

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 11, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Alberta Initiative for School Improvement Update

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RESOURCE  
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INFORMATION

In June 2003, our schools will complete the third and final year of their three year AISI projects. Alberta Learning requirements specify that AISI projects will not be funded beyond three years. The purpose of AISI is to provide school districts with the funding to explore sustainable programs to improve student achievement. AISI funding is intended to allow districts to establish a culture of continuous improvement, and then to have them embed this culture into their school systems.

We have identified, through AISI, programs and strategies to improve student learning. One strategy that has been highly successful has been full day kindergarten. The district plans to continue full day kindergarten in the top 18 high needs schools. Edmonton Public Schools will be applying to Alberta Learning to continue the funding of full day kindergarten for these schools for a fourth and final year. The achievement of these kindergarten students will continue to be monitored and reported. Kindergarten teachers will be part of a collaborative team that continues to explore the best practices in full day kindergarten programs. Alberta Learning has made it clear that a fourth year of funding will only be extended in a very limited number of circumstances, however, if the extension is not approved, this strategy will be funded through the district allocation process.

Starting September 2003, the district will be supporting programs that stress best practices in literacy, numeracy and critical thinking for students across all levels through AISI funding. We believe this approach is sustainable with the benefits continuing at the end of the three year funding period. The development of teacher expertise to implement these programs has the most benefit for the widest number of students at all grade levels.

AISI funds to schools come targeted from the province, and schools will be expected to expend this funding on tightly structured professional development in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking as part of the district's initiative to support teaching and learning.

## **District Wide Literacy, Numeracy, and Thinking Skills Programs**

Principals and teachers will be able to select from a comprehensive listing of training programs and in-service series provided by Consulting Services. Programs will include those that have been successfully used in district classrooms. New programs will be developed and/or extended as required (e.g., literacy strategies at the high school level and reading intervention strategies for junior high school). Training will include demonstration, modeling, practice and debriefing, with collaborative teams of teachers and consultants, and incorporate practices that have proven successful in previous AISI projects.

### **Literacy Programs**

Professional development programs will reflect a balance between the skills and processes of both reading and writing. A variety of literacy training programs will be available, including:

- Balanced Literacy, and related reading and writing modules
- Literacy MAP (Meaningfully Applied Phonics)
- Intervention Strategies, e.g., Reading Recovery
- Reading and writing strategies for junior and senior high school
- Literacy strategies across the curriculum, at all grade levels

Current successful literacy programs are being reviewed and additional programs are being developed to ensure that the district's literacy training will meet the needs of elementary, junior high and senior high school teachers.

### **Numeracy Programs**

Programs in numeracy will provide teachers with the knowledge and skills to enable students to:

- Learn and apply concepts and skills through problem solving
- Develop number sense, and acquire strategies for mental computation
- Acquire strategies for estimation and approximation in terms of assessing reasonableness of answers
- Gain an awareness regarding the appropriate use of technology

Training will be available at elementary, junior and senior high. Programs will provide teachers with researched classroom strategies targeting specific outcomes in all strands of the Mathematics Program of Studies.

### **Thinking Skills Programs**

Developing thinking skills is a highly desired outcome for all division levels and across all subject areas. Consulting Services will offer a series of professional development opportunities in the thinking skills area. The sessions will offer specific tools and strategies that have proven effective for developing thinking skills in kindergarten through grade 12.

Sessions will include:

- Creating an environment that promotes thinking
- Developing effective questioning strategies
- Modelling thinking through observable teacher behaviours
- Creating assignments that develop higher level thinking skills
- Incorporating analysis, synthesis and evaluation in daily lessons
- Promoting classroom discussions that support critical thinking
- Infusing problem-solving in the literacy and numeracy context
- Using graphic organizers and visual tools to organize thinking

While some programs, such as Balanced Literacy and Meaningfully Applied Phonics have been developed, numeracy programs at all levels and literacy programs for secondary are under development. Funding will be provided to central services to support the establishment of these programs.

Schools will receive AISI criteria, program information and draft allocations prior to spring break. Schools will be able to plan for AISI and sign up for best practices training programs between March 30, 2003 and April 15, 2003.

JB:pn