

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 11, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Accountability Pillars and the Renewed Funding Framework

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

RESOURCE

STAFF: Dean Power

INFORMATION

In 2002, the previous Minister of Education established a stakeholder committee to review the funding of school jurisdictions in Alberta. Before the renewed funding framework, the previous funding framework had been in place since 1995. The Minister believed it was appropriate to review the formula given the changes in the province.

The Minister established three pillars, or important elements of the renewed funding framework. The three pillars are flexibility, formula and accountability. The flexibility and accountability pillars were implemented in the 2002-03 school year, while the formula for the renewed funding framework was implemented in September 2004.

Flexibility and Accountability

School jurisdictions have the flexibility to allocate funding based on local decisions and needs and will be accountable to reach expected outcomes. The flexibility enhances the boards' ability to address needs of their individual communities.

The funding framework is intended to enhance and strengthen boards accountability to their communities and stakeholders. The accountability pillar will focus on results of the school jurisdiction to ensure students are learning and the school board is improving over time. School jurisdictions will be accountable for their results (outcomes), rather than the amount of funds that have been spent on various programs (inputs). In order to accomplish this, measures have been established to ensure that school jurisdictions are improving each year. These measures are:

- student achievement (grades, 3, 6 & 9 and diploma exams)
- high school completion
- satisfaction rates of stakeholders
- children at risk: parent, teacher and student satisfaction that children at risk have easy access to programs
- safe and caring school environment: schools are safe and students learn about caring and respect for others

- parent involvement: parents are satisfied that they have been involved in decision-making
- board selected indicator: the district has two indicators:
 - the percentage of students enrolled in Grades 1 – 9 judged to be at grade level in language arts and mathematics
 - the percentage of students who are successful in completing grade 10 high school core courses

The data for these measures will be obtained through student achievement results and surveys of students, parents, teachers and board members. Alberta Education will work with school jurisdictions on survey administration.

The findings from the accountability pillar measures will be used by Alberta Education and school jurisdictions to assess, evaluate, and plan for improvements. As mentioned previously, school boards and Alberta Education will focus on improvement over time. Jurisdictions will compare their results to both established targets and previous performance. If the school jurisdiction and Alberta Education are not satisfied with the progress being made, “collaboration” between the two to address the issues will take place. If results still do not show improvement, more focused, progressive “collaboration” will take place.

Formula

The principles behind the renewed funding framework are essential in order for school jurisdictions to provide funding to our schools. These principles are:

- Accountability
- Consistency
- Equity
- Flexibility
- Predictability/Stability
- Minimize Administration
- Transparency
- Maintain Provincial Goals

The renewed funding framework is based upon a jurisdiction profile concept in which factors contributing to cost differences between school jurisdictions are provided additional funding.

Funding from Alberta Education is distributed in three categories: base funding, differential cost funding and provincial priorities funding. The base funding is provided on a per student basis, with the majority of the funds available for distribution being allocated to school jurisdictions in this manner.

Differential cost funding is provided based upon specific student types, which include: severe disabilities, English as a Second Language, aboriginal, early childhood services with mild or moderate disabilities and socio-economic status of students.

The formula also provides funding to address other cost factors such as: small schools by necessity, year to year enrolment fluctuations, and the cost differences among school jurisdictions for the purchase of goods and services.

The formula for the distribution of funds was expected to benefit the district and other metro boards. Based upon the formula mentioned above, all metro boards felt the renewed funding framework would provide above average funding increases. However, when the final calculations were completed by Alberta Education, three of the four metro boards (including the district) received an increase below the average increase for school jurisdictions in Alberta. For this reason, the four metro boards are currently working with the ASBA to identify the areas that are being inadequately funded by the provincial government. Your administration will keep trustees informed as the study progresses.

DRP/ej