



## Terms of Reference

### Inclusive Education Parent Advisory Panel

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Effective Date: February 2025	Review Date: May 2026
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#### NAME OF PANEL

The panel shall be known as the Inclusive Education Parent Advisory Panel.

#### VISION AND PURPOSE

The Inclusive Education Parent Advisory Panel shall be a mechanism for ensuring continuing involvement of parents/guardians in Lethbridge School Division's implementation of an inclusive education system. It will provide for two-way communication and dialogue between the Administration (Lethbridge School Division's Director of Inclusive Education, Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services, and/or School Administration) and panel members, relating to operational practices and Division procedures regarding inclusive education.

#### ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the panel shall be to provide/receive feedback and share lived experiences in an effort to build understanding and meaningful educational experiences for students with exceptionalities.

The goal of this panel will include:

- enhance the work of Lethbridge School Division,
- continue to grow inclusive education practices,
- consider parent/guardian voice in shaping educational experiences and learning for students with exceptionalities.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE DIVISION

Parents/guardians serve in an advisory role, with the level of participation falling in the *Consult* and *Involve* ranges as defined on the [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) by the International Association for Public Participation.

- *Consult* is defined as "to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions."
- *Involve* means "to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered."

The panel has otherwise no decision-making power or authority. Feedback from the panel to the administration is to enhance understanding and consideration of parent/guardian perspectives.

Members of the panel may neither assume responsibility for the work of Lethbridge School Division nor represent the Division, nor the panel, in any other forum. Members of the panel may not, in their role as panel members, act as advocates or mediators in any individual situation.

All panel members acknowledge that Lethbridge School Division is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP), and shall abide by the requirements of FOIP insofar as applicable to the operations of the panel. Accordingly, no discussion of named students, or parents/guardians, or School Division staff shall occur within panel discussions.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The panel shall consist of:

- no more than eight parent/guardian members, with representation at each Division level (1-2 from each level - Early Education, Elementary, Middle, High)
- up to three School Division Administration members (Elementary(1), Middle(1), High(1))
- the Director of Inclusive Education
- At times, the Associate Superintendent of Instructional Services, the Coordinator of Inclusive Education, or the Early Learning Coordinator may attend

Parent/guardian members will serve a two-year term. If positions are vacant, a parent/guardian member may serve for another term with no more than four consecutive years serving (or 2 terms).

Public membership is considered to be a voluntary activity and members shall not be remunerated in any manner.

### **Application for Membership**

Parents/guardians interested in panel membership shall complete a formal application, outlining their interest, related skills or abilities, affiliation(s) with related community organizations/groups or advocacy panels, and include two character references that the Administration may contact. Click [HERE](#) for Application form.

As necessary, the Administration may solicit membership for the panel by placing advertisements on the Lethbridge School Division website, in school newsletters or in local media, asking for applications from interested parents/guardians. Advertisements would normally occur near the end of each term.

Selection, tenure, and replacement of parent/guardian members shall be at the discretion of the Administration, using the preceding guidelines, and with the intent of seeking a balance of representation of parents/guardians with children currently attending Lethbridge School Division at the various levels (Early Education, Elementary, Middle School, and High School)) and with various exceptionalities. Reference checks shall be completed for applicants who are being considered for membership. If a large number of applications are received, interviews may be arranged to assist in the selection process.

## **MEETINGS**

### **Chair and Vice Chair**

Panel meetings will be chaired by the Director of Inclusive Education (or, in their absence, an Education Centre Inclusive Education team member) and vice-chaired by a parent/guardian member.

### **Quorum**

There shall be no expectations around quorum for a meeting; however, each panel member is expected to commit to attending each meeting during their membership period, and otherwise communicate any unexpected absences to one of the co-chairs in advance of the meeting.

### **Panel Meetings**

The panel shall meet approximately five times per school year, with dates arranged at the discretion of the chair and vice-chair. Meetings shall typically be two hours in length and held at the Lethbridge School Division Education Centre; however, meetings may be occasionally extended, should a simple majority among all members vote for extension. Meetings will be scheduled during the work day. On rare occasions, meetings may be scheduled early evenings, based on a majority members vote.

### **Formation and Function of Sub-Committees**

Sub-committees may be formed based on identified needs and agreement of Panel members, and may be standing or ad hoc to achieve specific goals, tasks, or projects. The structure, purpose, and reporting measures of individual sub-committees will be determined by the Panel upon creation.

As established, sub-committees will identify a reporter to provide regular updates during Panel meetings and will be assigned a Lethbridge School Division Administration member as a point-person to support the sub-committee work and attend the meetings. Sub-committee meetings will occur in addition to Panel meetings, with meeting location, time, and frequency will be determined by the sub-committee members.

### **Structure of Meetings**

The chair and vice-chair shall support Lethbridge School Division Administration through reviewing and discussing agendas in advance of each meeting. Any panel member may, with reasonable notice, propose agenda items to the chair and vice-chair, including during the meeting start up, when the agenda is reviewed and approved.

### **Criteria for Agenda Items**

Agenda items shall include a balance of information and advice requests from the Administration, and potentially requests for information or topics proposed by panel members. Agenda items not covered (due to time) shall be placed on the proposed agenda for the next meeting.

Standing agenda items shall include:

- information and requests for advice from the Administration,
- reports from Sub-committees (should there be any in place), and
- issues, suggestions, or questions from parents/guardians

The Inclusive Education Panel will not discuss specific cases regarding students or schools.

**Role of Panel Members**

The panel will work positively within the activities of the panel. Lethbridge School Division is committed to providing and promoting working environments that foster respectful and responsible behaviour. It is the responsibility of panel members to contribute to creating a positive working environment in all activities of the panel.

**Role of the Chair and Vice-Chair**

The chair and vice-chair will solicit and collect agenda items; provide agendas in advance of meeting dates; co-chair meetings; facilitate the orderly discussion of agenda items; ensure positive and respectful conversation; and distribute meeting summaries and an annual panel activity summary to panel members and Administration. At sole discretion, the co-chairs may remove, either temporarily or permanently, any member from the panel who contravenes the Terms of Reference.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendations and advice from the panel to Lethbridge School Division's Executive team shall be by panel consensus among the panel members. Minority opinion may, nevertheless, be communicated to provide a comprehensive overview.

**COMMUNICATION**

Meeting summaries shall be distributed to panel members and to the school Division's Executive Team (i.e., Superintendent and Associate Superintendents).

Records and correspondence shall be maintained by the Department of Instructional Services.

**DURATION**

The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed by the panel after the first year, and every 3 years beyond the initial review - with advice to make modifications, or to continue or disband the panel – provided through the co-chairs of the panel to the Administration for decision.

**RELATED POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**

Related policies and regulations that may inform the work of the panel include the *School Act*; *Indicators of Inclusive Schools* (2013); and other existing Division policies and regulations.