

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 12, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Key Communicators' Program

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Elaine Decker, Victor Tanti and members of the Key Communicators' Advisory Committee

INFORMATION

Overview

The Key Communicators' Program was implemented in 1982 as a means to bring school parent council representatives together with central services staff to share district information and gain input from parents on specific issues such as district priorities. Today, the Key Communicators' Program has evolved into a collaborative model, seeing key stakeholders, through their various roles, focused on the common goal of student achievement and success.

The Key Communicators' Program is designed to provide district level support, liaison and involvement opportunities for the district's 206 schools councils, in recognition of the key partnership role that parents and school councils play in the education of all children. Key Communicators are parents who are chosen to represent their school council and serve as a link between their school council and the district. In following the school council model, parents in the Key Communicators' Program maintain an advisory, supportive role.

Mission and Goals of the Program

The mission of the Key Communicators' Program *is to provide a forum for school councils, parents, communities and Edmonton Public Schools to share information, have meaningful involvement and effectively communicate on issues and decisions that affect education.*

The goals of the program are:

- To provide opportunities for school councils and parents to become knowledgeable about the organization, goals, and priorities of Edmonton Public Schools.
- To promote the value and benefits of public education and to take action to support involvement in public education.
- To establish and maintain effective communication among Key Communicators and their schools, school councils and community.
- To provide opportunities for Key Communicators and trustees to share information, seek input, and receive advice on education issues.

- To provide information on current educational topics.
- To provide opportunity for input on district programs and future initiatives.
- To contribute to improving student achievement in Edmonton Public Schools.
- To promote a learning culture that enables students to achieve to their full potential.
- To promote the meaningful involvement of school councils, parents, and community in education.
- To establish and maintain effective communication with key education stakeholders.

Key Communicators' Advisory Committee

The Key Communicators' Advisory Committee is a working group that was established to set program direction for the Key Communicators' Program. This committee's membership includes: three trustees from the Community Relations Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees, two principal representatives from Superintendent's Council, a majority of parent volunteers and a consultant from the Communications Department.

The Key Communicators' Advisory Committee also provides leadership through offering workshops, peer mentoring and support to school councils. In modeling effective partnerships, members of the Key Communicators' Advisory Committee participate with district staff in providing group presentations to new teachers and future leadership staff on how to work effectively with parents and community.

Key Communicators' Meetings

Large group meetings throughout the school year provide opportunities to share information, provide feedback, and facilitate networking with other Key Communicators, school council chairs, principals and trustees. Topics for meetings are carefully chosen to align with the district's priorities and to be reflective of current issues impacting education.

A typical Key Communicators' meeting includes a general information session followed by ward breakouts with trustees. Principals and staff are invited to attend meetings with Key Communicators. Information summaries and updates from the sessions are provided to assist Key Communicators in sharing pertinent information with their school councils.

Attendance at Key Communicators' meetings varies from over 300 at the annual school council training session for all school councils to approximately 150 for regular Key Communicators' meetings. Approximately 55 per cent of schools are represented.

The effectiveness of the Key Communicators' Program has been measured through attendance at Key Communicators' meetings, evaluation surveys from each meeting, and written and verbal comments. Information gathered is used to guide ongoing programming for the Key Communicators' Program. Feedback has been positive and comments would indicate that the program continues to be effective in meeting the needs and expectations of attendees.

The *Keynotes* newsletter is published bi-monthly as an additional communications tool for sharing information and best practices. The circulation base for this newsletter, originally designed specifically for Key Communicators, continues to expand as external stakeholders become more involved in public education.

Summary

As we consider future directions for the Key Communicators' Program, it will be important to ensure that the program continues to support parents as partners in learning. The *Blueprints for Supporting Teaching and Learning* initiative supports the priorities of the district and also provides an excellent collaborative framework for addressing student achievement at the school and district level.

The Key Communicators' Program is supporting the *Blueprints* focus by providing ongoing information at meetings and follow-up in publications. As the district goes further into the *Blueprints* initiative, it is anticipated that future Key Communicators' meetings will continue to provide ongoing learning opportunities for parents directly related to supporting student success.

Key Communicators have the opportunity to be involved as members of focus groups, district committees, advocacy groups and with the media. One of the many benefits of the Key Communicators' Program is the increased knowledge base for parents, which allows them to expand their role within the district and beyond. The Key Communicators' Program continues to provide an effective forum for bringing key stakeholders together for dialogue about issues related to public education. A strong public education system requires that all stakeholders continue to work collaboratively.

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