

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 29, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee B. Esslinger, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee D. Fleming, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee
Trustee G. Gibeault, ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee Chair

SUBJECT: Proposed Issues for the 2008 ASBA Fall General Meeting

RESOURCE
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, 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 2008 Fall General Meeting, be approved:

1. Policy Deletion: That policy 4.P.02 Alberta SuperNet (Funding) be deleted.
2. Directive for Action: That the Alberta School Boards Association urge the Minister of Education to initiate a joint project with those Ministries linked under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to fund the use of the Early Development Instrument and of community mapping province-wide for the effective and efficient collection of information that will enable timely and equitable decisions to improve early childhood outcomes and student success in school.

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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 board's strategic plan for consideration at the ASBA Fall General meeting. The ASBA Issues and Resolutions Committee reviewed the submissions and recommends that the board approve and forward the above 2 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.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I – Background material supporting recommended changes to policy and development of Directives for Action

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

The current policy reads:

4.P.03 Alberta SuperNet (Funding) –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.

Rationale for Deletion

The implementation stage for SuperNet is complete and this policy is redundant. Alberta Education has been providing ongoing funding to districts as an additional grant since SuperNet became operational.

DIRECTIVE FOR ACTION: PROVINCE-WIDE USE OF THE EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL INSTRUMENT AND COMMUNITY MAPPING

The Alberta School Boards Association urge the Minister of Education to initiate a joint project with those Ministries linked under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to fund the use of the Early Development Instrument and of community mapping province-wide for the effective and efficient collection of information that will enable timely and equitable decisions to improve early childhood outcomes and student success in school.

Background:

In 2005 “Directive for Action 9.D.02” for ASBA to urge the Minister to initiate a joint project with ministries under the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative to fund the use of the Early Developmental Instrument (EDI) and Community Mapping¹ was recommended for deletion based on the Minister’s assessment of results of a pilot in early 2000. The test pilot reported community mapping is neither efficient nor effective at present. Since this time extensive research has occurred in Canada that has illustrated the value of EDI and of community mapping. There is increased interest in the province at the government level, school jurisdiction level, and community level. We now have evidence from the work in British Columbia that EDI and community mapping is both helpful and doable and that others are moving on it (Ontario and Manitoba).

¹ **Community Mapping** is a process that identifies the characteristics and assets of neighbourhoods, particularly those assets that support young children and their families. Community maps provide a visual representation of how communities support young children. The intent of Community Mapping with EDI is part of an overall strategy to enhance early child development.

Since the first request to use EDI and Community Mapping much work has happened in exploring the validity of the tool. EDI has been validated for a wide range of populations in urban, rural, and remote communities, and communities with particular social and cultural compositions (e.g. aboriginal communities, inner-city communities, affluent suburban communities, etc.). It has proven to be a useful and reliable instrument, and has since been used in jurisdictions across Canada, the United States, Australia, Chile, and several other countries. British Columbia is the first province in the world to have administered the EDI to its entire population of five-year old kindergarten students.

Why EDI and Community Mapping?

The time before children enter grade one is a developmentally sensitive period during which many factors influence the course of a child's future development. Interest in and knowledge about early childhood development has grown markedly over the past decade. Clear evidence exists that providing preschool aged children access to conditions to support early childhood development, has a positive impact on later learning and development. Schools recognize the critical importance of the early years of life in the development and future well-being of children. Early learning shapes children's development and sets the stage for successful school completion. Significant early learning experiences are linked with greater productivity in adults – an important element in success at work and economic security. Edmonton Public Schools has collaborated with Early Childhood Programs and community-based services for many years working to raise awareness of the importance of these early years.

Until recently, there has not been an effective way to assess early childhood development at a population level to know how well children are doing during the years prior to entering grade one. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a measurement tool that has been developed in Canada to address the need for data on early development which can support sound planning and evaluation strategy to enhance early child development. Reports from provinces (British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario) that are using EDI in conjunction with Community Mapping have found this to be a powerful strategy for obtaining a comprehensive picture of the kindergarten-age population, the variance among communities and a means for investigating how the nature and breadth of services may explain these differences. Because of this, British Columbia has implemented the EDI province-wide and mapped the results on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.

The EDI results are currently being used by many different groups in BC as a catalyst for the creation (or strengthening) of broad local coalitions that focus on the development of young children in their communities. The EDI has served to stimulate and facilitate discussion among teachers, parents, schools, government and community agencies on the early childhood program needs within their communities. EDI results have helped stakeholders all over BC to reflect on early childhood programs in the community and to target funds and resources where they will be most useful and measure impact.

We now have sufficient evidence to know the quality of a child's experiences before age 6 has long-term effects on later performance in the education system and in adult life. We also know healthy children most often emerge from healthy families and healthy families are in turn promoted by healthy communities. The EDI and Community Mapping provides school districts and communities data to determine the well being of children as they enter kindergarten and look at ways school jurisdictions can collaborate with communities to respond to areas of need for children in the early years.

In Alberta interest in EDI and Community Mapping has been growing since the first test pilot. In 2000 a project took place in the Calgary area. A small project was undertaken in late 2002 in Edmonton piloting EDI and Community Map depicting the status of early childhood development in neighbourhoods of Edmonton. Both Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools participated in this pilot. This pilot proved to be effective in prompting interest, discussion and understanding of the results as a tool for monitoring change. However, the “one-time-only” use of the EDI for this project was not sufficient. The EDI needs to be used on a regular basis (yearly or every second year) to enable planners and community members to monitor the impact of community changes. In addition the usefulness of the EDI in this project was diminished by the lack of data from all neighbourhoods in the city. Recently some school boards have shown interest in the EDI and have begun or will begin to explore the use of EDI and Community Mapping. These districts include Elk Island, Bow Valley and Lloydminster.

The intent of this recommendation is to ensure all communities in the province have the information required to enable them to improve the developmental progress of children in the years before school so as to maximize their successful learning in school.

In summary, EDI with Community Mapping, a non-invasive assessment, will provide schools and communities an understanding of resources that support early child development and to build capacity in communities to support early child development to ensure children are developmentally ready for school.