

Date: August 27, 2025 **Agenda Item:** 8.5

To: Board of Trustees

From: Shawna Warren, Superintendent

Originator(s): Shawna Warren, Superintendent

Subject: **Administrative Procedure 831: Religious Education and Instruction**

Background:

Administrative Procedures are the written directives, procedures and assignment of responsibilities established and approved by the Superintendent that direct the implementation of and achievement of desired outcomes of Board policy, Division Vision, Mission and Values and the effective operation of the Division ([AP 205 Developing Administrative Procedures](#)).

Administrative Procedures are reviewed and developed on a regularly scheduled basis.

On June 18, 2025, the Board of Trustees approved the rescission of Policy 800: Religious Education and Instruction, following a multi-stage review and recommendation process by the Policy Committee and Committee of the Whole. This action reflects the Division's ongoing implementation of the G-Tech model of governance, which clearly distinguishes governance from administration by emphasizing that operational matters be managed through administrative procedures, while the Board remains focused on strategic direction and student success.

The development of *Administrative Procedure 831: Religious Education and Instruction* ensures continued compliance with Alberta Education requirements and supports consistent, respectful and inclusive practices across the Division.

Status & Relationship to Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS):

This report aligns with the [SLQS](#) in the following way:

COMPETENCY:	(3) Visionary Leadership
INDICATORS:	c. promoting in the school community a common understanding of and support for the school authority's goals, priorities and strategic initiatives; and
	d. ensuring that the vision expressed in the school authority's education plan is responsive to the ongoing review of the school authority's achievements, meets all requirements identified in provincial legislation and incorporates the school community's perspectives.

COMPETENCY: (6) School Authority Operations and Resources
INDICATORS: a. providing direction on fiscal and resource management in accordance with all statutory, regulatory and school authority requirements;
 c. delegating responsibility to staff, where appropriate, to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness; and
 e. establishing data-informed strategic planning and decision-making processes that are responsive to changing contexts.

COMPETENCY: (7) Supporting Effective Governance
INDICATORS: d. ensuring that the board's plans, resource allocations, strategies and procedures lead to the achievement of its goals and priorities;
 f. supporting the board in the fulfilment of its governance functions in the fiduciary, strategic and generative realms; and
 g. implementing board policies and supporting the regular review and evaluation of their impact.

Governance Implications:

Education Act

Board responsibilities

33(1) A board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to
 (i) ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources,

Board Procedures Regulation

Policies and procedures

4 The board must

- (a) establish policies and procedures governing the conduct of meetings of the board and the administration and business of the board, and
- (b) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the established policies and procedures on a regular basis.

Board Policy 2: Role of the Board

Governance and Organization

- 26. Develop, approve and monitor the implementation of policies to guide the Division and the Board.
- 28. Monitor the development, revision and implementation of policy

Administrative Procedure 205: Developing Administrative Procedures

Administrative Procedures are the written directives, procedures and assignment of responsibilities established and approved by the Superintendent that direct the implementation of and achievement of desired outcomes of Board policy, Division Vision, Mission and Values, and the effective operation of the Division.



Administration is prepared to respond to questions at the August 27, 2025, Public Board meeting.

Attachment(s) and/or link(s):

1. [Administrative Procedure 831: Religious Education and Instruction](#)



831: Religious Education and Instruction

Responsible Administrator: Deputy Superintendent, Education Services

PURPOSE

Sturgeon Public Schools believes that our schools have a role in helping students develop emotionally, intellectually, physically, morally and spiritually.

Sturgeon Public Schools believes in religious tolerance, the acknowledgement of religious diversity, the maintenance of inclusive environments in its schools and the provision of appropriate opportunities for students to give expression to their religious beliefs.

Sturgeon Public Schools believes that while many education activities may be perceived to include incidental or indirect reference to religion or religious themes, these may provide valuable learning and cultural opportunities for students, serve to acknowledge the religious diversity that exists among students and provide students with opportunity to express their personal beliefs, when done in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner and does not involve indoctrination.

PROCESS

The Deputy Superintendent, Education Services, shall be responsible for maintaining the procedure.

2.0 GUIDELINES

2.1 In accordance with the Education Act, the Alberta Act, the School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories, the Constitution of Canada, and the Alberta Human Rights Act, Sturgeon Public Schools encourages the practice of providing opportunities for students to take part in religious instruction during the day and may prescribe religious instruction to be offered to its students.

2.2 Offering religious instruction

2.2.1 The Principal shall annually:

2.2.1.1 Inquire of parents/guardians as to whether or not they wish to have their child(ren) participate in a religious instruction course, and

2.2.1.2 Facilitate receipt of written approval for students whose parents/guardians wish them to participate in any religious instruction course.

