The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Standards for Writing and Classifying Administrative and Educational Policy

2024

B. Standards for Writing and Classifying Administrative and Educational Policy

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Policies should be written, read and understood within the context of the entire body of Association policy.

2. Policies should be stated, wherever possible, in one sentence, though exceptions may be necessary.

3. Policies should state a position or call for action but should not include a rationale for the belief or action.

4. Policies should be written, wherever possible, using terms that match those in the list of preferred vocabulary (see Appendix A).

5. Policies should be written so that they are comprehensible on their own and not in the least dependent on the subheading under which they are classified for their meaning.

6. Policies should not refer to other Association policies but should be comprehensible on their own.

7. Policies should be written using gender-neutral words.

8. Policies should be written in the active rather than the passive voice: Poor: "More funding is needed to renovate school facilities." Better: "The Government of Alberta should provide school authorities with more funding to renovate school facilities."

9. Policies urging other groups to act should do so simply, without resorting to intensifying adverbs: Poor: "Be it resolved that the Association strongly and adamantly urge the Government of Alberta to stop funding private schools." Better: "Be it resolved that the Association urge the Government of Alberta to stop funding private schools."

10. A single policy should never urge both the Association and an outside group to undertake action. If action is required from both parties, the policy should be split into two policies, one calling for action from the Association and the other calling for action from the outside group (or groups).

11. If two or more outside groups are being urged to undertake the same action, only one policy is necessary. The policy should identify the groups from which action is being requested and the action to be undertaken.

12. Policies that articulate different aspects of a central idea should be consolidated into one policy. The central idea should be presented in an introductory stem and the supporting points arranged in a logical order and numbered. The points should be enumerated using Arabic numerals. If subpoints are necessary, they should be identified using lower-case letters. Ideally, a list should be limited to about 10 items. Longer lists should be analyzed with a view to grouping the most closely related points into subtopics and creating a separate policy for each subtopic.

B. RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

1. In reconciling immediate directives, Resolutions Committee will apply the standards while endeavouring to preserve the intention of the resolution as originally worded and as informed by debate in the Annual Representative Assembly.

2. In reconciling competing or contradictory resolutions, newer policy will generally supersede older policy and more specific policy will generally supersede more general policy.

3. Policies are assumed to be internally consistent and congruent with the mission and objects of the

Association—it is not necessary to anticipate or attempt to accommodate in the text of the resolutions circumstances or interpretations that are highly unlikely, atypical or outside the commonly understood context of the resolution.

C. HIGH-LEVEL CLASSIFICATION OF POLICY

1. Policies should be assigned to one (and only one) of the high-level topics in Table 1.

2. When policies could logically appear in more than one section, they should be placed in the section that is most specific. For example, policies concerning human rights in the curriculum should be placed in the Inclusive Education rather than in the Curriculum, Programs and Supports section.

3. Policies that are classified as administrative procedures differ from the policies in other sections in that they

   a. concern an action that the Annual Representative Assembly has directed the Association to do,
   b. concern something that the Association has the capacity to do directly without involving others (such as locals) and
   c. are largely functional as opposed to aspirational.

TABLE 1. High-level topics

1. Administrative Procedures	13. Education Finance
2. Curriculum, Programs and Supports	14. Educational Accountability for Public Assurance
3. Student Assessment	15. Educational Assistants
4. Technology and Education	16. Teacher Professional Preparation and Certification
5. Early Intervention and Early Child-hood Education	17. Professional Development
6. Inclusive Education	18. Professional Growth, Supervision and Evaluation
7. Indigenous Peoples	19. Working Conditions for Profes-sional Service
8. Administration of Schools and School Systems	20. Pensions
9. Public Education	21. Professional Responsibilities of the Association and Its Members
10. Charter, Private and Home School-ing	22. Research and Research Ethics
11. School–Community Relations	23. Political Engagement
12. School Facilities	24. Social Justice and Global Issues

D. SECONDARY-LEVEL CLASSIFICATION OF POLICY

Within each high-level section, policies should be further classified as follows:

1. **Fundamental Beliefs**

   a. Fundamental beliefs are policies that set out the Association's broad, general beliefs with respect to the high-level topic.
   b. The belief or position being expressed in these policies should be stated directly, not prefaced by the observation that the Association believes such and such a position. Wrong: "The Association believes

that private schools should not receive government funding." Right: "Private schools should not receive government funding."

2. **Externally Focused Policies**

   a. Externally focused policies urge an outside organization to undertake some action or adopt some position.

   b. Such policies should state that the action "should" rather than "must" take place. "Must" implies that the organization has no choice when, in fact, it usually does. "The government should [not must] implement a child care program." "Must" is valid in cases in which the actor has no choice. "Individuals must [not should] have a valid teaching certificate to teach in Alberta schools.

   c. Policies urging the Government of Canada to act do not need to mention that the urging will be carried out by the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

   d. Policies calling on school authorities to act do not need to mention that the policy will be directed through the Alberta School Boards Association, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association or the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta.

