

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 11, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent
B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services
A. Habinski, Executive Director, School and District Services

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Meredith Colgan, Anne Mulgrew, Victor Tanti,
Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

REQUEST #241, FEBRUARY 24, 2003, (TRUSTEES): PREPARE A LETTER FOR THE CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE TO THE MINISTER OF LEARNING WITH RESPECT TO REQUESTING PERMISSION TO PAY DOWN THE DEFICIT OVER THREE YEARS. The attached letter was delivered to the Minister of Education on February 27, 2003. (Appendix I) (A. Habinski, 429-8469)

REQUEST #246, FEBRUARY 12, 2003, (TRUSTEE ODYNSKI): PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH WITH RESPECT TO THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE CITY CENTRE EDUCATION PROJECT (CCEP): CCEP commenced in the 2001-2002 school year. Alberta Learning achievement test results and Highest Level of Achievement Test (HLAT) results are available for the spring of 2002, and will serve as baseline data for future comparisons. When the second year of data becomes available in the fall of 2003, a report will be brought to board showing results for the two years.

A second source of data that is available is the study on the long-term impact of full-day kindergarten. The initial report for the 2000-2001 cohort of students was presented to Board March 12, 2002. This study was replicated with full-day kindergarten students in the 2001-2002 school year. Results for this group of students will be brought to Board when they are available. (A. Mulgrew, 429-8351)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #255, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE NICHOLSON) PROVIDE TRUSTEES WITH A COPY OF THE APPENDICES FROM THE LEASING SUMMARY REPORT WITH AN INDICATION OF WHICH LEASES NEGATIVELY AFFECT THE DISTRICT'S UTILIZATION RATE: Alberta Infrastructure allows for the exemption of leased space for Cross-Government Sector, Private Schools, and Non-Profit Sectors. Those leases that qualify for exemption of space that positively affect the district's utilization rate are denoted with an asterisk (*) under *Space Used For* column in Appendix II. Space leased in non-operational schools is exempted from the district's utilization rate as a closed school site. Non-operational

administrative buildings are not rated space and do not affect the utilization rate in any way. (M. Colgan 429-8537)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #256, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE HANSEN) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHETHER CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL WAS REQUIRED FOR THE LEASE OF THE FULTON PLACE ANNEX: The district owns the Fulton Place School site in fee simple title on non-reserved land. The lease for the annex at Fulton Place, by the daycare, complies with City of Edmonton Zoning By-laws and does not require City Council approval. This is a straight lease of the building and not a disposition of property. (M. Colgan 429-8537)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #257, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE MARTIN): PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHETHER OR NOT THE DISTRICT SHOULD BE RESPONDING TO THE FRASER INSTITUTE REPORT'S SURVEYS. Each year, the Fraser Institute publishes "Report Cards," which rank elementary and secondary schools, based on achievement test results, percentage below acceptable standard, achievement according to gender. The results of the Fraser report generate a great deal of media interest and the district is called on to respond. Parents are also very interested in the ranking. By continuing to respond to both audiences about the ranking concept and results, we can ensure that stakeholders understand that the Fraser Institute Report Card only offers one piece of the achievement puzzle and that many complex factors influence achievement at the school and individual levels. The Report Card also provides us with the opportunity to profile our schools' successes and challenges. For these reasons, Communications recommends that the district continue to respond to the Fraser Institute's annual Report Card. (V. Tanti, 429-8043)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #258, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE ODYNSKI), PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING HOW THE DISTRICT ENSURES CONSISTENCY FOR ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS OFFERED AT DIFFERENT CAMPUSES AND WHEN THE PROGRAM EXPANDS FROM ELEMENTARY TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL. The board report establishing the program sets the standard for each of the alternative programs. A copy of the report, curriculum developed for the alternatives and any other relevant documents are housed in the programs and curriculum area and are available for review by principals and staff in the various programs. Achievement and satisfaction data by program is tracked and alerts the district to programs in need of attention. This information is kept in the same area.

