

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 26, 2010

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement by Engaging Students in Second Language Learning

ORIGINATOR: J. Bidulock, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Janice Aubry, Sandy Forster, John Macnab, Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Engaging students in second language learning is one way that the District supports the Board Priorities. Board policy requires all students to study a language other than English beginning in Grade 4 and continuing through Grade 9. In this way, students are enhancing their literacy skills and their ability to act effectively as global citizens. Since 2006, for each school year, a new cohort group of Grade 4 students begins studying a second language. At the current time, all students in Grades 4 through 7 (a total of over 37,000 students) are studying a second language (Appendix I).

Students access language programming in one of three ways:

- Immersion (French) Program – up to 100 per cent of learning takes place in French,
- Bilingual Programs - up to 50 per cent of learning takes place in the target language,
- French Second Language/International Language and Culture courses – at least 150 minutes of learning per week takes place in the target language.

Through local, national and international district partnerships (Appendix II), district educators enhance the literacy and the cultural development of students and staff.

Through International Credentials for Languages Services (ICLS) the District provides opportunities for students to receive international certification for their language proficiency (Appendix III).

The Institute for Innovation in Second Language Education (IISLE) supports second language educators and students by providing a range of supports, at no cost to schools, for second language learning. Services include:

- direct support for teachers of languages other than English (in-servicing, resources including language-specific libraries, Leadership in Languages courses, conferences),
- opportunities for students and teachers to engage with other cultures using their second language (identifying student resources, promoting school twinning, facilitating and/or arranging for student camps, hosting cultural events).

Schools offering Immersion or Bilingual Programs and/or second language courses collaborate with IISLE staff and each other to create and support opportunities for students to enhance their language learning experiences. A recent report (*Investigation on the Longitudinal Effects of Immersion and Bilingual Programs on First Language Development*) commissioned by the Confucius Institute in Edmonton (CIE) and carried out by the District's Research Support Services has linked second language learning to positive results in first language achievement. District students of languages other than English not only score well in assessments of their second language proficiency but they appear to enhance their proficiency in English as well (Appendix IV). As is nationally and internationally acknowledged, district students continue to benefit from some of the finest second language education available.

ES:gj

APPENDIX I: Enrollments by Language

APPENDIX II: District Partners Supporting Second Language Education

APPENDIX III: Language Proficiency Credentialing Opportunities

APPENDIX IV: Abstract: *Investigation on the Longitudinal Effects of Immersion and Bilingual Programs on First Language Development*

ENROLLMENTS* BY LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE PROGRAM OR COURSE	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
American Sign Language (ASL) Bilingual	44
American Sign Language (ASL) Language and Culture	229
Arabic Bilingual	837
Arabic Language and Culture	126
Chinese Bilingual	1753
Chinese Language and Culture	576
Cree Bilingual	18
Cree Language and Culture	467
French Immersion/Late French Immersion	3,106
French Second Language	25,044
German Bilingual	583
German Language and Culture	400
Hebrew Bilingual	98
Japanese Language and Culture	548
Punjabi Language and Culture	120
Spanish Bilingual	210
Spanish Language and Culture	3,548
Ukrainian Bilingual	102
Ukrainian Language and Culture	14
TOTAL	37,823

*as of January 11, 2010

DISTRICT PARTNERS SUPPORTING SECOND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

1. The Confucius Institute in Edmonton (est. 2007) partners with the District in a broad-based agreement with the Office of Chinese Language Council International (HANBAN) of the People's Republic of China. This agreement targets numerous areas for collaboration, including school and public access to the largest Chinese resource library in Canada, as well as funding the re-resourcing of Chinese bilingual schools.
2. L'Acadmie de Rouen, an MOU with this jurisdiction in France was signed in December 2008. This Memorandum facilitates cooperation related to: common challenges in education; promoting the development of French and English language, competence and desirability to become proficient in both languages; supporting professional development of educators; promoting cultural understanding; and supporting international opportunities in business, cultural and professional exchanges.
3. Alliance Française of the Government of France signed an agreement with the District in March 2009. The goal of this collaboration is to encourage, support and strengthen French language teaching and learning in Alberta, and to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students and professional growth opportunities for educators and opportunities to learn and appreciate French culture.
4. Instituto Cervantes of the Government of Spain granted the District a DELE testing centre. This agreement enables the Institute to provide DELE testing and certification to students and the general public on behalf of the Instituto Cervantes.
5. Spain recognizes the District as an Associated Centre of the Instituto Cervantes granted in February 2009. This recognizes Edmonton Public Schools as providers of quality Spanish language services.
6. An official Spanish Resource Centre was granted from the Ministry of Education of Spain in May 2009, in collaboration with IISLE and the University of Alberta. As a result, IISLE now hosts a large collection of Spanish literature, cultural resources and language teaching and learning resources, in print, digital and multimedia formats.
7. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in October 2008 with the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (AfA), and the Goethe Institut. This facilitates cooperation in many areas, including professional development, cultural activities, resource acquisition, etc.
8. A partnership agreement with the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) was signed in September 2008. This partnership includes collaboration with IISLE to co-host the first national conference for international languages in Canada, which was held in May 2009 in Edmonton.
9. Service agreements with the Comunidad de Madrid continue for the delivery of four-week summer training programs for Spanish-English bilingual program teachers from Madrid.
10. A partnership agreement between Edmonton Public Schools and Lviv Oblast in Ukraine has been signed and is being implemented.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY CREDENTIALING OPPORTUNITIES

