

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 8, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: McKernan School's Junior High Enrichment Program

ORIGINATOR: J. Edey, Principal, McKernan School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Janet Stiles; Lorraine Lebeuf; Tom Davey

INFORMATION

McKernan School, located near the University of Alberta, is a kindergarten to grade 9 school serving 625 students. The motto of the school, "Pride In Excellence", is reflected in the high levels of achievement attained by students and the quality of programming they receive. The school offers programming in both French Immersion and English.

McKernan School has developed a unique enrichment program at the junior high level that has become a model for several other schools. The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement – Maximizing Student Potential project has allowed the school to expand the enrichment program during this school year. The program provides special opportunities to enhance the educational experience for those students interested in learning more than what is offered in regular classes. The program allows students to go beyond the curriculum and develop skills and attitudes that will be helpful in future education in and out of school. The goal is to create happy, challenged, knowledgeable, creative, and well-adjusted students.

The program is designed to be student-directed and as a result, the projects that the students are engaged in vary from year to year. The students start with identifying areas of interest from all grade levels, and students with similar interests form "Enrichment Groups". A group facilitator is assigned to each enrichment group and the students take an active role in planning their learning and the activities that they will be involved in throughout the year. The group facilitators are volunteers from the community.

The students are required to meet in their enrichment group one period a week so they can work with other group members and their group facilitator. They also have the opportunity to choose other times during the week in which they can develop research skills, expand creative talents, develop portfolios of personal learning and complete tasks required for their enrichment groups. Students are expected to maximize their learning opportunities, utilize higher levels of thinking, access mentors from within the school and

community and reflect on the outcome of their learning. Students are also expected to complete all assigned work for classes they miss while attending enrichment meetings.

An important component of the program is student selection into the program which is based on a number of criteria. The most important criteria is the keen desire of each student to learn in this particular fashion and to make a commitment to the program for the full year. The students must display high levels of achievement in regular schoolwork and receive recommendations from their subject teachers. They must have excellent work habits, be self-motivated, responsible, and able to work independently and cooperatively. There must also be parental approval, interest and support for the program. Students need to complete an application form to demonstrate their interest and their ability to meet the criteria given for the enrichment program. Grade 8 and 9 application forms are due at the end of September, and Grade 7 application forms after Interim report cards in October once they know what Junior High is all about and whether they want to take on extra challenges.

This year, students have formed enrichment groups to study the following topics: aviation, robotics, media, theatre, radio broadcasting, wildlife, business, photography, computer programming, reading development with children, and independent projects.

McKernan staff members are very excited by the opportunity to work with such a progressive, forward-thinking group of students.

JE:jj