

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 19, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees  
FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools  
SUBJECT: School Year Calendar  
ORIGINATOR: G. Reynolds, Department Head  
RESOURCE  
STAFF: Maryann Hammermeister, Simon van der Valk

RECOMMENDATION

1. That one of the two required school operational days at the end of the 2001-02 school year be waived, in order to provide one extra instructional day on June 27, 2002.
2. That revisions to the school calendars for 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 be deferred until further consultation with affected stakeholders.
3. That approval of the 2005-06 school calendar as per Board Regulation HCA.BR - School Year Calendar be delayed until the preceding calendar years are revised.

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The purpose of the report is twofold: a) to make trustees aware of the non-compliance of the district's instructional hours with Alberta Learning regulations; b) and to seek approval for the course of action being recommended.

At the February 11, 1992 board meeting regulations respecting the school year calendar were approved (Appendix I). These regulations were designed to meet the Alberta Learning requirement for the board to provide elementary and junior high students 950 hours of instruction and high school students with 1,000 hours of instruction for the school year.

Due to the cyclical nature of the annual calendar and the constraints imposed by both the district and Alberta Learning regulations, together with the high financial impact of increasing the length of the school week, it is problematic to provide the required 950 instructional hours at elementary and junior high in some years (Appendix II). For next year, the district calendar is currently five instructional hours short of the 950 requirement.

Justification for this non-compliance with the Alberta Learning regulations has been the stipulation in board regulations that hours of instructional time meet Alberta Learning regulations when averaged over the five-year calendar period. However, even this provision has not been met for the 5-year period 1997-98 to 2001-2002. Moreover, the situation for the next three years shows a five-year average that continues to fall.

The approval in November 2000 of the administrative regulation (Appendix III) that seeks to recognize the duties of teachers for the preparation of progress reports and the conducting of parent/teacher interviews by the exchange of one operational day at the end of the school year has further complicated the situation. In order to meet the district's legal requirements for instructional time it will be necessary to use the normal two operational days at the end of the school year (e.g. school calendars 2001-02 and 2002-03).

Recently, following an Alberta Learning review of instructional hours submitted by school jurisdictions in the province, the districts offering of 940 hours of instruction for elementary and junior high was questioned. Despite assurance by district staff that the annual instructional hours were being averaged to required 950 hours over a five-year calendar period, Alberta Learning has indicated that there is no such provision in Alberta Learning regulations (Appendix IV). The department has requested the district to make adjustments for the next three consecutive school years, 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 to ensure that the schools annually offer the required 950 instructional hours (Appendix V). In order to meet this requirement it will be necessary to provide 5 additional instructional hours for each of the school years, 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 and to reduce the number of instructional hours by 10 hours in 2004-05. This reduction in 2004-05 is possible due to the fact that without the need to average instructional hours over a five-year period it is no longer necessary to exceed the 950 hours requirement in certain years to maintain the average.

## **Options Available**

### **Action One**

Increase the length of the instructional day by two minutes per day (or ten minutes per week to 1510 minutes) to achieve the required 950 hours at elementary and junior high. Each ten-minute increment in the length of the instructional week would add 5 hours of instruction to the school year.

### **Result**

- The instructional day for elementary and junior high school for the three school years, 2001-02 to 2003-04 would be extended to 302 minutes.
- Compliance with provincial regulations with no need to change existing school calendars for those years.

### **Other Considerations**

- Maximum cost implication of required additional teaching as a result of 1,400 minutes per week limitations on teachers' instructional time (approximately \$1.5 million per annum).
- Staffing and scheduling difficulties.

## **Action Two**

Maintain the current length of the instructional day. Achieve the required hours by extending the school year by one instructional day (5 hours of instruction) using one or a combination of some or all of the following options:

- a) Extend the school year into July or start earlier in August
- b) Reduce the number of school professional development days
- c) Reduce the number of operational days at the end of the school year
- d) Reduce the number of board declared holidays (e.g. Remembrance Day, Easter Monday)
- e) Realign spring break with the Easter long weekend

Note: All of the above options require waiving or amending current board regulations.

## **Results**

- Low community acceptance of school continuing to operate after Canada Day holiday in July or starting in mid August
- Reduced professional development opportunities for school staff
- Shorter organizational time for school opening and closing
- Improved consistency of Easter and spring break with neighboring school districts
- Negative parent reaction to realignment of spring break with Easter weekend as school calendars extending to 2004-05 have already been approved by board and publicly communicated
- Compliance with provincial regulations, but existing school calendars would need to be approved for modification.

## **Other Considerations**

All of the above options in Action Two require waiving or revising board regulations

## **Conclusions and Possible Action**

In general it is more cost effective to maintain the current length of the instructional day to achieve the required hours by extending the school year and using the options outlined in Action Two. Due to varying circumstances for each of the school calendars for the next three years it is necessary to treat them separately. However there is an inter-relationship as the calendars were originally created with the five-year averaging clause in mind.

### 1. School Calendar 2001-02

The extra instructional day can be added by reducing the number of operational days at the end of the school year from two to one. Then June 27, 2002 would become another instructional day for students and teachers. This option is cost effective, easy to implement and the least disruptive to the students, parents, and teachers. Moreover, there are existing precedents for this recommended course of action.

