

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 11, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Bill Bonko, Chairman District Priorities Subcommittee
Trustee Svend Hansen, District Priorities Subcommittee
Trustee Lynn Odynski, District Priorities Subcommittee

SUBJECT: District Priorities 2002-2005

RESOURCE
STAFF: Ken Dropko, Anne Sherwood, Victor Tanti

RECOMMENDATION

That the *District Priorities 2002 – 2005* (Appendix I) be approved.

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The District Priorities set the stage for the important work that we will do as a district for the next three years. They provide a framework for schools and central service decision units to develop their education and work plans and their budgets each year. The document itself is also invaluable in assisting trustees, principals, staff and parents in communicating with our publics about the work we do and in building support and commitment for public education.

The District Priorities Subcommittee met on November 6, 2001 to confirm a process for receiving stakeholder input on the district priorities. Input was invited from principals, Teachers Advisory Group, Key Communicators, Student Advisory Team and staff groups. As well, trustees, fresh off the campaign trail and having had the benefit of attending results reviews, were in an ideal position to bring a broad perspective on community and staff input. The subcommittee met again on November 27, 2001 to review the input received and to discuss ways of capturing the broad intent of as many suggestions as possible while providing maximum flexibility for local decision making in terms of how to achieve the priorities.

Principals expressed a desire to reduce the number of priorities for schools to address so that they can focus their attention on teaching and learning in the classroom. Principals and teachers also indicated that the needs of all students, whether disadvantaged, gifted or otherwise, need to be addressed and expressed some concern with how disadvantaged is defined. Staff supported teaching and learning as a priority but wanted the language to be more inclusive of the contributions that all staff make. The Custodial Health and Safety Committee expressed a desire to see an emphasis placed on health and safety in the priorities. Funding was a common theme. Parents articulated a need to address the individual needs of

students. Students also identified individualized teacher attention and instruction as important. All groups identified student achievement as a top priority and preferred a broad definition of achievement. All groups also addressed a positive learning and working environment with words like tolerance, respect, responsibility and citizenship.

In attempting to incorporate these ideas into the district priorities, the subcommittee examined the entire 1999-2002 document (Appendix II). The priority on *increasing levels of public support and funding for public education* was moved to the left side as it is not an “end” in itself but a necessary means to achieve our priorities. “*Public education*” was added to the stem for the priorities to read: *In its continuing commitment to excellence in public education, the board has adopted the following priorities:* This was seen to place an emphasis again on public education as in publicly funded and accountable education and allowed us to eliminate some of the old “systems” language of “effectiveness and efficiency”. The concept of disadvantaged students, special needs, gifted and talented and average students was incorporated into the student achievement priority as *to improve student achievement for ALL students*. The *with emphasis on language arts and mathematics* was changed to *with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy* as this was seen to be more all encompassing across all grades and areas of the curriculum and an intended outcome of the educational process. The statement on *high quality teaching and high quality leadership* was expanded to capture the idea that all staff contribute to the process of teaching and learning through their service and by contributing to collaborative decision making. In this sense, all staff exercise leadership. The concept of responsibility and tolerance was captured with the word *citizenship* which was added to the priority statement regarding *high standards of conduct, safety and well-being of students and staff*.

Additional changes were made to the left hand side of the document to reflect the priority changes: the statements on citizenship and responsible behaviour and on character education were deleted as these were seen to be addressed under “*citizenship*” in the priorities listing. *Fosters continuous learning* was replaced with *cultivates life-long learning* as this was thought to better capture the intent of the original statement. The statement, *values the contributions all staff make to support student achievement* was added. The statement, *develops the potential of each child* was also added to capture the concept of individualized attention to student needs. The word “*secure*” environment in the stem of the left hand side listing was expanded on to capture a “*caring and safe*” environment that had been expressed by so many parents and the Custodial Health and Safety Committee. The District Priorities Subcommittee also considered that “health and safety” was addressed under “*safety and well-being*” in the priorities -- the term “well-being” allowing for a broader interpretation of “health”. As well, the left hand side was re-ordered to align with the priorities. This was not intended as a ranking but to convey the importance of student achievement.

AS:mmf

APPENDIX I: *District Priorities 2002-2005*

APPENDIX II: *Amended District Priorities 1999-2002*