

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 12, 1999

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dosdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: International Symposium on Second Language Education

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Janice Aubry, Ann Calverley, Stephen Wright, Shirley Wacowich,  
Edmond Levasseur, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

Plans are presently underway for Edmonton Public Schools to host and coordinate a major international symposium on second language education, which will be entitled **Passports for the New Millenium: An International Symposium.**

Second language enrolments in North America and here in Alberta are in decline. In 1996, 33 per cent of Alberta's high school graduates had completed a course in a second language. By 1998 that had dropped to 21 per cent. A research document, produced last year by the district for Alberta Learning (Appendix I), demonstrates the positive impact that second language training has on students. While these two findings seem to be in contradiction to one another, the decline in language enrolments continues. Edmonton Public Schools, with the support of Alberta Learning and a number of other organizations and institutions, plans to coordinate a symposium, drawing delegates from many parts of Canada and the world, and in the process develop the basis for a strategy to reverse the enrolment trend.

The symposium itself will provide opportunity to:

- showcase a number of successful delivery models for bilingual and international language training from Europe, North America and Asia
- discuss and debate the issue of the *role of second languages in basic education in North America*
- offer world class professional development in the area of language education for teachers
- advocate for increased emphasis on and access to second languages for Alberta students, and the additional funding required to meet this need
- promote Edmonton Public Schools as a leader in international language and bilingual education

Edmonton is an ideal location for such a symposium and Edmonton Public Schools has the expertise to host this event. Edmonton Public Schools is a leader in bilingual programming and is also the primary developer of the Western Protocol Frameworks for both Bilingual and International Language curriculum.

The symposium is set for October 2000, with Fantasyland Hotel selected as the venue. At present 800 delegates are expected. Sessions, with the approval of site principals, will include visits to operating language programs.

A large number of organizations are anxious to partner with Edmonton Public Schools in this undertaking including Alberta's universities and colleges, Alberta Chamber of Commerce, a number of provincial development agencies and many private, Heritage language groups. Support for the symposium is also coming from the government of Spain, and language educators in Japan are interested in our bilingual models.

Mr. Edmond Levasseur, formally the Language Services consultant with Edmonton Catholic Schools, now retired, has been asked to accept the position of Symposium Coordinator. He will be assisted in this role by Janice Aubry, Language Consultant with School and District Services.

The need for a greater number of Albertans to become proficient in the use of second languages has never been more pronounced, and with research showing distinct benefits for students who receive second language training, such a symposium is most timely.

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- APPENDIX I: Impact of Second Language Education on Intellectual Development, Student Achievement, Socialization and Economic Potential of Student and Province
- APPENDIX II: Framework for a Proposal for an International Symposium on Bilingual and Second Language Education
- APPENDIX III: Passport for a New Millennium: An International Symposium