

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 26, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Exemplars of Board Advocacy

ORIGINATOR: G. Reynolds, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Beatrice Denboer, Brian Fedor, Barbara Morgan-McDermid, Dean Power, Anne Sherwood, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

This report provides information highlighting recent board and individual trustee activity with the provincial government, city and the community aimed at advocating for public education. The attached lists (Appendix I by date and Appendix II by topic) track formal meetings and presentations from September 1999 to the end of 2001. The lists are provided as an example of the extensive work that has been done and do not list all of the activities that have occurred.

There has been much additional activity by trustees who have worked on boards and committees of other boards such as the Alberta School Boards Association and committees for government, which can be characterized as advocacy. Trustees have been active in their constituencies and in the broader Edmonton community discussing and advocating for a range of issues in public education. As well, trustees have consistently voiced opinions through the media about funding for education on numerous occasions.

Following are a number of examples and some of the direct and indirect results of trustee advocacy in the past few years:

Increase in per Student Funding

The board was the first in the province to point out to the government the gap between funding per pupil in 1993-94, the year previous to provincial funding cuts, and the then current funding. In the spring of 1999, that gap was approximately \$305 per student as calculated for our district. For 2002-03, assuming we will receive the previously announced 3% increases to our instructional and other grants, we will be slightly ahead of 1993-94 funding levels, as adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. It is noted that though 1993-94 was used as the benchmark year, this does not assume funding levels in 1993-94 were ideal.

### One-Time Deficit Reduction Grant

Later in the 1998-99 school year, a one-time deficit reduction grant was announced by government calculated as \$305 per funded student. Of that, the district used approximately \$16.0 million to eliminate the deficit, while providing schools with \$6.2 million for one-time expenditures. The board had a great impact with government leading to this funding for all school districts.

### Supplementary Requisition

In 1994, the Board joined with the Public School Boards Association in challenging amendments to the *School Act* which removed the district's right to requisition funds from the municipal property-tax base. The rationale for the Board's position was that losing access to the tax base would inhibit its ability to appropriately respond to the needs of its students, and unduly impinge on other financial issues such as collective bargaining. The Board actively pursued this litigation for years, through the Court of Queen's Bench, Alberta Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Canada, investing much energy in order to protect the integrity of education in this province.

### Curriculum

The board has been a leader in the province in the area of advocacy in curriculum. Recently the board has advocated directly to the minister with regard to specific concerns about new curriculum and/or its implementation. Problems in the new high school mathematics curriculum provide an example, where the board's efforts were instrumental in bringing about changes, which enabled implementation to take place.

Another way in which the Board has been active in this area is in initiating the establishment of the Capital Region Curriculum Committee, allowing the ten participating districts to collectively advocate a common position. The board recently created a recommendation for a provincial review of Career Technology Studies (CTS), which was passed unanimously by the ASBA.

Advocacy is on-going in English Language Arts, Social Studies and CTS, and continues in the area of mathematics. The position taken by the board is largely based on input from classroom teachers and school administrators. As a result the expertise of the district has been and is being employed to improve both curriculum and the curriculum development process.

### Early Childhood Services

The board was an enthusiastic advocate for full half-day funding for kindergarten. In 2000-2001, the province restored funding for full half-day kindergarten resulting in an additional \$4.6 million to the district.

### Special Education

The on-going support of trustees to examine the processes and funding levels for students with special needs resulted in a review of special education by Alberta Learning in 2000. In December 2000, Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs, A Review of Special Education in Alberta was released outlining sixty-six recommendations to improve services to students with special needs. Through the Alberta School Boards Association, trustees have continued to support increased funding for students with mild/moderate and severe disabilities.

### School Facility Condition and Utilization Rate

On many occasions and in a persistent manner, trustees have stressed that the declining physical condition of our schools is approaching a crisis. The need for a province-wide building condition assessment was proposed by the board to the province's School Facilities Task Force. The district actively participated in the School Facilities Task Force that was established in 1997, as well as the School Facilities Task Force Implementation Steering Committee during 1999-2000. As a direct result of the committee work, an assessment of school buildings was performed by the province and the government invested an additional \$635 million in school capital projects in 2001. Edmonton Public Schools received approval for \$93 million in capital projects in the same year. Our district has been the direct beneficiary of numerous modernization approvals for schools including Victoria School and the City Centre Education Project.

