

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 18, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools  
SUBJECT: Second Language Policy  
ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Joanne Bergos, Marie Commance-Shulko, Charlotte Corothers, Don Darling, Michelle De Abreu, Pat Dougherty, Sandy Forster, Marlene Hanson, Melody Kostiuk, Valerie Leclair, Elvira Loewen, Shelly Pepler, Wendy Thurber-Gratton, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

That the Second Language Education Policy (HGAF.BP) be amended to reflect the change in the Alberta Education position on the Second Language Requirement

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**Background**

Edmonton Public Schools has been recognized internationally for its leadership in second language education.

This amended policy (Appendix I) is being brought forward at this time to provide clarity of direction in light of the withdrawal of the provincial requirement regarding the implementation of second languages. The amended policy retains the requirement for all students in Edmonton Public Schools to begin the study of a second language, starting in grade 4 in September 2006. This recommendation is made in the best interest of our students and in the best interest of the district. It also reflects a recent review by a focus group of principals.

While Alberta Education has rescinded the second language requirement, the province will continue to support jurisdictions who are implementing local language requirements. Funding allocations to units within Alberta Education to support language implementation have been guaranteed.

The recommendation in this report also aligns with the newly approved *Alberta Education Business Plan 2006-2009*, which encourages strategies to support a language initiative.

The recommendation also serves to support Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations #8 and #38.

One hundred and fifty-eight of our schools have already selected and implemented a second language. The district has put in place a comprehensive series of supports to facilitate second language implementation in schools, supports that are the envy of other districts. (See Appendix II)

## **Rationale**

### **A. Students**

Research studies have demonstrated repeatedly students receiving quality second language instruction experience increased:

- intellectual potential
- scholastic achievement
- first language proficiency
- economic potential
- cultural awareness and sensitivity

*(A Review of the Literature on Second Language Learning, Dr. John Archibald; Impact of Second Language on First Language Learning, Edmonton Public Schools)*

Dr. Archibald's work also demonstrates the value of second language learning for English Second Language students in their efforts to learn English.

Our students must be prepared to work in a modern world, and even here in Alberta companies are placing increasing value of bilingual capacity. The major competitors in trade and commerce, in Europe and Asia are implementing third language policies.

Edmonton Public Schools has pioneered the practice of international credentialing in five second languages. This provides an opportunity to students enrolled in second languages to access a benefit which has strong currency with employers and post-secondary institutions.

### **B. District**

The benefits to the district to pursue a second language requirement, given our present circumstances are compelling.

- The district's history in leadership in languages has led to our present role in developing for Alberta Education second language curricula, implementation manuals and assessment materials. We have recently received new contracts worth several hundred thousand dollars that will extend to 2007. The revenue generated from this work enables the district to improve our ability in helping students achieve superb results in languages.
- The district at this time, based upon our profile in the area of second language, has agreements with foreign governments including China, Spain and France. These are of long range value to the district and can create a significant marketing advantage, especially in the area of credentials.
- Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools have all moved to maintain a requirement for second language grades 4 to 9. Of the nine other districts of the Capital Region, eight are requiring all grade four students to take a second language starting in September 2006. A number of these districts have had language requirements for many years. For Edmonton Public

Schools to retract from this position could see a loss of competitive advantage in attracting students, and could leave us vulnerable to a loss of some teachers being sought for second language positions in boards where it is a requirement.

- Maintenance of our contractual role with Alberta Education is in the district's interest in a number of ways, not the least of which is the opportunity provided to many classroom teachers to take part in curriculum, assessment and materials development, as well as helping at in-services in other districts. This builds a depth of knowledge and leadership potential within the district.

### **Implementation**

The recommendation will see all district schools ensure that second language instruction is implemented at least at grade four for September 2006, growing to encompass all students from grades 4 through 9 by September 2011. Schools that have already implemented a second language will continue the offering to ensure programming continuity for students. If a school has not yet implemented the requirement, and faces exceptional circumstances that make implementation impossible for September 2006, the superintendent, at his discretion, may permit the implementation to be delayed one year.

### **Summary**

Maintaining the requirement for students in the district from grades 4 to 9 will serve to enhance student achievement, which will in turn contribute to the enhancement of the image of the district as the best place to come for a quality education. It will enable the district to maintain a position of leadership provincially and nationally.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: HGAF.BP Second Language Policy

APPENDIX II: District Supports for Second Language Implementation

## Edmonton Public Schools Board Policies and Regulations

CODE: HGAF.BP  
TOPIC: Second Language Education

EFFECTIVE DATE: 14-09-2004  
ISSUE DATE: 15-09-2004  
REVIEW DATE: 09-2009

In accordance with the Provincial Language Requirement, **Appreciating the benefits of second language learning for first language development, as well as other developmental, scholastic, economic and cultural benefits**, Edmonton Public School students shall study a second language (in addition to English) in grades four to nine, beginning in grade four in September 2006.

Edmonton Public Schools shall support and encourage students to continue to build proficiency in a second language through the end of grade twelve.

### **Types of Second Language Education:**

#### **French Language:**

Given that French is an official language of Canada, and is important in international, economic, political, diplomatic and cultural exchange, all Edmonton Public School District students shall have access to French language ~~programming~~ **courses** in schools ~~identified as offering~~ **choosing to offer** French as a second language (FSL) ~~programs~~ and in ~~designated~~ school sites **designated for** ~~through~~ French Immersion (FIM) programming.

#### **International Languages:**

Given that international languages are an important asset in international, economic, political, diplomatic and cultural exchange, Edmonton Public School District students shall have access to International Language and Culture ~~programming as second language~~ **courses, at schools where demand permits courses to be offered**, and in ~~designated sites, through~~ Bilingual language programs (K-12) **at designated sites**.

#### **Aboriginal Languages:**

Given that aboriginal languages are an important part of Canadian heritage, and given that aboriginal languages are a growing part of the cultural and economic mosaic of the nation, Edmonton Public School District students shall have access to Aboriginal Language and Culture programming, as a second language course, **at schools choosing to offer such courses**.

#### **Special Needs Students:**

If a student is coded as moderate or severe special needs, and in the opinion of the principal the student is unable to learn a second language, then the principal may exempt the student, ~~in accordance with the requirements by the Minister of Learning.~~

#### Reference(s):

[HA.BP](#) - Student Programs

[HGAF.AR](#) - French Language Programs

[HGAG.AR](#) – International and Aboriginal Language Programs and Courses

## District Supports for Second Language Implementation

These supports are primarily funded from federal funds to be targeted for French support and from the result of provincial contracting in languages:

Edmonton Public Schools has put in place the most comprehensive support system for schools and teachers of second language in Alberta. The supports ensure provision of curriculum and assessment information, as well as identification of resources, access to resources and mentoring and support from highly skilled consultants in second language education. These supports have been in part responsible for the large increase in the number of students studying a second language even though there has been a decline in overall student populations. Some of the supports are listed below:

- in-services in French and International languages in terms of assessment, pedagogy and organization for language instruction
- identification of resources
- in-class mentoring and monitoring
- supports in identifying staff with language expertise
- language proficiency assessments for teachers of second language
- courses in building language proficiency and pedagogical skill
- Professional Development Day for Second Languages (attended by nearly 300 teachers annually)
- development of improved methods of assessment and reporting of achievement for second languages
- curriculum support documents
- guides to implementation
- websites and teachers forum providing electronic support for resources and sharing of practices
- consultant availability to schools at no cost to schools – this has helped change practice in our second language classes
- timetabling and scheduling support to enable sufficient time for language instruction – this is provided without charge to schools.
- International language credentials in five languages provides worldwide recognition of language proficiency