

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 13, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #156, NOVEMBER 12, 2008 (TRUSTEE HUFF). PROVIDE INFORMATION RE: THE IMPLICATIONS OF INSTITUTING A PROGRAM FOR OUR DISTRICT SIMILAR TO THAT DESCRIBED BY THE PRESENTER AT THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA SESSION: *SCREENING AND EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING FOR STUDENTS AT RISK FOR READING PROBLEMS*, THAT WOULD ASSIST WITH THE EARLY INTERVENTION AND EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES.** As follow-up to the Learning Disabilities review, several representatives from the Administration attended the session held by Dr. Linda Siegel on November 4 to 5, 2008, regarding the *Firm Foundations* program. A preliminary review of the information indicates that the program could provide teachers with another tool that will enhance the reading and language skills of young students. An initial understanding of the program is provided below:

- **District direction:** The purpose of the program is aligned to district goals.
- **Research base:** The program is founded on sound research regarding early reading development for young children.
- **Focus:** The program has potential to add to the skills of a teacher by focusing on strategies for teaching phonemic awareness such as sound-letter connections (phonemes), breaking words into sounds (phonological awareness), vocabulary building activities, and sound discrimination activities.
- **Cost:** The costs of implementing the program would include purchase of a guide, the provision of workshops for teachers and the costs of releasing teachers to attend the professional development sessions.
- **Pilot project:** The program could be implemented as a pilot project in September 2009 at several school sites with the view of assessing its effectiveness in relation to particularly English Language Learners, Aboriginal students, and students who may be at risk of not completing school.

In order to gain more in-depth information about the implications of instituting this program, two staff members from the Programs unit will be visiting and observing the program in Vancouver in January. After further information is collected, decisions will be made regarding the provision of workshops for staff and implementation of a pilot project.

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #162, NOVEMBER 25, 2008 (TRUSTEE FLEMING). PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE RECENT PROVINCIAL SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENTS IN TERMS OF ITS IMPACT OF THE DISTRICT. WHAT WILL BE THE DISTRICT'S RESPONSE?** At present schools and central services units have only seen preliminary on-line drafts of the proposed new *Off Campus Manual*, which outlines proposed changes to provincial regulations governing off-campus education programming.

Alberta Education will provide a formal presentation of their official draft for response on January 16, 2009, at the Zone 3 Curriculum meeting. That draft will be studied and compared to earlier documentation. Subsequently, in consultation with district high schools, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) staff, and with other districts, a formal district response will be developed.

At present it appears our recommendations would include (pending the Alberta Education presentation), an emphasis on the negative impact of the number or frequency of face to face worksite visits. Linked to this is the concern about potential loss of employers who will express concern over the amount of time required to support a student in terms of the number of worksite meetings.

Rather than this increase in inspections and required visits, recommendations will be considered leading to implementation of a standardized worksite inspection process and a standard safety orientation provided to all off campus students.

The District believes in the value of the off campus programs and will ensure that the best interests of students and schools are represented in the submission to the province, which will be finalized in late February.

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #164, NOVEMBER 25, 2008 (TRUSTEES). PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE TRUSTEE INITIATIVE FOR AN ALTERNATE CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT.** The District has been very active in exploring various forms of certification, in addition to those provided by Alberta Education, that would assist students to have skills and knowledge readily accepted in the workplace. The District participated in a three year pilot with the Conference Board of Canada to develop the *Skills Credential*, which measures employability skills both character related and skill related. In addition, the District was a pilot site for the *Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)*, which is widely used in industry, but has issues with cost.

Since 2006 the District developed an *Employability Skills Achievement Certificate*, which was first piloted and then implemented at L.Y. Cairns School. To date 45 certificates have been awarded to students. This has proven to be helpful in enabling these students to acquire meaningful employment upon graduation, as the certificates are recognized by some businesses.

The Curriculum department is in the process of developing a new electronic portfolio which will capture academic achievements, record meaningful work experiences, and certifications acquired. This tool will enable access to on-line educational planning, facilitating effective transitions, and encourage goal setting. It will provide on-going feedback to students about career options available, based upon training and education to date. It will provide a broader picture of the achievements and strengths of the student than do traditional transcripts for potential employers.

A report on this work will be presented to Trustees in late February.

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