

Module 14 – Part A: The School Board as Employer

[Overview]

In this module, you will become familiar with the range of Human Resource functions in your school board. While the module includes all possible Human Resource functions for a board, your Board may have assigned some of the functions discussed to another department.

This module has been structured in four parts and will address:

- Employment functions in a school board from recruitment to retirement
- Employment law in the education context
- Labour relations including collective bargaining in the education sector
- The board's role in promoting the health and safety of its employees

[Part A: The School Board as Employer]

School boards are one of the largest employers in every community. The people who work in our schools and offices are vital to the success of our students and our organizations. About 95% of our employees have direct contact with students. More than 80% of a school board's budget is directed to staffing costs. Effective Human Resources practices are critical to ensuring that this investment serves to develop our human capacity for the benefit of our students.

Human Resource practices from recruitment through the employment life cycle to retirement are aimed at ensuring that the employees who work in our schools and offices are competent and well-suited to their roles. These practices also ensure that employees experience fairness and equity and are encouraged to be successful throughout their careers. Sound human resources practices also consider the well-being of all staff.

[Accessibility in Employment]

Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act has the goal of creating an accessible Ontario by 2025. Regulations made under the Act require organizations, including school boards, to establish practices that make employment from recruitment all the way through the employment life cycle accessible to people with disabilities.

[Staff Recruitment]

Boards have a vested interest in maintaining their reputation as an excellent employer. Fair and equitable recruitment processes apply to all staff with the goal of selecting the best candidate to teach and support our students.

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[Recruitment and Regulation 274]

Regulation 274 was introduced in 2012 and provides specific rights to occasional teachers to be considered for permanent teaching vacancies. The Regulation includes a statement about due regard for the provision of the best possible program and the safety and well-being of the pupils. The provisions require boards to maintain both a list of Long Term Occasional Teachers and a roster of Occasional Teachers in order of seniority. Any permanent teacher vacancy must be posted on the board's website for 5 days. After meeting any collective agreement obligations, for example the placement of supernumerary permanent teachers, the board must then interview the five most senior qualified candidates from the Long Term Occasional Teachers list. There are exemptions to these provisions for some French language boards.

[Selection of Staff]

Fair and consistent processes support good decision making in the selection of staff. Supervisory staff are trained to ensure the careful review of documentation, interviews, reference checks and feedback. All employees are required to undergo a criminal background check before hire.

[Hiring Processes]

The hiring process is a shared responsibility between Human Resources Services and administrative departments or schools. As a new hire the employee is provided with a range of information related to compensation and working conditions and human resources staff obtain relevant personal data for entry into the board's employee information system.

[Compensation and Benefits]

Collective Agreements describe the working conditions and compensation for unionized staff which generally comprise about 95% of all board staff. Working conditions and compensation for non-unionized staff who primarily hold management positions are described in Terms and Conditions of Employment documents.

[Compensation Provisions]

Compensation provisions vary depending upon the employee group and there are provisions for both hourly and salaried employees. Other provisions can include compensation for overtime and reimbursement for travel and previously approved out of pocket expenses.

[Employee Benefits]

Benefit provisions are negotiated through the collective bargaining process for unionized staff and incorporated into collective agreements. For non-unionized staff, benefits are described in Terms and Conditions documents. Some benefits are paid by the board, some involve shared payment by the board and the employee and others are paid exclusively by the employee.

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[Attendance Management]

Effective management of employee attendance is a critical component of supporting student success. Human Resources departments develop a range of programs to support employees who are ill or disabled and may require accommodation. These include return to work initiatives and individual accommodation plans. The Employee Assistance Program is a confidential professional service that can be accessed by employees and their families when they experience challenges in their working or professional lives.

[Progressive Discipline Procedures]

School board employees demonstrate excellence every day. In a very few situations, there are examples of unacceptable employee behaviour that need to be addressed. Boards strive to be fair and consistent and, therefore, follow a progressive discipline approach when dealing with employee misconduct. Principals, managers and superintendents work closely with Human Resources staff to ensure due process is followed.

[Performance Management]

Performance appraisal for teachers, principals, vice-principals and supervisory officers is legislated in the Education Act. Boards have developed performance management systems for other supervisory, administrative and support staff. Performance appraisal is designed to provide all employees with recognition, feedback and support in their roles. Human Resources staff work with principals and supervisors to implement performance appraisals.

[Professional Development]

Employee professional development is a shared responsibility of Human Resources and schools or administrative departments. Training for new curriculum implementation and teaching strategies is usually under the direction of the board's program department. Health and safety, accessibility awareness, new employee orientation and leadership development are often the responsibility of the Human Resources department. In all cases, the goal is to support employees in developing their knowledge and skills and to enhance their expertise in their various roles.

[Leadership Development]

A key role of Human Resources is to develop and manage processes that address the Board's succession planning needs including promotion and leadership development opportunities.

[Mentoring and Coaching]

The goal of mentoring and coaching is to enhance employee engagement, to support employees to be successful in their roles and to encourage employees to aspire to positions of greater responsibility. The Human Resources department works in partnership with other departments to facilitate mentoring and coaching opportunities.