The former provincial utilization formula that prevented the district from receiving new school construction funding in the past has been replaced with a broader sector utilization rate model, which trustees had been advocating for many years. The new formula, which recognizes geographical differences across the district, has greatly enhanced the district's ability to examine modernization needs in older areas of the city, as well as build new schools in newer areas of the city. This was not possible under the old formula.

### New School Construction

Edmonton Public Schools last new completed school, Michael A. Kostek, was built in 1994. Due to considerable and consistent lobbying by the board, two new district schools were approved in 2001. The George P. Nicholson School, in the Twin Brooks neighbourhood, and the Jackson Heights School will be completed in 2002. Both communities had been waiting for a new school since the early 1990's.

### Innovation Grants

Capital innovation funding for both Centre High and L'Académie Vimy Ridge Academy was received in recognition of these unique schools. The board emphasized to the province that innovative school programs must be part of the future of public education. Provincial funding was also provided for the J. Percy Page Telelearning Centre after the case was put forth by the board in support of this leading-edge project for Western Canada.

### Amiskwaciy Academy

Trustees met with several ministers and MLA's to argue the case for funding to house a new high school with a focus on Aboriginal programming, Amiskwaciy Academy. With achievement levels and completion rates for our aboriginal students well below average, it was decided a new tailored school program should be created. In June of 2000, the government announced \$12,000,000 for the Amiskwaciy Academy. The funds would assist with the renovation of a facility plus provide operating revenue to cover lease costs for the first few years of the school.

Several other positive increases to funding in the past few years have come on the heels of activity the board has been engaged in. Grants for transportation have grown markedly to better reflect the needs in Edmonton. It is hoped the province's recent study of the Total Cost of Ownership for technology, completed by our District Technology staff, will result in adequate funding for these resources.

### Joint Use Agreement

The Joint Use Agreement with the City and Edmonton Catholic Schools is an example of the board's continued support for the advancement of partnerships that will mutually benefit parties involved in joint public interest projects.

The board believes that a well-informed and engaged electorate is the best ally in its drive for a strong public education system. The board encourages and actively supports parental involvement in the school system through its Key Communicator Program which provides a number of services to school councils and parent associations. The district priorities reflect the input received from students, staff, parents and community and continues to place the achievement of all district students as paramount. Information on district programs, priorities, initiatives, and challenges are shared regularly with the parent and business community through board meetings, the *Key Notes* publication, the district website, education supplements and trustees own speaking engagements and meetings with outside organizations.

The board fosters advocacy for public education through its own model of governance and accountability. Public board meetings are often forums for trustees to discuss and encourage positive change for education by bringing information about the issues facing education into the public domain. The budget planning and results review process is transparent and accessible ensuring community confidence that student achievement is the priority and accountability is essential. School communities are knowledgeable about their own schools and have ready access to reliable information about their operations.

Throughout the public advocacy and lobby process for improved funding for education, the board has undertaken a deliberate strategy to proceed on the basis of collaboration, factual information and mutual problem solving. The results that the board has delivered in the past number of years are tangible evidence that the strategy is effective.

GR:mjl

- APPENDIX I: Board Activity In Support of Advocacy (date)
- APPENDIX II: Board Activity In Support of Advocacy (topic)

**Board Activity in Support of Advocacy  
(Date)**

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Standing Policy Committee on Learning	Students at risk of not completing their schooling; Aboriginal education; Interagency collaboration; curriculum and resources; facilities and technology	Trustees	1999-08-09
2.	Minister, Alberta Learning	Funding; Students at risk; Aboriginal Students; Curriculum, Facilities, Technology	Board Chair	1999-13-09
3.	Capital Region Caucus (PC)	Poverty, Literacy	Trustee	1999-29-04
4.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Special Needs, Instructional Grant; Responsible and Accountable	Board Chair	1999-29-11
5.	City Council	Vacant School Sites, Aboriginal High School, Transportation	Board Chair	2000-03-02
6.	Mayor and Council	Education Property Tax	Trustee	2000-03-02
7.	Mayor and Council	Transportation	Trustee	2000-03-02
8.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Facilities and Funding, Transportation Funding	Board Chair	2000-08-05
9.	Calgary Board Chair, & Minister Alberta Infrastructure	Capital Planning	Board Chair	2000-10
10.	Calgary Board Chair, Minister Alberta Learning	Capital Planning	Board Chair	2000-10
11.	MLA	Amiskwaciy Academy	Trustees	2000-10-04
12.	MLAs	Transportation Funding	Trustees	2000-10-04
13.	Mayor	Transportation and Public Works Committee Report Affordable Transit Fare	Board Chair and Superintendent	2000-11-01
14.	MLA	Funding Transportation	Trustees	2000-12-05
15.	Minister or MLAs	Energy Costs	Trustees	2000-13-10

