

# EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 8, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Conduct and Outcomes of Balwin, North Edmonton and Princeton Schools' Cluster Study

ORIGINATOR: C. McCabe, Assistant to the Superintendent

## RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Randy Billey, Dean Caouette, Meredith Colgan, Michael Ediger, Leanne Fedor, Andrea Furness, Darlene Jones, Tony Kernaghan, Kerry-Ann Kope, Roland Labbe, Randy Leal, Shirly McNeill, Deanne Patsula, Cindy Skolski

## INFORMATION

### **Background**

On December 14, 2004, the board approved a recommendation that groups of schools in areas of the city with low enrolment be examined for the purpose of addressing improved educational opportunities for students. The schools in this cluster study are: Balwin, North Edmonton and Princeton Schools'.

### **Educational Benefits for Students**

By working together with school communities, increased educational opportunities for all students is an expected outcome of the study. Small schools can be of benefit to students because of the family-like environment created. This environment can be created in a larger school. When schools become very small, significant disadvantages arise.

The following are educational benefits for students that will be realized if recommendations in the subsequent board report are approved.

- In larger schools with more than one class per grade, students can be placed with the most appropriate teacher to match each student's learning needs. There is typically only one teacher per grade in small schools, thus allowing little opportunity for schools to match teaching style to learning style of students. Very small schools, or programs with low enrolment, provide little flexibility for grade groupings, often necessitating double or triple-combined grades.
- The financial supports for inclusion of students with special needs are far greater in a larger school than they are in very small schools. As well, specialized teaching for students with special needs may be more difficult to provide in a very small school.
- Students attending schools with increased enrolment and more resources are able to experience diverse programming options that very small schools are unable to offer. As

enrolment declines, the demands on staff to teach outside their area of expertise increase. The wider availability of specialist teachers, for example, for fine and performing arts, physical education, second languages and special education is less likely in a very small school. School librarians and computer specialists, as well as the available resources for libraries and computer rooms are far greater in a larger school.

- At the junior high level, the range of teacher specialization is much more limited in a small school. For example, teachers teaching beyond their specialty areas of expertise. The range of junior high option courses is limited as are opportunities for the organization of junior high clubs, teams and activities.
- Very small schools have limited funds to purchase resource materials for new curriculums, library book upgrades, physical education equipment, mathematics and science manipulative materials and technology upgrades.
- Studies have shown that student learning is enhanced in school facilities that are up to date and provide optimal classroom environments for student learning<sup>1</sup>. In larger schools, students have better access to specialized equipment, materials, and facilities for option courses, such as: Music, Instrumental Band, Food and Fashion Studies, Design and Technology and Computer Studies.

**Examples of Elementary Programming Available in Schools with Higher Enrolments (i.e. more than 350 regular program students)**

<b>Curricular</b>	<b>Co-curricular and Extra-Curricular</b>	<b>Special Education</b>	<b>Student Services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Language (FSL)</li> <li>• Second Languages (e.g. Mandarin, Ukrainian, German)</li> <li>• Computer Assisted Instruction</li> <li>• Fine Arts (Music, Art and Drama)</li> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Academic Challenge</li> <li>• Balanced Literacy</li> <li>• English as a Second Language (ESL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Competitions and Science Fairs</li> <li>• Field Trips</li> <li>• Computer, Table Tennis Clubs</li> <li>• Heritage Fair</li> <li>• Choir, Hand Bells</li> <li>• Intramurals</li> <li>• Athletics (Track &amp; Field, Soccer, Journal Games, Cross Country Running)</li> <li>• Theatre Sports</li> <li>• Family Dances</li> <li>• Student Council</li> <li>• Newspaper</li> <li>• Safety Patrols</li> <li>• Student Announcers</li> <li>• Conflict Management Teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour Assistance</li> <li>• Resource Room</li> <li>• Reading Recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling Services</li> <li>• Daily Noon Hour Tutorials/Special Help</li> <li>• Lunch Program</li> <li>• Peer Support Programs</li> <li>• Teacher Librarian</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Dr. Morgan, Where Children Learn: Facility Conditions and Student Test Performance in Milwaukee Public Schools, *CEFPI Issuetrak*, December 2000.

