear policy exists, people know where they stand and what is expected of them, but also where they are going and what the overall aims and objectives of the system are. Good policies lead to predictable outcomes for everyone involved.

Some Definitions

Policy: tends to direct, guide or govern; may be a pronouncement either encouraging or banning some activity. It is a general statement of the beliefs of the organization, and constitutes a basis for development and implementation of procedures.

Procedures: statements of who does what, how and in what sequence, may be mandatory or discretionary

Regulation: a rule, order, prescription, regulating principle, governing direction, or law (i.e., the regulations of a school)

Guideline: provides guidance relative to setting standards or determining a course of action—a rule or principle provides guidance

Effective policy--

- is precise
- reflects the overall values of the school and community
- clearly defines the school system's goals and objectives
- is flexible and able to respond effectively to operational issues as they arise
- creates a shared understanding by clearly defining expectations, roles and responsibilities
- envisions and measures clear outcomes
- is written in plain language and easily understood

Where do I find Policies?

Yukon Education policies are posted on the website:

<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/policy/index.html>

These are broad-based policies that apply to all Yukon schools and include such topics as:

- student attendance
 - dispute resolution
 - tobacco-free schools
 - field trips
 - school nutrition
 - substance abuse
 - student transportation
 - sexual orientation and gender identity
- and much more

Individual Yukon school policies should be posted on each school's website via:

www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools. These are school-based, and there may be some variation between schools.

School Council members are well served by taking some time to review their school's as well as the territory wide Yukon Education policies as they will provide guidance in the work that you do.

It is important that policies are available to all stakeholders in education—students, school staff, parents, community, departmental staff. They provide clarity and direction for many matters that affect the school environment and student learning, relative to rights, responsibilities, authorities, and decision-making processes.

Council members have a role in developing, reviewing, modifying and implementing policies in a number of areas. They may also suggest a policy be developed by Yukon Education to meet a need.

Councils may also develop their own 'internal' policies to guide them in their operations. Policies should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are relevant, consistent and easy to understand.

How to Develop Policy

In general there are five steps involved in policy-making:

1. Initiation
2. Development
3. Refinement
4. Adoption & Implementation
5. Review & Evaluation.

⇒ **Step One: Initiation**

The need for a new policy can emerge from a number of different areas including:

- a specific incident or issue
- staff, teachers, students, parents or the community
- new legislation
- the creation of new programs
- the elimination of programs or services

If it is decided that a policy should be developed, and none exists or is no longer relevant, policy development begins.

⇒ **Step Two: Development**

At this stage, information is collected, alternatives are evaluated and a decision on overall policy direction is made.

Research and community engagement are two key activities that occur during this stage. Research should be conducted on the issue itself, community and stakeholder values and interests, policies that exist in other jurisdictions, and other available background information.

Soliciting public input is a key component of policy development and an effective way to collect information on their values, interests and ideas. Opportunities exist to involve the public in:

- better understanding and defining the issues that **affect student learning and achievement**
- identifying community values and interests
- creating and evaluating alternatives
- making the decision

⇒ **Step Three: Refinement**

During this stage, the draft policy is reviewed by a variety of stakeholders to ensure it is clear, meets the required objectives and has no unintended consequences.

A proposed policy may need to be reviewed by various parties including:

1. legal counsel to ensure it is within the Department's or Council's mandate and does not impose additional liabilities
2. human resources or labour relations to ensure it does not violate employee rights or the collective agreement
3. communications (or someone well-versed in this area) to ensure clarity
4. superintendent or staff to ensure it can be implemented.

Once the policy has been refined and reviewed it should be taken back to the community (or involved stakeholders) to ensure it accurately reflects what was agreed to in step two.

⇒ **Step Four: Adoption and Implementation**

The policy is formally adopted at the Department and/or Council level and forwarded to staff (if applicable) for implementation. Some things to consider when implementing policy include:

- new regulations and procedures may be required to support the policy
- new equipment/materials that may be required to support implementation
- how to communicate policy details to affected groups
- training (if required).

⇒ **Step Five: Evaluation and Monitoring**

It is important to monitor and evaluate policy implementation to ensure the policy is effective, achieves the desired outcome and does not create unintended problems or outcomes. A formal evaluation should compare the actions and outcomes of the policy against the original intent and objectives.

SAMPLE POLICY DEVELOPMENT OUTLINE

Identifying areas where policy is needed or where revision is required

ISSUE: *WHAT IS THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE?*

BACKGROUND: *WHAT HISTORY IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING THIS PROBLEM OR ISSUE? (REFER TO OR ATTACH ANY PERTINENT DOCUMENTS)*

INVOLVEMENT: *WHO SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN FINDING A SOLUTION?*

ALTERNATIVES: *WHAT ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS ARE THERE? WHAT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?*

EXISTING POLICY: DOES THIS PROPOSED POLICY RELATED TO ANOTHER POLICY?
REFERENCE

OPTIONS: CAN THE SAME OUTCOME BE ACHIEVED THROUGH GUIDELINES, PROCEDURES OR OTHER MEANS? YES OR NO AND WHY?

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: IS THERE LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE AUTHORITY?

BUDGET: ARE THERE ANY POSSSIBLE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS?

GOOD POLICY CHECKLIST

	YES	NO
1. enables people within the schools to clearly understand their responsibilities;	_____	_____
2. builds support and understanding among in the community for what the schools intend to do and how they intend to achieve their goals;	_____	_____
3. saves time by clearly delineating areas of concerns and the philosophies that should guide action;	_____	_____
4. not only guides action, but calls for action by establishing expectations which make it clear how people in the system should design plans for the future as well as responses to current incidents;	_____	_____
5. establishes responsibility and accountability and, as such, enables intelligent and consistent evaluation and review;	_____	_____
6. includes expressions of purpose and intent, thus ensuring that actions are consistent with general philosophy, goals, strategic directions, etc.;	_____	_____
7. addresses the needs of the future rather than the "tyranny of the moment";	_____	_____
8. provides continuity in a system to ensure that even if a governing body changes significantly philosophy and broad goals/expectations will remain in place; and	_____	_____
9. deliberately takes the philosophical high ground and, by so doing, tends to enable organizations to avoid the potential pitfalls and chaos that can be caused by division or conflicts.	_____	_____