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
16.	MLAs	2000 Capital Planning, Provincial Capital funding process, Alberta Infrastructure's New Century Plan, New utilization formula	Trustees	2000-13-10
17.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy and Twin Brooks and Developer Built K-8 in Terwillegar Towne)	Board Chair	2000-14-02
18.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy Academy	Board Chair and Trustees	2000-14-02
19.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy, Twin Brooks Multi-Use Proposal	Board Chair, Superintendent, and Department Head	2000-17-05
20.	ASBA Fall General Meeting	High School Funding: Funding Increases	Board Chair	2000-21-11
21.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Curriculum Issues and Recruitment Challenges that can Impact the Alberta Advantage; School Facilities Task Force, Capacity and Utilization; Plant Operations and Maintenance	Board Chair	2000-27-11
22.	MLAs/Ministers Infrastructure and Learning	Funding and Transportation Funding	Trustees and Superintendent	2000-30-10
23.	ASBA Zone 23 Advocacy Committee Meeting	Provincial Funding, Student Learning & the provision of school facilities, school facility capital needs, Provincial capital funding process, Alberta Infrastructure New Century Capital Plan, Sector Model, Provincial Utilization Rate, Special Education erosion of local decision making, Demand for Specialized and costly interventions, diff. In implementing student health initiative plans (ESHIP), Mild/Moderate Special Needs, curriculum for students with Special Needs who are unable to achieve the regular program of studies.	Trustee	2001-01

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
24.	ASBA Urban Caucus Meeting	Limited funding, Limited availability of Specialized staff, pre-training, need for specialized professional development, Advocates for Inclusion, Advocates for District Sites, Ongoing collaboration & communication	Trustees	2001-06
25.	City Manager	Land issues/partnership; Twin Brooks; Jackson Heights	Superintendent	2001-07-11
26.	ASBA Zone 23 Advocacy Committee Meeting	Funding	Trustee	2001-08-01
27.	ASBA Metro Caucus Meeting	Severe Disabilities Funding inadequate	Board Chair	2001-11
28.	Visitors from Calgary	EPS collaborative model, alternative school vs charter school; mtgs with educational groups; Aboriginal program; LD program; professional development approaches; facility needs and utilization issues; use of technology to improve teaching and learning; teacher shortage; teacher development in post-secondary system	Trustee	2001-11-10
29.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Implementation of the Special Education Report; Government's Strategy for Funding Education; Implementation of the New Math Curriculum	Board Chair	2001-15-03
30.	Federal Minister of Justice	Children's Services, Issues In Aboriginal Education, Federal Support For Second Language Programming	Board Chair and Superintendent	2001-16-01
31.	Minister, Alberta Learning	Working with the department, Alberta College submission, Special Education Amiskwacyi update	Board Chair, Vice Chair and Superintendent	2001-17-01
32.	ASBA	Review of Career and Technology Studies	Trustees	2001-18-11
33.	Metro Caucus Meeting	ESL Funding & Related Procedures – district perspective	Trustees	2001-18-11

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
34.	ASBA Fall General Meeting	High School funding, Alternative Programs vs. Charter Schools, Funding Increases, operations and maintenance funding	Board Chair	2001-21-11
35.	Alberta Infrastructure	Ideas for providing new Schools	Board Chair	2001-24-11
36.	Ministers of Learning and Infrastructure	Capital Funding	Superintendent	2001-29-05



**Board Activity in Support of Advocacy  
(Topic)**

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	MLAs	2000 Capital Planning, Provincial Capital funding process, Alberta Infrastructure's New Century Plan, New utilization formula	Trustees	2000-13-10
2.	MLA	Amiskwaciy Academy	Trustees	2000-10-04
3.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy Academy	Board Chair and Trustees	2000-14-02
4.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy and Twin Brooks and Developer Built K-8 in Terwillegar Towne)	Board Chair	2000-14-02
5.	Minister, Alberta Infrastructure	Amiskwaciy, Twin Brooks Multi-Use Proposal	Board Chair, Superintendent, and Department Head	2000-17-05
6.	Ministers of Learning and Infrastructure	Capital Funding	Superintendent	2001-29-05
7.	Calgary Board Chair, & Minister Alberta Infrastructure	Capital Planning	Board Chair	2000-10
8.	Calgary Board Chair, Minister Alberta Learning	Capital Planning	Board Chair	2000-10
9.	Federal Minister of Justice	Children's Services, Issues In Aboriginal Education, Federal Support For Second Language Programming	Board Chair and Superintendent	2001-16-01
10.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Curriculum Issues and Recruitment Challenges that can Impact the Alberta Advantage; School Facilities Task Force, Capacity and Utilization; Plant Operations and Maintenance	Board Chair	2000-27-11
11.	Mayor and Council	Education Property Tax	Trustee	2000-03-02

