

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 9, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Joint Recommendations on Issues of Curriculum Change

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright

INFORMATION

In response to the large number of new curricula introduced by Alberta Learning in the past few years, much having been a source of concern on the part of both educators and the public. Edmonton Public Schools has worked to bring such issues to the attention of Alberta Learning, advocating on behalf of the district's teachers, students and parents. The efforts have attempted to influence provincial curriculum directions through constructive input, the preparation of which involved many district teachers.

Conversations with other districts around the province revealed many districts were struggling with the same issues. As a result, commencing last autumn, a committee was established from boards in and around the capital region to address concerns related to curriculum change. The participating districts were able to reach consensus on a number of key points, which were jointly presented to Alberta Learning by the curriculum leaders of the respective jurisdiction in early February. Given that no response was received from Alberta Learning, the district superintendents met in April and again agreed on a common position, which they presented to the Deputy Minister in early May (Appendix III).

One issue relates to the process of curriculum development and implementation. Desired is a process of curriculum development which ensures new curriculum is phased in on a schedule that does not put an undue burden on teaching staff and on district resources. Concerns also include availability of suitable resources and the presence of completed and piloted standards documents prior to mandatory implementation.

Very prominent in the concerns is the issue of the new high school math program, in which districts fear for the educational future of tens of thousands of high school students. The excessive number of outcomes in Pure Math, the lack of clearly defined midstream courses, the excessive emphasis on technology in the math programs, the creation of severe financial pressures on schools and the existence of unworkable bridging courses (Appendix II), threaten the jurisdictions' ability to implement new curriculum and still meet the needs of all of their students. Among other concerns is the failure of Alberta Learning to increase general allocations to districts in years of new curriculum implementation, especially in light of the cost of new texts and the technology that is often mandated to support these new courses.

The district is hopeful for a positive response from Alberta Learning to this submission from districts representing over one-third of all students in the province of Alberta. Equally it is hoped that Alberta Learning will recognize many other districts throughout the province share the concerns included in this document.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: Flow Chart of High School Math Courses pre 1999

APPENDIX II: Flow Chart of New High School Math Courses

APPENDIX III: Joint Recommendations on Issues of Curriculum Change