

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 29, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: American Sign Language and Deaf Culture: Locally Developed Nine-Year Course

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Janice Aubry, Linda Cundy, Sema Dhillon, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

That the locally developed course American Sign Language (ASL) and Deaf Culture Nine-Year Program (grades 4 to 12) Program of Studies for use in Edmonton Public Schools be approved.

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**Background:**

In response to requests from district schools, the Curriculum Unit initiated the development of an ASL and Deaf Culture Program of Studies, to be offered as a new second language course. This Program of Studies was developed collaboratively by staff from the Alberta School for the Deaf, community members (Dr. David Mason, Angela Stratiy, and Dr. Marty Taylor), Curriculum staff (Janice Aubry, Linda Cundy, Sema Dhillon and Stuart Wachowicz), and teachers (Nancy Geldart, Deborah Lenihan and Sandra Reid).

This Program of Studies was developed based on the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education: Common Curriculum Framework for Programming in International Languages (grades 4 to grade 12). This Program of Studies includes outcomes for Applications, Language Competence, Global Citizenship and Strategic Learning, which are identified on a grade level basis and have been adapted for ASL and Deaf culture.

There are many advantages to recognizing ASL as a distinct language. Apart from the common advantages related to the learning of a second language, it permits an insight into Deaf culture and provides more opportunity to communicate directly with deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

ASL and Deaf Culture programs have been taught for many years in Edmonton Public Schools. The oldest ASL program at Edmonton Public Schools is the American Sign Language Arts program delivered at the Alberta School for the Deaf in a bilingual context. As well, the ASL and Deaf Culture Three-Year Program (15-3Y, 25-3Y, and 35-3Y) has been taught to hearing students at high schools in the District with a high degree of success

and growing enrolments. The Three-Year program has been shared with other districts, and has recently been purchased by Manitoba Education for use as a provincial program in the Province of Manitoba. In this way, Edmonton Public Schools has made a contribution to the expansion of opportunities for both deaf and hearing students to acquire this language.

There continues to be a growing interest in ASL in the District and this new program expands opportunities for district students. Support in implementing this new Program of Studies will be provided by the Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education. Implementation guides for the grade 4 entry point are currently under development, and delivery and support resources are being reviewed.

This Program of Studies also creates the potential to provide other school districts who seek an ASL curriculum the opportunity to do so. Discussions have been held with Alberta Education to explore the possible purchase of this Program of Studies for use across the province.

Locally developed courses are permitted and governed by Alberta Education policies. All courses developed align to these policies including such guidelines as:

- courses are completed within the year they are started
- a certificated teacher is required for instruction
- unique hours of instruction are required for each course

The district is most grateful to members of the Deaf community, the ASL teachers and other district staff who contributed in this development process.

A copy of the course is available for viewing in the Trustees' On-line Reading Room.

SW:dh