

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 11, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: MicroSociety – Oliver School and Mount Royal School

ORIGINATOR: Jackie Hobal, Mount Royal School
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INFORMATION

Imagine 15 six to 12 year olds working together with a lawyer for a full day to learn, and discuss questions such as: what is law?, why do we have laws?, what are the different kinds of lawyers?, what is restorative justice?

The *MicroSociety* program has been implemented successfully with proven results in 21 states and in over 250 schools in the United States. Mount Royal School in Edmonton would be the second Canadian site to implement this program. Oliver School is Edmonton and Canada's first *MicroSociety* site launching their program in the fall of 1998. We believe the *MicroSociety* program addresses many of our schools' urgent social and academic needs and will ensure that the schools continue to be vibrant and vital contributors in our community. We also believe that the collaboration of our two schools will provide much needed support for program implementation and developing community partnerships. We want our students to enjoy learning and to make connections with the world outside the walls of the school.

MicroSociety is the dream child of George Richmond, a painter, teacher, author and acclaimed educator. His first job in A New York elementary school in 1967 was a rookie teacher's nightmare. In the end, the young idealist from Yale threw up his hands in frustration and proceeded to set his students free: free to generate a private sector, transact business in the open marketplace, organize and operate organizations, produce goods and services, save and invest, change leaders by ballot, and redress excesses and correct inequities that occur in any society.

The first *MicroSociety* school, C. G. McDonough City Magnet, has been successfully operating for eighteen years in Lowell, Massachusetts, U.S.A. Dr. Richmond founded the non-profit *MicroSociety, Inc.* in 1992 to provide support and networking for educators implementing *MicroSociety* (<http://www.MicroSociety.org>).

The *MicroSociety* program is the only student-based entire school reform effort of its kind. This research based education program transforms classrooms by providing a real – world context for academic learning.

The *MicroSociety* program works because it:

- increases academic achievement
- reduces disciplinary problems
- increases attendance and reduces truancy
- provides the tools for accomplishing the goals of schooling
- increases community and parental involvement
- provides new incentives and powerful tools to motivate students
- provides a connection between academic skills and their real world application
- reinvigorates the teaching process
- is flexible and cost effective

The foundation of MicroSociety programming at Oliver and Mount Royal is the ‘Six Pillars of Character’. Students are expected to demonstrate: respect, responsibility, fairness, trustworthiness, caring and citizenship. Program strands include: technology, economy, academy, citizenship and government, humanities and arts, and the heart.

Students collaborate with parents, business and community volunteers and staff to create functioning small communities. Traditional subjects are taught and then applied “on the job” during afternoon program activities. The program seeks to "level the playing field", providing all students opportunities and responsibilities that a society offers. Students spend one hour, four days a week in their jobs where they learn to run businesses, write business plans, apply technology, develop government and social agencies and create cultural and arts organizations and events. Children interview for and obtain jobs and provide service to their society and community. Our simulated economy pays them in micro currency, with a portion taken out for taxes, rent and utilities.

Our community partners are: Highlands Community League, Mayfield Rotary Club, Northeast Rotary Club, Highlands Baptist Church, Oliver Community League, Concordia University College, Grant MacEwan Community College, Junior Achievement of Northern Alberta