

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 22, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Algebra 35

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board Chairman send a letter requesting the Minister to immediately provide students access to and funding for Algebra 35 or Transitions Math 101

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Background:

In September 2004 the Superintendent sent a letter to the Deputy Minister Dr. Maria David-Evans (Appendix I), which explained the district's concerns about applied math and the need for a funded fourth course to support student transition to post-secondary education. The letter outlined two alternatives either of which would resolve an urgent problem students face. In December 2004 the Acting Deputy responded in a letter (Appendix II), promising restoration of funding for TM (transitional math) 101. However, at a subsequent meeting on February 2, 2005, Alberta Education staff informed district staff that no immediate funding for TM 101 introduction was forthcoming. It was also conveyed that funding would possibly be linked to a remuneration to Athabasca University for the use of the course.

At the same meeting the district was informed as well, that the locally developed course Algebra 35, would not be approved due to a narrow interpretation of Alberta Education policy. It should be noted that Applied Math 30 along with Algebra 35 is acceptable to NAIT as a math prerequisite and is listed in the NAIT Viewbook.

The Premier recently stated in a speech (February 8, 2005): "We must ensure that every young Albertan has a chance to take their skills and knowledge to the next level." In the same speech he shared a plan to develop 60,000 new post-secondary spaces, many, if not most, in trades and technologies. This will not be achievable if students do not have math credentials from high school to gain entry to these spaces.

The need is urgent to address this issue. Many of our students would be better served by applied math but are enrolling in pure math, with limited success, because of prerequisite requirements for post-secondary institutions.

As outlined in the September letter, Alberta Education has two viable options to help students:

1. approve and fund Algebra 35
2. restore access and full funding for TM 101

Both of these are interim solutions, serving to meet the needs of students while the Province completes the current review of provincial math curriculum.

Currently students are being faced with a barrier, denying them smooth transition to opportunities. A quick resolution of this problem is in the best educational and economic interest of students and the Province.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: Letter from the Superintendent to the Deputy Minister, September 9, 2004

APPENDIX II: Letter from Deputy Minister to the Superintendent, December 20, 2004