

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 20, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Spanish Academy

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Janice Aubry, Ann Calverley, Gloria Chalmers, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

Edmonton Public Schools is currently exploring the possibility of opening a Spanish Academy in September 2001. The program would open as a kindergarten to grade two offering in its first year, and expanding through grade twelve in succeeding years.

The present memorandum of understanding between the governments of Alberta and Spain makes reference to exploring the establishment of such a school within an Alberta jurisdiction. Academies are assisted by the Spanish government in terms of consultant availability, identification of resources and eligibility for the Spanish "visiting teacher" program. Highly qualified teachers from Spain can serve as both instructors as well as teacher mentors for teachers in the school and for those teachers of Spanish elsewhere in the district, adding strength to the International Language program as well.

A location for the program would be related to available space, community interest and long range projections for enrolment.

There are currently six Spanish Academies operating in the United States but none in Canada. Given that Edmonton Public Schools has been the leader in the development of Spanish curriculum, it makes sense for the district to seriously consider this opportunity. It can enhance our leadership role in languages, and help us to better serve other districts both in sharing expertise and through the use of the Academy as a mentoring site for teachers of Spanish from all parts of the province.

The district senses significant interest in a Spanish program of this type from our communities. Strong support exists within the business community as there is an accepted awareness of the need for growing capability in Spanish to meet the needs of the manufacturing and trading sector. Overall community interest will be further examined.

The benefits to students lie not only in developing a good understanding of Spanish language and culture, but upon the completion of the grade twelve year it may be possible for some students to acquire education credentials both from Alberta and Spain. There will also be opportunities for students to study in Spanish cultures abroad. The Spanish Academy will further strengthen the district's commitment toward creating opportunities for building intercultural knowledge and understanding amongst and for students in our community.

Much exploratory work remains to be done in terms of curriculum, identification of strong teachers of Spanish and in work with our communities. The benefits however, of such a collaborative partnership among Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta Learning, Spanish authorities and possibly other school districts, are significant.

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