

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 27, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Angus McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: City Centre Education Project – Status Report

ORIGINATOR: Donna Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent

RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

Purpose

This is a report on the status of the City Centre Education Project (CCEP), an initiative launched in 2000-2001 to provide equitable access for city centre students to an enriched program of instruction. It accompanies an oral presentation by the coordinator of the project and several of the city centre principals.

Background

The project originally involved eight schools: Alex Taylor, Eastwood, John A. McDougall, McCauley, Norwood, Parkdale, Queen Mary Park and Spruce Avenue. Alex Taylor and Queen Mary Park were subsequently closed, and this year Delton School has been added to the group.

Faced with the challenge of declining enrolments, limited programming opportunities, deteriorating buildings, limited financial resources, and the need to serve a population that has a high percentage of disadvantaged students and families, the city centre principals put forward a new vision of education in the city centre. The vision involves innovative programming, an emphasis on community and business partnerships, and reorganization of students into larger populations. The plan to make the vision a reality was implemented in September 2001.

New Programs and Services

The following are in place at this time:

- All city centre schools have full day kindergarten, reading recovery, balanced literacy, and small grade one classes
- Additional print and technology resources have been purchased to support literacy and numeracy instruction

- There is a 0.5 FTE teacher librarian at each site
- Specialist music, art and career and technology studies teachers are in place
- Through the use of a transportation shuttle, junior high students are being exposed to specialized programming, teacher expertise and facilities
- Increased counseling support is available with the addition of three 0.5 FTE family therapists seconded from the Family Centre (this is in addition to a therapist already in place at Norwood, and traditional counseling services at Parkdale, Spruce Avenue and John A. McDougall)
- Expanded field trips; each school received additional funding for this
- Free school supplies were provided, and the schools participated in the United Way Tools for Schools program
- French instruction has begun in all seven schools at the grade 4 level
- A city centre band/choir leader has been hired and is based at McCauley School
- An after-school strings program with 18 students is operating at McCauley School, and over 100 other children are waiting to participate

Partnerships

Partnering with a multitude of non-profit groups, agencies and institutions has provided extra-curricular opportunities for students, while enabling teachers and administrators to remain focused on instruction. Partnerships have made the following possible:

- Dr. Jose da Costa, University of Alberta, has committed to a three year study examining the collaborative nature of CCEP and its effects on teaching and learning
- Dr. Jose da Costa, Dr. Margaret Haughey and Dr. Fern Smart of the University of Alberta have submitted an application for funding to continue small class size research within the CCEP
- The Edmonton School Lunch program has made it possible for Delton School to participate in the morning snack program; discussions are ongoing about the possibility of extending the lunch program to the three city centre schools that do not have it
- Continued funding for the Norwood Pre-school demonstration project was secured for the 2001-2002 school year, from the Edmonton Community Foundation, IKEA, and the Minister of Children's Services
- An early head start program and a parents' playtime group has opened at Eastwood School
- Through the Family Centre, the schools have access to four family therapists, parent support workers, and other related services
- Beginning in January, a course for parents of challenging children will be offered free of charge to parents of the seven schools; transportation will be provided for parents to attend the course at John A. McDougall School
- The Reading Clinic at the University of Alberta is developing a package of individualized reading strategies for division II students who continue to struggle; this should be available by September 2002
- The Success for Six Book Buddies program has been extended to all seven sites
- United Way, Tools for Schools and Norwood's Partners for Kids program continue to provide opportunities for children
- The Centre for Family Literacy is providing service to one school, and will expand to the others in the new year

