

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 26, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Plan for Special Education 2009-2010

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Gloria Chalmers, Deborah Brandell, Monica Ellis, Lil Rueck, Belina Pasula

INFORMATION

Background: This report is provided in response to a commitment in the February 3, 2009 report to board regarding provision of a special education plan. This plan indicates beginning actions for implementation consistent with the responses provided in Phases 1 and 2 of the province's *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta* initiative.

As outlined in the February 3, 2009 report to board, the District recommended shifts in philosophy and practice in keeping with the province's *Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta* initiative (Phase 1). Some of these were, but not exclusively:

- Advocating for adequate and continuous funding from the early years through Grade 12
- Focusing on assessment for programming rather than funding
- Requiring a focus on the functional and educational needs of students

A key focus in the jurisdictional response to Phase 1 was to include parents and support staff as part of a team. The District stated goal was, "to achieve a system (for all students) that respects the knowledge of teachers but also embraces and utilizes the knowledge and expertise of parents and other support people in the child's life. We need a flexible system in which there is a desire to work with everyone on a child's team. Supporting the whole child can only benefit success in the classroom."

The District response to Phase 2 reinforced messages from Phase 1 and included input from district staff, parents and stakeholders. It described what actions were currently in place and believed to be important in the areas of; setting expectations for all students, using strengths and abilities to drive programming, and building capacity for school-based staff and learning teams.

Work Plan: The Minister's Forum for Phase 3 of *Setting the Direction* takes place in Edmonton on June 8 and 9, 2009. This provides an opportunity for discussion of the new framework as the Alberta government moves towards system re-design. Based on outcomes from the Forum, the District may further refine its plan. The intent is to move forward with

our District plan on priorities for special needs programming and over time to align these with the Minister's initiatives. The plan is provided in Appendix I. Highlights of the plan include:

- Establishing a parent advisory group to provide input to district direction in implementing *Setting the Direction*.
- Create a demonstration pilot to explore a cross-departmental service model and to extend supports into Grade 3.
- Proposal to continue the inclusion pilot.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research intervention project to explore the use of effective strategies to help students with FASD.

Next Steps: The District remains committed to serving all students, including students with special education needs, to enable them to achieve their full potential. The District will report on progress and growth related to the plan.

PLAN FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION 2009-2010

AREA	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	KEY PARTNER(S)	2009-2010
Parent/ Community and Staff Collaboration	Establish parent and community advisory group to provide input to district direction in implementing <i>Setting the Direction</i> .	Assistant Superintendent	Special Education Parents	Establish and hold meeting in fall 2009 and spring (and as needed).
	Establish staff advisory group to support implementation of the provincial <i>Setting the Direction</i> philosophy and related actions.	Special Education	Schools Consulting Services Central Decision Units	Establish and hold a meeting in the fall of 2009 and as needed.
	Create a demonstration pilot to explore a cross-department service model and to extend supports into Grade 3.	KIDS SEST ERECS	Programs	September 2009 to June 2010.
	Share information learned from collaborative district initiatives.	The Way In STAR program CCEP	Programs	On-going.
Building Staff Capacity	Professional Development in positive behavior supports for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.	Programs Consulting Services	JACC (Joint Action Committee for Children) Consulting Services KIDS	Commence September 2009.
	Provision of financial support for special education courses in conjunction with Personnel.	Personnel	Programs University of Alberta	Commence summer 2009.

AREA	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	KEY PARTNER(S)	2009-2010
Curriculum and Programming	Establish staff, parent advisory committee to support the implementation of Knowledge and Employability (K&E) curriculum	Curriculum Special Education Schools	Consulting Services	Commenced spring 2009.
	Investigate the variables and trends of special needs coding, placements, programming, and achievement in relation to Aboriginal, immigrant and refugee students.	Programs	Budget Cultural Brokers Consulting Services Schools	Winter 2008 and on-going.
	Continue the inclusion pilot.	Schools Programs	Consulting Services Planning KIDS	Commenced September 2008 and ongoing.
	Continue implementation of the <i>Early Education, Learning Disabilities, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing reviews.</i>	Special Education Schools	Early Education Sites Consulting Services Working committees Personnel University of Alberta Provincial Deaf Educators Network Learning Disabilities Association	Continue to develop documentation to support programming. Continue to work with Personnel to ensure expertise in training. Continue to support consistency in programming for increased student achievement.

AREA	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	KEY PARTNER(S)	2009-2010
Curriculum and Programming	Pilot <i>Firm Foundations</i> (Phonemic Awareness Program) for Kindergarten in schools.	Programs	Schools Learning Disabilities Association Consulting Services	Pilot the program commencing September 2009. Report on pilot by May 2010.
Assessment	Investigate how cultural background impacts identification of students with special needs. Explore ways of involving parents and cultural groups in decision making and addressing this issue.	Programs	Consulting Services University of Alberta Schools	On-going.
Research and Collaboration	FASD research intervention project exploring the effectiveness of strategies to support students with FASD.	University of Alberta	Special Education Research Support Services Schools	Creation of teacher focus groups commenced in spring 2009. Research project continues.
	Involvement in, and Banker for, provincial wraparound research project.	Programs CUP	The Way In CCEP STAR program	Commenced spring 2009 until fall 2010.
Technology	Pilot use of laptops with students with special needs and English Language Learners (ELL).	Queen Elizabeth High School Programs	District Technology	Report on pilot by May 2010.
	Promotion of assistive technology use for students with special needs.	Programs Consulting Services	District Technology	IPP handbook will be updated to include assistive technology. Continue to share assistive technology resources with teachers and schools.

AREA	ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	KEY PARTNER(S)	2009-2010
Advocacy	Continue to advocate and collaborate for all students with special needs in relation to programming, transportation, and staff capacity.	Trustees Programs Complex Needs/JACC	Transportation Planning Budget Consulting Services Personnel Parents	On-going.
	Advocate regarding pre-service training of teachers and support staff.	Trustees Executive Team Grant MacEwan	Programs	On-going.