

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 10, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Programming for Intellectually Gifted Students

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services

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INFORMATION

This report outlines district initiatives that will commence in 2004-2005 to further meet the needs of intellectually gifted students at the elementary and junior high levels.

**Background**

An October 2003 board report provided information about the comprehensive Academic Challenge Review process of gathering current educational research, best practices, staff, parent and student input, and expert advice, and considering trends.

This process has resulted in the creation of new initiatives that focus on and re-energize efforts of staff in meeting the needs of intellectually gifted students across the district. Expertise has been coordinated to develop program guides and documentation, and to ensure staff training, liaison with Alberta Learning, and continuous communication and consultation with district staff.

**Program Initiatives for 2004 – 2005**

The following initiatives will be implemented for elementary and junior high students in 2004 - 2005:

- *The Extensions Program* is introduced for students from kindergarten through grade nine.
- *The Challenge Program* replaces the elementary Academic Challenge Program for students from kindergarten through grade six.

*The Academic Challenge Program* continues unaltered at the junior high level, to allow district review and evaluation of several emerging program options for bright high achieving students.

The new Challenge and Extensions Programs, described in an October 2003 board report, are designed to serve two different groups of intellectually gifted students. Program goals and directions are summarized below:

- *The Challenge Program* is designed to provide bright, high achieving students with enriched, challenging, appropriately paced educational programming. Grouping students with similar educational needs in designated schools allows teachers to differentiate at the class level, enriching the curriculum and emphasizing higher-level thinking, research and inquiry skills.
- *The Extensions Program* serves students of high intellectual ability who require substantially different educational programs and individual accommodations in order to achieve and grow academically, socially and emotionally. This highly differentiated program provides acceleration, extensions beyond curriculum in areas of strength, counselling, coping strategies, and modified expectations depending on each student's abilities and needs.

Community schools that work with high ability and/or high achieving students are also assisted through these initiatives. *The Challenge Program Guide* supports the work of district centres and community schools, suggesting research-based best practices for high ability students in each setting. During 2004-2005, community schools have no-cost access to the guide and to related inservice sessions.

#### **Two-Year Financial Transition Plan**

Support for the new programs is accessed from current Academic Challenge allocations, via a two-year financial transition plan.

- In 2004-2005, allocations are reduced by approximately 10% for enrolled Academic Challenge students (coded before or during 2003-2004). Extensions Program centres access level 5 allocations for qualifying students.
- In 2005-2006 Challenge Program centres access level 1 allocations and are eligible for a budget line item for costs associated with identification.

#### **Support for Implementation and Next Steps**

No-cost supports are provided to district staff and schools as they implement these initiatives. Supports offered to district centres and community schools include program guides, parent brochures, opportunities for teachers to work together, and facilitation of targeted professional development.

#### **Summary**

The steps outlined in this report focus attention on characteristics and needs of a wide range of bright, high achieving and gifted students and expand opportunities for research-based programming for students who are academically and intellectually gifted. At the same time, programming guides and training associated with these initiatives support and enhance the work of schools in ensuring superb results from all students, including those who are highly able.

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