

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

October 28, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Career Education Focus: The Skill Centre Pilot

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jan Anderson, Stuart Wachowicz, Stephen Wright

INFORMATION

Background: In November 2002, a recommendation to develop a comprehensive strategy for school to work transition referred to as Career Focused Education (CFE), was approved by the Board of Trustees. The CFE framework was developed to provide teachers with supplementary tools, resources and program delivery options to support the teaching of Alberta Education's Career and Technology Studies (CTS) program. Ultimately, the goal of CFE is to ensure that every junior and senior high school student is equipped with the skills, attitudes and abilities required to complete high school and student transitioning into post-secondary studies and the workplace.

The CFE framework is based on a partnership approach, involving the District, post-secondary institutions, and business and industry sectors including the Conference Board of Canada, Skills Canada Alberta and the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation.

Description: The Curriculum department synthesized the original Individual Learner Career Pathway work outlined in the CTS program into relevant programs for teachers. Today, the framework supports the fundamental values of the CTS program through enhanced activities and initiatives in the following areas:

- classroom experiences that support core learning, e.g. Algebra 35, international credentialing in second languages and the provincial International Baccalaureate Program
- guidance and learning plans attached to academic development, workplace essential skills and international credentialing in second languages
- real-world relevance, which focuses on workplace safety training and employability skills developed through the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP), Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP) and work site learning programs
- school specific projects that offer pathway learning experiences in international credentialing in second languages, Fluid Power, Aviation, Aircraft Maintenance, Computer Fundamentals and other CTS courses
- career development initiatives, which include the development of Knowledge and Employability (K&E) Works resources, as well as an annual Workplace Showcase event, Career Cruising opportunities, Alberta Career preparation courses, summer school courses such as Print Media Production and Health Sciences Grade 11/12, and The Skill Centre. Most recently, the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative was introduced to specifically help Aboriginal students improve their understanding of entrepreneurship

while learning leadership and technology skills, and a partnership initiated with Women Building Futures will focus on providing support to the young women at Braemar.

Since the implementation of the framework, many positive results have been achieved. Some of the most significant achievements are:

- collaborative working relationships with over 50 CFE partners to support high school completion and successful transition into post-secondary education and the world of work
- over 40 different initiatives, program options and plans have been included as part of the district's CTS program delivery
- the district's work with the Conference Board of Canada resulted in the development of a matrix to ensure that special needs students are able to achieve an employability skills achievement certificate
- 33 students were the recipients of Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) scholarships in 2006 and 27 students were recipients in 2007
- 42 participants completed the Health Sciences Grade 11/12 course in 2008, which is provided as part of the district's summer school programming, and earned bursaries from Capital Health after signing an "Intent to Work" agreement
- the district's safety training approach has been used as a model by many other Alberta school districts
- a database has been created to provide partners and schools with access to information about field trip and professional development opportunities, potential speakers and work site options.

Qualitative Data: Feedback from staff, students, parents and partners suggests that CFE:

- provides the necessary framework to help teachers with the delivery of Alberta Education's CTS program
- improves student learning (e.g., many students in CFE programs succeed well academically, with many indications that students are encouraged to complete high school and acquire a diploma)
- increases access to resources and supports for teachers, students and parents
- is instrumental in creating new ways to work with community partners
- increases the professional development and networking opportunities available to staff
- increases the number of career options and training opportunities available to students.

The Skill Centre Pilot Project

The District has also been very innovative in its approach to career development initiatives. As part of the district's belief that education is a shared responsibility and the Board's commitment to ensure students are prepared for the needs of our ever changing, interdependent world, the District is engaging in a pilot project referred to as The Skill Centre (Appendix I). The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) is an important partner of this technical hands-on learning centre, which is housed within Amiskwaciy Academy. The Skill Centre courses complement the programs that are currently offered at high schools and expose students to interesting experiences in fields such as aircraft maintenance and health care. The centre will enable students to apply their practical and theoretical knowledge in a unique setting, where business and community leaders are on hand to add significant value to the delivery of high quality training and skill development.

