

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 14, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

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RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #450, MARCH 23 (TRUSTEE HANSEN) RE TM 422 REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 2005: PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL DAY OTHER COURSE OFFERINGS, SPACE AND THE LOGISTICS OF MOTIVATING STUDENTS WITHOUT COMPENSATORY CREDIT: There are significant implications of the Minister's proposed Daily Active Physical Activity (DAPA) initiative for our schools. There is an impact on all schools, but that impact differs for the different divisions, especially for high schools. The DAPA requirement lacks clarity and definition and has not taken many factors into consideration.

Staffing

Currently a Bachelor of Education program can be completed without developing expertise in the areas of physical education, physical education safety, physiology or nutrition. With the very short timeline for implementation and the demand that many teachers now become involved in such areas, teachers will not be able to be trained or in-serviced to properly deliver a program that will meet the Minister's objectives of reducing childhood obesity and improving student fitness.

Professional development will have to be provided to teachers to build expertise, at least ensuring that there is one staff member in every school expert in these areas. This is currently not the case, especially at a number of elementary schools. This is a cost pressure for which there is no identified support from Alberta Learning.

School Day

Scheduling: The specificity of the Minister's requirement "30 minutes continuous physical activity within the school day", will require that scheduling be driven largely around this 30 minute time period which must be available for all students every day. Due to the

requirement for facilities in which to conduct DAPA this will impact the scheduling of other courses and reduce flexibility in programming.

K-9: At the K-6 level students receive on average 100 minutes per week of physical education, this would thus see 50 additional minutes per week removed from other programming.

Junior high programs average about 120 minutes per week of physical education, thus DAPA will require at least another 30 minutes programmed. The problem however is in the mandate for “daily” activity, which will force a change in present timetabling. It will mean much more than just adding another period. There will be a reduction in other school offerings.

High School: High school scheduling is much more problematic. Current high school courses are generally based on the formula of 125 hours of instruction for a 5 credit course and 62.5 hours of instruction for a 3 credit course. Thirty minutes a day for DAPA would represent 95 hours over one year. It would also need to be provided for all students all year, and could not be semestered. This anomaly in instructional time will force the high school timetable to be built around the DAPA requirement, impacting flexibility of programming and reducing choice available to students.

An additional problem which will impact all schools, but primarily high schools is the effect of exam days and field trips. Would DAPA be required to be offered on exam days or on special field trips? If the student is registered in Physical Education 10 and is taking the compulsory unit on Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), largely a classroom activity, does the student have to make up that time with 30 additional minutes of DAPA?

Impact on Other Course Offerings

Whenever specified amounts of time in the school day are earmarked for a given use, it leaves less time for other things. The Minister has recently announced that schools will be required to provide 150 minutes per week of second language instruction, commencing in September 2006. The DAPA requirement will require additional time to be set aside.

There will certainly be less time for optional areas or other core subjects which are generally using more than the recommended time allotment. Some course areas such as Music and Art are already seeing reduced time, which prevents the teacher from delivering the curriculum as intended. The school week however is finite and what is added to one subject must be lost to another.

Impact on Physical Education: The description of DAPA indicates that while it is not physical education, the outcomes of physical education will be linked to what is done in DAPA. This creates two different but similar programs within a school, one a formal course with outcomes and assessment, and one an activity time using outcomes of the other but not assessing them. It is reasonable to assume, for a number of reasons, that the quality of instruction in DAPA will be lower than that of physical education. The result will be a decrease in the quality of the programs compared to a single physical education course taught by a knowledgeable instructor, in which all outcomes are taught and assessed.

Assessment

To date, the only response to questions to Alberta Learning staff about assessment have been that Physical Education, the course, is assessed, but physical activity, 30 minutes daily, is not assessed. If the school is using physical education time to meet the 30 minute requirement that particular day, then it would be assessed. The result is that DAPA does not support any expectations for the student to be involved nor to improve since there is not a standard (lack of measurement). This would only contribute to a lack of motivation for some students to participate in a quality manner.

In addition to the lack of assessment present in this initiative described for K-9, high schools also face audits of delivery of programming. With no assessment criteria, this initiative would not be able to be audited and no determination of quality could be assessed. Without assessment, there is no accountability.

High School Funding

The current funding model for high schools is to fund credits (CEUs) completed by students. Since DAPA is not a course, students do not earn credits for this activity and the school would not receive funding. Yet the school would be required to provide a safe program and must incur all costs with providing the daily activity. Therefore, CEU funds earned within other courses would need to be allocated to fund the DAPA leaving fewer resources for courses from the Program of Studies. Generally, the school will be expected to supply the same amount of programming as in the past with a reduction in funding (up to \$400/student/year). In some cases, a school would actually increase the amount of programming for all students who are not completing a full program each year (e.g. spares) with no additional funding.

