

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 29, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent
J. Bidulock, Assistant Superintendent
T. Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Kelly Hehn, Anne Mulgrew

INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #67, FEBRUARY 26, 2008 (TRUSTEE FLEMING) PROVIDE AN ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE KNOWLEDGE IS POWER PROGRAM (KIPP), POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS IN THE DISTRICT AND CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF OFFERING THIS AS AN ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM.

The **Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)** began in 1994 at two middle schools in Houston and New York. It has since expanded across 17 states to 57 middle schools, 55 of which are Charter schools. The KIPP schools currently serve about 14,000 students and expect continued expansion. These are all open-enrollment schools that do not screen for prior achievement. They are strategically placed to serve high-need areas. Student populations are 80 per cent low-income, and more than 90 per cent African-American or Latino. The KIPP network is now releasing school-level achievement data and has started to report mobility data.

KIPP schools typically receive annual state and local funding of \$5,000 to \$13,000 per student depending on the state. They raise an additional \$1,100 to \$1,500 per student from foundations and private sources to cover the cost of the extended school day, week and year, which means additional salary costs, and the costs of annual field trips.

Each KIPP school is run by a principal who has been KIPP trained. The schools balance rigorous instruction with extracurricular activities, experiential field lessons and character development. While there are some local variations in instruction and operations, all KIPP schools are built around five pillars: **high expectations** – make no excuses based on the students' backgrounds; **choice and commitment** – no one is assigned or forced to attend a KIPP school; attendance is by choice; **more time** – offer an extended school day (7:30-5:00), week (every other Saturday) and year (three weeks in summer); **power to lead** – principals have control over school budget and personnel; **focus on results** – relentless focus on high student performance on standardized tests and other objective measures.

KIPP schools typically are implemented starting with Grade 5 and growing over four years to serve students through Grade 8. Each grade has approximately 80 students.

Effectiveness has been demonstrated by various research studies. Independent, scholarly research has confirmed the remarkable success of KIPP schools. Four studies, since 2002, have reported substantial and statistically-significant gains in the achievement of KIPP students in five jurisdictions. Beyond those, the most authoritative report was published in 2005 by the independent Educational Policy Institute (EPI), commissioned by the KIPP Foundation to review the performance of 1,800 fifth- and sixth-grade students in 24 schools. Over a period of one year or less, in 2003-2004, average achievement gains in reading, language and mathematics varied from 7.4 to 17.4 on standardized 99-point scales. EPI concluded that "KIPP has posted large and significant gains on a nationally norm-referenced standardized test. This performance is true across schools and throughout the nation. The fact that KIPP fifth-grade cohorts showed a dramatic increase well above normal growth rates in reading, language and mathematics is laudable and worthy of continued investigation and practice."

EPI cautioned that further research is needed to determine whether KIPP practices would be replicable and effective in other urban areas and noted that KIPP schools may tend to attract students with favourable parental qualities — although such factors had not previously enabled high achievement.

KIPP Foundation promotional materials report that, on average, KIPP students' reading achievement scores rise from the 34th percentile to the 58th percentile from the start of Grade 5 through completion of Grade 7, while average mathematics achievement scores rise from the 44th to the 83rd percentile. KIPP also reports that almost 80 per cent of students who attend KIPP schools through Grade 8 subsequently enter college.

These achievement results are complicated by mobility rates. A 2007 study of five KIPP schools, in five different states, found that one per cent to 34 per cent of non-graduating students left each school, each year. Those mobility rates tended to be lower in the KIPP schools than in other schools in the same jurisdictions. More comprehensive data on mobility rates in all KIPP schools will be released this year.

One of the original KIPP schools has been honoured by the Texas Education Agency as an "Exemplary School" for its first eight years. The other was recognized by the New York State Senate as the highest-performing public middle school in the Bronx for eight consecutive years.

With regard to **possible applications** in the District, we can see that see that four of the five pillars are already emphasized in EPSB. *Bright Futures Begin Here* and the *Success For All* previously used announce high expectations. Choice and commitment is consistent with the District's open boundary policy in effect since 1973 and its alternative program approach introduced in 1974. Power to lead is embedded in the District's site-based decision making model. Focus on results, including public sharing of results on standardized tests and other objective measures (HLATs) is also evidenced in the District.

The degree of alignment with the five pillars provides **opportunity**. However, the fifth pillar, more time, resulting in additional demands on staff and need for additional funding,

poses a significant **challenge**. But, the City Centre Education Project does offer summer programming as do some of our multicultural partners and numerous of our partners offer or are prepared to offer after-school programming, including homework assistance. Thus, it might be possible, in partnership, to extend time for instruction and support.

There are also other lessons to be gleaned from the KIPP approach. It is a relatively early intervention, beginning in late elementary before underachieving students have lost hope. We know from our own experience that many of our at-risk students begin disengaging at or around Grade 5 and that the transition from Grade 6 to Grade 7 can be difficult for such students. As well, four years is sufficiently long transition programming to enable knowledge and skill acquisition and be prepared to make the transition to a mainstream high school program. Also, unlike some of the District's current intervention programs (e.g., Literacy), students and families chose to attend rather than being directed to attend. Finally, all KIPP schools are single track.

