

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 14, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: 2006 Second Language Requirement Implementation Process

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

RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

Alberta Learning has announced that the study of a second language will become mandatory for all students in grades four through nine, starting with grade four in September 2006. At that time the study of a second language will no longer be considered an option but will become part of core instruction. The province will support eight languages (French, German, Spanish, Ukrainian, Cree, Japanese, Mandarin and Italian), with Punjabi likely to be added next year.

While Edmonton Public Schools has been a large provider of second language education, both in the form of Immersion, Bilingual and International Language programming, many district schools do not currently offer a second language. It was important to develop a district strategy for the purpose of supporting schools to implement the language requirement. It is a major undertaking impacting, among other things, staffing, transportation, planning, professional development, resources, communication and school based scheduling.

In order to begin planning for a smooth and successful implementation two central committees were formed. The *Language Staffing Committee*, chaired by Robert Mazzotta, was formed in May of 2003, and is responsible for developing strategies to enable the district to have a sufficient supply of qualified and competent second language teachers.

The second committee is the *Principals' Curriculum Committee*, which has been enlarged and has been dealing with not only curriculum issues, but also the strategies for implementation of the second language requirement.

Based on input from these committees, as well as from advisory groups, internal and external consultants, principals, teachers, parents and students, a number of elements of an overall district strategy has been developed. The elements are premised on what all those consulted agreed to be the *Characteristics of Successful Second Language Programs* (Attachment I)

Instructional Programming Support:

- Clearly defined grade level expectations have been developed that:
 - clarify for parents, students and teachers the goals and outcomes expected for second language at each grade level
 - provide clear descriptors of levels of language proficiency in writing, reading and oral interaction.
- Entry points for language courses and programs have been identified.
- A plan for the development of assessment tools to enable consistency of measurement of student achievement across the district has been developed.
- *Principals' Handbook for Second Language Implementation* has been developed (available in Trustee's Reading Room).
- Sample timetables will be provided to all elementary and junior high schools to demonstrate some ways in which required language instructional time can be planned.
- Inservicing of second language teachers on curriculum, instructional approaches, assessment strategies and resources will be provided.
- Access to second language consultants will be available for schools implementing new language programming.
- Opportunity for student recognition of language competency through district certificates as well as national and international credentialing will be available.

Staffing

- A survey has been completed identifying the second language instructional capacity of the district (Attachment II).
- Second Language Development Plan for Staff:
 - Personnel Recruitment and Staffing has hired a consultant to assess the language proficiency of all French Immersion and French Second Language teachers and applicants, and to coordinate language proficiency assessments for teachers and applicants for all other district language programs. The goal is to have the proficiency of all language program teachers assessed prior to September 2006, so that schools are well positioned to meet the mandate with qualified teachers in place.
 - The Teacher Development Program will be expanded to support teachers in undertaking coursework to enhance language proficiency or knowledge of related methodology or the culture of the second language in Canada and beyond
 - Arrangements are underway with the University of Alberta (Faculty of Arts, Faculté St. Jean and Faculty of Education) to ensure coursework in language proficiency, culture and pedagogy will be accessible to district staff
 - There are two visiting teachers en route from Spain to Edmonton Public Schools for the 2004-05 school year. These teachers are certified by Alberta Learning and will teach and assist with Spanish language programming at the high school level. The visiting teacher program may be expanded in future years to have visiting teachers from other countries with languages that align with district language programs, or to increase the number of teachers from Spain.

Other Support

- Development of Administrative Regulations and Implementation Guidelines to assist in consistent implementation across the district
- Publishing of research materials and articles (distributed to schools) on a variety of subjects including the impact of quality second language education on the child's first language and on Special Needs students. (Attachment III)

- Strategies and materials for promoting second language to students and parents
- Distribution of Language Programs and Courses in the District:
 - Curriculum, Planning and Programs and Curriculum met with all elementary principals, by transportation zones (Attachment IV). At these meetings information was provided to all principals to assist them with their language selection. This information included:
 - language currently offered in their transportation zone
 - languages offered by Edmonton Catholic Schools
 - language demographics of their zone by mother tongue and language spoken at home
 - conditions and details about the Alberta Learning Language requirement
 - steps the district is taking to support schools in language implementation
 - considerations when a school is selecting a language.
 - As a result of these meetings all elementary schools in the district have indicated their language(s) of choice, which they will be offering in September 2004 or by September 2006. Attachment V provides a recap of the number of schools' offering each language by transportation zone as well as, a listing by transportation zone of each schools language offering.

In order to support the work described above, the Curriculum Unit, through the French Language Renewal Project, Official Languages in Education Expansion Program, Federal Action Plan and funds earned through language contracts with Alberta Learning will provide the bulk of the support. Personnel Services Staff Relations and Staff Development will provide, through the Teacher Development Program, financial support for teachers' professional development in language competence, culture and pedagogy. Teachers will also be able to apply for leave and/or tuition support through the Clause 23 Professional Improvement Program as guided by the Teachers' Collective Agreement.

In conclusion, the district is well prepared for the coming language requirement, and the great majority of schools will already have implemented the language requirement ahead of the September 2006 date. The supports that have been and will be further developed will ensure Edmonton Public Schools will continue to demonstrate leadership in second languages in Alberta.