**Examples of Junior High Programming Available in Schools with Higher Enrolments (i.e. 400 – 600 regular program students)**

Curricular	Co-curricular and Extra-Curricular	Special Education	Student Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• French as a Second Language</li> <li>• Second Languages (e.g. Mandarin, Ukrainian, German, Spanish)</li> <li>• Computer Assisted Instruction</li> <li>• Career and Technology Studies (Construction and Technology, Foods and Fashion Studies, Environmental and Outdoor Education, Information Processing, Visual Communications, Leadership)</li> <li>• Fine Arts (Band, Art and Drama)</li> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Academic Challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math Competitions and Science Fairs</li> <li>• Field Trips</li> <li>• Cultural, Speech, Computer, Table Tennis, Travel, Cycling and Ski Clubs</li> <li>• Heritage Fair</li> <li>• Jazz and Concert Bands</li> <li>• Band Camps</li> <li>• Cheerleading</li> <li>• Intramurals</li> <li>• Athletics (Track &amp; Field, Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Slow Pitch, Journal Games, Cross Country Running, Downhill Skiing, Snow Boarding, Rock Climbing, Archery, Bike Trips)</li> <li>• Theatre Sports</li> <li>• School Dances</li> <li>• School Council</li> <li>• Yearbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour Assistance</li> <li>• Resource Room</li> <li>• Reading Recovery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling Services</li> <li>• Daily Noon Hour Teacher Tutorials/Special Help</li> <li>• Snack Shack</li> <li>• School Resource Officer</li> <li>• Peer Support Programs</li> <li>• Electronic Homework Hotline</li> </ul>

**Study Results**

With the goal of improving programming opportunities and learning environments for students, it was anticipated that the study would result in recommendations to the board for the consideration of one or more of the following:

- the relocation or consolidation of programs;
- the upgrading and preservation of existing space;
- the closure of schools;
- the demolition or decommissioning of space; and
- an alternative arising from the community consultation process.

Appendix I describes the completed consultation process and timeline for the studies. A consolidated record of parent, staff and community input can be found on the district website at <http://planning.epsb.ca> .

## **Preliminary and Refined Options**

In the cluster, a number of preliminary options were presented for discussion purposes at the special combined school council meetings, the individual school council meetings, and combined staff meetings. Capacity, enrolment, and utilization rates were presented. (Appendix II). Participants identified issues for consideration regarding each option, and provided advice relative to the issue. Participants also identified additional options.

### **Summary of Feedback Regarding Preliminary Options**

- Parents voiced a concern that special supports should be available for students to ease the transition of changing to a new school location. There was also support for retention of existing special needs programs, the full day kindergarten (North Edmonton) and how a potential K-9 school would be organized in terms of mixing older and younger children.
- Parents and staff supported the use and retention of the best buildings in the cluster. It was noted that North Edmonton School was in the poorest condition, having achieved the highest Provincial Audit Score of 910. The cost-effectiveness of facility modifications was an important consideration. Participants also noted the positive attributes of Balwin School's central location, two gymnasiums, existing facility modifications to accommodate interactions students, and large capacity building.
- Parents and staff supported the existing range of special needs and alternative programs in the cluster, and were resistant to displacing any of them. Consideration of future expansion and relocation of the Ukrainian International Bilingual program was raised. It was noted that larger student enrolments could support more programming options.
- There was a strong desire to maintain the existing sense of community in the Balwin area and at the individual school level. There was strong perception that the retention of a junior high program in the neighborhood would preserve a sense of community.
- There was a sentiment that a long-term solution was needed to ensure the viability of the schools, such that further study would not be required in the near future. A K-9 option or a K-4 and 5-9 option may support the expansion of the Balwin junior high program.
- There was consensus for keeping junior high grades in the cluster: Parents proposed a new K-4 and 5-9 option in Princeton and Balwin Schools which was advanced as one of the refined options.
- Some parents and community members expressed concerns that all options indicated a closure of one or more schools, and that they could not support any option that contemplates closing any school.

