

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 25, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent  
A. Habinski, Executive Director, School and District Services  
B. Holt, Executive Director, Instructional and Curricular Support

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Sheri-Lee Langlois

### INFORMATION

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #465, APRIL 27, 2004 (TRUSTEE ODYSKI) PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE REASONS WHY ENROLMENT FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS HAS INCREASED – IS THIS THE RESULT OF PROGRAMMING THAT IS BEING OFFERED OR THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF OUR STUDENTS?**

**Increases in students with special needs eligibility**

The number of students with special needs eligibility in Kindergarten to grade 12 in 1999 was 11,717, or 14.54 percent of total enrolment. In 2003, this enrolment increased by 1,231 students to 12,948, or 15.89 percent of total enrolment. The enrolment of students with special needs has increased in divisions I and II, declined slightly in division III, and increased significantly in division IV. As well, there has been a significant increase in the number of students enrolled in Early Education from 478 in 1999 to 626 in 2003.

Division	1999		2003	
	Special Needs Enrolment, K-12	Percentage of total District Enrolment in 1999	Special Needs Enrolment, K-12	Percentage of District Enrolment
I and II	6,407	7.95%	6,458	7.92%
III	3,601	4.47%	3,343	4.10%
IV	1,709	2.12%	3,147	3.86%

A primary reason for the increased enrolment at senior high is due to the schools' efforts to attract and retain students with special needs. This has been accomplished through the growth in programming and the availability of programming at most senior high school. The principals' initiative of 1998 to provide programming to all students with special needs residing in their attendance area has served to improve the success of students with special needs in high school.

The eligibilities that have shown the largest growth over the last five years are indicated below with their total enrolments in 1999 compared to 2003 and the change in enrolments by division over the five year period:

Eligibility	September 30 Enrolment		Change in enrolment from 1999 to 2003		
	1999	2003	Div I & II	Div III	Div IV
Severe Emotional or Behavioural Disability (#27)	586	829	+109	+78	+56
English as a Second Language (#301,303)	1,612	3,688	+865	+372	+839
Literacy (#63)	331	647	+45	+146	+125
Opportunity (#32)	1,629	2,110	+119	+177	+187
Strategies (#31)	1,214	1,077	-29	+37	+129
Early Education	478	626	N/A	N/A	N/A

Among these six eligibilities, the net enrolment has increased by 3,127 students since 1999. There are many reasons for these increases over time including the total increase in district enrolment over the five year period, with corresponding increases in students with special needs. In relation to specific district centre programs in which students are placed, there are reasons for the increases in each of these large eligibilities, as follows:

**Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disorders:** the reputation of this program attracts students from out of district. Additionally, the services available to families of students with these disorders are considerably greater within the city of Edmonton, thereby attracting families from out of town. Students residing in districts outside of Edmonton who are institutionalized in the city are released in some cases to group homes located within the district thereby making these students residents of EPS.

**English as a Second Language:** the city has experienced increasing immigration rates over the five years. In 1998, the district recognized that it was “under-identifying” students within the category “English as a Second Language”, whether Foreign or Canadian, and thereby accessing less funding than if every student meeting criteria was identified by the schools. Schools were encouraged to identify all students meeting the eligibility for ESL.

**Literacy:** this program was first defined and established in 1997-98. Since then, school staffs have become more familiar with the profile of these students’ learning needs and therefore, have been identifying more students for assessment. As well, this program was phased in at the grade 4 and 7 levels and the numbers of students with Literacy eligibility who were identified in earlier years are progressing into senior high annually, creating an increase at division IV.

**Opportunity:** the support services and medical specialists that are available in the city act as a magnet for families with children who have special needs of a medical nature to move to Edmonton and enrol in Edmonton Public Schools. Improvements in the attraction and

retention of Opportunity students at the senior high level have resulted from the availability of programming at most senior high school.

Strategies: improvements in the attraction and retention of Strategies students at the senior high level have resulted from the offering of both district centre and programs in senior high schools.

The number of students with special needs requiring yellow bus service increased by approximately 500 students this year. The bulk of this increase is attributed to increased enrolments of students with eligibility for Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disorders, Strategies, Opportunity, Literacy, or Early Education. (Sheri-Lee Langlois 429-8431)

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #476, MAY 11, 2004 (TRUSTEE WOODROW) PROVIDE INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO THE DIFFERENCES IN FEES BEING CHARGED BY TALMUD TORAH SCHOOL AND MEADOWLARK CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.** Proposed fees at Meadowlark Christian School vary depending upon the number of children in a family. For one child, the proposed yearly fee is \$1,380; \$2,072 for two children and \$2,416 for three children. Talmud Torah School has one yearly fee of \$3,000 per child regardless of number of children in a family. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398)

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #477, MAY 11, 2004 (TRUSTEE WOODROW): HAS ANY CONSIDERATION BEEN GIVEN IN OUR DISTRICT TO FUNDING PROJECTS THROUGH AISI IN THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR THAT WILL STRENGTHEN THE ARTS DISTRICT WIDE, AS HAS BEEN DONE IN CALGARY PUBLIC?** The district will continue to have two approved Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) projects for next year, full day kindergarten and Supporting Teaching and Learning. Through the Supporting Teaching and Learning project, schools may spend as much as 60% of their AISI allocation on best practices training. Consulting Services has designed many AISI modules in this category. Included in these AISI eligible modules are the following:

Children's Literature and Illustration  
Drama as a Tool for Teaching Literacy  
Literacy and Problem Solving Through Music and Art  
Read Me a Picture; Write Me a Song  
Bringing Literacy Alive Through the Arts  
(D. Barrett, 429-8035)

**TRUSTEE REQUEST #478, MAY 11, 2004 (TRUSTEE ODYNSKI) WHAT IS OR CAN BE DONE FOR STUDENTS IN SPECIAL PROGRAMS SUCH AS LANGUAGE OR RELIGION IN STAND-ALONE FACILITIES TO PROVIDE SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH OTHER STUDENTS TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT?** Students in alternative language or religious-based programming in stand-alone facilities do have opportunities to interact with other students and other community groups. In all three stand-alone alternatives, the students participate in district interschool athletic programs and district events and festivals. As well, they invite other schools to their dramatic and musical performances and attend such performances in other schools. When visiting the legislature, for instance, they are booked with other school groups. One of the junior high programs partners with a district high needs school to help with the winter carnival and to provide mittens and other accessories. At the senior high school level,

students are involved in service projects and volunteer in hospitals, senior care facilities, the Youth Emergency Shelter and other such city agencies. Some senior high students participate in the Citadel drama series with students from across the district and some have attended classes in other high schools for such courses as Mathematics 31. In one case, consideration is being given to extending students' experiences through videoconferencing to enhance student programming and extend the sense of community. Instructional leadership team collaborations, including interschool visitations, may also open up opportunities for students to e-mail, write letters and visit other schools. (G. Chalmers, 429-8398)

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