The District believes that its students and other stakeholders should have the same opportunities, as do thousands of others in hundreds of countries around the world, to obtain internationally recognized certification for their language proficiency. Through the work of *International Credentials for Languages Services (ICLS)* students have access to certification in six languages. The table below indicates the number of students who have received international certification in the last three school years.

International language proficiency certification

- enables students to be assessed on the same international language standards as candidates in over 180 countries,
- encourages and provides standards to help students to set goals for second language learning,
- certifies second language achievements in reading, writing and oral interactions in real world situations,
- opens doors for students to continue their studies at foreign universities and in a wider variety of Canadian universities,
- provides additional support documentation for students to work in North America, Europe, Japan and China.

LANGUAGE	EXAM	SOURCE	APPLICABLE GRADES	# OF STUDENTS CERTIFIED IN LAST 3 YRS.
Chinese	Youth Chinese Test (YCT)	Hanban, China	3 – 9	approx. 2,500
Chinese	Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK)	Hanban, China	7 – 12	
French	Diplôme d'études en langue française (DELF)	Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP), France	5 – 12	1149
German	Deutsches Sprachdiplom	Central Agency for Schools Abroad, Germany	7 – 12	approx. 350
Japanese	Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT)	Japan Foundation, Japan	11 – 12	approx. 60
Spanish	Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE)	Instituto Cervantes, Spain	6 – 12	118
Ukrainian	Ukrainian Language Exam for Foreign Students at the Ivan Franko National University of LVIV	Ivan Franko University, Western Ukraine	11 – 12	18

ABSTRACT: *Investigation on the Longitudinal Effects of Immersion and Bilingual Programs on First Language Development*

Research Support Services, contracted by the Confucius Institute in Edmonton, has analyzed district data to explore the relationship between extensive instruction in a language other than English and students' achievement in English Language Arts. Are immersion and bilingual students learning English as well as students whose schooling is exclusively in English? Do Bilingual and Immersion Programs affect the English acquisitions of all students equally, or do some gain more than others?

In Edmonton Public Schools, students have considerable choice in second language learning programs. It is a requirement that all students in the district, which has a population of approximately 80,000 students, are required to engage in the study of a second language. The primary language of instruction throughout the district is English, but students can study in Immersion or Bilingual Programs, or they can study a second language as an elective in school. Immersion Programs have become increasingly popular within Edmonton Public Schools and throughout Canada. An Immersion Program provides up to 100 per cent of instruction in the school day in French starting in Kindergarten and gradually reducing to at least 45 per cent of the school day by high school. In Edmonton Public Schools, Bilingual Programs may provide up to but not exceed 50 per cent of the school day instruction in a target language other than English.

A recurring question among parents, educators, researchers and policy makers is whether second language learning positively or negatively affects cognitive development on first language literacy skills. One concern is that the study of a second language at a high level of intensity could have deleterious effects on the students' command of their first language. This is counter-indicated by theory and by a large number of small-scale studies in a number of linguistic environments. In a 2006 report prepared for Alberta Education, ("A Review of the Literature on Second Language Learning, 2nd Edition) Dr. John Archibald from the University of Calgary provided reasons to be confident that "Negative effects of the second language on the first language (such as accented first-language speech or loss of access to first-language knowledge) will not occur under Alberta school authority language initiatives." We tested this assertion.

RESULTS

Practical results on Provincial Achievement Tests in English language arts demonstrate that Edmonton Public Schools' Bilingual and Immersion Programs promote additive bilingualism for students—the second language adds to the student's English, and does not subtract from it. Even though these students do not receive full instruction in English language arts, they show a rate of improvement that is statistically significantly greater than that of their expected trajectories. While most student scores are stable or improving, the most significant gains are for those students whose English scores are relatively low in Grade 3. The most surprising result of this study is that rather than being programs for the elite, Bilingual and Immersion Programs appear to be agents of equalization of achievement and, consequently, of opportunity. Students with the greatest need in Grade 3 make the greatest gains by Grade 9.

Based on the results of this study, parents considering placing their children in Immersion or Bilingual Programs should not be greatly concerned about their child's continuing growth in their culture's majority language. Below average and average students in the majority language show greater gains in this language than would be expected with no participation in the Bilingual or Immersion Program; students above average in the early years demonstrate stability or slight decline over time. In spite of this decline, the significantly above average students in the majority language remain significantly above average in later testing. Finally, it is worth noting that parents do not place their children in Bilingual or Immersion Programs with the sole purpose of improving the children's mastery of the majority language; they put them in to gain some level of mastery in a target minority language. The evidence for overall benefit is very convincing.