### **Summary of Feedback Regarding Refined Options**

Refined options were presented at the parent and community consultation meetings in February (Appendix III). These options were refined based on feedback received at the previous sets of consultation meetings. At this time, participants evaluated the advantages

and disadvantages of each refined option, and indicated which options they might be able to support.

**Option A – Princeton K-4, Balwin 5-9 with Modernization, Close North Edmonton School**

**Advantages:**

Parents, staff and community members identified the following advantages of this option:

- Retention of junior high programming and likelihood of growth of the grades 7-9 program as a result of more students staying in the cluster
- Higher enrolments at Balwin School could lead to more program choices
- Reduced capital expenditures due to the retention and use of the buildings that are in the best condition and age appropriate for intended programs
- Available capacity and specialized or ancillary spaces at Balwin for grades 5-9 programming
- Junior High, Special Needs and Alternative programs maintained

**Disadvantages:**

The primary disadvantages of this option were:

- Long distance for K-4 to travel from North Edmonton area to Princeton School
- Students may move to Catholic Schools
- No playground at Balwin
- No leadership/mentorship opportunities for the K-4 students
- Potential for North Edmonton students to change schools 4 times before grade 12

**Option B – Balwin K-9 with Modernization, Move N. Edmonton into Balwin, Close North Edmonton School**

**Advantages:**

Parents, staff and community members identified the following advantages of the K-9 option:

- There is choice for parents and students who may prefer either K-6 or a K-9 model
- Junior high programs are maintained in the community
- Elementary students will be more likely to stay at Balwin for junior high program
- A strong sense of community could develop in a K-9 school that grows from community support presently at North Edmonton School
- Minimizes change for students, and there is much less disruption overall options
- Convenient for families having all students in one school and easy transition to junior high
- Opportunity for older students to provide mentoring for younger students
- Larger student numbers should increase program options at Balwin School
- Easiest transition for students and staff of North Edmonton School to stay together
- Balwin School is in a central location
- Potential use of North Edmonton School as a future community centre

**Disadvantages:**

The primary disadvantages of refined option B were:

- No playground at Balwin School
- Safety concerns along 132 Avenue
- Does not address declining enrolment at Princeton School
- Combining K-9 may not enhance programming options
- Expense to renovate Balwin for elementary sized bathrooms/water fountains/playground

**Option C – North Edmonton K-6 & Modernization, Princeton K-6, Close Balwin School****Advantages:**

Parents, staff and community members identified the following advantages of this option:

- Both elementary schools stay open
- School is an integral part of the community (North Edmonton School)
- Least disruptive for elementary students
- Playground equipment at both schools

**Disadvantages:**

The primary disadvantages of refined option C were:

- Balwin community loses its local junior high
- Does not address declining enrolment
- Expensive to modernize North Edmonton School
- Loss of junior high programs, sense of community
- 2 small elementary schools remain

Some parents and community members expressed concerns that all options indicated a closure of one or more schools, and that they could not support any option that contemplates closing any school.

**Summary of Indications of Parent and Community Support**

At the Parent and Community Consultation Meeting held on February 16, 2005, the 103 participants were asked to indicate option(s) that they could support. A total of 87 response sheets were received, 4 from community members, 35 from Balwin School parents, 15 from Princeton School parents, 23 from North Edmonton School parents, and 10 from North Edmonton School staff.

Most respondents indicated they could support Refined Option B (Balwin K-9 moving North Edmonton into Balwin), the support coming evenly from among the various groups represented. Some respondents indicated support for Refined Option A (Princeton K-4 and Balwin 5-9), the majority of the support coming from Balwin and Princeton parents. The lowest indication of support was for Refined Option C (Close Balwin, retain the two elementary schools), the support coming mainly from North Edmonton parents and staff.

Appendices IV and V provide details regarding school enrolments in the cluster, and an area map of schools.

