

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 8, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Immigrants and Refugees: Establishment of Three Clusters of Schools Serving English Language Learners (ELL)

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

Current Situation

The demographics in the City of Edmonton have changed dramatically and the prediction is that this will continue over the next several years. The district has experienced an increase of about 2,000 English Language Learners (ELL) over the past year, with an expectation that further increases will occur next year. In addition, a significant number of these students are refugees who are not well-grounded in their mother tongue, have little or no experience with formal schooling and are suffering from the effects of trauma because of their experiences of war and refugee camps. District achievement data on ELL students indicate that many of these students are not experiencing success and are two or more years behind grade level. Additionally, many of the refugee/immigrant parents do not have the language ability or the knowledge of Canadian culture to support their children's learning at home. This means support is needed at the school (e.g., homework clubs, after school tutoring).

Support Model

The model to assist schools to better serve English Language Learners, including refugee and immigrant youth builds on some of the lessons learned in the City Centre Education Project. It involves providing service to a cluster of schools within geographic proximity serving similar students and families, realigning district resources and accessing community resources to collectively better serve the students and families.

The model includes provision for transition classroom programming to serve the neediest of the ELL students (those who have little or no English and who have had little or no formal educational training). Additional supports such as assessment and cultural brokers to serve both the school providing the transition programming and a cluster of surrounding schools. This is possible because there are high concentrations of ELL students in specific geographic areas.

Benefits to Schools and the District

Programs, Student Achievement, and Consulting Services (ELL Centre) will work collaboratively and in partnership with community and with a cluster of schools. Central units and schools can benefit from each others' knowledge and experience in order to

determine how best to increase school and central capacity to serve our changing demographics. A collaborative model has the potential to enable us to work more effectively and efficiently.

Each cluster will provide access to culturally and linguistically diverse resource staff, ELL services at school sites within a target geographic area and will increase collaboration with community agencies and organizations. Results expected are that refugee youth will receive a foundational program before integrating them in mainstream; that schools develop capacity in serving refugee and immigrant children, youth and families; and that schools work collaboratively with a range of agencies so refugee and immigrant children and youth are successful in school. The schools and the district will benefit through additional services, and learning what works and what does not. Most importantly, the culturally diverse children, youth and families served by our district should be better served and have more success in school.

Plans for 2007-2008

In the 2007-2008 school year, the plan is to:

- establish three clusters of about three or four schools per cluster
- implement transition programming within one school in each cluster
- provide additional supports (e.g., ELL assessment on site, access to cultural brokers) for the entire cluster.

The results of the first year will inform the budget process for the 2008-2009 school year.

School Funding

The plan envisions transition programming for ELL students who have significant gaps in their education, being provided at one school site within each of the three clusters of schools. The cost of 3.0 FTE teachers and 3.0 FTE teacher's aides would be paid through the per student allocation. The allocation for refugee students has been augmented to level 5. In addition, \$4,000 would be allocated to each cluster for resource and additional assessment materials.

Central Funding

Support for the clusters, from a number of central services decision units, will be provided through the \$500,000 realigned and allocated to support schools serving ELL students:

Consulting Services:

- On-site assessment and professional development support for these students; this support would be located at school sites within the cluster.
- Psychological and social worker support; this support would be located at school sites within the cluster and funded centrally.
- In collaboration with community partners, provide information and orientation support to parents.

Programs:

- Cultural brokers from community partners, located at the school sites.
- Support for cluster interagency work

- Provide transition support from Settlement Services (agency that provides immediate support to newly arriving immigrants and refugees.) The teacher would provide transition support to students newly arriving in the city.
- In collaboration with community partners, develop a mentorship model responsive to the needs of the ELL community.

Next Steps

Three clusters of schools will be identified. Central staff from Programs, the ELL Centre and Consulting Services will meet with the principals of these schools to flesh out the approach, clarify highest priority needs and develop a plan for implementation in September 2007.

GC:ee