Facilities and Equipment

Facilities: Although a gymnasium is not the only space in which daily activity can occur, it will be the predominate facility. Tarmacs, fields, multi-purpose rooms, etc. may all be supporting spaces that may be used, depending on the weather conditions and appropriateness to students' age. A few examples have been presented by Alberta Learning that describe how the current facilities are adequate for a school with a small population or with multiple gyms, but no examples have been provided to demonstrate how a school that is currently maximizing its facilities will be able to leverage additional space without additional costs. For example, swimming at a local pool, requires a bus to transport students (and is not practical in 30 minute time blocks). Dividing a very large gym into two smaller gyms with a dividing curtain requires the curtain, labour to install and maintenance to the curtain and motor. Alberta Learning's position, that schools could do more activity with no more facilities, assumes that there are currently underutilized facilities in schools. Unfortunately, the reality is that schools are already maximizing the use of all facilities to ensure the best possible programming in a cost-effective manner. Currently, schools with large classes of 30 plus students cannot 'double-up' in a gym due to safety concerns or the increased amount of 'standing around' waiting for equipment or a turn to be active. Additional facilities would be required by most schools to carry out the additional activity time required by this initiative. Any additional use of existing facilities will increase the cost to maintain the facilities.

An additional point must be raised regarding gymnasium space. Currently a school uses the gym space to provide other learning situations. Assemblies, concerts, stage plays, volunteer teas, and religious studies services all occur in school gymnasiums. When reviewing

utilization of facilities for daily activity, many of these activities may need to be lost to accommodate the specific requirement of daily activity.

Equipment: Similar to facilities, schools currently maximize their investment in equipment and do not have a reserve or surplus to draw from to support the increase in activity required by this initiative. Support from external sources is also maximized. Increased funding would be required to provide extra equipment to deliver this initiative and the diversity to support the use of non-traditional facilities. The increase use of equipment would also require more frequent replacement or repairs due to the increased wear and tear.)

Motivation

Students: Further education has become the expectation (and a necessity) for students finishing high schools. This forces students to prioritize courses into courses needed for entrance to post-secondary programs, courses required for diploma requirements and other courses of general interest. Since DAPA is not required for post-secondary entrance requirements, and is not part of a diploma requirement, it defaults to a general interest activity. Within the general interest area, students who are active and motivated to be active will perform well in DAPA, and be positively reinforced. Likewise, students who are unmotivated to be active would not perform well, and be negatively reinforced. There is likely to be a significant resistance on the part of a number of students at the high school level (grade 11 and 12)

Furthermore, student currently choose to take full schedules to enable them to complete as many required courses, as well as general interest courses as possible. This will enable most to graduate within three years and move on to post-secondary institutions or the world of work. Mandatory inclusion of DAPA will require the student to eliminate courses that may have otherwise enabled graduation in three years. This will potentially slow the growth in high school completion rates, a factor that would not motivate students to be supportive of the initiative.

Summary

Given the aforementioned implications, the district will be approaching Alberta Learning to seek greater clarification on the DAPA initiative and will develop a set of recommendations which can serve to improve student activity without the negative implications of the initiative as currently described. In this, the district will be working together with the Capital Region Boards. (Stuart Wachowicz, 429-8186)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #458, APRIL 5, 2004 (ODYNSKI): PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION ON WHY CHILDREN ARE SUSPENDED IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, WHAT OTHER ALTERNATIVES ARE EXPLORED BEFORE A SUSPENSION, AND WHAT CONDUCT IS PRECIPITATING THESE SUSPENSIONS.

In order to encourage appropriate behaviour and respond to students' developmental needs schools can access services through Consulting Services to establish character education, pro-social skills programming, anti-bullying programming, Peaceable Schools and the Effective Behaviour System.

For the purpose of this trustee request, several schools, both with lower and higher numbers of suspensions were contacted. All schools contacted are using less intrusive discipline methods initially such as in-school suspensions, bus and recess detentions, logical

consequences, student-led conflict management teams and restitution whenever appropriate. Where there are behaviour concerns, school personnel do endeavour to meet with the parents, and to refer to consultants such as school psychologists and school social workers. However, these efforts do not always produce the desired results. The schools with more suspensions tended to be larger and/or to have some special needs programming. There were instances of one or two students representing most of the suspensions at a particular school. In some cases they were coded for behaviour assistance or have since been identified for special education programming. The types of behaviours that would warrant a suspension were:

- Behaviour that hurts other students, including physical violence and bullying
- Defiance towards staff, including violence towards staff
- Out of control behaviour
- Possession of drugs or a weapon

. (C. McCabe 429-8238)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #466, APRIL 27, 2004 (TRUSTEE FLEMING): PROVIDE INFORMATION ON WHY THE NUMBERS OF SUPPORT STAFF AND EXEMPT STAFF HAVE INCREASED WHEN OTHER STAFF GROUPS HAVE DECREASED FOR LAST YEAR.

