

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 14, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee B. Esslinger, Chair ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee D. Fleming, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee C. Ripley, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed Issues for the 2009 ASBA Fall General Meeting

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, David Fraser, Glenn Johnson, Anne Sherwood

RECOMMENDATION

That the following items, as detailed in Appendix I, for submission to ASBA Zone 23 for policy development and consideration at the 2009 Fall General Meeting, be approved:

1. Policy Amendment: That Policy 4.P.03 Alberta SuperNet (Funding) be amended to read as follows:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that funding for the accessibility to high-speed connectivity of the Alberta Supernet be increased to cover service costs for 100/20 Mbps connection speeds at all educational sites.

2. Policy Amendment: That Policy 4.P.04 Technology (Funding) be amended to read as follows:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that provincial financial support for technology should reflect the actual costs of technology; that such support should be determined in consultation with school districts, be an ongoing component of educational funding and be announced in a timely manner. The funding should be based on a current Total Cost of Ownership study of the costs to provide: an instructional computer, data projector and/or interactive white board in every classroom; a student computer for every five students; and the appropriate networking infrastructure and technical support for these learning technologies, on a five-year lifecycle replacement schedule.

3. Directive for Action: That the Alberta School Boards Association urge the appropriate Ministers to make the training of Educational assistants a high government priority.
4. Directive for Action: That the Alberta School Boards Association encourage the provincial government Ministry of Alberta Education to approve the provision of test accommodations (Reader and/or CD version and Scribe) for English as a Second Language Students (ESL) for Provincial Achievement Tests.

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The Administration was asked to review existing ASBA policy and submit suggested policy issues in keeping with the district priorities and the Board's strategic plan for consideration at the ASBA Fall General meeting. Four issues and accompanying background information and rationale were submitted by the Administration. Trustees were also advised that they could submit suggestions for policy issues. One suggested directive for action related to advocacy for funding of cafeterias in new high schools was submitted by a Trustee.

The ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee reviewed the submissions and recommends that the board approve and forward the above 4 items to ASBA Zone 23 for consideration at its May meeting. Zone 23 can submit up to six issues to the ASBA Policy Development Advisory Committee.

Given a lack of understanding and background information about how cafeteria space is currently funded and by which ministry as well as the implications of advocating for targeted funding in this regard, the Committee is not recommending the suggested policy issue related to funding for cafeterias in new high schools be brought forward to the ASBA at this time. The Committee suggests that the Trustee could make a request for information at public board to provide sufficient background on the issue to assist the Board in determining if it wishes to pursue the matter and the best possible courses of action.

NOTE: With respect to Recommendations 1 and 2 and advocacy re: cafeterias in new high schools. The Board should be aware that the ASBA is currently reviewing its existing policy framework with a view to consolidating its policies and removing inconsistencies, and tentatively, a consolidated set of policies will be presented at the Spring AGM for approval by the membership.

The Education Finance section, in particular, will be streamlined to delete the many targeted funding requests as these are not consistent with the overarching ASBA policy that supports non-targeted funding. In addition, a new process for handling the issues and requests of the membership is likely to be proposed at the Spring AGM with the purpose of acting on the issues in the most expedient way – not solely through a policy or directive for action mechanism. If any of the Board’s recommendations are accepted by Zone 2 3 and sent forward to the FGM, and if both the consolidated version of the policy book and the recommended new process are passed at the SGM, there may be alternate suggestions from the ASBA Standing Policy Committee on how to take action on these issues other than through policy amendments or directive for actions.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I – Background Material Supporting Recommended Changes to Policy and Development of Directives for Action

AMEND POLICY 4.P.03 ALBERTA SUPERNET (FUNDING) –

The current policy reads:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that funding for the accessibility to high-speed connectivity should commence in September 2001. This would enable school jurisdictions to cover costs associated with their connectivity to the Internet and remove the concern about the interim gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” during the implementation stage of the Alberta SuperNet.

Amend the policy by:

- striking out the section beginning “should commence in September 2001” and ending at “during the implementation stage” and,
- adding after “ of the Alberta SuperNet” the following “*should be increased to cover service costs for 100/20 Mbps connection speeds at all educational sites*”.

The amended policy would read as follows:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that funding for the accessibility to high-speed connectivity of the Alberta SuperNet, should be increased to cover service costs for 100/20 Mbps connection speeds at all educational sites.

Background

The Alberta SuperNet was announced by the provincial government in November 2000. Alberta Education committed funding of \$503 / month per site, to cover the base service costs of SuperNet access at a connection speed of 10/6 Mbps.

When the SuperNet project was announced in 2000, an expected 10/6 Mbps connection speed was reasonably advanced. Since the SuperNet has been implemented, the requirements for telecommunications speeds have increased substantially. Based on the growth in use of Internet resources, videoconferencing and other technologies like voice over IP or shared technology services, a connection speed of 100/20 Mbps is needed to enable school district sites to access and properly utilize these resources over SuperNet. Alberta Education would need to increase the amount of SuperNet funding per site from \$503.50 per month (existing 10/6 Mbps connection) to \$697 per month (a more practical 100/20 Mbps connection).

