

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 13, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosedall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: J. Percy Page Technology Centre: Capital Project Proposal

ORIGINATOR: Ken Marshall, Principal, J. Percy Page School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Karen Andrews, Bob Clark, Beatrice Denboer, Avi Habinski, Welsyn Mather,
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RECOMMENDATION

That a request to Alberta Infrastructure, under innovation funding, for a technology centre at J. Percy Page School estimated at \$4.3 million, be approved.

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This report provides the rationale for requesting innovation funding from Alberta Infrastructure for a technology centre referred to as The Tele-Learning Centre at J. Percy Page School.

Background

This proposal would facilitate a unique learning model for students and teachers. As the techno-savvy generation enters our high schools, we need research-based ways to meet the needs of this new generation. In 1997, J. Percy Page School experienced a quantum leap in technology thanks to the commitment of staff, students, community and a model partnership with Shaw Communications. Since this time, J. Percy Page has become a leader in the research, development and utilization of information communications technologies (ICT) for learning. Today, through the use of advanced networks and computer technology, J. Percy Page provides learning opportunities for both teachers and students that are among the best the world has to offer. J. Percy Page is now ready to expand its cutting edge student programs and innovative professional development opportunities both within its building and far beyond.

In 1999, the district received \$20,000 under the province's Capital Innovation Fund to further develop the concept of a technology centre at J. Percy Page School. This was in response to the district's request for a larger scale innovative capital project at the school that included four components, one of which was a technology centre. With the approved funds, Stantec Architecture Limited was awarded the contract to work on the concept study with the school. At the time, it was expected that the study would expand on the technology component and lead to a subsequent capital project request.

Over the last two years, the school has secured financial contributions from a number of sources in support of its technology initiatives related to the subject proposal, including Shaw Communications Incorporated, Stuart Olson Constructors Incorporated, and Stantec Architecture Limited. Additional information on the contributions by the school and each of its partners is provided in the attached Feasibility Study Report.

In December 2000, when the board considered its 2000 - 2003 Capital Submission, the administration indicated that a separate report would be brought to board once the study was concluded. The study has since been completed and forms the basis for a request to the province for capital funding through the Alberta Infrastructure Innovation Fund.

Approval Process

In seeking support for the technology concept, the school had meetings with two other provincial departments, Alberta Learning and Alberta Innovation and Science. In both instances, the unique nature of the programs offered and the one-of-a kind opportunities for students and teachers that the project would offer were acknowledged and supported by the respective departments. However, each of these departments indicated that it did not have a process or funding in place to facilitate a request for a facility to house the program.

Recent correspondence from Alberta Infrastructure (Attachment I) has confirmed that the Capital Innovation Fund is still in existence, and that the J. Percy Page project could be submitted as a stand-alone innovation fund application. It is believed that the Tele-Learning Centre project meets the provincial criteria for innovative projects, and the application will therefore be submitted for consideration under the innovation fund. This also means it will not affect the board's previously established capital priorities.

The Proposal

The proposed facility will address the following needs at the school:

1. Provide a state of the art technology facility to facilitate innovative delivery of student programs including:
 - Advanced technology streams for web site designing, fast networking connections using the high speed Broadband Network, and with capability to create and view three dimensional depictions;
 - Advanced communication courses in video conferencing connected with sites around the globe;
 - Video streaming that involves students/teachers accessing curriculum-based video files stored elsewhere and an ability to create local video files for ready access by others;
 - The Global Classroom Program, a cross-curricular application of video conferencing and video streaming.
2. Provide a facility to facilitate unique teacher learning opportunities:
 - Teacher training in technology integration and the delivery of advanced ICT courses;
 - LearnCanada, a National Professional Development program for teachers funded by Industry Canada;
 - Training in the use of video streaming and educational portals;
 - Connect teachers to educational researchers and experts anywhere on the globe;