Exempt Staff: The increase in exempt staff can be attributed to hiring additional Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, and Physical Therapists to support an increased level of Early Education programming. For these staff:

- in February, 2003 there were 54.04 FTE, and
- in February, 2004 there were 64.50 FTE.

Support Staff: In an effort to address the challenges created by insufficient funding for 2003-2004, specifically with regard to support staff positions, schools budgeted and staffed conservatively. As a result, significant hiring took place following the injection of additional funds in January, 2004. As well, additional Special Education district centres resulted in an increased need for teacher assistants. The number of PUF funded students increased dramatically from February, 2003 to February 2004, necessitating the need for additional teacher assistants.

- In 2002-2003, 660 PUF funded students were served through Early Education sites and 38 in neighborhood schools for a total of 698.
- In 2003-2004, 894 PUF funded students were served through Early Education sites and 24 in neighborhood schools for a total of 918.

(V. Lastiwka, 429-8088)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #467 (TRUSTEE WOODROW) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING HOW MANY FEES ARE NOT PAID BY PARENTS FOR TRANSPORTATION: The total amount of uncollected fees during the 2002-2003 school year was \$34,400 and for the current school year up until the end of April is \$39,000. We are not aware of any students being refused transportation because of non-payment of fees. The school principal is authorized to waive transportation fees based on individual family circumstances. Funding for the waived fees comes from the school budget. Some principals

use the administration funding forwarded to schools to subsidize staff time for the sale of bus passes to pay for waived fees (\$.50 per bus pass). (D. Sombach, 429-8326)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #472, APRIL 27, 2004 (TRUSTEE HANSEN) PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE PROCESS USED TO IDENTIFY ESL STUDENTS RELATIVE TO CALGARY PUBLIC. ARE THE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED ACCURATE? ARE WE ENSURING WE ARE IDENTIFYING ALL STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR ESL FUNDING UNDER THE NEW FUNDING FRAMEWORK? How many ESL students and self-declared Aboriginal students do we have in Edmonton Public Schools compared to Calgary Public? This academic year Calgary Public has 12,500 (12.4%) ESL students, with about half foreign born. Edmonton Public had 3,690 (4.5%) – 2,216 foreign born and 1,474 Canadian born. Calgary Public is projecting 14,900 ESL students for September 2004.

Edmonton Public had 6,127 self-declared Aboriginal students as of September 30, 2003 and Calgary Public had 2,063.

Explain any significant differences beyond what may be expected due to differences in total population. According to information in the report of the Learning Commission, Alberta is the fourth largest immigrant receiving province and the expectation is that about 60% go to Calgary and 30% to Edmonton. In 2002, 26% of the total newcomers to Alberta were school-aged children and youth. As Calgary is believed to receive twice as many immigrants as Edmonton, this explains a significant portion of the differences between the two districts.

According to information provided in the 2001 Statistics Canada census data, the total self-declared Aboriginal population in Edmonton and Calgary combined (71,460), Edmonton has 64% and Calgary has 36%. Of the total self-declared student population in these two cities (8,190), Edmonton serves 75% and Calgary 25%.

Are there differences in the ways in which Edmonton Public and Calgary Public identify ESL students? Both districts identify students based on Alberta Learning criteria but the criteria are general and open to varied interpretations. Staff in both districts make use of various checklists and tests in the identification process. Calgary Public has a reception centre and all foreign born students arriving in the district are admitted to the district through the centre. These students are thus coded centrally but Canadian born students are coded at the school level as are all students in Edmonton Public. Calgary has a highly visible support system in place for ESL students. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398)

RESPONSE TO TRUSTEE REQUEST #479, MAY 25, 2004 (ODYNSKI): RE: TT#465: IS THERE A SPECIAL ALLOCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS OR DOES THE MONEY COME FROM THE CEU COUNT? Special Needs students in high schools are funded in the same way as elementary and Junior High schools in the district. Mild/Moderate to Severe special needs students receive an additive allocation to the base (Level 1) rate and are not included in the CEU count. (R. Bell, 429-8062)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #480, MAY 25, 2004 (TRUSTEE ODYNSKI) CAN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS IN STAND-ALONE FACILITIES BE ASKED IF THEY ARE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN INITIATIVES THAT FOSTER UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT? Principals in stand-alone facilities were asked if they would be willing to meet in the fall to discuss options for initiatives that foster understanding and respect. They all indicated a willingness to meet and a meeting will be scheduled in the fall. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398)

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