2. School Calendar 2002-03

The extra instructional day needed in 2002-03 presents a problem as the two operational days (non-teaching days) usually present at the end of the school year have already been waived and used as instructional days. The viable options available are:

- a) reduce the number of professional development days to one
- b) withdraw a Board declared holiday
- c) align spring break with Easter long weekend

The action of aligning spring break with the Easter weekend is an option that has merit not only for 2002-03 but as a permanent feature of the Board's regulations for the school calendar. Most other surrounding school jurisdictions offer the week preceding Easter as spring break and the district has had representation over the years from these districts to consider this alignment for various reasons. Moreover, the permanent alignment of spring break and Easter weekend in the form of a board regulation would effectively create one extra instructional day as Good Friday or Easter Monday would always fall within the spring break holiday.

The reduction of the number of professional development from two to one while contractually possible (VI, clause 14.5.8 Teachers' Collective Agreement) would breach the spirit of the collective agreement with the teachers and undermine the professional development efforts of school principals to improve student achievement. Based on the above reasoning the alignment of spring break and the Easter long weekend could begin in the 2002-03 school year and thereafter be a clause in Board Regulation HCA.BR – School Year Calendar

3. School Calendar 2003-04

If the change in Board regulation to begin aligning spring break and Easter weekend were to be approved then the need for an extra instructional day for 2003-04 is automatically resolved as either Good Friday or Easter Monday will now be included in the spring break holiday.

4. School Calendar 2004-05

The currently approved school calendar for 2004-05 is a very interesting situation with 192 instructional days (194 days less two professional development days). This number of instructional days provides 960 hours of instruction. This school calendar was created using the existing Board regulations and is 10 hours (two instructional days) over the minimum requirement, due to the need to meet the 950 hour-five year average. In this particular school year the normally occurring spring break at the end of March aligns naturally with the Easter long weekend (March 25-28). This particular year also features the return to class for students on August 30, a full week before Labour Day.

If the changes to the school calendars for 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 were to be approved, then the two extra instructional days currently present in the approved 2004-05 school calendar can be eliminated. If this revision of the school calendar were implemented then the final day of instruction for students and teachers in June 2005 would change from June 28 to June 24 and the two operational days at the end of the

school year would change from June 29 & 30 to June 27 & 28. Conversely, instruction could start September 1<sup>st</sup>, with the operational days moving to August 30 and 31.

The reduction of two instructional days in the school calendar would be a significant concession to teachers who could see their spring break and Easter long weekend aligned in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

5. School Calendar 2005-06

The school calendar for this year has not been created pending consultation with affected stakeholders as described in recommendation two. Approval to delay the introduction of the 2005-06 calendar is needed as Board regulations require that the school calendars be issued five years in advance. It is proposed that consultation with affected stakeholders (ATA local, principals, and parent representatives) take place with regard to the school calendars for the years 2002-03 to 2004-05 and that the input derived from this process be used to create the 2005-06 calendar.

**Summary**

The 2001-02 school calendar is of immediate concern as it is already publicly distributed and hence any changes must have minimal disruption to staff, students and parents. It is the administration's recommendation that one of the two required operational days at the 2001-02 school year be waived, in-order to provide one extra instructional day (5 hours) on June 27, 2002.

The need to change the school calendars for 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 can be delayed pending further extensive consultation with the schools, parents, and staff groups. The administration will return to Board early in the new school year with further recommendations.

SvV:mh

- Appendix I - Current Board Regulation HCA.BR – School Year Calendar
- Appendix II - Summary of Operational and Instructional Days
- Appendix III - Board Regulation GCBD.AR – Time in Recognition of Duties Related to Reporting Student Achievement
- Appendix IV - Letter from Maria David-Evan, Deputy Minister, Alberta Learning
- Appendix V - School Year Calendars, 2001-02 to 2004-05
- Appendix VI - Collective Agreement Clause 14.5.8 Professional Development

APPENDIX II

SCHOOL YEAR CALENDARS 1993-94 TO 2005-2006				
YEAR	TOTAL DAYS		INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS LESS P.D.*	INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS PER YEAR
	OPERATIONAL	INSTRUCTIONAL		
1993-94	200	194	192	960
1994-95	200	194	192	960
1995-96	196	190	188	940
1996-97	196	192	190	950
1997-98	197	192	190	950
1998-99	198	192	190	950
1999- 2000	200	194	192	960
2000-01	196	190	188	940
2001-02	197	191	189	945
2002-03	195	191	189	945
2003-04	197	191	189	945
2004-05	200	194	192	960

\* Total instructional days remaining after deduction of a maximum of two days for in-school professional development

Five year average for the period 1993-94 to 1997-98 is 950 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1994-95 to 1998-99 is 950 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1995-96 to 1999-2000 is 950 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1996-97 to 2000-2001 is 950 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1997-98 to 2001-2002 is 949 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1998-99 to 2002-2003 is 948 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 1999-00 to 2003-2004 is 947 hours of instructional time.  
 Five year average for the period 2000-01 to 2004-2005 is 947 hours of instructional time.