

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATORS: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Veda Lastiwka, 1999-2000 Personnel Principal Committee

INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #233, MAY 16, 2000 (TRUSTEE GIBEAULT)
TRUSTEE REQUEST #195, FEBRUARY 22, 2000 (TRUSTEE GIBEAULT) WHAT FACTORS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE FACT THAT OUR TEACHING FORCE DOES NOT REFLECT AS MUCH DIVERSITY AS OUR STUDENT POPULATION?

The administration has looked at the whole issue of what factors contribute to the fact that our teaching force does not reflect as much diversity as our student population and concludes that relatively few individuals who are of a visible minority group enter faculties of education. When a member of a visible minority applies for a teaching position with the district and that individual meets our hiring criteria that individual is offered employment. We are not aware of any reason why individuals who are of a visible minority do not select teaching as a career option.

ARE THERE ENOUGH MINORITY STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA AND ELSEWHERE FROM WHICH THE DISTRICT CAN HIRE?

The University of Alberta was contacted. The University does not ask students in the Faculty of Education to identify their language(s), ethnic background, nor whether they are a visible minority. They only track gender and age. When asked if there was any "opinion" as to whether or not there is either a number of visible minority students representative of the Edmonton population or a significant number of visible minority students enrolled in the Faculty of Education, the "opinion" was "No."

A principal who is a member of the Personnel Principal Committee for 1999-2000 recently had the opportunity to do a presentation to two classes of Education students at the U of A. This principal reported that there was not one member of a visible minority group in either class.

Observations of personnel staff confirm that while there may not be a substantial number of applicants who are visible minorities, the number of visible minorities hired is increasing.

WOULD THERE BE ANY MERIT IN OFFERING TEACHER APPLICANTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SELF IDENTIFY THEIR MINORITY STATUS ON APPLICANT FORMS?

The only direction the administration has been given is to hire the best candidates available. Asking applicants to self identify that they are a member of a visible minority group would be contrary to the Alberta *Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* unless this were asked for the purpose of the district implementing an affirmative action plan with respect to hiring. An affirmative action plan with respect to hiring visible minorities would involve preferential or quota hiring based on race.

ARE PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS WITH HIGH ENROLMENTS OF MINORITY STUDENTS ENCOURAGED TO CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD ROLE MODELS FOR ALL THEIR STUDENTS WHEN MAKING STAFFING DECISIONS?

When principals identify a staffing need, they are provided with the names of available applicants who have the best skill set for the position requirements. Applicants are referred without consideration for whether or not they are part of a visible minority. When making staffing decisions, principals consider what is best for all students relative to student achievement.

A discussion of the issue of "minority hiring" was held with the Personnel Principal Committee. This was a group of 10 principals representing all levels and all areas of the city. Their reaction is summarized as:

- We must hire the best person for the job.
- We must consider skill set and best fit to ensure that student's needs are met.
- We would like our teaching staff to reflect the community we serve. Visible minority teachers should not be only in schools where there are high numbers of visible minority students.

The administration will examine ways in which the number of visible minorities who meet the district hiring criteria might increase, such as:

- Initiating discussions with universities to identify barriers that might discourage visible minorities from pursuing a career in education.
- Communicating the importance of selecting qualified visible minority applicants to principals of schools in communities with a significant number of visible minority students.
- Providing opportunities for principals and personnel staff to be involved in sessions or workshops that address issues related to diversity.

(Veda Lastiwka, 429-8088)

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