

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 8, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Plan for Program Distribution 2000-2001

ORIGINATOR: Angus McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Anne-Louise Charette, Bob Evoy, Andrea Furness, June Klassen, Sheri-Lee Langlois, Donna Leask, Manfred Malzahn, Faye Parker, Leona Salo, Amy-Irene Seward, Carol Suddards

INFORMATION

Each year at this time, as schools and central services begin their budget planning for next year, a plan for program distribution is prepared and provided to the board and the district as a whole for information (Appendix I). The plan encompasses special needs, alternative programs, and several other programs and services that are significant in the district. For each of 33 programs, there is a brief description, information about enrolment trends, current issues, and plans for next year and beyond. New sections describing the Edmonton Christian School Program, International Baccalaureate Primary Years and Middle Years, and off-site programs, have been added to the plan this year.

Changes in District Centre Designations for 2000-2001

- Enrolment is growing and/or new sites are being established for Nellie McClung, Cogito, Mandarin, learning disabilities, opportunity, literacy, and possibly early education.
- The Weinlos French immersion program is being considered for consolidation with the Greenview program, and the remaining adaptation district centres may be closed following further consultation. Site designations that were removed include English as a second language from the Académie Vimy Ridge Academy, home schooling from Meadowlark and Queen Elizabeth, and academic challenge from Grace Martin.

Other Initiatives Under Way

The district has expressed to Alberta Learning its interest in exploring ways to participate in a Spanish International Studies Program, which would provide graduates with both an Alberta diploma and Spanish credentials. The curriculum for grades 7 to 12 has already been developed, and is being piloted in several Alberta schools. This program is still at the conceptual stage, but it may offer significant benefits to the district.

On June 22, 1999, the board approved the Science Alberta Foundation alternative program for offering in September 2000. As indicated in that report, this academic year Brightview, Westlawn, Donnan, Overlanders and Steele Heights schools have been furthering their knowledge of the alternative through meetings with the administration and founders of the Science Alberta charter school in Calgary, visits to the school and assistance from consulting services. Prior to the September 2000 pre-registration period, each school will confirm whether it is prepared to be a site and what delivery model it will use (whole school focus or alternative program stream). It appears likely that one or more of our schools will offer the program next September. The Calgary group has been very supportive of our efforts.

What is Program Distribution?

Program distribution activities are supportive of the district's mission and priorities, particularly in terms of providing choice for students and parents, improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged students, and building public support for public education. These activities go beyond planning in the narrow sense. They encompass a wide range of activities and services in support of schools and the district as a whole, including:

- Early identification of trends and issues related to accommodation of programs
- Data analysis and enrolment forecasting
- Designating district centres, and consolidating programs
- Consultation with principals, parent groups, and staff in central services
- Initiating change beyond the individual school level
- Facilitating decision-making and planning by groups of principals
- Coordinating, advising and providing support when new district sites are opened
- Advising individual principals in planning for their schools and programs
- Supporting principals in the operation of programs
- Coordinating program distribution with district initiatives such as twinning, student health initiative, revision of attendance boundaries, etc.
- Providing program and demographic information to principals and the public on request
- Publicizing district programs and their locations.

How are Program Distribution Decisions Made?

The accommodation of programs of need and alternative programs in the district is based on a set of planning principles developed in 1986, and have evolved since that time. Key elements of the principles are:

- District centres are designated to provide a specialized program for which there is limited demand, or which requires specialized facilities, equipment or staff that are difficult or expensive to provide at the local school
- Programs of need may be offered at the local school or in district centres, while alternative programs may only be offered in designated district centres
- The district is committed to providing programs to accommodate the differing educational needs and interests of students, public consultation, equitable geographic access to programs, and responsible use of resources.

In 1999, Principles for Accommodation and Placement of Students with Special Needs were developed to assist administrators of special needs programs (Appendix II). Developed with considerable input from principals and others, they clarify how schools are designated as district centres, responsibilities of principals for accommodation of students, and so on.

Decision-making responsibilities in program distribution are as follows:

- The board approves new alternative programs
- The board must approve closure of the last site for any alternative program
- The superintendent designates district sites, and removes designations, for all special needs programs and alternative programs other than those decided by the board
- Principals decide how to organize and operate district centre programs in their schools, consistent with board policy and district expectations.

How Does Program Distribution Benefit Students?

Students benefit in a variety of ways:

- A range of placement options is provided for students with special needs
- Establishment of successful new alternative programs provides more choice to students and attracts new ones to the district
- As programs expand, student spaces are available where and when they are needed
- Location of district programs in small schools contributes to their long-term viability, so that access to schooling is maintained
- Facilitating collaboration and information-sharing among principals enables them to better serve students in district centre programs
- Support provided to the senior high schools has contributed to a significant change in practices, which is expected to improve access to programming for students at risk of not completing their schooling, and students with special needs.

What Will Influence Program Distribution Plans in the Future?

- In light of the district's support of Head Start, the student health initiative, and other inter-agency initiatives, identifying suitable school space for district programs will become more complex
- Continued growth in the number of students with mild and moderate special needs will result in the establishment of more sites and demands on space
- Growth in Cogito, Logos, Nellie McClung, Awasis and Mandarin must be managed; possible further decline in French immersion enrolments will be a challenge
- Possible establishment of new alternative programs in response to public demand
- Twinning of schools may create new opportunities.

Maps showing the location of existing programs are in Appendix III.

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- Appendix I -- Plan for Program Distribution 1999-2000
- Appendix II -- Principles for Accommodation and Placement of Students with Special Needs
- Appendix III -- Maps Showing Location of District Programs in 1999-2000