- Through federal government funding, McCauley, Spruce Avenue and Parkdale were granted \$50,000 per year for three years to establish health and fitness programs to educate parents and students about the onset of diabetes
- A partnership with the YMCA has made possible an after-school program at McCauley, soon to expand to at least two other sites; it emphasizes literacy skills and includes recreational swimming
- Other partners involved in after-school programming at two schools include Norwood Child and Family Resource Centre, the City Centre Children's Project, and the Aboriginal Youth and Family Well-Being and Education Society
- Big Sisters and Big Brothers and Eastglen School have come together to offer an in-school mentoring program to children in kindergarten and grade one at Spruce Avenue; Big Sisters and Big Brothers plans to expand their involvement to all seven schools
- Through private funding, Cool Schools Web Page Design was offered at Parkdale for division II students
- Cool School tutorial is being offered three days a week at Delton, and will expand to four other schools in the new year
- City of Edmonton Community Services provided services in five sites as part of their fall programming
- In-school scouting is ongoing at McCauley and is slated for Norwood in the new year; it is hoped that this can be expanded to Parkdale and John A. McDougall; conversations have begun with Girl Guides
- A partnership with the Bank of Montreal is now secured; the bank's fundraising efforts will go toward purchase of books for Eastwood library
- Big Sisters and Big Brothers is working with Bank of Montreal head office staff to encourage their involvement in mentorships at Eastwood
- A partnership with Pro Coro choral group is under discussion; it would involve professional musicians in the group mentoring music teachers
- Children's Services has assigned a child welfare worker to each school for a one-year term to provide continuity of service
- The availability of scholarships is being expanded, with the premise that the dollars are provided when students complete high school; for example, the Driving Force is considering a scholarship component in addition to its mentoring activities at Spruce Avenue, and a proposal has gone to the Rotary Club for grade six scholarships in all seven schools
- Since September 2001, the CCEP has received \$206,100 from alternate sources, with another \$57,000 expected in the near future; the funding has gone toward sound field systems, musical instruments, library resources, hiring authors for each school, the strings program, health and fitness programs, and special family events; in keeping with the collaborative nature of the CCEP, the funds are distributed to schools based on need, not by formula
- IKEA has donated \$14,500 worth of equipment and furniture for CCEP kindergarten classes

Organization

A cornerstone of the project is the grouping of students in larger numbers in fewer locations, and movement toward a multi-campus organizational model. This has a financial dimension, as well as facility and transportation implications.

1. Financial Aspects

Reducing the number of schools and programs in the city centre has made about \$600,000 available for new initiatives, including:

- Print and technology resources to support literacy and numeracy instruction
- Math and science equipment
- Hiring of teacher librarians
- Increased counseling support
- Expanded field trips
- Free school supplies
- Purchase of French language resources
- Purchase of band equipment
- Hiring a band/choir leader
- Shuttle bus service
- Parent information nights
- Project coordinator

2. Facilities

Alberta Infrastructure is providing funding of over \$10 million for modernizing John A. McDougall and McCauley Schools, and about half a million dollars for upgrades to Eastwood, Spruce Avenue and Parkdale.

The closed Alex Taylor School building has been leased to the City Centre Church Corporation, a provider of a wide range of community services. The future use of the Queen Mary Park School building has not yet been determined. Preference will be given to uses that are education-related, and community input will be sought before a decision is made.

3. Transportation

Families have responded favourably to the package of transportation services being provided to support the CCEP schools:

- Free busing to students in neighbourhoods where schools or programs were closed
- Coordinated service to keep stops close together and ride times short
- Shuttle service among the sites during the day so students can access specialized programming, teacher expertise and facilities
- Enabling elementary students to participate in field trips and enrichment activities at schools other than their own
- Busing for family events such as conferencing evenings at the schools, a trip to the book sale at the Teachers Book Depository, a Halloween evening sponsored by the YMCA, and a Christmas event with the Pro Coro choral group.

Other Plans

The CCEP is a multi-year undertaking. Although much has been accomplished in the first several months, other plans are still being developed:

- Enhanced collaborative planning opportunities for teachers from all the schools
- Teachers remaining with students for two years
- Continued work on Blueprints
- Continued curriculum support, fully functioning libraries and computer labs in all the schools
- A CCEP identity and common communication plan
- A City Centre Education Project web site
- Increased sharing of financial resources among the schools
- New partnerships and scholarship opportunities

Reporting of Results

It is the intention of the principals involved in this project to again present to the Board in the spring. By that time, interim measures aligned with the instructional focus work should be in place and this will allow presentation of new data that are not available at this time. Other measures to be used on an ongoing basis are Highest Level of Achievement test results and provincial achievement test scores. In addition, research by Dr. Jose da Costa of the University of Alberta will provide valuable information on the collaborative aspects of the CCEP and their impact on learning and teaching.

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