

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 26, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Success By 6: Report Card

ORIGINATOR: M. D. Man, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers

INFORMATION

Background: In response to the United Nations declaring 1994 the International Family Year, a number of organizations and agencies in Edmonton committed to working together to implement an action plan and secure funding to reduce the effects of poverty on children. Subsequently, a decision was made to form a Success By 6 group, an approach pioneered in 1989 in Minneapolis by the United Way, to further these aims. Success By 6 is not a program or an agency but rather a means of promoting collaboration and involvement from all sectors of the community towards a common purpose of helping all children succeed for life. Success By 6 Edmonton is an umbrella organization that brings together representatives from government, non-profit groups, businesses and communities to champion children and their families through prevention and integrated service delivery in health, education and social services. It is governed by a Council of Partners. Edmonton Public Schools is represented on the council.

Initiatives under the auspices of Success By 6 include:

- Healthy Families: a home visitation program to provide ongoing, long-term support to families
- Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.): a program that brings pre-school experiences to children right in their own neighbourhood
- Champions for Kids: a public information program to build community support through public awareness and education
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) Prevention Program: through community development, advocacy and intensive supports enhances the community's capacity to prevent FAS
- Community Team: a program that responds to community needs and connects people with resources
- Centre for Family Literacy: helped Prospects literacy grow into the Centre for Family Literacy
- Report Card on Edmonton's Children: provides a means for measuring our community's collective efforts to support our children

Report Card on Edmonton’s Children: As a means of tracking the impact of the work of the Success By 6 Council of Partners and others in the community who are committed to improving the lives of children, a decision was made to identify a number of critical indicators and to report on them on an annual basis. The work began several years ago and proved to be more difficult than initially anticipated. Nonetheless, the first report was published last year and the second one “Let’s start at the very beginning...” (Attachment I) is now available. The summary document (Attachment 1) focuses on the criteria identified in the areas of infant and child health, safety and family violence, education and school readiness, social and community factors, childcare and teen years. The background document brings together the best available information in critical areas affecting children and enables the community to become aware of how well we are caring for and supporting our children. The background document has been provided to trustees.

The summary report indicates that there is improvement in a number of areas (e.g., infant mortality rate, grade 1 students reading at grade level, unemployment rate and number of families with children living below Canada’s Low Income Cut-off, no change in others and a worsening situation in a few areas (e.g., children receiving Child Welfare Service, adequate family income, affordability of childcare).

As well, it indicates that much yet needs to be done if all children are to succeed for life. Some of the findings of this report are:

- It is estimated that 1 in 6 Edmonton children can be considered “at risk” because they will arrive at school less prepared and with less knowledge than their classmates.
- 5.8 out of 1000 babies die before their first birthday (three-year average 1997-99).
- The number of children receiving Child Welfare Services has increased by 63% since 1996, an average of more than 10% per year.
- There is an inadequate number of quality affordable childcare centres.
- Seven of every 10 mothers of preschool children work outside the home. Removing a women’s income, in dual-parent households, would double the percentage of families living below Canada’s Low Income Cut-Off.
- Childcare workers in Alberta earn \$8.36 an hour on average, for an annual after tax income of \$13,875.
- Our lower income neighbourhoods are doing significantly worse than the community norm in many key areas such as low birth weight, infant mortality, teen birth rate and school performance.

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ATTACHMENT I: Report Card – Let’s start at the very beginning...