

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 22, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Bio-DiTRL Partnership

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Dr. Bev Mitchell, Sid Shugarman, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

The Bio-DiTRL (Biological Digital Teaching Resource Lab) facility, operated by the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta, houses a huge electronic database of images, animation and other data related to the study of living things. The facility was designed to enable teaching staff in the Department of Biological Sciences to make effective use of computer technology in their teaching, by providing them with images, posters, animation and other teaching aids, customized for their particular needs through the Bio-DiTRL facility.

Last year the Curriculum, Programs and Planning unit entered into an exploratory arrangement with the Department of Biological Sciences, to see if it were possible for teachers of science within the district to make use of this ultra-powerful computer database in their own classrooms. The district's role was to bring in teams of science teachers from all divisions to identify topics, specific images and animation that would be needed in the database in order to support the grade 1 to 12 science curriculum. This task has been completed.

It will soon be possible for teachers in the district to access this database and download images and animation keyed specifically to topics at a given grade level in the science curriculum. These resources would otherwise be unavailable to students and teachers. The system will also permit teachers to order posters (small and large) custom made from the database to support the teaching of a given topic. In addition they may be able to order animation to assist with the teaching of difficult biological concepts.

Currently, the Faculty of Science is applying for funding from the national CANARIE fund, which will help to expand the database into other disciplines such as physics, mathematics and earth and atmospheric sciences. The project would also enable linking with other powerful databases across the nation. Edmonton Public Schools is actively supporting this application, and has provided the University with a letter of support (Appendix I).

The Curriculum, Programs and Planning unit will be supporting the project by contributing, in cash or in kind, \$5000 per year for 2000 through 2006. The funding will serve to continue to identify topics that need to be in the database to support the curriculum, as well as to help

support the hiring a managing editor for the project. In addition, Edmonton Public Schools will have representation on the management committee.

This initiative provides for a focused use of computer technology, geared directly to the curriculum and yielding a product that cannot be otherwise obtained. It has the potential to positively impact student learning and understanding, and, consequently, to improve achievement. The arrangement is a partnership in knowledge, which will help increase interest in science.

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APPENDIX I: Letter to Computer Network Services, University of Alberta