JB:ME:pn

- Appendix I: Consultation Process and Timeline for Study
- Appendix II: Preliminary Options and Capacity, Enrolment and Utilization Rates in Cluster Schools
- Appendix III: Refined Options
- Appendix IV: School Enrolment
- Appendix V: Cluster Area Map

## **Consultation Process and Timeline for Study**

The consultation process for the cluster studies began in late November, 2004 with the administration holding preliminary discussions with the principals of all the schools in each of the three clusters. These discussions focused on defining optimal learning environments for students and informed the administration on the development of preliminary options.

Early in the New Year, staff from the Planning Department coordinated the commencement of the studies in each of the three clusters. Planning staff continued to consult with principals throughout the process and, in various meetings, consulted as well with school staff, parents, school councils, program representatives and the broader community within each cluster. The overall objective of the consultation process was to provide participants with the opportunity to work effectively and meaningfully with the district in the further refinement of options and, finally, in the identification of preferred alternatives.

The specific objective of the consultation process at each of the meetings was to enable the administration to receive and record advice specific to each of the preliminary options presented to participants within each of the clusters. This advice was purposefully intended to inform the administration on the further refinement of options. Refined options based on the advice received from participants in the process were then presented in each cluster to an assembly of parents and community members for their review and discussion around advantages and disadvantages. This information was also recorded along with information indicating which, if any, of the refined options participants felt they could support.

Throughout the process, the administration kept a running record of advice received specific to the preliminary options and feedback on the refined options. The advice and feedback that was received and recorded from all of the meetings held within each cluster was supplemented, as well, by advice and feedback that was received by the administration through phone calls, letters and emails. The full running record has been maintained for public viewing on the district's main website as well as the district's Planning website.

The consultation meetings held within each cluster study included:

- *Special Combined School Council Meetings (week of January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*
- *Combined School Staff Meetings (week of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005)*
- *Individual School Council Meetings (week of January 24, 2005, week of February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and week of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*
- *Parent/Community Consultation Meetings (week of February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and week of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005)*

The administration also consulted with the Logos Christian Society (meeting Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005), The Association for English-German Bilingual Education (meeting Wednesday, January 26, 2005) and the Ukrainian Bilingual Association (meeting Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005).



A table summarizing the timeline of the various consultation meetings held in the study of Balwin, Princeton and North Edmonton Schools' along with information on meeting attendance follows below:

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Special Combined School Councils	Balwin Junior High School	Monday, January 17, 2005	31
Special Combined School Staffs	Balwin Junior High School	Thursday, February 3, 2005	76
Ukrainian Bilingual Association	Balwin Junior High School	Thursday, February 3, 2005	8
Balwin School Council	Balwin Junior High School	Monday, February 7, 2005	8
North Edmonton School Council	North Edmonton Elementary School	Monday, February 14, 2005	26
Princeton School Council	Princeton Elementary School	Tuesday, February 15, 2005	7
Parent/Community Meeting	Balwin Junior High School	Wednesday, February 16, 2005	103
<b>TOTAL ATTENDANCE (all meetings)</b>			<b>259</b>

**Preliminary Options for:  
Balwin School, North Edmonton School and Princeton Schools'**

<b>Option A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Princeton School as a K – 6 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate grades 7 – 9 from Balwin School to another area junior high school to be determined.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from North Edmonton School to Princeton School.</li> <li>• Close North Edmonton and Balwin schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Option B</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Balwin School as a K – 6 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate grades 7 – 9 from Balwin School to another area junior high school to be determined.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from Princeton and North Edmonton schools to Balwin School.</li> <li>• Close junior high program at Balwin School.</li> <li>• Close Princeton and North Edmonton schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Option C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Balwin as a K – 9 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from Princeton School to either North Edmonton School or Balwin School.</li> <li>• Close Princeton School.</li> </ul>
<b>Option D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Balwin School as a K – 9 facility and Princeton School as a K – 6 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate K – 6 students from North Edmonton School to either Princeton or Balwin schools.</li> <li>• Close North Edmonton School.</li> </ul>
<b>Option E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernize Balwin School as a K – 9 facility.</li> <li>• Relocate all students from Princeton and North Edmonton schools to Balwin School.</li> <li>• Close Princeton and North Edmonton schools.</li> </ul>

## CAPACITY, ENROLMENT AND UTILIZATION RATE OF SCHOOLS IN SCHOOL GROUPS

(Based on September 30, 2004 enrolment.)