- Provide world-renowned courses via satellite.
3. Provide 6-8 additional classroom spaces to accommodate enrolment pressure:
 - Over the last 3 years, J. Percy Page School has had to limit its enrolment to prevent overcrowding in the school building. The facility cannot reasonably accommodate more than 1,350 students.
 - Because of limited space, the school is running two classes in the recreation centre next to the school.
 - The school requires a dedicated classroom space for special needs programming
 - Enrolment projections indicate that the school will likely remain full for at least the next 5-10 years.
 - This project would allow the school to relocate a number of classes from the existing facility to the Tele-Learning Centre, freeing up classrooms in the existing school structure to accommodate anticipated enrolment at the school over the next 5-10 years.
 4. Provide a hub for community access to technology:
 - This facility will help facilitate life-long learning initiatives for the community in a number of ways:
 - J. Percy Page is a district site for the Community Access Program (CAP). Under CAP, the school will provide 20 after-school hours a week for community training and access to the Internet.
 - Businesses offering work experience for students will have access to employee technology training opportunities.
 - The school plans on sharing this resource with its feeder schools in the community.
 - The school is involved with the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative, a program focussed on schools as safe places in their communities. This facility will be used as a vital communication centre that enables schools and project participants to link with one another to share information and views.
 - The Tele-Learning Centre is proposed to be sited between the existing J.Percy Page School facility and the existing community recreation centre located east of the school, forming a link between the two uses. It will be designed to be accessible from either side, as well as to serve exclusive school or community functions.

The heart of this facility is the Learning Commons, a multi-purpose, flexible assembly space that can be configured to suit a wide array of activities. As the primary venue for large group functions, the Commons will facilitate live video conferencing, formal lecture presentations, group training sessions and a multitude of other audience presentations. As an extension to the Commons, two seminar or 'break-out' rooms are located directly adjacent to facilitate smaller group sessions and to serve as teaching stations. These areas are fitted with moveable walls to maximize the flexibility and usability of these spaces.

In addition, six computer labs are incorporated to serve as teaching stations and are designed as smaller versions of the Tele-Learning Centre. Faculty support areas are located on the upper level to accommodate the teaching and support staff related to the program development and delivery.

The Server Room is the technological nerve center for this facility. Located adjacent to the Learning Commons this room accommodates all of the "state-of-the-art" hardware and software that supports this facility.

The attached Draft Feasibility Study describes the programs and the proposed facility in more detail. Copies of the final report for submission to Alberta Infrastructure will be provided to trustees.

Why J. Percy Page School and Why Now

Shaw Communications Incorporated has been a partner with J. Percy Page School for a number of years and entered into a “technology partnership” with the school in 1997 to provide high speed (broadband) internet access to students using the latest fibre optic technology. Shaw Communications has expended almost \$1.2 million to date at the site in an effort to better equip students for the new work place. Also included in this investment was internet training for teachers, web site development, and participation in opportunities for students to do curriculum-based research through connectivity to students from various Canadian and European locations as part of the Communications Research Centre’s Virtual Classroom Project.

In 1998, J. Percy Page School was successful in obtaining another financial commitment from Shaw Communications through a philanthropic grant application in support of a technology centre at the school. The grant, which was initially for \$676,000, was structured to roll out funds incrementally over a five-year term as progress on the building was achieved. However, since the initial commitment was made, Shaw amended their grant process establishing a ceiling of \$500,000.

The terms of the grant indicated that the first roll out of funds for the project was conditional on the school securing the balance of funds for the estimated \$4.3 million project. Shaw’s expectation was that the project would begin within a year of the initial grant approval. When this did not happen, the school explained the circumstances involving government approval processes and timelines and an extension was given on the basis of unique circumstances. Although Shaw has been accommodating to date, there remains a concern by the school staff that the continuation of the funding may be at risk unless some progress is made on the proposal. This is the basis for requesting capital funds as a year 2001 project.

KM/bd

ATTACHMENT I – Correspondence from Alberta Infrastructure

ATTACHMENT II – Feasibility Study of The Tele-Learning Centre at J. Percy Page School