The *Alternative Programs Administrator's Handbook*, developed with input from principals, teaching staff and parent support groups, provides information about process and roles of the various parties involved. As well, a session on alternative programs is provided in each of the district leadership inservice programs.

Central office staff work cooperatively with school staff in the first and second year of program implementation and, subsequently, on a rotating basis to review current status and consider areas in need of revision or revitalization. Over the past several years, the review has focused on the district bilingual programs. Staff from all sites were involved in both curriculum revision and the development of implementation manuals. Central staff facilitate meetings among principals and parent support groups as required. As well, on an as-needed basis, staff from central conduct program reviews and provide a report to the principal. Such a review was conducted a year ago for one of our alternative programs.

The School Act enables the establishment of alternative programs based on language, culture, religion, subject matter and teaching philosophy or pedagogy. In our experience, programs based on teaching philosophy or pedagogy are the most challenging to implement. Because not all parents have the same understanding of the pedagogical approach, principals may be lobbied by various factions. To ensure program integrity, central office staff work with principals to support practices that are consistent and reflect the intent at the time the program was developed. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398; Stuart Wachowicz, 429-8186)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #259, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE ODYSKI): PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE STEPS THE DISTRICT IS TAKING TO CLARIFY HOW SCHOOL COUNCILS CAN COMMUNICATE TO PARENTS. The district has recently taken a number of steps to clarify the role of school councils in communicating information to parents. On February 18, the superintendent sent an e-mail message to all principals regarding the role of staff and school councils in communicating information using school resources. The message reminded principals that the distribution of politically motivated material through school newsletters, Friday envelopes or Web sites was not permitted. The message also indicated that it was acceptable for principals to share information on how the district's financial situation would impact their respective schools and classrooms.

In response to inquiries from several principals regarding the role of school councils in distributing information to parents, the superintendent prepared a second e-mail, which was sent to the individual principals concerned. This second e-mail message clarified the role of school councils and provided examples of the politically motivated material that school councils are not permitted to distribute using school resources. The message also confirmed that school councils were welcome, with principal approval, to hold meetings in school buildings, to publicize the date, time and location of these meetings in school newsletters, and to distribute the minutes from school council meetings in school newsletters.

In a meeting with all district principals on February 25, the superintendent offered verbal clarification on the role of school councils and district staff in the distribution of politically motivated material. The superintendent confirmed that students could not be used to deliver political messages, but that principals and school councils were welcome to share factual budgetary information. The superintendent also asked principals to continue working with their school councils to ensure that they understand the rules regarding distribution of politically motivated information.

On February 28, the Board Chairman addressed business leaders and shared the district's position not to permit district staff or school councils to use school resources to distribute politically motivated material. The Chairman also explained how the district supports the role of principals and school councils in distributing factual budgetary information, holding meetings in school buildings, publicizing upcoming meetings and sharing school council meeting minutes with parents. On March 5, the Chairman addressed parents at a Key Communicator meeting, where he provided an overview of the same material he presented to business leaders on February 28. (V. Tanti, 429-8043)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #260, FEBRUARY 25, 2003 (TRUSTEE FLEMING) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHETHER SCHOOLS ARE REDUCING COMMUNITY

ACCESS DUE TO FUNDING AND HOW THIS MIGHT AFFECT THE JOINT USE AGREEMENT: During the current school year four schools have adjusted their community access downward due to budget or staffing restraints. These schools adjusted their availability as of January 2003 with advance notice to the user groups to allow Rental Services adequate time to make adjustments in the bookings. All affected user groups have been accommodated within our district.

Schools' budgets have not been set for the next school year and the impact of budget restraints on next year's availability will not be known until principals complete and return the Facility Availability Schedule due at the end of April 2003. (M. Colgan, 429-8537)

APPENDIX I - Letter to The Honourable Dr. Lyle Oberg

APPENDIX II - Edmonton Public Schools Lease Summary 2002-2003

DB : BH : AH : hc