

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 14, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools  
SUBJECT: South Edmonton High School Accommodation Plan  
ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Assistant to the Superintendent

### RESOURCE

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## INFORMATION

### Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is to identify strategies that will support teaching and learning in classrooms for students who attend high schools in South Edmonton and better enable them to achieve superb results. As a result of the district's need to balance enrolment amongst high schools in South Edmonton and maintain acceptable class sizes, this study transpired to devise a strategic plan to address student accommodation issues and challenges in the short term until a new high school is built in Riverbend/Terwilligar Heights. This report summarizes the issues, processes, findings and the strategies generated from the recently completed study, *Review of High School Accommodations in South Edmonton*.

### Background Information

The need to maintain acceptable class sizes at the high school level is critical in achieving superb results for all students in the district. With open boundaries and program choice there are currently more students requesting placements at some high schools than the schools can accommodate. For the 2003-2004 school year the overall averaged space utilization rate for South Edmonton high schools (Harry Ainlay, J. Percy Page, McNally, Strathcona and W.P. Wagner) was 101 percent. With continued growth anticipated in the South West sector of Edmonton it is expected that student accommodation demands will continue to grow.

All high schools identified have optimal enrolment limits (a pre-determined maximum number of students designed to ensure excellent teaching and learning conditions for all students). For the 2004-2005 school year Harry Ainlay, Strathcona and W.P. Wagner High Schools had to implement a random selection process. This is a process implemented when the registration demand from outside the designated attendance area exceeds the available number of student learning spaces. The process provides students from outside the designated attendance area of a school fair and equal chance of admission.

The need to address the current high school designation for the Rossdale neighborhood was also a factor prompting this study. Parents in the Rossdale community expressed that the current designation of Garneau School (Kindergarten-Grade 6), Ritchie School (Grade 7-9) and Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts (Grade 10-12) to serve their neighbourhood did not meet the learning needs of their children.

Input and information in this study was gathered through:

- Parental and student input to principals, school councils and Leadership Services;
- Public consultation with community league members in the Rossdale neighborhood;
- Meetings with district junior high and high school principals in South Edmonton;
- Analysis of district data that included enrolment history, trends and projections; and
- Collaboration amongst staff from Curriculum, Curriculum/Programs, Leadership Services and Planning.

### Findings from the Study

Key findings identified from the study that were gathered from parents, students, junior high and high school principals and central services staff are listed below:

#### Boundary Issues

- The ability for a student to remain with peers within the same social group is a high priority in terms of factors influencing the student's high school selection;
- Current attendance boundaries are not keeping up to the changing demographic patterns and development of the city; and
- It would be prudent to continue to reassess the attendance boundary issue, while delaying actual changes to high school attendance boundaries until they can include those needed to accommodate the opening of a new high school in Riverbend/Terwilligar Heights.

#### Communications:

- Improved understanding of the pre-enrolment process, passports, optimal enrolment limits and the random selection process as they pertain to high school registration is needed amongst parents and students entering grade 10 throughout the district; and
- Clarification of the interpretations of policy and regulations that apply to high school registration would be beneficial for principals at the junior high and senior high school levels.

#### Demographics

- Challenges exist in maintaining the viability of programs and schools as populations in newly developing neighborhoods are growing and the numbers of school aged children in aging neighborhoods is declining; and

- Competition for enrolment is growing as parents are finding it increasingly attractive, convenient and seamless to transition to Edmonton Catholic Schools. It was expressed that new schools, transportation and other factors are persuading families to leave Edmonton Public Schools to attend Edmonton Catholic Schools.

#### Student Program Distribution

- Some parents were unclear of the number of students some schools could accommodate in selected programs, and were disappointed when their expectations were not met;
- Concerns were expressed with regard to the high profile given and the manner in which high schools promote International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs. Parents perceive that without enrolling in these programs their child may have limited access to post secondary learning opportunities; and
- It was suggested that more emphasis be placed on the merits of regular high school programs in accessing university and post secondary opportunities.

#### Rossdale Community

- Some of the main concerns and comments expressed by parents in the Rossdale community included:
  - There is a lack of program flow and continuity in the current designation of schools for the Rossdale neighborhood (Garneau School, Ritchie School and Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts);
  - Of the 54 students attending Edmonton Public Schools from the Rossdale neighborhood, 19 are registered in Kindergarten to Grade 6, 17 in Grades 7 to 9 and 18 in Grades 10 to 12. Thirteen junior high students attend McKernan School and none attend Ritchie, the designated junior high school for this neighborhood;
  - Parents are not comfortable with their children having to transfer buses in the downtown area due to safety concerns; and
  - It is perceived that Edmonton Catholic Schools has a noticeable presence in the neighborhood through their advertising and transportation incentives.

#### Addressing Student Accommodation Issues in High Schools in South Edmonton

Student accommodation issues in high schools in South Edmonton will be addressed as follows:

1. For the 2005-2006 school year:
  - During the spring pre-enrolment process, prior to April 30, 2005, Strathcona and Harry Ainlay High Schools will only accept registrations from students who live in their respective designated attendance area and from eligible students who wish to enroll in the single site district centre programs of French Immersion at Harry Ainlay, German Bilingual at Strathcona or Strategies at Strathcona;
  - Students who wish to enroll in the International Baccalaureate program at Harry Ainlay or the Advanced Placement program at Strathcona and who do not live in the school's designated attendance area must apply to the respective school to register in these programs prior to April 30, 2005.

Students will be admitted to these programs where space permits by a random selection process and will have their registration confirmed by May 4, 2005. Students whose registration is not confirmed will also be notified by May 4, 2005 and will have the choice of attending their neighbourhood school or any Edmonton Public School where there is space available in planned programs;

- Optimal enrolment limits for Grade 10 students will be set for Harry Ainlay High School at 650 students and Strathcona High School's total school optimal enrolment will be set at 1385; and
  - A sibling of a student already in attendance at a school will be permitted to enroll in the same school if both siblings will be enrolled at the same time.
2. Boundary changes for high school attendance areas in South Edmonton will be reviewed to accommodate the opening of a new high school in the Riverbend/Terwilligar Heights area. Upon final approval of the construction of the high school in Riverbend/Terwilligar Heights, Curriculum, Curriculum/Programs and Planning will commence work with high school principals in South Edmonton and their communities to define the program offerings at the new school.
  3. Garneau School (Kindergarten-Grade 6), McKernan School (Grade 7-9) and Strathcona High School (Grade 10-12) will be the designated receiving schools for Rosedale, effective September 2005.
  4. The creation of a district information package pertaining to high school registration including information on the pre-enrolment process, student passports and the random selection process will be developed collaboratively between high schools and Communications. This package will be distributed in January 2005 to parents and students currently in Grade 9, who will be registering for high school for the 2005-2006 school year.
  5. Leadership Services and Planning will develop and offer in-servicing to enhance the knowledge and understanding of principals in junior and senior high schools with regard to interpretation of district policies and regulations associated with the registration process.

RB:cp