Lessons learned from the KIPP approach will be further examined in the ongoing work of improving programming for students who are at risk of not completing their schooling. It will be discussed with partners and the question of what might be effective and feasible in Edmonton Public Schools will be addressed. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #77: REGARDING SERVICE REQUEST #42 – WHAT IS THE PLAN TO TARGET THOSE SCHOOLS THAT HAVE A HIGHER THAN AVERAGE DROP-OUT RATE? (TRUSTEE HUFF): In the February 22, 2008 Transmittal Memorandum, information was provided on drop-out rates for 2001-02 up to 2005-06 for all district high schools. The 2005-06 data is the most recent data available from Alberta Education.

Alberta Education defines the drop-out rate as follows: “Alberta students aged 14 to 18 are tracked for one year to determine how many have left the education system without completing. Students are considered to have dropped out if they are not enrolled in the following year or have not met a high school completion criteria, i.e., have not, within the tracking period: received a high school diploma, IOP Certificate, high school equivalency (GED), earned credits in 5 grade 12 courses (including 4 diploma examination courses), or enrolled in a K-12 school in Alberta, an Alberta post-secondary institution or registered in an Alberta apprenticeship program.”

All students who drop out of school are of concern to the District regardless of which school they attend. There are home, environmental and school factors that impact drop-out rates. Some district schools serve a higher percentage of students who have a number of these risk factors which may impact their drop-out rates. The schools in the District that have higher than average drop-out rates are aware of this issue. Outlined below are examples of how schools are responding to this issue. These strategies reflect research related to causes of dropping out and have a positive impact on supporting students to complete school.

Connections and Relationships

Research indicates that one of the factors associated with dropping out of school is a lack of connection to or identification with their school. Almost every research source suggests that building meaningful relationships with students is a key element to successful transitions.

Relationships of school staff with students should emphasize respect, caring, trust, high expectations and faith in their success.

Actions that district schools have taken with community agencies in this regard include

- establishing collaborative projects to support identified students at risk
- accessing support from district resources such as Aboriginal liaison workers, and the English Language Support Services Centre (ELSSC)
- using community conferencing in lieu of expulsion to plan proactively for students re-integration into school
- establishing a plan to foster personal supportive connections between staff and identified students at risk
- recognizing student diversity through a variety of cultural events

Self-Efficacy and Academic Support

Students who have low confidence in their ability are less likely to feel they have control over their learning are more likely to drop out. Research (Dweck 2006, O'Connor 2008, Wiliam 2007) suggests that fair and flexible grading practices, assessment for learning strategies and differentiated instruction enhance the development of autonomous, capable learners. Actions that district schools have taken in this regard include:

- ongoing professional development (both AISI and targeted professional development) to enhance teachers' skills and confidence in applying these strategies
- use of in-school rather than out-of-school suspensions to reinforce the importance of continuous learning so that discipline related to behaviours will not exclude students from learning opportunities
- instilling a staff-wide belief system that all students can be successful
- ensuring that staff are aware of student behaviours that may be indicative of impending disengagement with schools (e.g., absenteeism, sudden changes in academic achievement)

Forward Planning

Drop-outs often have a less clear idea of how education will help them to meet their career goals. Strategies used to overcome this include:

- extensive career counselling
- access to a variety of registered apprenticeship programs and work experience placements
- provision of information about career pathways (e.g., Learning Clicks, career days)

Transitions

Transition from junior high to high school is difficult for many students, so providing opportunities for students to feel connected from the beginning of the school-year is critical.

Some district schools have implemented the following strategies:

- opportunities for Grade 9 students to visit high schools during a school day and for high school students to visit junior highs so that students entering high school will feel comfortable with older students and with the high school environment
- establishing a student mentor system where incoming Grade 10 students are "buddied" with a Grade 11 or Grade 12 student

- analyzing Grade 10 data on an ongoing basis in order to support students who are at risk academically

There are a variety of ways that schools share the strategies they are using with each other, central departments, the community, and Trustees

- AISI May sharing
- planning documents and presentations
- committee on transitions for First Nation Métis Inuit (FNMI) students
- presentations to Board

It is anticipated that these efforts on the part of schools will result in a continuation of the District trend of a decreasing drop-out rate. By the end of May 2008, Alberta Education will release the 2006-07 drop-out rates for the jurisdiction and each high school. This updated information will be provided to Trustees. (A. Mulgrew, 429-8351)

TRUSTEE REQUEST #90: APRIL 15, 2008 (TRUSTEE HUFF) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHAT THE PROPOSED DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POINT IS FOR WOODCROFT STUDENTS WHO WILL BE BUSED TO THEIR DESIGNATED SCHOOL IN THE NEW YEAR. Student Transportation performs the application process and subsequent route design during an annual process starting on June 1 of each school year. This process is normally completed by July 31; with parents receiving their child's busing information in mid-August via postal service. A number of factors can influence the location of stops including mileage efficiencies, numbers of schools served, school hours, road structure and demand. For these reasons, it is not advisable to guarantee a stop location as it eliminates the required flexibility in routing scenarios, e.g., the direction of travel. The intention is to provide a stop in the Woodcroft neighbourhood with consideration that a stop not be located in front of the school, that an ETS bus stop will be used as a preferred stop location, that arterial and collector roadways are a preferred travel path, and that the stop location is centrally located, safe, sustainable and stable. (K. Hehn 429-8585)

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