

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 15, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Character/Citizenship Education

ORIGINATOR: B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support Services

RESOURCE

STAFF: Sharon Busby, Gloria Chalmers, Sandy Forster, Dennis Koch, Laurie Sorensen, Sid Shugarman, Bonnie Steiner, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

As a result of a trustee initiative, a report was presented to Board in June 2002 outlining a district framework to facilitate the development of desirable attributes of character and citizenship in students.

The key considerations guiding the development of the framework were:

- The framework does not constitute a new course or new or additional set of outcomes. It is rather a strategy which can help the school establish an environment or culture within which elements of character and citizenship are lived in all aspects of school life. In this environment the outcomes of the Program of Study can be more effectively achieved.
- The framework is flexible in nature to allow schools to meet unique needs. Schools can build on their strengths and create an approach based on the shared district vision, as defined by the framework. Thus most existing character education programs in use in the district can be accommodated.
- The framework identifies a common district language of character/citizenship, based on a shared set of common virtues.
- The framework identifies the virtues and/or principles inherent within public education, reinforcing the fact that public education is values based.

The framework was piloted in 2002-03 in twelve district schools, spanning all grade levels. Input received from the pilot was very positive. Implementation was broader in 2003-04 including formal implementation in forty-four district schools. All of these schools were thoroughly inserviced in the framework. It should be noted that many other schools are using the framework, but not all have chosen to attend inservicing.

Given that a sizable number of schools had been implementing the framework over a one or two year period, it was decided to collect data from these schools on the effectiveness of the framework (Appendix I). The survey was based on a number of indicators, some of which are identified in the framework (Appendix II).

The survey was designed to measure whether or not, and to what degree, the implemented framework has impacted behaviour and attitude of students. The survey of the 44 schools from which at least one staff member has been inserviced in the district Character/Citizenship Education framework has indicated that these schools are using the district framework to frame their choices of method of delivery and resources used to support Character/Citizenship Education at their site. The focus of these schools has been to create a school-wide culture of character with an emphasis on raising the awareness to a level beyond the individual classroom, to address the character and citizenship education needs identified by staff, students and parents at the individual school site.

- 25% of the schools responded that they have noted a decrease in the number of students late for class.
- 54 % of these schools have noted a decrease in the number of referrals to administration for discipline matters.
- 86% of the schools have noticed an increase in the use of the language of good character by students, staff and parents.
- 54% have noted positive changes in the outcomes of other related school goals such as a decrease in litter and decrease in the use of negative language.
- 71% of schools have noticed an increase in the number of students voluntarily performing school service.
- There has been a 43% increase in the perception of school safety and respect for school and student-teacher interactions as shown in year-end evaluations.
- There has been an 88% increase in school postings, letters and or class codes of conduct that contain the “language of good character”.

The results of the survey demonstrate that inserviced schools had significant improvements in school climate.

Results of this survey have shown the value of the framework and the benefits that accrue to a school from a systematic implementation. Consequently the following support will continue to be available to district schools.

- Indicators will be developed and added to Teaching and Learning Expectations to maintain the emphasis on character and citizenship education.
- In-servicing will continue on an ongoing basis.
- Amendments will be made to the indicators of successful implementation (Appendix II) to reflect input received from schools.

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Appendix I: Character/Citizenship Survey

Appendix II: Indicators of Successful Implementation

