

DATE: February 14, 2012
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Renting Non-District Space (Response to Trustee Request #165)
ORIGINATOR: Brian Smith, Executive Director
RESOURCE STAFF: Roland Labbe, Ann Parker, Lorne Parker
REFERENCE: January 31, 2012 Board Meeting (Trustee Janz)

ISSUE

The following information was requested: Why do we rent spaces outside of district properties when we have excess space?

BACKGROUND

The District operates a number of education programs within space that is not owned by the District. Some of the space is owned by educational partners, some space is owned by commercial landlords, and some space is owned by the Federal or the Provincial Government. While there is typically unique rationale for each space use, some themes or categories of rationale exist. In most cases, the amount, type, or location of district space available is not suitable to meet program needs. In the case of Outreach programs, the Alberta Education Outreach program handbook stipulates that *“Alberta Education provides funding to help boards support the success of students who have difficulty with regular education programs. A condition of that funding support is that the Outreach programs must operate in stand-alone facilities.”*

CURRENT SITUATION

The District operates two schools which became district programs through education agreements with either the Federal or the Provincial Government. Operation of the education programs within the current non-district buildings were in place prior to assuming responsibility for program delivery. The Alberta School for the Deaf program operated within a provincial building that was purpose-built as a facility for the deaf and hard of hearing community. Major General Griesbach School was a school operated by the Canadian military within a building owned by the Federal Government when the District assumed responsibility to provide educational services. The school is no longer on a military base, and the building housing the school will become a district facility with the opening of the replacement Alberta Schools Alternative Procurement (ASAP) school building in September 2012.

The District operates the Amiskwaciy Academy program within the former City Centre Airport terminal building. This site is controlled by a commercial landlord, who leased the property to the District in 2001. The site was chosen with significant input from the Aboriginal community, who wished to have the program housed in a non-traditional school building, to avoid evoking past negative experiences in traditional educational settings.

The District provides educational programming within seven school buildings owned by partner societies, including Talmud Torah, Edmonton Christian (four), Millwoods Christian and Meadowlark Christian schools. Each of these societies operated private schools within their own facilities prior to partnering with the District. Responsibility to provide and maintain these facilities remains the responsibility of the partner societies. Few if any district sites could absorb an entire partner program. While a few partner societies have inquired about the possibility of accommodation within district space, desire for stand-alone programming at a site would require discontinuation of regular programming. Given the Moratorium on Closures and community sensitivities, these inquiries have not been considered further.

The District operates several Outreach programs within commercial space or within partner space, such as the YMCA. Outreach programs must operate in stand-alone facilities outside of operating district schools in order to qualify for funding support from Alberta Education.

Centre High was established as a site to accommodate a high school for students requiring more than three years to complete high school, or improve student achievement. It was felt that separation of students beyond their third year of high school from regular high school settings would benefit both groups of high school students. The central location in a non-traditional school setting within the downtown business community also reinforced the concept for “*a novel environment where students could concentrate on their studies and proceed to the next phase of their career, be it education or work.*” Separation helped address student capacity limitations at regular high schools.

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Space Utilization Information – Follow-up from September 13, 2012
School Closure Moratorium Committee Presentation

RL:gm

FOLLOW UP FROM SEPTEMBER 13, 2011 – SPACE UTILIZATION - INITIATIVES AND CLARIFICATION:

PROVIDE A SUMMARY OF THE METHODS AND STRATEGIES THE DISTRICT HAS CONSIDERED AND EMPLOYED OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS TO REDUCE SPACE AND INCREASE THE ACU RATE.

Initiatives to Increase the District Area Capacity and Utilization (ACU) rate

There are a number of strategies that the district has drawn upon, either individually or in combination, in order to attempt to increase the District's ACU rate. These strategies are outlined below:

1. *Relocation of Decentralized Administration into Schools*
School districts are permitted to house decentralized administration within portions of operational schools and the space can then be removed from capacity inventory. Examples within this district include the relocation of consultants to Queen Elizabeth School and Metro Continuing Education which is located within Vimy Ridge Academy.
2. *Portable Dispositions*
A standalone portable classroom has the capacity to accommodate 20-25 students. By reducing the District's inventory of portables by 12 units, the District is removing the same amount of capacity as the closure of one small elementary school. Portables are disposed of through either sale or demolition. This fall, the District sold two portable units to not-for profit groups. This capacity will be removed from the district upon confirmation of Ministerial approval.
3. *Disposition of Closed School Buildings*
The District has engaged in the disposition and/or sale of closed school buildings in order to improve the district's utilization rate. Examples of district dispositions would include the sale of Cromdale School to the Capital Health Authority and the sale of Strathearn School to the City of Edmonton.
4. *Leasing to Tenant Groups and Partners*
There are numerous examples of surplus space leased to not-for-profit tenants and partners thereby reducing the capacity in a school; however, Provincial school capital cannot be used to upgrade leased space.
5. *Relocation of Programs from Non-owned Space into District Schools*
Some district programs and sites established within space not owned by the District may be suitable for relocation into portions of schools with excess capacity and viable programs based on enrolment. All leasing situations exist for important and valid reasons; however, opportunities are explored on a case by case basis if improved student environments can be achieved. The most recent example would be the relocation of the Woodside program from an external district leased space in to High Park School which was closed in 2007.
6. *Exploration of Partial Dispositions through Partnerships*
The administration pursues opportunities for sharing, through lease arrangements, existing space with other providers of services to children and families, such as Edmonton School Health Initiative Partnership (ESHIP), Capital Health and Child and Family Services. Other similar arrangements under consideration include the sharing of space in different locations with the

Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord and the Alberta Association of Architects. The partial disposition of a portion of a building as an alternative to a long-term lease arrangement has been explored.

7. *Demolition of Excess Capacity as Part of School Preservation Projects*

Reductions in capacity can also be achieved through preservation projects such as those which occurred at Hazeldean School and Victoria School. In these cases, with the right-sizing of the school, capacity requirement guides the design development process. This approach will continue to be applied in the case of future funded preservation projects wherever it may be appropriate.

8. *Demolition of Portions of Schools*

The poor condition of some surplus space is sometimes best addressed through partial demolition. In the past, the district's three-year capital plans contained requests for the funding of demolition projects. These include portable and pod classroom demolitions and demolitions such as the Belvedere Consulting Services Annex.

In an effort to improve district space utilization, many initiatives consistent with these strategies have been, or are currently being employed on a case by case basis, as opportunities may arise. In general, these strategies can be considered in many circumstances, but they are not feasible or applicable in all situations nor do they, in every case, necessarily lead to significant improvements in space utilization district-wide.

PROVIDE EXPLANATION AND CLARIFICATION OF WHICH TYPE OF LESSEES AND/OR USE OF SPACE OTHER THAN INSTRUCTIONAL SPACE GET CALCULATED IN THE ACU RATE. WHICH FACTORS ARE NOT CONSIDERED?

All uses of instructional space for other than instruction are calculated in the ACU rate. However, the Province does exclude space from capacity (the ACU rate) for the following uses or reasons:

- Career and Technology Studies space (junior and senior high schools only)
- Space used by a school district for decentralized administration
- Space leased to not-for-profit groups and organizations, or other levels of government
- Space is closed through a formal school closure, relocated or demolished

To be recognized for student capacity exemption, partner and tenant groups must have priority of access to their space secured through a formal lease or license, typically on a full-time basis. Such agreements must be documented and provided to the Province on an annual basis. Unless otherwise approved by the Minister, all school space must be recallable and not committed to a third-party beyond a one-year period.