

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 9, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: 2004-2005 District High School Completion Rates

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RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

On May 1, 2006 Alberta Education released to each jurisdiction information on the 2004-05

- high school completion rates; and
- high school to post secondary transition rates.

This information is compiled by Alberta Education and provided to jurisdictions as part of the accountability pillar, and for use in the 3-Year Education Plan and the Annual Results Review.

High School Completion Rates

Alberta Education calculates the rate at which Alberta students complete high school within three, four, and five years after starting Grade 10. Students can achieve high school completion status through a variety of means:

- achieving an Alberta High School Diploma;
- achieving a High School Equivalency Diploma (GED);
- achieving a Certificate of Achievement for completion of the Integrated Occupational Program (IOP);
- enrolment at a Post-Secondary Institution;
- participation in an apprenticeship program; or
- by passing a minimum of five grade 12 courses including a Language Arts diploma exam course, and three other diploma exam courses

The table below provides district information for three, four and five-year completion rates since the province began to provide the information.

TABLE 1
PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICT STUDENTS ACHIEVING
HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION STATUS BY REPORTING YEAR

Rate Type	Reporting Year								Diff. 04-05 – 03-04
	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	
3 Year	51.1	53.0	57.5	57.0	57.3	57.6	60.5	63.6	+3.1
4 Year		59.1	62.0	65.5	64.5	65.0	64.3	68.0	+3.7
5-Year			64.2	67.0	69.8	68.8	69.0	70.0	+1.0

The district information in Table 1 shows substantial gains in the 2004-2005 percentages of completers for both the 3-year and the 4-year rates. For 3-year rates, both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 show substantial gains. Data for reporting year 2003-2004 pertains to the cohort of students who began grade 10 in 2001-2002. During 2001-2002 high schools were provided with successful completion data for all grade 10, 11 and 12 core courses and professional development focused on improving successful completion rates for students. This work appears to be reflected in the substantial gains noted in the 2003-04 and 2004-2005 3-year rates and in the 2004-2005 4-year rate. Based on this trend, one would anticipate a substantial increase in the 5-year rate when the 2005-2006 data is available next year.

High School to Post-Secondary Transition Rates

To track the extent that Alberta high school students participate in post-secondary study, Alberta Education calculates the rate at which students move into post-secondary education within four and six years of starting Grade 10. Students from the grade 10 cohort are counted as post-secondary students if, within four or six years of starting grade 10, they are

- registered in a post-secondary program at an Alberta post-secondary institution; or
- registered in an apprenticeship program in Alberta.

Alberta Education does not specifically track Alberta students who participate in post-secondary programs outside of Alberta. They do, however, estimate the number of students who have left the province to pursue post-secondary education and this estimate is factored into the High School to Post-Secondary Transition Rate.

Table 2 provides district 4-year and 6-year information on transition rates.

TABLE 2
PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICT STUDENTS
TRANSITIONING TO POST-SECONDARY

Rate Type	Percentage Transition Rate by Reporting Year							Diff. 04-05 – 03-04
	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	
4-year	30.2	31.8	33.5	30.7	33.8	33.4	38.8	+5.4
6-year			50.2	51.3	53.7	55.3	59.2	+3.9

The data for 2004-2005 indicates a substantial increase in the percentage of district students transitioning to post-secondary relative to the previous data included in the Table. The increase in the 6-year rate appears to be accelerating over time and this is reflected in a

substantial increase of 3.9 per cent in the most recent data. As a higher percentage of district students successfully complete high school, a higher percentage are eligible to pursue post-secondary studies.

Factors that Have Contributed to Improvement

The district and province recognize the importance of increasing high school completion rates. To achieve this goal requires the commitment of all teaching and leadership staff from Kindergarten through grade 12 and continuing education.

As a district, our data indicated that the low successful course completion rates in grade 10 alternative stream courses may have contributed to a relatively low rate of high school completion. Therefore, high school staffs, as part of their instructional focus concentrated on strategies to improve course completion rates over the last three years, particularly in grade 10. When more students successfully complete courses, more students can be expected to complete high school. For grade 10 students, it takes an additional two years before the impact of increased course completion appears in high school completion data.

What are some of the factors that may have contributed to increased high school completion rates over the last three years in Edmonton Public Schools?

- Trustees, the superintendent of schools and senior staff provided a clear message that improving high school completion rates was urgent.
- To emphasize their support, trustees have created a legacy statement that sets the following targets for high school completion by the end of the 2006-07 school year:
 - 70 per cent of students will complete high school in three years
 - 80 per cent of students will complete high school in five years
- Staff were engaged in analyzing data on an ongoing basis and linking changes in instructional practice to positive trends in the data.
- Professional development emphasized research-based strategies that were linked to increased achievement for struggling students.
- Leadership staff encouraged teachers to share successful teaching strategies (based on evidence of improved course completion rates) in conversation with other teachers, within department groups, between trio schools and at district professional development sessions.
- Data indicated that many schools realized increased course completion rates by incorporating assessment for learning strategies into classrooms, particularly for students in the alternative course streams. Sharing of success stories increased teacher implementation of these best practices.
- Individual schools responded in unique ways to support grade 10 students identified as 'at risk' based on district HLAT measures. These included mentoring, targeted support, goal setting, and reinforcing supportive, inclusive classroom environments. Qualitative evidence suggests that these initiatives positively impacted these students' engagement in the learning process.

As a result of ongoing, focused attention of high school staff in supporting success for all students, and the efforts of K-9 staff to maximize student learning, it can be predicted that high school completion rates will continue to improve over time.

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