

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 8, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee C. Dean, ASBA Issues Ad Hoc Committee
Trustee D. Fleming, ASBA Issues Ad Hoc Subcommittee
Trustee J. Melnychuk, ASBA Issues Ad Hoc Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Issues for the 2001 ASBA Fall General Meeting

RESOURCE STAFF: Avi Habinski, Anne Sherwood, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the submission of the following issues, as outlined in Appendix I, to the Alberta School Boards Association for consideration at the 2001 Fall General Meeting, be approved:
 - a) *The goal of Career and Technology Studies (CTS) was to ensure "current curriculum" and flexibility of programming, yet no study has been done to assess the actual impact of CTS on students, schools, school districts, teachers and business and industry.*
 - b) *School districts across the province have invested in technology far in excess of the provincial grant for technology. It is vital that the provincial support for education takes into consideration the need for adequate funding for technology to reflect the "total cost of ownership".*
2. That the following issue, as outlined in Appendix II be forwarded to the ASBA Board of Directors for consideration at the Spring Annual General Meeting.

Alberta Supernet will be phased in over a three-year period. Alberta Learning has suggested that school jurisdictions consider interim solutions. These interim solutions should be funded on an equitable basis commencing in September 2001.

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In response to the ASBA's call for the identification of policy issues, the ASBA Ad Hoc Committee solicited suggestions from the administration and developed the attached submissions. Issues identified by member boards will be debated at the Zone level and worked into policy statements for approval at the ASBA Fall General Meeting.

The policy issue regarding Alberta Supernet was considered to be more time sensitive and therefore has been proposed for consideration by the ASBA Board of Directors in conjunction with the ASBA Spring Annual General Meeting.

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- APPENDIX I - Proposed Alberta School Boards Association Policy Issues for the Fall Convention
- APPENDIX II - Proposed Alberta School Boards Association Policy Issue for the Spring General Meeting

REVIEW OF CAREER TECHNOLOGY STUDIES

Issue:

A number of years ago Career Technology Studies (CTS) replaced the courses known as practical arts, which included vocational education courses, at both junior and senior high school. While the goal was to ensure “current curriculum” and flexibility of programming, no study has been done to assess the actual impact of CTS on students, schools, school districts, teachers and business and industry.

Recommendation:

That the ASBA in association with Alberta Learning commission an independent study to determine the following:

- ❑ Are students making good use of CTS modules to prepare for post-secondary study or for direct entry into the work force?
- ❑ Has the introduction of CTS increased the percentage of students taking vocationally-oriented training, preparing for post-secondary study or direct entry into the work force?
- ❑ Has the introduction of CTS increased the percentage of students studying at the “advanced” level or “30” level in vocationally-oriented courses?
- ❑ What post-secondary schools are accepting advanced CTS courses as prerequisites, or courses that help a student gain entry to post-secondary trades and technology training? (Include only CTS courses in their own right, not those that are part of specially negotiated articulation agreements. The idea would be to determine if advanced-level CTS courses are given the same degree of acceptance as the former 30-level vocational education courses.)
- ❑ Since the creation of CTS has the “evergreening process” (updating of the courses) been active and successful? (If so why have districts had to create new locally developed courses like *Networking Technology* or be working with post-secondary schools and business to create new courses for the Logistics strand with little or no financial support from Alberta Learning?)
- ❑ Are CTS courses well resourced with print-based materials, to facilitate the success of students in all circumstances? (Currently the practice is to pour resource money into on-line resources only. These are often not appropriate or useful for particular applications.)

Background:

Alberta is currently facing a critical shortage of skilled tradespeople. So serious is the shortage that projects large and small are held up in the province. CTS was designed to be a program more responsive to the needs of students and to enable the student to access more of the resources in the community. It would appear however that instead of having a positive effect of drawing more students into the areas of trades and technologies, fewer students are taking the advanced levels of study. Add to this the loss of equipment in the province, due to the selling off of much vocational education equipment, and the province may be found to have lost capacity in this important area.

Also lost have been many of the teachers who held journeyman status, who were invaluable and inspiring instructors.

It is widely known that the vast majority of CTS courses (1-credit courses) completed in the province are at the introductory level. These are taken as individual courses, or increasingly embedded in a core course. Such a format appears not to be successful in providing enough training even for entry level in industry or post-secondary institutions.

Many teachers have expressed the view that the outcomes in CTS courses are narrow and very specific, preventing the instructor from having the time to provide the depth or added explanation that is required for real appreciation of the outcomes. In addition, students may often select from a smorgasbord of modules in a strand thus potentially missing the continuity or natural sequencing of topics that lead to a broader understanding and subsequent interest in seeking more skill and knowledge in the strand.