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APPENDIX I: Descriptive Summary of the Skill Centre: A Five Year Pilot

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SKILL CENTRE:
A FIVE-YEAR PILOT

The District is participating in a five-year pilot of The Skill Centre as part of (1) *Secondary to Post-Secondary Career Technology and Trades Skills Program* with NAIT funded through Access to the Future - Innovation Funding and private industry support; and (2) *Health Services Grade 10-11-12* with Capital Health / NorQuest with funding from Capital Health and Alberta Health and Wellness to support learning for EPS students.

Description of The Skill Centre: The Skill Centre provides a physical presence to coalesce many programs and initiatives that support student achievement and high school completion through Practical Arts education. The Skill Centre provides programming diversity to further ensure EPS remains an advocate of choice.

The Skill Centre provides only Practical Arts programming for students, with the following as initial offerings:

- Health Care Professional (Grade 11/12 – summer 2008, Grade 10 – September 2008)
- Aircraft Maintenance Orientation Program (first intake September 2009)
- Culinary Arts – 1st Period (first intake September 2009)
- Manufacturing and Materials (first intake February 2010).

In addition, due to the concentration of resources, The Skill Centre will provide leadership to teachers of Practical Arts programming across the District through various supports to teaching and learning (e.g. Entrepreneurship, Architectural and Mechanical Design, etc.).

Within the student program part of The Skill Centre, it would appear much like the typical high school with the exception that students do not “walk to class”, but rather take busses to the classes at The Skill Centre from their home school. The home schools involved in the pilot course offerings will be Amiskwaciy, Queen Elizabeth, Ross Sheppard, and Victoria.

Benefits of The Skill Centre to the District:

- engaging kinesthetic learners - students who learn by working with their hands will experience achievement by seeing a finished product. Students will apply academic learning such as mathematics and science skills and concepts to reinforce and provide relevance to classes taken at their home school. In addition, high school completion rates and achievement results will increase.
- providing a cost-effective strategy for providing students' with access to specialized programs that can not be replicated in every high school. Yet, these students remain a member of their home high school.
- providing greater utilization of resources (including qualified and knowledgeable teachers) by maximizing their use by the entire district rather than one school
- providing opportunities to develop new programming (e.g. Fashion-Retail-Logistics) or field test new curricula (e.g. Career Internship 10-20-30) and supporting the subsequent implementation at other EPS high schools
- identifying EPS as an innovative leader in the delivery of Practical Arts education.

Conceptual Context: Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) has identified the importance of providing technical and trade related programming to meet the needs of the students within our district.

While within the District there is a wide range of resources to provide instruction in practical arts areas, considerable disparity exists between schools to increased high school completion through retaining students:

- some high schools were originally built with no facilities, or limited facilities, for CTS
- other schools have lost practical arts labs to other programs and as a result have lost skilled teachers
- increasing costs of tools and new facilities coupled with the elimination of funding programs has limited the capacity of the District to offer hands-on learning experiences
- limited acceptance of CTS courses by post secondary schools
- loss of a well articulated junior high practical arts program of studies further limit the district's current capacity.

The establishment of The Skill Centre will serve to address these issues and help the District better meet the needs of all students, with the support of the non-parent community (e.g. business, industry, and post-secondary institutions).

Ongoing development work with EPS school staff, Alberta Education, Advanced Education (including Apprenticeship and Industry Training), Alberta Health and Wellness, Capital Health, Canadian Aircraft Maintenance Council, The Logistics Institute, University of Alberta, NAIT, NorQuest and businesses and industries (including sector councils) continues to place EPS at the centre of convergence for implementation of a skill centre. EPS is presented with the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in practical arts education while reinforcing academic learning. In addition, this initiative has the potential to provide programming for students who are at-risk for leaving school due to lack of engagement.