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
12.	Minister or MLAs	Energy Costs	Trustees	2000-13-10
13.	Visitors from Calgary	EPS collaborative model, alternative school vs charter school; mtgs with educational groups; Aboriginal program; LD program; professional development approaches; facility needs and utilization issues; use of technology to improve teaching and learning; teacher shortage; teacher development in post-secondary system	Trustee	2001-11-10
14.	Metro Caucus Meeting	ESL Funding & Related Procedures – district perspective	Trustees	2001-18-11
15.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Facilities and Funding, Transportation Funding	Board Chair	2000-08-05
16.	ASBA Zone 23 Advocacy Committee Meeting	Funding	Trustee	2001-08-01
17.	MLAs/Ministers Infrastructure and Learning	Funding and Transportation Funding	Trustees and Superintendent	2000-30-10
18.	MLA	Funding Transportation	Trustees	2000-12-05
19.	Minister, Alberta Learning	Funding; Students at risk; Aboriginal Students; Curriculum, Facilities, Technology	Board Chair	1999-13-09
20.	ASBA Fall General Meeting	High School funding, Alternative Programs vs. Charter Schools, Funding Increases, operations and maintenance funding	Board Chair	2001-21-11
21.	ASBA Fall General Meeting	High School Funding: Funding Increases	Board Chair	2000-21-11
22.	Alberta Infrastructure	Ideas for providing new Schools	Board Chair	2001-24-11
23.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Implementation of the Special Education Report; Government's Strategy for Funding Education; Implementation of the New Math Curriculum	Board Chair	2001-15-03

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
24.	City Manager	Land issues/partnership; Twin Brooks; Jackson Heights	Superintendent	2001-07-11
25.	ASBA Urban Caucus Meeting	Limited funding, Limited availability of Specialized staff, pre-training, need for specialized professional development, Advocates for Inclusion, Advocates for District Sites, Ongoing collaboration & communication	Trustees	2001-06
26.	Capital Region Caucus (PC)	Poverty, Literacy	Trustee	1999-29-04
27.	ASBA Zone 23 Advocacy Committee Meeting	Provincial Funding, Student Learning & the provision of school facilities, school facility capital needs, Provincial capital funding process, Alberta Infrastructure New Century Capital Plan, Sector Model, Provincial Utilization Rate, Special Education erosion of local decision making, Demand for Specialized and costly interventions, diff. In implementing student health initiative plans (ESHIP), Mild/Moderate Special Needs, curriculum for students with Special Needs who are unable to achieve the regular program of studies.	Trustee	2001-01
28.	ASBA	Review of Career and Technology Studies	Trustees	2001-18-11
29.	ASBA Metro Caucus Meeting	Severe Disabilities Funding inadequate	Board Chair	2001-11
30.	Capital Region Superintendents and Board Chairs with Capital Region Caucus	Special Needs, Instructional Grant; Responsible and Accountable	Board Chair	1999-29-11
31.	Standing Policy Committee on Learning	Students at risk of not completing their schooling; Aboriginal education; Interagency collaboration; curriculum and resources; facilities and technology	Trustees	1999-08-09
32.	Mayor and Council	Transportation	Trustee	2000-03-02
33.	Mayor	Transportation and Public Works Committee Report Affordable Transit Fare	Board Chair and Superintendent	2000-11-01

	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Trustee/Supt.</b>	<b>Date</b>
34.	MLAs	Transportation Funding	Trustees	2000-10-04
35.	City Council	Vacant School Sites, Aboriginal High School, Transportation	Board Chair	2000-03-02
36.	Minister, Alberta Learning	Working with the department, Alberta College submission, Special Education Amiskwaciy update	Board Chair, Vice Chair and Superintendent	2001-17-01

GR:mjl  
February 2002