

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 12, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Busing Fees for Challenge Students
ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Executive Director

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Jody Lundell, Dorothy Sombach, Leslie Sonnen

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board approve the designation of Challenge students into the special education fee category retroactive to September 2006.

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Questions have come forward from parents of students enrolled in the Challenge program at elementary schools asking why these students need to pay the alternative rider transportation fees when their children are attending a site for students with special education needs. Parents are asking the Board of Trustees to reconsider the placement of challenge students as alternative riders and approve them in the special education fee category.

The administration has researched the origin and history of placing academic challenge (now challenge) students in the alternative program category for the purposes of bus fees, and provides the following information.

The most recent decision of the Board in this regard was when the Board of Trustees approved the Budget Planning Base in 1990-91. At that time, the board approved the current bus fee classification of gifted and talented students as alternative program riders.

The Board of Trustees sets fees on an annual basis, and by board policy, can determine to which alternative programs the board provides transportation, and through the annual fee structure, what those fees are for that service. The Board has the authority to charge a higher fee to one group of special education students.

In September 1983 to August 2004 gifted students were designated as code 17, gifted and talented. In September, 2004, code 92, gifted and talented academic challenge replaced code 17. Since then, code 92 has been phased out and replaced with code 91 Challenge, Level 1. By board policy, the district is required to provide transportation to mild/moderate students if they are directed to attend a district site. Challenge students are the only Level 1 group of students directed to attend a district site. All other Level 1 students attend their

neighbourhood schools and either do not require transportation or receive it to their designated neighbourhood school (e.g. ESL, Adaptation).

There are currently 217 elementary and 284 junior high coded Challenge students attending district sites and 35 of those elementary students are using yellow bus transportation service under the alternative program transportation fee category. The cost to parents for the transportation is \$420.00 per year. If the Board of Trustees approves the fees in the Special Education category, the cost to parents would be \$220.00 per year. The net loss in revenue to the district for the current school year would be approximately \$7,000.00 calculated as follows:

35 Students X \$420.00 =	\$14,700
Less 35 Students X \$220.00 =	<u>\$ 7,700</u>
Net Loss in Revenue per Annum =	\$ 7,000

The Challenge junior high students utilize Edmonton Transit Service and pay the same fee as all other junior and senior high students, and would continue to do so.

The new fee category may attract more students to use the yellow bus transportation service from outside the current alternative program transportation zones which could result in very long ride times and the necessity to add more buses at a cost of \$35,000 per year per bus. In addition, where school bus service and or Edmonton Transit is deemed to be inadequate to the district site, parent provided transportation may be requested by both elementary and junior high students directed to district Challenge sites at an additional expenditure of \$1,330 per student per year. If 50 families requested parent provided transportation, the additional cost would be \$66,500.

As well, there may be a need to look at ensuring an elementary Challenge site in each transportation zone. Currently Zone 1, 2 and 5 do not have an elementary Challenge site.

JB:pn