

ATTENDANCE POLICY DIRECTIVE CONSULTATION SUMMARY

October 24–28, 2022

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Date(s) of Consultation(s)

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Contact Information

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Consultation Participants

- Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
- Manitoba School Boards Association
- Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba
- Independent Funded Schools
- The Manitoba Teachers' Society
- Éducatrices et éducateurs francophones du Manitoba
- Council of School Leaders
- Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth

Overview

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning commits to work across the system and alongside parents/caregivers, communities, and educational partners to enhance proactive and preventive practices to foster student presence and engagement, with a focus on identifying and removing barriers early. Collectively, we share responsibility for facilitating and promoting student presence and engagement.

Developed in collaboration with the Attendance Task Force (2019–2022), the provincial attendance policy directive was reviewed by senior leadership representatives from key stakeholder organizations through the lens of policy implementation. The following questions guided the facilitated discussion:

- How much time is required to align your current divisional policy with the new policy directive?
- What would be helpful topics to include in an information sharing session following the announcement of the directive?
- Is there anything else you would like the department to consider?

Feedback

TOPIC 1: POLICY ALIGNMENT

General Themes of What We Heard

- Policy alignment would be doable by June 2023; implementation of the policy directive will take time.

TOPIC 2: INFORMATION SHARING SESSIONS

General Themes of What We Heard

- **Following the release of the policy directive, information sessions for school leaders on the following topics would support the implementation of divisional policies:**
 - The importance of understanding student needs and interests to enhance student presence and engagement
 - Connecting students to their communities: the value of community-engaged learning
 - Schools as community hubs: the power of community partnerships to support children, youth, and families
 - Interventions to promote student presence and engagement: highlighting successful practices in the Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years with examples of successful interventions, success stories, and strategies being used now that will give schools momentum
 - Student-specific planning and case management, including sample templates and exemplars: What does this look like for short-term and long-term planning?
 - A refresher on *The Information Sharing Act*, including *PHIA* and *FIPPA*

TOPIC 3: POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

General Themes of What We Heard

- Early intervention is key.
- Focus on presence and engagement.
- There is a need for sustainable resources so that principals and staff in schools/regions with high student absenteeism can respond to and remove barriers such as nutrition, transportation, transiency, student mental health, and workload.
- Use a multi-faceted approach when responding to barriers, and create a sense of belonging and engagement with families.
- Clarification of the role of the proposed Divisional Attendance Committees is needed.
- Punitive responses such as sending letters home are not effective and create barriers for family engagement.
- Public awareness is critical; clarify roles and responsibilities.

- Refresh the message on a regular basis (supporting student presence and engagement is not a “one and done”).
- Recognize that schools are not alone and this is a provincial issue where all communities/stakeholders have a role to play, but mobilizing all of these assets will be a longer project.
- Include Attendance Task Force members in the acknowledgements section.
- Precise language is important and needed in English and French.
- Add school principals to the case management approach.
- Clarify definitions (e.g., does the definition of chronic absenteeism include excused and unexcused absences?). The validity of excuses must be considered and presented (e.g., cultural appropriateness issue).
- Resources: List resources according to region (north, south, west, east), and include contact information for Canadian mental health services. Ensure the resources section is reviewed regularly so it is current and reflective of what is available.
- Inter-agency involvement is required to support students. How can the department support connecting schools with required agencies (i.e., bringing hot-spot schools and other agencies together)?
- The tiered model included in the *Safe and Caring Schools* document provides a good visual and reference. Providing a repertoire of solutions is very helpful.
- What is the role/involvement of the departments of Families, Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, and Justice? What mechanism will support the collective coordination and partnership to support and improve regular daily attendance for all students?
- What next steps are being suggested for those students we haven't been successful at getting to attend? Is an action plan for how to do this work going to come?
- What is the vision for how we are directly marking (coding) for attendance? There are more challenges at the high school level (e.g., each class is marked).
- Ongoing information sessions will be required apart from the roll-out.

Conclusion

The department thanks all who have participated in the engagements to inform the development and implementation of the provincial attendance policy directive. The input and perspectives provided by all participants will be taken into consideration as the department refines the policy directive and develops a complimentary action plan. We are committed as a system to realizing the vision of every child in Manitoba reaching their full potential, no matter where they live or their individual circumstances, and student presence and engagement is the foundation of this vision.