2.2.1.3 In accordance with the Education Act, the Alberta Act, the School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories, the Constitution of Canada and the Alberta Human Rights Act:

2.2.1.3.1 Receive indication from any parents/ guardians who do not wish to have their child(ren) participate in a religious instruction course, and

2.2.1.3.2 Make provision to provide an alternate course of instruction for any student(s) whose parents/guardians do not wish them to participate in a religious instruction course.

2.2.2 Approval Process

2.2.2.1 Whenever parents/guardians request that religious instruction courses be made available at a school, the Principal shall advise the Superintendent.

2.2.2.2 The Deputy Superintendent may direct the Principal to determine the degree of parent/guardian interest around such request for religious instruction courses through surveys, meetings or any other appropriate means of gathering information, and establish a timeframe for such undertaking.

2.2.2.3 The Principal shall present information obtained, including the rationale for the request for religious instruction courses and the determined degree of parent/guardian interest in the request, to the Deputy and seek Deputy prescription of such courses.

2.2.2.4 The Deputy shall consider the rationale presented, including the tradition and culture of the school community, as well as the determined degree of parent/guardian interest and may prescribe the religious instruction courses to be included in the school's course offerings.

2.2.2.5 For schools where the Deputy prescribes religious instruction courses, the Principal shall typically present information regarding such courses as part of the school's instructional program plan for the coming school year. Such information shall include:

2.2.2.5.1 The grades or grade groupings for which religious instruction will be offered,

2.2.2.5.2 The scheduling, as per legislation, of instruction per week,

2.2.2.5.3 The process by which parents/guardians will indicate their approval or non-approval for their child(ren) to participate in a religious instruction course,

2.2.2.5.4 The course of instruction to be offered to any student whose parents/guardians indicate that their child is not to participate in a religious instruction course, and

2.2.2.5.5 If any persons other than teachers are to provide the religious instruction to the students.

2.2.2.6 The Deputy Superintendent, or designate, shall report annually to the Board the number and location of schools offering religious instruction courses.

2.3 Alternative Programs

In accordance with The Education Act, the Division may establish an alternative program that emphasizes religion and includes:

2.3.1 Courses of study

2.3.2 Instructional materials, and

2.3.3 Instruction or exercises that deal primarily and explicitly with religion.

2.4 Participation in Activities

2.4.1 Student participation is authorized in the following activities which may include incidental or indirect reference to religion or religious themes:

2.4.1.1 A moment of silence at a special event such as a Remembrance Day ceremony,

2.4.1.2 Appropriate and inclusive ceremonial prayer at special events such as graduation exercises,

2.4.1.3 Participation in extra-curricular activities such as religious clubs,

2.4.1.4 Preparation for, and performance of, musical or dramatic selections with incidental religious themes or content, with the understanding that such selections shall not contain religious exercises such as prayers or bible readings and where the preparation and performance of those selections takes place in an inclusive, nondiscriminatory manner and do not involve indoctrination.

2.4.1.5 Concerts and activities in recognition of holidays with a religious basis, where such concerts and activities do not contain religious exercises such as prayers or bible readings and the concert or activity takes place in an inclusive, non-discriminatory manner and do not involve indoctrination.

2.4.1.6 Activities of a religious nature associated with the study of other cultures, and activities as part of provincially authorized courses of study such as Religious Ethics 20, Religious Meanings 20, and World Religions 30 where sufficient student interest warrants the offering of such courses.

2.4.2 Parent Notification and Exemption Provisions

2.4.2.1 In accordance with the Education Act, parents/guardians shall be provided notice where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion.

2.4.2.2 Exemptions from Participation Principals shall ensure that:

2.4.2.2.1 Provision is made to accommodate the wishes of parents/guardians who make written request that their child(ren) be exempted from participating in activities dealing primarily and explicitly with religious theme or content,

2.4.2.2.2 An appropriate alternate activity is provided for nonparticipants

2.4.2.2.3 Depending on the parent request, the students are permitted to leave the classroom or place where the activity is taking place for the duration of the activity that includes the primary and explicit religious theme or content, or the students are permitted to remain in the classroom or place of activity without taking part in the activity, and

2.4.2.2.4 Non-participants are treated discreetly and with respect at all times.

2.5 Wearing Faith-Based Symbols

Students may wear faith-based jewelry, objects or articles of clothing at school or during school sponsored activities, as long as these are worn discreetly, do not have a proselytizing message, and meet the requirements of the school's standards of dress and grooming.

References:

Education Act: Sections 16, 61, 58 (1) (a) (b), and 58.1

Alberta Act, 1905: Section 17

School Ordinance of the Northwest Territories, 1901: Sections 137 and 138

Constitution Act, 1867: Section 93

Alberta Human Rights Act Preamble

History

2025 Jun 18 Initial Approval

Administrative Procedures VIII. Curriculum and Instruction