

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 25, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Services Update: English Language Support Services Centre

ORIGINATOR: T. Parker, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Helen Yee, June Mielnichuk

INFORMATION

Background

The 2001 Census, reported that the proportion of Canada's population who were born outside the country was at its highest level in 70 years. In 2004, Alberta received 7% of Canada's immigrant population, with Edmonton receiving 29% of Alberta's share of immigrants. Approximately 23% of Alberta's immigrants in 2004 were of school age.¹ Statistics Canada projects that by the year 2017, between 21 to 25 per cent of Canada's population will speak a first language that is neither French nor English.² Given the continuing growth of cultural diversity, more school age children will enter the public school system with unique linguistic and sociocultural needs.

For many children arriving in our district from outside of Canada, English is no longer a second language, but a third or even a fourth language. Thus, the district has moved away from using the term "English as a second language learners" to "English language learners" or "ELL's". The district English Language Support Services Centre (ELSSC) was established in July of 2005, at the culmination of a full review of district English Language Learner programming and services.

ELSSC Services for Families and Schools

The ELSSC provides a comprehensive set of services to support new district English Language Learners and their parents. These include support to students, families and schools.

Support to Students

One of the supports provided is the initial reception and assessment of incoming English language learners. From July 18, 2005 to March 31, 2006 over 386 student assessments had

¹ *Overview of Immigration to Alberta, 2004.*

² Statistics Canada (2005). *Population projections of visible minority groups, Canada, provinces and regions: 2001-2017.* Ottawa, ON: Industry Canada.

been completed by ELSSC with additional assessments booked. Assessments take between 45 minutes to 3 hours and provide information related to language proficiency specifically vocabulary knowledge, level of reading comprehension, extent and range of word recognition and decoding skills, writing skills, speaking ability and listening skills. To date 25% of students identified are of refugee background while the other 75% are of Canadian Immigrant status. Students assessed have arrived from 58 countries and 51 different first languages. The top countries of origin include China, Afghanistan, Canadian born ELL's, India and Pakistan. ELSSC has assessed students in 77 district schools.

Support to Families

The ELSSC works closely with the district's Multilingual Services Consultants unit to provide parents and older students with orientation information to help them better understand: the school system, a school environment and related expectations, student progress reports, parent-teacher conferences, curriculum expectations, and the benefits of English language programming support. For many families, the Centre may be their first stop for information. Parents are also provided with information about available community immigrant support services, language training and career counseling services for themselves, and extracurricular student support.

Support to Schools

In addition, the Centre provides support to district school staff in the areas of ESL programming and instruction, cross-cultural information, resources selection, and community support options. Through small group sessions, school wide staff inservices, individual teacher observations, and school cluster inservices, consultants provide advice and assistance in implementation and coaching of teaching best practices. Consultants have provided service to 32 elementary schools, 10 junior high schools, 4 elementary-junior high schools and 3 senior high schools.

Comments and feedback received from parents and schools who have accessed the services of the English Language Support Services Centre have been positive.

District ELL Student Enrolment 2005-06

Provincial funding is received by the district only if schools identify ESL as the student's primary need. A chart of enrolment information provided by Student Information Services is shown in the table below:

	<u>September 30, 2004</u>	<u>September 30, 2005</u>
ELL identified for enrollment	3,506 students	4,156 students (18% increase)
	<u>January 30, 2005</u>	<u>January 30, 2006</u>
	3,668 students	4,264 students (16% increase)

As of January 31, 2006 a total of 4,264 students have been identified. The increase is attributable not only to actual growth in district ELL enrolment, but also to better understanding, awareness and identification of students requiring English language support.

Collaboration with Community Immigrant Services Agencies

ELSSC liaises and works with community immigrant services agencies to support schools and the school achievement of English language learners in a number of ways including:

- Collaborating with community agencies to help schools establish after-school extracurricular supports for learners, such as tutoring/recreational opportunities/homework clubs;
- Accessing community interpreter support for families with other languages in addition to the language interpretation available through the district Multilingual Services;
- Making immigrant parents aware of available community supports and language training opportunities for both youth and children;
- Networking with community agencies to increase immigrant parent awareness of ELSSC services and support;
- Maintaining up-to-date information of available community support services and making mutual referrals for family settlement in the community; and
- Collaborative advocacy for the needs of immigrant families.

In conjunction with Central Service's Programs decision units, ELSSC is currently working to develop a district long-term vision for the provision of programming that supports the achievement of English language learners.

ES/bs