

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 13, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Request for International Spanish Academy Alternative Program

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Karen Bardy, Ann Calverley, Gloria Chalmers, Manfred Malzahn,
Ken Spillett, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

That the establishment of the International Spanish Academy alternative program from kindergarten to grade twelve, beginning in September 2001, be approved.

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Background: In a June 20, 2000 board report (Appendix I), the administration advised that it was exploring the possibility of opening an International Spanish Academy, beginning with kindergarten to grade two in September 2001 and expanding through grade twelve in succeeding years. The exploration involved discussions with Alberta Learning regarding curriculum development and resource identification, with the community regarding support for the concept, and with schools regarding an interest in providing a location for such a program.

Alberta Learning is supporting the development of a provincial kindergarten to grade twelve Spanish Language Arts Program of Studies. Edmonton Public Schools received the contract to develop this curriculum in cooperation with the Calgary Board of Education, a consultant provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Spain and a representative from the University of Calgary. A first draft of this curriculum has been prepared and feedback is being solicited from educators, parents and community members across North America, as well as parents who are considering the program for their children. As well, Alberta Learning is planning to initiate a call for resources to support the program.

Response from Spanish heritage groups and media in the city was positive. They have been helpful in advising the community of district plans. Through the use of these sources as well as mail outs to city preschools, day cares and our schools, 124 families have indicated an interest in such a program.

Several district schools advised of their interest in offering an International Spanish Academy program. Based on criteria such as space availability, geographic location and accessibility

from different areas of the city, Mill Creek Campus, Mill Creek/Ritchie School has been identified as the most suitable location for such a program.

Rationale for Recommendation: The memorandum of understanding between the governments of Alberta and Spain supports the establishment of an International Spanish Academy within an Alberta jurisdiction. The administration in its feasibility study has confirmed that there is support from the general public, the business community and Spanish organizations. As Edmonton Public Schools has been the leader in the development of Spanish curriculum and in offering language programs, it has the expertise and experience to implement such a program. Also, given the preponderance of the Spanish language in the United States, Mexico, Central and South America, the administration believes that this alternative provides a significant benefit to students.

Proposed Program:

Name: International Spanish Academy. There are currently a number of American jurisdictions in the process of establishing International Spanish Academies. The Spanish government assists academies in terms of consultant availability, identification of resources, eligibility for the Spanish “visiting teacher” program, teacher training courses at Spanish universities, student exchanges, and development of educational projects with Spanish schools using internet support.

Curriculum and Program Focus: The International Spanish Academy will be structured similarly to other bilingual programs in the district and the province. The languages of instruction will be English and Spanish with a ratio of 45 per cent Spanish and 55 per cent English in grades one to six, 40 and 60 per cent in grades seven to nine and 25 and 75 per cent in grades ten to twelve. The kindergarten program may exceed 50 per cent of the instructional time in Spanish. The intent is to enable students to achieve enough oral and written competence in both languages to successfully communicate and utilize English and Spanish as languages of learning.

The Spanish language content of the program will be delivered in part through the use of the provincial Spanish Language Arts Program of Studies. This will occupy 25 per cent of the instructional week in kindergarten through grade six, 18 per cent in junior high and 12.5 per cent at high school. Spanish Language Arts will contain the study of linguistic elements specific to the Spanish language as well as general language arts skills that parallel those found in the English Language Arts Program of Studies. It will support the use of the Spanish language in real-life activities appropriate for the context and the group of students, as well as for the communication and exchange of information and ideas between district students and Spanish speakers around the world.

A core academic subject, following the Alberta Program of Studies, will also be delivered in the Spanish language. The plan will see mathematics targeted as the core academic course taught in Spanish. Resource availability as well as a number of pedagogical considerations have guided this decision. Mathematics will occupy 10 per cent of the instructional day in the elementary years and 13 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively in junior and senior high. Through the elementary and junior high grades physical education and/or music and health would comprise an additional 10 per cent of the instructional time in Spanish. The foregoing will meet the requirements of the International Spanish Academies and also the outcome requirements of the Alberta Programs of Study.

The program's cultural component, outlined in the Spanish Language Arts Program of Studies, will be integrated throughout both Spanish Language Arts and the other subject areas and schooling experiences of the students.

The language and culture components will accommodate the National Standards for Spanish Learning and the Spanish content established for each educational level by Spanish legislation. There is an expectation that connections will be made with other areas of study and that the Spanish language will be used both within and outside of the school environment. The cultural component includes intercultural skill development and the exploration and appreciation of diversity and similarity of Spanish speaking cultures around the world.

The general instruction will enable students to be aware of the value of cultural diversity. It will involve students in an interdisciplinary projects approach in which Spanish skills can be utilized in other selected subject areas, and provide opportunities for interactive and meaningful learning through collaboration and integration of new technologies when and where appropriate.

Grades Involved: It is a kindergarten to grade twelve program. In the first year, it is anticipated that kindergarten to grade two will be offered, with an additional grade being added each year until it is offered at grade twelve.