<b>Cluster Schools</b>	<b>Total Capacity (Actual)</b>	<b>Total Enrolment (Actual)</b>	<b>School Utilization (%) (PUR *)</b>	<b>Audit Score</b>
<b>Cluster A</b>				
Balwin (Gr. 7-9)	758	279	40	450
North Edmonton (K-6)	448	193	42	910
Princeton (Gr. 7-9)	449	249	64	510

\* **PUR (Provincial Utilization Rate)** is the calculation of school space utilization based on “weighted” enrolments and capacities. The PUR is not calculated on the basis of “actual” enrolments and capacities.

- **Adjusted enrolment:** The total enrolment at schools is weighted by Alberta Learning with consideration being given to the accommodation of students enrolled in special education programs.
- **Net capacity:** The total capacity at schools is weighted (or adjusted) by Alberta Infrastructure as well, with consideration being given to the total area of leased space and CTS (Career Technology Studies) space that exists within schools.
- **Provincial audit score** is calculated by Alberta Infrastructure and indicates the relative condition of the building. A high audit score (600+) indicates a school requiring major upgrades.

**REFINED OPTIONS: BALWIN, NORTH EDMONTON, AND PRINCETON CLUSTER****OPTION A (Refined)**

- **Modernize Balwin School as Grades 5-9 facility to serve all grades 5-9 students in the cluster**
  - Grades 7-9 Regular, Special Needs Program(s) and Alternative Language program students remain at Balwin School
  - Balwin School remains the receiving school for junior high students from the cluster schools plus Delwood and Belvedere
- **Princeton School as a K-4 facility to serve all K-4 students in the cluster**
  - Princeton School 5-6 regular students to Balwin School
  - Princeton School 5-6 Opportunity students to Balwin School
- **North Edmonton School is closed**
  - North Edmonton School K-4 regular students to Princeton School
  - North Edmonton School K-4 Opportunity students to Princeton School
  - North Edmonton School 5-6 regular students to Balwin School
  - North Edmonton School 5-6 Opportunity to Balwin School

**OPTION B (Refined)**

- **Modernize Balwin School as a K-9 facility**
- **Move students from North Edmonton School as a group to Balwin School**
  - Grades 7-9 Regular, Special Needs Program(s) and Alternative Language program students remain at Balwin School
  - Balwin School remains the receiving school for junior high students from the cluster schools plus Delwood and Belvedere
- **Princeton School remains K-6 facility**
- **Close North Edmonton School location**

**OPTION C (Refined)**

- **Essential Modernization of North Edmonton School to remain as K-6 facility**
- **Close Balwin School**
  - Grades 7-9 Regular would be designated to either Killarney or Steele Heights Schools
  - Grades 7-9 UIB would be designated to either Queen Elizabeth, Highlands or Westmount schools
  - Grades 7-9 Interaction would be designated to either Londonderry or JD Bracco schools
  - Grades 7-9 Literacy would be designated to either Londonderry or JD Bracco schools
- **Princeton School to remain as K-6 facility**
- **Consideration for upgrades to receiving schools to accommodate junior high students out of Balwin School.**

## SCHOOL ENROLMENT

<b>Cluster</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Programs</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>	
<b>A</b>	<b>Balwin (Gr. 7-9)</b>	Regular	185	
		Literacy	32	
		Opportunity	30	
		Ukrainian International		
		Bilingual	22	
		Interactions	10	
		<i>Total</i>	279	
	<b>North Edmonton (K-6)</b>	Regular	139	
		Opportunity	54	
		<i>Total</i>	193	
		<b>Princeton (K-6)</b>	Regular	203
			Opportunity	46
<i>Total</i>			249	

September 30, 2004 enrolment

### Cluster Area Map