3. **Internally Focused Policies**

   a. Internally focused policies outline actions that the Association will (or does) undertake internally with respect to the high-level topic.

   b. Unlike administrative directives, internally focused policies are more aspirational than functional.

4. **Immediate Directives**

   a. Immediate directives outline actions that the Association will undertake in the next operational year. Such policies typically authorize one-time funding allocations from the Association's budget, direct aspects of Association operations or send political messages to outside groups. All completely new (as opposed to amended) policies approved by an Annual Representative Assembly are initially classified as immediate directives.

   b. Immediate directives should be couched as resolutions and, as such, begin with the phrase "Be it resolved that the Association . . ."

   c. Immediate directives that do not concern the Association's budget expire after one year at which point, as directed by the Annual Representative Assembly, they either disappear or are rewritten as belief statements and incorporated into one of the other categories of policy.

   d. Immediate directives with implications for the Association's budget automatically expire at the end of the next fiscal year. In some cases, their content may be incorporated into subsequent budget proposals.

E. TERTIARY-LEVEL CLASSIFICATION OF POLICY

1. If a secondary category contains more than a handful of policies, the policies should be grouped by topic and assigned a subtopic heading.

2. Depending on the number of policies in the secondary category, any number of subtopics may be required.

## F. CLASSIFICATION OF POLICY AT A GLANCE

HIGH-LEVEL TOPIC ONE

A. Fundamental Beliefs

B. Externally Focused Policies

    1. Subtopic One

        —long-term policies related to subtopic one

    2. Subtopic Two

        —long-term policies related to subtopic two

    3. As needed . . .

C. Internally Focused Policies

    1. Subtopic One

        —long-term policies related to subtopic one

    2. Subtopic Two

        —long-term policies related to subtopic two

    3. As needed . . .

D. Immediate Directives

    —all immediate directives relating to high-level topic one

G. NUMBERING OF POLICIES

Each policy should be assigned a unique number that is separated into four parts by periods:

1. The first part uses the number of the high-level category shown in Table 1.

2. The second part specifies the secondary classification into which the policy falls: Fundamental Beliefs are indicated by 1, Externally Focused Policies by 2, Internally Focused Policies by 3 and Immediate Directives by 4.

FIGURE 1. Resolutions diagram
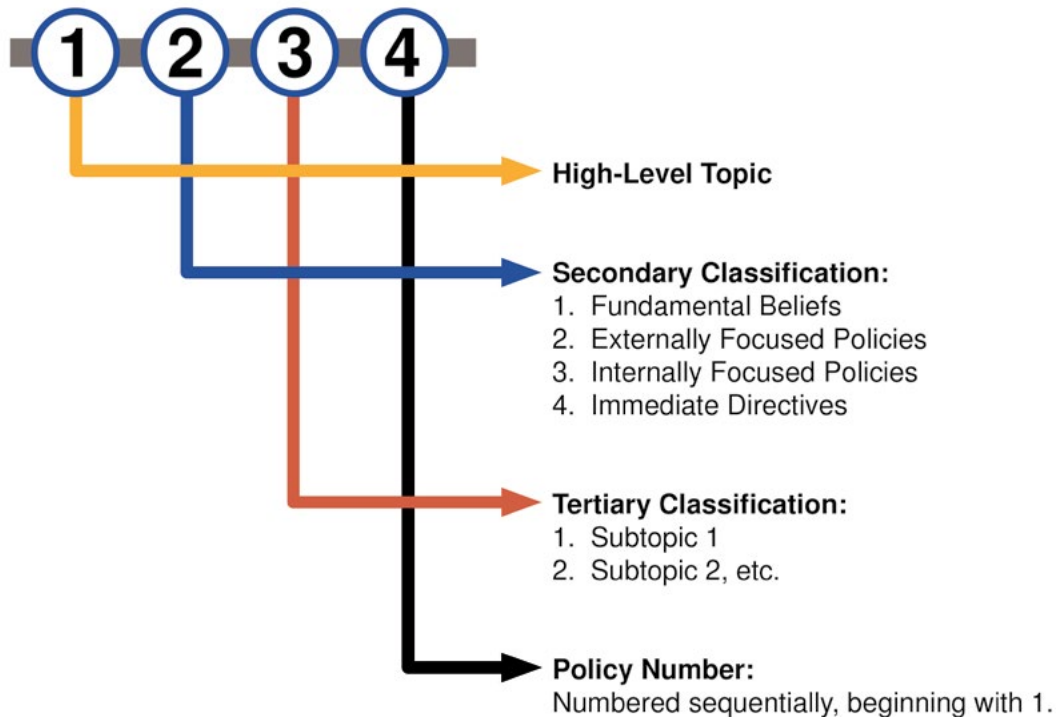
3. The third part is the number of the subtopic (if any) to which the policy has been assigned. The first subtopic in each secondary level classification has the number 1, the second subtopic has the number 2 and so on. If a policy has not been assigned a subtopic, the third part of the unique number is populated by a zero (0).

