

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 12, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: District Actions: Cultural Diversity and English Language Learners

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Karen Bardy, Gloria Chalmers, Margaretha Ebbers, Donna Leask, Jody Lundell, Helen Yee

INFORMATION

As follow-up to information provided to the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2005, this report describes current district actions pertaining to cultural diversity and English language learners.

Background

As part of the district's focus on improving the achievement of all students, the district is committed to identifying strategies that will promote success for students who are at risk of not completing high school. District data indicates that students who are at risk include higher proportions of English language learners, particularly students coming from refugee camps who have limited exposure to formal schooling; FNMI (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) students; students living in poverty; and students with mild or moderate special needs.

Many of the students who are at risk have significant learning challenges that require innovative approaches to programming at the school level. In addition, many of these students have social, emotional and health needs that can only be met with ongoing collaboration with community partners. In order to identify ways to work more closely with the community in providing supports to schools, the district, this past fall, created two external committees of community partners (Appendix I). One committee includes community organizations that provide supports to FNMI students and families; the other includes community organizations that provide supports to English language learners and their families.

Creating a Framework of Supports

The work undertaken in 2005-06 to support English language learners who are at risk has included the following:

- consultation with a sample of principals and teachers at the elementary, junior high, and high school level about the needs of English language learners who are at risk
- work with community partners on the development of projects in relation to needs identified for English language learners

- attendance at two series of parent empowerment sessions organized by the Family Centre at Abbott and Balwin Schools, to hear about the needs of parents and students who are English language learners
- identification of areas of need based on the information collected through the English Language Support Services Centre

Information collected from community partners regarding the needs of English language learners resulted in the identification of a number of priority areas for collaborative projects. These priority areas and ideas for collaborative projects were vetted through a number of principals and were positively supported. Additional information regarding the specific collaborative projects with community partners is provided in Appendix II.

- **Prevention and intervention:** identify strategies in the early years of school that provide students with a foundation for success; identify the most effective strategies for intervention at all grade levels
- **Literacy Programming:** concentrate on literacy needs of students with limited literacy in their own language and in English; provide programming for students with limited experience with formal schooling and connect to community resources available to students and families
- **Transitions into school and leaving school:** create transition programs with community partners for students coming and leaving school; include educational programming and life skill training in these programs
- **Culturally appropriate assessments:** identify appropriate assessment protocols and communication processes to share information with parents
- **Mentorship:** determine what kind of approaches to mentorship could be used; concentrate on students at the junior and senior high levels
- **Working with families:** work in partnership with families to understand their needs more accurately and to inform them of the expectations of schools; identify approaches that will be effective in involving families: e.g. use of translators, after school sessions that are ongoing throughout the year
- **Cross-cultural understanding across the district:** information and strategies to build staff's understanding of cultural diversity

The administration will extend this work this fall by expanding its consultation with principals and teachers of schools with large numbers of English language learners, parents and students with limited schooling experience, and central services units that provide supports to schools and English language learners. The focus of this consultation will be on the supports needed to create successful learning experiences for English language learners who are at risk.

LT:ee

APPENDIX I: External Committees of Community Partners

APPENDIX II: Collaborative Projects with Community Partners

EXTERNAL COMMITTEES OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Cultural Diversity Community Partners Committee

1. Barb Maheu, Professional Development, Alberta Teachers' Association
2. Lyle Watling, Alberta Teachers' Association
3. Mary Gallivan, Immigration and Settlement Services, Catholic Social Services
4. Nyambura Belcourt, Edmonton Multicultural Society
5. Maria Jagiello, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
6. Donna Mae Ford, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
7. Charlene Hay, Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations
8. Don Langford, Métis Child and Family Services
9. Kym Pelletier, Métis Child and Family Services
10. Cheryl Whiskeyjack, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
11. Yvonne Chiu, Multicultural Health Brokers
12. Terry Carson, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta
13. Chris Nsaliwa, Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
14. Shirley Buchanan, The Family Centre

First Nation, Métis and Inuit Community Partners Committee

1. Don Langford, Métis Child and Family Services
2. Kym Pelletier, Métis Child and Family Services
3. Iris Gumbs, Red Road Healing Society
4. Joanne Pompana, Red Road Healing Society
5. Alanda Fox, Ben Calf Robe Society
6. Dr. Lola Baydala, Department of Pediatrics, University of Alberta and Misericordia Child Health Services
7. Dr. Carmen Rasmussen, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital
8. Dr. James Dempsey, Faculty of Native Studies
9. Cheryl Whiskeyjack, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
10. Joe Cloutier, Innerscity High School
11. Muriel Stanley Venne, Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women
12. Shauna Seneca, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
13. Melissa Gillis, Concordia University College of Alberta

COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Project Areas	Initiatives	Fall Plans
Prevention/Early Intervention	<p>Stepping into School: Developing and implementing a Stepping into School program at the kindergarten level for parents with limited experience with schooling; the program provides information about schooling before kindergarten begins and provides parents with the tools and opportunity to learn strategies to promote school readiness in their children.</p> <p>YMCA Kid's Club: Implementing this after school program which focuses on building developmental assets in children through pro-social development, literacy, and recreational activities.</p>	<p>Sessions held in June at John Barnett and Belvedere Schools. Planning underway regarding other sessions and support.</p> <p>Implemented at Abbott School, Rundle School, Glengarry School, and Mee-Yah-Noh School.</p>
Literacy/Programming/Transitions	<p>Elementary transition programming for English language learners with limited schooling: Developing a school pilot at the elementary level for students with limited schooling; pilot includes programming strategies, working with parents, connection to health resources, and cultural information for teachers.</p> <p>Junior High transition programming for English language learners with limited schooling: Developing a school pilot at the junior high level for students with limited schooling; pilot includes programming strategies, working with parents, connection to health resources, and cultural information for teachers.</p> <p>High School transition programming for English language learners with limited schooling: Developing a pilot transition program for students with limited schooling with Catholic Social Services and the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.</p> <p>District Teacher on site as part of Settlement Services: Exploring the feasibility of seconding a teacher to the Settlement Services part of Catholic Social Services to provide transitional support to newcomers.</p>	<p>Development of transition programming at Grace Martin School.</p> <p>Development of transition programming at Balwin School.</p> <p>Development of transition programming at a high school.</p> <p>Possible implementation.</p>

Culturally sensitive assessment	Culturally sensitive assessment: Obtaining information from community partners about best practices pertaining to culturally sensitive assessment and assessment experts.	Meeting with community partners with expertise in this area.
Mentorships	Framework: Developing a framework for mentorship programs in order to identify effective approaches to providing mentors for English language learners.	Further development in the fall.
Working with families	Parent sessions: Developing parent information and empowerment sessions for parents with limited formal schooling in partnership with community organizations.	Identification of possible school sites for the Family Centre.
Cross-cultural understanding across the district	<p>District leadership programs: Involving community partners in presenting with Programs about cultural diversity to district leadership programs for new principals, staff applying for principal positions, and staff interested in leadership positions.</p> <p>Cultural diversity workshops: A team of consultants participated in the Alberta Teachers' Association cultural diversity workshop.</p> <p>Safe and Caring Schools: Serving on a committee chaired by Safe and Caring Schools regarding the identification of policies and practices that increase the understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.</p> <p>Self-assessment tools: Working with the University of Alberta on the development of a self-assessment tool that schools can use to identify their needs in the area of cross-cultural understanding.</p> <p>Anti-racism strategies: Understanding issues related to racism and identifying anti-racism strategies for use by schools.</p>	<p>Sessions beginning in late fall.</p> <p>Will explore other opportunities to participate or collaborate with the ATA.</p> <p>Committee to be established in fall.</p> <p>Work beginning in fall.</p> <p>Identifying and communicating information about strategies for schools to use.</p>

	<p>Information on needs of students and parents from Somalia and Afghanistan: Working with the Multicultural Health Brokers to provide information to school staffs about the educational needs of students and parents from the Somalian and Khurdish communities.</p> <p>Joint presentations at 2007 Teachers' Convention: Providing a joint presentation with community partners to the 2007 Teachers' Convention regarding cultural diversity and English language learners.</p> <p>Information update for schools: Developing a bi-monthly newsletter with community partners for schools; the newsletter will provide information about expected numbers and cultural information regarding refugee and immigrant students and families coming to Edmonton, as well as workshops and resources available in the school's geographic area to support students and families.</p> <p>Identifying numbers of students with limited schooling: Working with Student Information to develop a means by which schools can indicate in the registration process that a student has limited schooling.</p>	<p>Share information collected.</p> <p>Draft plan has been developed.</p> <p>Meeting with Immigration Canada Services in June. First information update to be developed for October.</p> <p>Template developed; implementation in fall.</p>
--	---	---

KB:ee
August 28, 2006