

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 12, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee G. Gibeault, Chairman ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee D. Fleming, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee S. Hansen, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed Issues for the 2005 ASBA Fall General Meeting

RESOURCE
STAFF: Karen Bardy, Gloria Chalmers, Brian Fedor, Anne Sherwood

RECOMMENDATION

That the following items, as detailed in Appendix I, for submission to the ASBA for policy development and consideration at the 2005 Fall General Meeting, be approved:

1. Directive for Action: Given that the Alberta School Boards Association believes that the adequacy and consistency of funding for Alberta school infrastructure is insufficient to meet the existing and future needs of school jurisdictions and that government plans to address the matter have faltered, and further that a comprehensive and committed plan is necessary to properly plan for and manage this important public asset, the ASBA request an independent government funded study to establish such a plan.
2. Directive for Action: That the Alberta School Boards Association urge the Minister of Education to initiate a joint project with those Ministries linked under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to fund the use of the Early Development Instrument and of community mapping province-wide for the effective and efficient collection of information that will enable timely and equitable decisions to improve early childhood outcomes and student success in school.

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The administration and trustees were asked to submit suggested issues for the ASBA Fall General Meeting. The ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee reviewed these directives and is recommending that the board consider them and if approved, forward them to ASBA Zone 23 for consideration. Zone 23 can submit up to six issues to the ASBA Policy Development Advisory Committee to review.

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APPENDIX I – Background material supporting recommended directives for action.

DIRECTIVE FOR ACTION

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Comprehensive Plan for Facilities Funding of Alberta Schools

Given that the Alberta School Boards Association believes that the adequacy and consistency of funding for Alberta school infrastructure is insufficient to meet the existing and future needs of school jurisdictions and that government plans to address the matter have faltered, and further that a comprehensive and committed plan is necessary to properly plan for and manage this important public asset, the ASBA request an independent government funded study to establish such a plan.

Background:

Over the past decade, a variety of government initiatives have been announced that unanimously supported the notion that Alberta's schools were in dire need, both with respect to existing inventory and with respect to growth needs. The plans outlined proposals to reduce backlogs over specified periods of time and to improve response to demographic changes. Little in the way of tangible, sustainable practices has resulted and the tendency toward lump sum injections of capital interspersed with periods of restraint has prevailed. This process by its very nature detracts from proper planning and makes responsible management of the inventory difficult.

School buildings play a key role in the delivery of educational programming and rapid technological change coupled with soaring operational and capital costs makes consistent, predictable funding mandatory. The impact and profile of school buildings within the broader community also requires confirmation and coordination among and between government departments.

An independent study could provide the following:

- Confirmation of the need and appropriate means to address the need
- Identification of the magnitude of need
- Identification of the required resources to address the need over time
- Leadership and direction with respect to balancing new needs, with declining needs.
- Alternate solutions within a community-based context

The current process is not working and the prognosis is for continued decline with respect to the general condition of Alberta's schools. To justify and compare the state of condition of Alberta's schools with other jurisdictions in Canada or North America is inappropriate without consideration of the financial status of those jurisdictions.

Sponsor: Edmonton Public School District No. 7

DIRECTIVE FOR ACTION

PROVINCE-WIDE USE OF THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT AND COMMUNITY MAPPING

That the Alberta School Boards Association urge the Minister of Education to initiate a joint project with those Ministries linked under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to fund the use of the Early Development Instrument and of community mapping province-wide for the effective and efficient collection of information that will enable timely and equitable decisions to improve early childhood outcomes and student success in school.

Background:

Over the past several years, community mapping and the Early Development Instrument (EDI) have been used in a number of places in Canada, notably Vancouver, Winnipeg, North York, and Prince Albert. This year the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario will use the EDI province-wide. The reports from Prince Albert and Vancouver indicate that the instrument used in conjunction with community mapping is a powerful tool for obtaining a comprehensive picture of the kindergarten-age population. The picture of child development generated by the EDI enables examination of the variance among communities and is a means for investigating how the nature and breadth of services may explain these differences.

Community mapping describes neighbourhood characteristics and inventories the services available to support young children and their families. The EDI is designed to capture a picture of the children aged 4 ½ to 5 ½ in five developmental areas: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills/general knowledge. It is completed by kindergarten teachers because they are usually the people, other than the parents, who are most knowledgeable about the lives of these young children. Once completed, the individual questionnaires are compiled into a profile for the group of children according to the areas in which they live. The names of the children, teachers and schools are not used because the intent is to match the group profile with the characteristics and assets of the neighbourhood, town or city. The profiles themselves can unearth information that was previously not known. This information can then be used by service providers to make decisions regarding services for young children and families. For example, in Vancouver, it was found that higher levels of language and cognitive skills were found in communities with library preschool outreach programs.

A project called Early Childhood Development Community Mapping is currently underway in Edmonton. The project involves 64 of the 210 city neighbourhoods and is being conducted by a collaborative group involving Capital Health, Children's Services, Success By 6, the United Way, Alberta Education, the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Catholic Schools and Edmonton Public Schools. It will provide us with an Alberta-based experience that would be helpful in implementing such a project province wide.

Rationale:

We now have sufficient evidence to know that the quality of a child's experiences before age 6 has long-term effects on later performance in the education system and in adult life. We also know that healthy children most often emerge from healthy families and healthy communities. The Early Development Inventory used with community mapping is an effective means of

bringing communities, and the organizations within them, together to better understand how well their young children are doing and promote enhanced early childhood development outcomes. The intent of the recommendation is to ensure that all communities in the province have the information required to enable them to improve the developmental progress of children in the years before school so as to maximize later successful learning in school.

Sponsor: Edmonton Public School District No. 7