

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 11, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Programming for Senior High School Students with Special Needs and Students at Risk, 2001-02

ORIGINATOR: Mack Fysh, Principal Liaison, Senior High Special Needs Coordinators' Committee

RESOURCE

STAFF: Dan Bateman, Sheri-Lee Langlois, Sandra Mason, Shannon Smith

INFORMATION

A presentation will be made by representatives of the Senior High Special Needs Coordinators' Committee to inform the board of activities that are being undertaken with the goal of retaining students with special needs and those at risk of not completing grade 12 through to graduation. These activities are associated with the board's priority regarding the improvement of educational outcomes for disadvantaged students at risk of not completing their schooling.

The senior high school principals committed in 1998 to finding more effective ways of addressing the needs of these students in response to information indicating that many were leaving school prior to completion of grade 12. The range of courses offered at the high schools was analyzed in relation to the varying abilities and interests of students with special needs and those at risk. Programming was adjusted accordingly in order to retain and support students throughout high school.

Each principal identified a Special Needs Coordinator to assist with student placement, programming, and the development of individual program plans involving all teachers associated with each student, and to enhance communications with students' families. The coordinators formed a committee in 1999 to enable them to share resources and expertise, engage in problem-solving, and improve the efficacy of processes for providing customized programming that would support these students' success, especially for those entering grade 10 from feeder junior high schools. The committee receives support from central services staff in so doing.

The results of this initiative can be seen, in part, by changes in the statistical information that has been gathered since 1998, as follows, district-wide:

- The enrolment of senior high students with mild and moderate special needs has increased by 33 per cent from 1,327 in 1998 to 1,768 in 2001.

- The enrolment of students with severe special needs has increased by 24 per cent from 242 in 1998 to 299 in 2001.
- In total, district high schools accommodate 32 per cent more students with special needs this year than they did prior to the implementation of the initiative in 1998.

One goal of this initiative is to accommodate students with special needs in their designated high school. Therefore, separate statistics are gathered on those schools with a defined local attendance area, i.e. Eastglen, Harry Ainlay, J. Percy Page, Jasper Place, M.E. LaZerte, McNally, Queen Elizabeth, Ross Sheppard, Strathcona, Victoria, W.P. Wagner. Data relevant to these schools indicates:

- The enrolment of students with special needs has increased by 47 per cent from 1,075 in 1998 to 1,584 this year.
- The proportion of special needs students as a percentage of total enrolment has increased from 6.88 per cent in 1998 to 9.56 per cent in 2001.
- In 1998, only 33.97 per cent of students with special needs attended their local high school. This year, 37.41 per cent have made this choice. This percentage is now comparable to that of their regular program peers.

The eleven high schools which are designated to serve the entire city, i.e. Academy at King Edward, Alberta School for the Deaf/Teve Miller Heritage, Amiskwaciy Academy, Braemar, Centre High, Edmonton Christian, Institutional Services, Kennedale, L.Y. Cairns, L'Academie Vimy Ridge Academy, and Millwoods Christian, are not included in the figures immediately above.

Efforts towards increased opportunities for success for senior high students with special needs and those at risk will continue. Coordinators believe that their students will benefit from the Blueprints for Success program. The process that high schools are undertaking to determine their instructional focus has served in many instances to familiarize regular program staff with the needs of these students, many of whom are included in 13/23/33 level classes. The expertise of the senior high special education teachers in individualizing programming and using multiple teaching strategies is being shared with their colleagues in the context of implementing their school's instructional focus.

This year the committee will be gathering quantitative and qualitative data about the retention and achievement of students with special needs at their schools. This data will provide evidence of effective programs, programming models, staffing arrangements, and course offerings, which may then be used to plan for the coming school year. Further resource development will occur and current, research-based information related to enabling student success will be provided.

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