AMEND POLICY 4.P.05 TECHNOLOGY (FUNDING) –

The current policy reads:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that provincial financial support for technology should reflect the actual costs of technology; that such support should be determined in consultation with school districts, be an ongoing component of educational funding, and be announced in a timely manner.

Amend the policy by adding the following to the end of the current statement:

The funding should be based on a current Total Cost of Ownership study of the costs to provide; an instructional computer, data projector and/or interactive white board in every classroom; a student computer for every 5 students; and the appropriate networking infrastructure and technical support for these learning technologies, on a 5 year lifecycle replacement schedule.

The amended policy would read as follows:

The Alberta School Boards Association believes that provincial financial support for technology should reflect the actual costs of technology; that such support should be determined in consultation with school districts, be an ongoing component of educational funding, and be announced in a timely manner. The funding should be based on a current Total Cost of Ownership study of the costs to provide; an instructional computer, data projector and/or interactive white board in every classroom; a student computer for every five students; and the appropriate networking infrastructure and technical support for these learning technologies, on a five-year lifecycle replacement schedule.

Background

The provincial government has acknowledged the need for additional funding for technology in school jurisdictions.

In January 2008, Alberta Education provided one-time funding for technology through the 21st Century Classrooms grant. Funds were provided in two allocations; \$49.50 per student for technology infrastructure, and \$20 per student for technology in classrooms.

In May 2008, Alberta Education announced another one-time funding initiative, called Innovative Classrooms Technology Funding. With this funding, Alberta Education stated a vision to ensure all grade 1-12 classrooms in Alberta are equipped with an instructional computer and data projection device (digital projector and/or electronic whiteboard). Funds were committed for a 3 year period, at approximately \$36 per student per year.

Based on recommended ACOL class sizes, the total 3 year funding would range from \$1,836 (division 1) to \$2,916 (division 4) for each classroom. The acquisition costs of an instructional computer, digital projector and electronic whiteboard is roughly \$3,200 – 4,500 (depending on entry level to larger, unified all-in-one projector/whiteboards). There are further costs for installation, required infrastructure and technical support.

Alberta Education indicated that once jurisdictions have equipped every classroom with a computer and data projection device, the remaining funds could be used for other classroom technologies such as student laptops, sound amplification systems, assistive technologies and classroom software. Clearly, the funds provided are insufficient and Alberta Education recognizes additional technologies are needed to support innovative teaching and learning.

While these additional funds have enabled districts to increase the amount of technology in classrooms, these funds were announced as one-time grants, and need to be sustainable on an ongoing basis. Sustainable and sufficient funding on a per student basis for technology would enable all jurisdictions to provide equitable access to technology for all students in the province.

DIRECTIVE FOR ACTION: TRAINING OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

That the Alberta School Boards Association urge the appropriate Ministers to make the training of Educational Assistants a high government priority

Background:

The Minister of Alberta Education has initiated *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta*. The outcomes from this review will set the stage for special education in Alberta over the next decade. Educational Assistants play a key role in assisting teachers and healthcare professionals to provide the supports, programs and services students need to be successful.

There has been a significant increase in the number of educational assistant positions over the past five years. Some jurisdictions have seen a 40% increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) positions during this period. The demand for qualified graduates of post-secondary programs has also been impacted by the changing demographics of current educational assistants. Up to 35% of these staff are eligible to retire within the next four years.

The role of educational assistants has also evolved over the past fifteen years. In the past, educational assistant responsibilities revolved around ordering supplies, photocopying and laminating materials, taking groups of students to the library to exchange books, setting up displays and bulletin boards, etc. This is no longer the case.

Today's educational assistants work with a diverse group of students (e.g., medically fragile, autistic, English Language Learners) and require pre-employment coursework and/or continuing education in a variety of knowledge and skill areas, including: non-violent crisis intervention; positive behaviour management; aboriginal awareness and culture; speech and language development assistance; occupational therapy and physical therapy assistance; medication management; physical care; learning disabilities; general curriculum knowledge; data collection and recordkeeping; and, individual program plans.

DIRECTIVE FOR ACTION: PROVINCIAL ACHIEVEMENT TEST ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS

That ASBA encourage the provincial government Ministry of Alberta Education to approve the provision of test accommodations (Reader and/or CD version and scribe) for English as a Second Language Students (ESL) for Provincial Achievement Tests.

Background

Current policy of the Ministry of Alberta Education does not allow for accommodations on Provincial Achievement Tests for English as a Second Language students, with the exception of allowing ESL students double the amount of time to write the tests.

From the Achievement General Information Bulletin:

“English as a Second Language (ESL) and francisation students may have up to twice the allotted time to write any of the achievement tests.”

In October 2006, the Alberta Education Draft Comprehensive Strategy Plan for K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL) included recommendation #3:

“Review accommodations for ESL students for Diploma Examinations and Provincial Achievement Tests.”

In addition, Edmonton Public Schools identified several additional considerations for the Draft Comprehensive Strategy including recommendation #3:

“Increased flexibility in the types of accommodation allowed.”

Rationale

Edmonton Public Schools, through the English Language Support Services Centre (ELSSC) assesses ESL students in the various strands of English language proficiency. For students who have an adequate level of aural comprehension, but limited reading and writing skills, accommodations on the PATs such as a Reader and/or Scribe could be beneficial.