4. The fourth part is the policy number that the policy has been assigned. Policies within each subtopic are numbered sequentially, beginning with 1. Policy numbers may change from year to year to ensure that new policies can be inserted and presented in a logical order.

5. To refer to an item or sub-item in a policy that contains an enumeration, place the number of the item and/or sub-item in parentheses at the end of the policy number. For example, item 2, sub-item (c) of Policy 18.2.7.3 would be cited as follows: 18.2.7.3(2)(c).

Appendix A: Preferred Vocabulary

Preferred Term	Synonymous Terms
Alternative School Calendars	• Year-Round Schooling
Assistant Principal	• Vice-Principal
Child Care	• After-School Care • Daycare
Counselling	• Guidance
Curriculum	• Programs of Study
Digital Assessment	• E-Assessment • Online Assessment
Digital Learning	• E-Learning
Discrimination	• Stereotyping
Distance Learning	• Blended Learning • Distance Education • Distributed Learning
Early Childhood Education	• Early Childhood Services • Early Learning Birth to Kindergarten
Education Partners	• Education Stakeholders • Partners
Educational Accountability for Public Assurance	• Educational Accountability • Public Assurance in Education
Educational Assistant	• Instructional Assistant • Paraprofessional
Education–Business Partnership	• School–Business Partnership • Sponsorship
English Language Learners	• English as an Additional Language Students/English as a Second Language Students
Extended Disability	• Long-Term Disability
Faculty Advisors	• Faculty Consultants
Field Test	• Pilot • Pilot Project • Pilot Study • Pilot Test
First Nations Education Authorities	• Band-Operated Schools
Government of Alberta	• Department of Education • Minister of Education
Government of Canada	• Federal Government
Grade	• Level of Education
Health Care Services	• Health Support Services • Medical Services • Mental Health Services • Population Health Services • Psychiatric Services • Public Health Services
Inclusive Classrooms	• Inclusive Learning Environment • Schools as Inclusive Learning Communities

Preferred Term	Synonymous Terms
Indigenous	• Aboriginal • First Nations • Inuit • Métis
Institutions That Offer Teacher Preparation Programs	• Alberta Institutions with Teacher Education Programs Recognized by the Association • Alberta Universities with Teacher Preparation Programs • Faculties of Education • Institutions with Accredited Preservice Alberta Teacher Preparation Programs • Teacher Preparation Institutions
Interim Professional Certificate	• Initial Professional Certificate
K–12 Education	• Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education • K to 12 Education • Kindergarten Through Grade 12
Local	• Local Association
Online Learning	• E-Learning • Online Education
Parent–Teacher Interviews	• Teacher–Parent Interviews
Parents	• Guardians
Preservice Teachers	• Student Teachers
Principal	• Administrator • Instructional Leader • School Administrator • School Leader • School-Based Administrator
Provincial Executive Council	• Council • The Provincial Executive Council
Relocatable Classrooms	• Mini-Schools • Portables
Resources	• Classroom Resources/Materials • Educational Resources/Materials • Instructional Resources/Materials • Teaching and Learning Resources/Materials • Teaching Resources/Materials
Roman Catholic Separate School Authorities	• Roman Catholic School Boards • Roman Catholic Separate School Boards • Separate School Boards
School Authorities	• Employers [of teachers] • Public Education Authorities • Public School Authorities • Publicly Funded Education Authorities • School Authorities Receiving Public Funds • School Boards • School Jurisdictions • School Systems
School Communities of Practice	• Communities of Practice

Preferred Term	Synonymous Terms
School Facilities	• Authority-Operated Facilities • Public School Facilities • Publicly Owned Education Facilities • School Buildings • School Sites • Schools
School-Based Decision Making	• School-Based Budgeting
School Leader	• Assistant Principal • Principal • Vice-Principal
Strike	• Job Action • Labour Action
Student Assessment	• E-assessment • Formative Student Assessment
Student Evaluation	• Summative Student Evaluation
Students with Exceptional Learning Needs	• Children with High Needs • Coded Students • Exceptional Students • Students Who are Gifted and Talented • Students with Behaviour Disorders • Students with Diverse Needs • Students with Exceptional Needs • Students with Exceptionalities • Students with Mild and Moderate Learning Disabilities • Students with Special Learning Needs • Students with Special Needs
System Leader	• Central-Office Administrator • School-System Official • System Administrator
Teacher	• Educator
Teacher Preparation Program	• Preservice Education Program • Teacher Education Program
the Association	• the Teaching Profession/The Alberta Teachers' Association/the ATA
Volunteer	• Parent Volunteer