

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 25, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Requests for Information

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent
D. Power, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE
STAFF: Deborah Brandell

INFORMATION

TRUSTEE REQUEST #119, JUNE 10, 2008 (TRUSTEES): PROVIDE BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DEVELOP A DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT POLICY FOR THE PLANNING AND POLICY COMMITTEE. A draft report was provided to the Planning and Policy Committee on November 19, 2008.

TRUSTEE REQUEST #134, SEPTEMBER 23, 2008 (TRUSTEE COLBURN) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING SPECIAL NEEDS REVIEWS THAT HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS IN TERMS OF THE FOLLOWING:

- 1. WHAT WERE THE RECOMMENDATIONS COMING OUT OF THE REVIEWS?**
- 2. WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS COMING OUT OF THE REVIEWS**
- 3. HOW IS THE IMPACT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORED?**

Alberta Education has conducted three major reviews in the past few years. They include:

- Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs (2000)
- Special Education Programming Standards Reviews (2005)
- Severe Disabilities Profile Review (2007)

In 2000, Alberta Learning (Education) published the document, *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs: A Review of Special Education in Alberta: Final Report*. Initiated in March 2000 to review delivery of educational programs and services for students with special needs in Alberta, it involved consultation with education partners, stakeholders, and service providers who identified issues and made recommendations related to accountability, administration, funding and professional development, communication/information, resources and policy for students identified with special needs.

As a result of this report, the following special needs reviews occurred in Edmonton Public Schools.

1. Special Education Programming Standards Review, January–February 2005 (Final Report - June 1, 2005)

Alberta Education selected a random sampling of schools to visit and then reviewed a random sampling of files and programs for identified students with special education needs.

Recommendations from the Alberta Education Programming Standards Review

- Create a principal handbook entitled *Transition Process for Students with Special Needs* outlining a detailed process for discussing student transitions for parents. It was recommended that school districts make available in-services on this topic to teachers and principals.
- Revise sections of the Individual Education Plan (IPP) related to procedures for evaluating student progress, coordinated support services, and relevant medical information in order to support teachers in providing the appropriate documentation. It was noted that certain sections related to essential information did not meet Alberta Education documentation requirements.
- Provide continued in-service on IPP planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Explore a variety of delivery methods for special education programming in regular classroom settings.

Action Plan from Edmonton Public

The District was charged with completing a plan of action to address these issues. A committee was struck to address identified areas for improvement and was submitted to Alberta Education to:

- Revise and clarify policies and procedures related to special education, including information available on the Edmonton Public Schools website regarding avenues of dispute resolution for parents, and align language with current Alberta Education usage and terminology in *Standards for Special Education*, Amended June 2004.
- Review, revise, and/or create information regarding the role of the Board and staff who provide programming and services to students with special education needs.
- Provide leadership and coaching related to the appeal process through district training (e.g., Leadership and Principal Development and Education courses, and first year principal sessions).

Recommendation Monitoring

Report 2008 from Alberta Education stated, “Significant progress has been made and all of the required changes have been accomplished ...p. 1” correspondence from Dr. Marliss Meyer, Alberta Education, June 2008.

2. Special Education Severe Disabilities Profile Funding Review – May 2007

Alberta Education required jurisdictions in the province to submit all files of students identified with severe disabilities for review. Just under 2,000 files were submitted by Edmonton Public Schools.

Feedback

Alberta Education released their findings in a report to all superintendents of school jurisdictions in spring of 2008. The report indicated provincial trends and did not include information related to any one jurisdiction.

The severe disabilities profile review clearly demonstrated that school jurisdictions are providing a variety of program supports to address the special educational needs of the students. The review confirmed that school jurisdictions vary widely from each other and from Alberta Education in their interpretations of policy and application of policy. It invites greater examination of the current purpose of special education coding criteria, and provision of additional education services, (pp.16, *Report on Severe Disabilities Profile Review*, May 2008).

Recommendations

Involve Albertans in a major consultation process in “Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta.” This project will develop a framework that creates common language and understanding around vision, principles, policy, accountability and funding based on continuous improvement for education of students with special education needs.

Phase 1 Fall 2008 – consultation through public sessions or an on-line survey.

Phase 2 February-March 2009 – seeking input on options for special education policy, accountability and funding.

Phase 3 Minister’s Forum, June 8-9, 2009

Recommendations from this project will be implemented in September 2010.

TRUSTEE REQUEST #153, OCTOBER 28, 2008 (TRUSTEE HUFF) PROVIDE INFORMATION REGARDING WHAT MECHANISMS ARE IN PLACE TO TRACK DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS: The success and development of special needs students is monitored at both district and school levels.

Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) provide information regarding the achievement of special needs students relative to graded curriculum. Students who do not participate in these assessments must meet Alberta Education criteria for non-participation and, in addition, students must then be exempted by the superintendent.

Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLATs) provide annual grade level of achievement data in reading and writing for all district students in Grades 1 through 9, and information about student growth in reading and writing. Students with special needs participate at a level appropriate to their reading abilities. Any students who are not able to participate are identified as being “not yet Grade 1”.

At the school level Individual Program Plans (IPPs) track development and success for all students with special education needs. IPP goals and objectives are measurable and specific to individual student learning needs. Student progress is measured against identified goals and objectives and is reported to parents at regularly established reporting periods. Goals and objectives may be adjusted throughout the year according to student learning needs.

In addition, success and development of some students with special education needs is tracked through the traditional report card. As part of that process teachers are to identify each student’s grade level of achievement in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies for Grades 1 to 9 annually.

DB:DP:ja