It should also be noted that simple completion rates in CTS are not an indicator of the success of the program, given the fact that it measures the enrolment in largely introductory courses. What is needed is to effectively assess the value of the approach, identify its strengths and weaknesses and make revisions, so that CTS will in fact deliver to students and society a purposeful program that will be for the benefit of all stakeholders.

PROVINCIAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TECHNOLOGY

Issue:

Alberta Learning has advanced to school jurisdictions financial support for the 2001-2002 school year, under the Technology Integration Fund (\$43 per student). In the past, this amount was provided as a matching grant and was designed to support the acquisition of hardware for use by students. More student workstations are required in order to implement the ICT curriculum consisting of new outcomes expectations for students in Divisions I through IV. The current level of financial support is not sufficient to cover the actual cost of technology in schools. School districts across the province have invested in technology far in excess of the provincial grant for technology. While school jurisdictions are not seeking additional earmarked grants, it is vital that the provincial support for education take into consideration the need for adequate funding for technology.

Background – Why is it an Issue?:

It is important that the actual costs schools are incurring in the preparation for the ICT curriculum and other technology-related expenditures be taken into consideration in examining future provincial financial support. Alberta Learning has contracted to undertake a study on the Total Cost of Ownership, the results of which should be available in the near future. This study, which focuses on a sample of a dozen schools from across the province, identifies the broad range of expenditures associated with technology including: hardware, infrastructure, software, access to resources, technical support and training. It is clear that there has been an increased use of Information Technology across the curriculum, including ICT and CTS, and for business functions.

As well, the use of word processing is an option available to students writing a number of provincial diploma exams and there has been a general increase each year in the number of students who have exercised this option. As the number of students asking to write the test with the use of a word processor increases, it will be necessary to explore issues such as staggering groups for exams, security and supervision. Availability of access to the same platform students were trained on is another issue that needs to be explored.

Means of Resolving the Issue:

It is vital that provincial financial support for technology reflect the actual costs of technology. The level of financial support should be determined in consultation with school districts, be an ongoing component of educational funding and be announced in a timely manner. This would enable schools and school jurisdictions to develop a long-term plan for technology integration rather than basing annual expenditures on the availability of funding. Adequate and ongoing financial support is needed, not as targeted funding, but in a fashion that allows decisions to be made at the local level.

ALBERTA SUPERNET**Issue:**

Alberta Supernet will be phased in over a three-year period. Alberta Learning has suggested that school jurisdictions consider interim solutions. These interim solutions should be funded on an equitable basis commencing in September 2001.

Background:

The Government of Alberta has recognized the importance of high-speed connectivity for Alberta communities in general and the education system in particular. On November 2, 2000, Dr. Lorne Taylor, then Minister of Innovation and Science, announced that the government of Alberta is moving ahead with the Alberta Supernet, a project that would provide high-speed broadband Internet Network to 420 communities across the province and include every hospital, school, library and government facility. In conjunction with this announcement, Dr. Lyle Oberg, Minister of Learning, has announced that the ministry would provide equitable access to all school jurisdictions and fund access to the Supernet at a rate of \$504 per month for each school in Alberta at a speed of 10 megabits per second (Mbps).

While the Alberta Supernet is being planned, school districts are spending significant resources on infrastructure and access to high-speed connectivity without adequate provincial funding.

In his announcements regarding Alberta Supernet, Dr. Lyle Oberg, the Minister of Education, emphasized the benefits of a high-speed broadband network to our school system. He indicated that it would:

- Help ensure that all students have access to technology resources no matter where in the province they live
- Give Alberta students improved access to on-line resources through the Internet or through their own school divisions wide area network
- Allow for new technologies such as video conferencing and video streaming to be implemented in the classroom
- Allow learners and teachers everywhere in Alberta to gain access to on-line curriculum materials, Internet-based educational programs and personal communication tools.
- Teachers and other school personnel could readily exchange information such as lesson plans and professional development would be an important component in the use of a broadband network.
- Facilitate the implementation of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) program of studies which calls for the integration of technology in subjects such as language arts, math, science and social studies.

At a meeting regarding the Alberta Supernet hosted by Alberta Learning and Alberta Innovation and Science on November 14, 2000 the advantages of this high-speed broadband network were identified and input from school jurisdictions regarding the phase in of the system was sought. It was clear that a fair and equitable approach was needed in the implementation of the Alberta Supernet over the next three years.

Means of Resolving the Issue:

Funding for the accessibility to high-speed connectivity should commence in September 2001. This would enable schools jurisdictions to cover costs associated with their connectivity to the Internet and remove the concern about the interim gap between the haves and have nots during the implementation stage of the Alberta Supernet. Who will get it first would no longer be a critical issue since funds would be available by school jurisdictions