

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 23, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent
R. MacNeil, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Jose da Costa, Shannon Gentilini, Darwin Martin,
Heather Raymond

INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #110, MAY 27, 2008 (TRUSTEE GIBEAULT): PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE RESEARCH THAT HAS BEEN DONE IN ALBERTA REGARDING FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN. A review of the literature surrounding full-day kindergarten (FDK) research in Alberta indicates that, Dr. Jose da Costa, from the University of Alberta, is the sole, primary researcher in this area. There is considerable research on half-day kindergarten programs in Alberta and there is a growing body of literature on FDK programs internationally, but Dr. da Costa continues to be the lead researcher with respect to studying FDK in an Alberta context.

In Alberta, a variety of models are used for the delivery of kindergarten curricula (da Costa, 2008). The most predominant model (half-day kindergarten) has kindergarten children in school for approximately 500 hours of instructional time per school year (da Costa, 2008). The Alberta government currently funds school jurisdictions for 475 hours of kindergarten programming per year (da Costa, 2008). FDK provides students with approximately 1000 hours of instructional time for the entire school year (da Costa, 2008).

Since 2001, Dr. da Costa has studied the longitudinal impact of FDK in Alberta as part of the partnership between Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) and the University of Alberta. The study draws on longitudinal comparisons, through to grade six, between students who attended a FDK program and a half-day kindergarten program both offered within EPS. The primary finding of the longitudinal study indicates that FDK for children from educationally deprived communities enables them to maintain reading and writing levels at par with children from the rest of the district until the end of grade three.

Actions that central services staff have taken to address the findings and recommendations identified in the May 27, 2008, board report titled, *Longitudinal Effects of Full-Day Kindergarten Through to Grade Six* include:

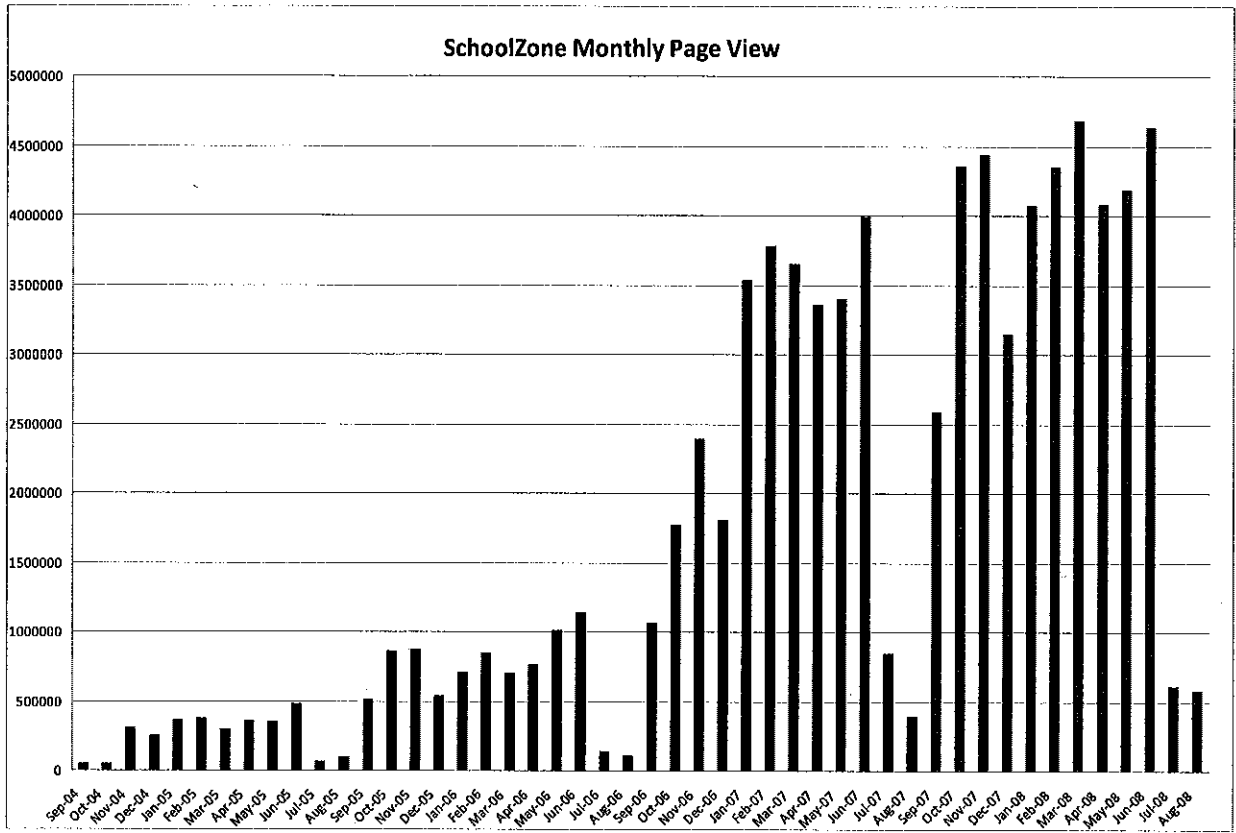
- Communicate to district staff the importance of providing activity-based (not random play-based), child focused FDK experiences to all children living in low Socio-Economic Status (SES) communities.
- Explore the role of FDK and reading recovery by meeting with FDK staff to share and collect information.
- Provide support to FDK school personnel to afford opportunities to meet regularly to share information about curriculum and instruction issues and approaches to support the needs of their students, particularly ELL students.
- Identify and address anomalies found within the FDK research data by conducting focus group discussions with FDK school personnel.
- Collect, analyze and disseminate district research data for the FDK longitudinal study and report the findings to Board.

TRUSTEE REQUEST #118, JUNE 10, 2008 (TRUSTEE COLBURN): PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE GROWTH AND PROGRESS OF SCHOOLZONE SINCE ITS INCEPTION. In 2003 District Technology started development of a web portal intended to enhance communication between school and home. Eleven schools piloted SchoolZone in the spring of 2004, providing valuable feedback which influenced the design and deployment to the rest of the district. In the initial version of SchoolZone, school staff entered school news, classroom news and homework while attendance information, HLAT and Provincial Achievement Test results were made available through data integration with District SIS.

SchoolZone is currently implemented in over 100 schools. Over 70,000 students, parents and staff use SchoolZone with an average of four million pages viewed monthly, peaking at over 4.7 million page views in June 2008. SchoolZone has become an integral communication tool in junior and senior high schools, and is becoming more widely used in elementary schools. The functionality, driven by feedback from users, has grown to include marks reports, progress reports, school resources, timetables, collaborative workspace, high school credit reports, and student course requests. Integrated with other Edmonton Public Schools systems, SchoolZone provides parents and students with transportation information and student fee information which was previously provided in paper format. Many schools have reported saving time and money by implementing SchoolZone while reducing their environmental footprint by using less paper. Development in 2008-09 will focus on features which support the communication needs in elementary schools, such as an ePortfolio and personalized teacher comments.

The implementation of SchoolZone is a school-based decision. Two intakes are organized throughout the school year where schools are invited to attend a product demonstration. Information Technology Services provides training and assistance to school staff through inservices and Helpdesk phone support. More information can be found on the District Technology Website at <http://dt.epsb.ca/content/section/4/93/>

The table below indicates the number of pages viewed from September 2004 to August 2008.



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