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Attachment I: Characteristics of Successful Second Language Programming
 Attachment II: Second Language Capacity Survey Summary
 Attachment III: Impact of Second Language
 Attachment IV: Transportation Zone Map
 Attachment V Language Selections of District Elementary Schools

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMMING

Successful French Immersion and FSL Programs demonstrate the following characteristics:

1. POSITIVE DISTRICT SUPPORT

The district endorses the importance of learning French and has a policy stating its commitment to French language learning. The district defines programming conditions (e.g., student eligibility, equitable access, instructional time), provides sufficient funding and hires competent teachers. The district encourages lifelong professional development and promotes the French Immersion and FSL programs.

2. POSITIVE PRINCIPAL SUPPORT

The principal hires and assigns competent teachers and schedules sufficient time for the French language programs. The principal plays a leadership role in the administration and promotion of the programs, allocates an appropriate budget and supports teachers.

3. COMPETENT, ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHERS

The teachers possess Intermediate or high level competency in French if teaching FSL, and an Advanced or Superior level if teaching French immersion. The teachers are knowledgeable about second language acquisition and appropriate teaching strategies. The teachers understand how to effectively integrate technology into their instruction. They teach effectively, arranging a variety of interactive learning activities for students. They are competent in the content areas if teaching subjects other than French, and participate in professional development activities.

4. POSITIVE COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Parents understand and support the French Immersion and FSL programs. The business community and the community at large support second language learning as part of a world-class education. The school community supports second language learning. The French language and culture are visible in the school and community.

5. INTEGRAL PART OF REGULAR PROGRAM

FSL is given the same importance as other subjects. FSL is taught in a classroom designated for the language. Class time is respected. The program is stable.

6. SUFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

FSL students receive instruction for a minimum of 30 to 40 minutes per day or 150 to 200 minutes per week over ten months. Students take FSL for up to nine years, from Grades 4 to 12 and receive at least 945 hours of instruction from Grades 4 to 12.

French Immersion Programs provide at least 75% of the instructional time in French at the elementary school level, 60% of the instructional time in French at the junior high level and 40% of the instructional time in French at the senior high school level. Following these guidelines, students would receive over 7,000 hours of instruction from Grades 1 to 12.

7. CLEAR AND RELEVANT CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS

The curricular expectations are easy to understand and help students to develop a meaningful level of language proficiency and cultural understanding in French. In French immersion, students learn effectively a variety of required and optional courses through the medium of French.

8. STUDENTS ENGAGE IN INTERACTIVE LEARNING

Students learn French in situations that are as close as possible to real communication. They develop an understanding of the French language system and subsystems (phonological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) by using the French language in authentic contexts. They develop communication



skills through games, skits, simulations and dramatizations. Students make contact with speakers of French through structured interviews, use of the telephone, writing letters or e-mail messages and meeting French-speaking residents in the community.

9. QUALITY LEARNING RESOURCES

Sufficient and appropriate classroom and library resources are available to support the French language programs. Learning resources are appropriate for the students' interest and language level. Resources include dictionaries, novels and audio-visual material such as videos, cassettes, computer software, CD-ROMS, films, music and television programs, novels, magazines and books for personal interest.

10. WELL-ARTICULATED PROGRAMS

Students experience a similar learning program at a given instructional level in schools across the district. Program expectations, instructional time, instructional and assessment practices and learning resources are similar at each grade level.

Smooth and logical transitions occur between elementary, junior high and senior high school levels. Program expectations in junior high build on knowledge and skills acquired at the elementary school level and program expectations at the senior high school build on knowledge and skills acquired at the junior high school level.

Elementary, junior high and senior high second language teachers and school administrators work together to develop programs that build on previous learning in the second language.

The junior and senior high schools develop several program streams to accommodate both students who are beginning the learning of a second language and those who are continuing from a previous level.

In the French immersion program, French language arts and English language arts teachers undertake joint planning to eliminate needless repetition of skills already taught in one language, to maximize the possibilities of language transfer and to reduce interferences between the two languages.

11. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teachers access a variety of second language professional development activities and school administrators encourage and support lifelong professional development. The teachers belong to a language oriented professional organization. The teachers as well as their school subscribe to one or two professional journals dealing specifically with the teaching of French as a second language.

12. PROMOTION AND MARKETING

The district and schools promote the benefits of learning French and other second languages. Promotion highlights job opportunities, research results and study and exchange opportunities. The French Immersion and FSL programs are promoted through information packages for parents and students, open houses, information evenings, brochures, district Web site, school displays, student clubs, Internet e-mail pals, field trips, student exchanges and posters. The French language is visible in the school through the use of signs, bulletin boards, displays, school concerts, extra-curricular activities and school announcements.

13. STUDENT ACCESS, SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

The French language programs are available to all students, including gifted students and students with special needs. Immersion schools are located in all areas of the city to provide equitable student access. Students who have special needs receive appropriate assistance. Students are recognized for their achievement through certificates, awards, bursaries and other incentives.

14. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Sufficient funds are available to purchase learning resources, student assessment materials and to fund professional development needs, cultural activities and student and staff recognition.