

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 25, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Expansion of the Cogito Program

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE
STAFF: Faye Parker, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

Background

In 1995, the Board of Trustees approved the establishment of the Cogito Alternative Program from kindergarten to grade six at Mount Pleasant School. A year later the board approved extending the program to the end of grade nine, and a junior high component was introduced at Allendale School. Since that time, the program has grown significantly in the existing sites. There has also developed a significant demand from west end parents to have a Cogito program established in that area of the city. This would provide better access to north side and west end parents, and would enable a greater proportion of those interested in the program to be accommodated.

Description of the Cogito Alternative Program:

The word Cogito is Latin for "*I reason.*" Cogito was envisaged as a program built on a classical educational tradition, having a balanced approach between the humanities, sciences, fine and practical arts, while developing a mastery of foundational knowledge and skills in language and mathematics, and based on the *Effective Schools* research. The base curriculum for the program is that prescribed by Alberta Learning. Courses are enriched by expanding the base curriculum in depth, rather than through acceleration. The teaching methodology is primarily teacher-directed large group instruction. Resources selected for use in instruction are compatible with and facilitate the methodologies of *Effective Schools*. The methodology emphasizes the importance of understanding fundamental concepts and also encourages the use of memorization, some drill, exercises and regular, meaningful homework. Extra-curricular activities or holiday celebrations are not permitted to interfere with classroom instruction.

Size and Location:

Currently, the pre-enrolment for the planned west end program is 325 students and preliminary registrations are still increasing. Once actual enrolment is known, Elmwood and Britannia schools will work with the parent committee to determine if there may be a need to limit program enrolment for 2000-2001.

Present pre-registrations show that approximately 65 per cent of the enrolment is from out-of-district, consisting of students in home schooling, charter schools and other school districts.

The parent group has indicated that it is very important to them that Cogito become a program that extends from kindergarten through grade twelve. The program is currently authorized only to the end of grade nine, and board approval would be required to introduce a senior high component. The administration will work with the parent group over the next several weeks to complete a rationale and fully-articulated description of the proposed senior high component so that a recommendation for extension of the program can be brought to board by mid-March.

If such a recommendation were approved, it would be the parents' hope to generate sufficient student registrations to offer grade ten in 2000-2001. Britannia School would be willing to serve as the location for the entire secondary program, if the senior high component becomes a reality.

Admission and Over-subscription:

As with other alternative program locations, admission to the program will be consistent with board regulations on student accommodation, and open to all interested students. In cases where the program is oversubscribed, currently registered students and their siblings will have first priority, with remaining places filled by random selection. Additional sites will be identified in the future if demand for the program exceeds the capacity of the existing locations.

Funding:

The program will be funded on the same basis as other district programs, with the schools receiving a multiple program allocation and an establishment grant. Consistent with past practice, the establishment grant would be \$265 per student for enrolment in the first year, plus \$265 per student for growth in the second year of the program.

The parent group understands that, if there are program costs above those incurred by the district for a "regular" program, these would be the responsibility of the parents. This is consistent with section 16(4) of the *School Act*, which states that a board may charge fees to the parents of students enrolled in an alternative program for the purpose of "defraying all or a portion of any non-instructional costs that (a) may be incurred by the board in offering an alternative program, and (b) are in addition to the costs incurred by the board in providing its regular educational program." There are presently no fees associated with the Cogito program, and it is not anticipated that this will change.

SW/FP:dh