Size and Location: The intent is to begin with one class per grade at Mill Creek Campus, Mill Creek/Ritchie School and to open programs in other locations, if and when student numbers warrant it. A junior high site will not be identified at this time as we anticipate that conditions will change during the four or five years it will take to have a grade seven class.

We would be prepared to offer kindergarten, kindergarten and grade one or kindergarten to grade two depending upon enrolment.

Admission and Oversubscription: Admission to the program will be consistent with board regulations on student accommodation and open to all interested and qualified students. As with all other district bilingual programs, knowledge of the second language is not required for admission at kindergarten or grade one. Principals may admit a student at a higher grade depending upon a student's knowledge of the target language, in this case, Spanish.

If the program is over subscribed for September 2001, available spaces will be filled by random selection. When a student is admitted by random selection, siblings will be admitted as well. Students who live in Edmonton will have priority over those who do not. As noted above, if demand were to exceed available space at Mill Creek Campus, Mill Creek/Ritchie School, the establishment of a second program location would be considered.

Staffing: As it is a language alternative, the district's language proficiency screening process will apply. Also, it is desirable that teachers in the program be in possession of the *Diploma Basico de Espanol como Lengua Extranjera* (D.E.L.E) or be in the process of preparing themselves to obtain this certificate. As well, staff will be encouraged to maintain active contact with members of the Spanish educational and cultural community.

Hiring will be done from among current district staff who apply for the particular positions. New hiring would only occur if there were no suitable candidates currently on staff, and then only from applicants acceptable to the district's personnel department.

Student and Program Evaluation and Review: As with all district programs, students will write district and Alberta Learning achievements tests. Upon completion of the first two levels of the program, that is kindergarten to grade five and grades six to eight, students will receive a diploma certifying their attendance at the Spanish Academy. For the last level, that is grades nine to twelve, an outside examination is required at each grade if the student is to receive the international certificate. The outside examination focuses on the language and culture component of the program. The yearly examination will be carried out with the collaboration of the teaching staff responsible for the language and culture component of the program. The examination will be used to evaluate the ability of the student to use the Spanish language in real-life situations.

There is an expectation that the International Spanish Academy will develop a program evaluation plan and report on a yearly basis on the objectives and measures identified in the plan. The district tests and satisfaction questionnaires, as well as the external examinations, will be useful as indicators of the success of the program.

Funding: The basis on which funds would be allocated to Mill Creek Campus, Mill Creek/Ritchie School would be the same as for other district schools and programs. This alternative program would qualify for a multiple program allocation on the same basis as other schools or programs. It is also intended to provide the school offering the program with an establishment grant to allow for the acquisition of textbooks and basic instructional supplies. The amount of the establishment grant would be \$265 per student enrolled as of September 30, 2001 and for additional students registered as of September 30, 2002. This is the same amount given to new schools for textbooks and supplies.

Transportation: Transportation will be the responsibility of parents. All students will be eligible for a subsidized Edmonton Transit pass. At a cost to parents, yellow bus service will be provided for elementary students. Because bus routes are designed once students' addresses are known, it is not yet possible to be specific about the geographic area to be served. However, it is expected that it would be the area south of the river, and part of the city north of the river.

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APPENDIX I: Spanish Academy

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 20, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Spanish Academy

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Janice Aubry, Ann Calverley, Gloria Chalmers, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

Edmonton Public Schools is currently exploring the possibility of opening a Spanish Academy in September 2001. The program would open as a kindergarten to grade two offering in its first year, and expanding through grade twelve in succeeding years.

The present memorandum of understanding between the governments of Alberta and Spain makes reference to exploring the establishment of such a school within an Alberta jurisdiction. Academies are assisted by the Spanish government in terms of consultant availability, identification of resources and eligibility for the Spanish "visiting teacher" program. Highly qualified teachers from Spain can serve as both instructors as well as teacher mentors for teachers in the school and for those teachers of Spanish elsewhere in the district, adding strength to the International Language program as well.

A location for the program would be related to available space, community interest and long range projections for enrolment.

There are currently six Spanish Academies operating in the United States but none in Canada. Given that Edmonton Public Schools has been the leader in the development of Spanish curriculum, it makes sense for the district to seriously consider this opportunity. It can enhance our leadership role in languages, and help us to better serve other districts both in sharing expertise and through the use of the Academy as a mentoring site for teachers of Spanish from all parts of the province.

The district senses significant interest in a Spanish program of this type from our communities. Strong support exists within the business community as there is an accepted awareness of the need for growing capability in Spanish to meet the needs of the manufacturing and trading sector. Overall community interest will be further examined.

The benefits to students lie not only in developing a good understanding of Spanish language and culture, but upon the completion of the grade twelve year it may be possible for some students to acquire education credentials both from Alberta and Spain. There will also be

opportunities for students to study in Spanish cultures abroad. The Spanish Academy will further strengthen the district's commitment toward creating opportunities for building intercultural knowledge and understanding amongst and for students in our community. Much exploratory work remains to be done in terms of curriculum, identification of strong teachers of Spanish and in work with our communities. The benefits however, of such a collaborative partnership among Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta Learning, Spanish authorities and possibly other school districts, are significant.

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