

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 11, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Update on English Language Learner Hubs

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE

STAFF: Karen Bardy, Gloria Chalmers, Helen Yee

INFORMATION

Background: In response to trustee initiatives introduced in the 2007-08 budget, nine schools, grouped in clusters of three, were invited to explore new ways of providing programming, supports and services for the increasing numbers of immigrant and refugee students in our community. The nine schools include: Grace Martin, Malcolm Tweddle and Edith Rogers in Millwoods; Balwin, Glengarry and Killarney in north central and Lorelei, Mary Butterworth and John D. Bracco from the north central and north east. The schools were advised that they would receive dedicated consultant and professional learning support, psychology and social work support and cultural broker support. The intent is to tailor the nature of this district support to the needs of the particular cluster and to work with community partners to determine how supplemental services can be accessed.

Additionally, a decision was made to identify and make available to district schools additional funding for English Language Learners (ELL) who have refugee experience, no English and minimal or no formal education and/or a 3 or 4 year lag in performance separately from the general ELL population. Students will be identified with the assistance of the English Language Support Services Centre (ELSSC). This information will enable the district to have a better understanding of the needs of these students and how we can provide programming and support most effectively for them. In addition, this coding also will enable us to determine how many students with refugee experience and limited schooling are in district schools and where they are located, in order that we provide needed programming.

Current Situation: Staff from the ELSSC and Programs has met with each of the cluster schools to discuss their particular situation and identify their priority needs. From these discussions, we learned that there is:

- A broad range of needs within each cluster, ranging from little or no-school experience and English knowledge through to those who have conversational English but limited vocabulary and comprehension of academic content
- A need for professional development regarding second language teaching methodology and differentiating programming for ELL Learners
- Support for providing a transition class within each cluster depending on enrolment.

Through the ELSSC, two new ELL specialists dedicated to this initiative have been hired and trained. They will be providing some immediate assistance to the cluster schools to assist with the identification of ELL students, particularly new admissions over the course of the summer. Cultural brokers from the Kurdish, Somali, Sudanese and Afghani communities have been identified and will be deployed based on the needs of the clusters.

Each cluster has identified some space to house the cluster team and space at each school for staff to meet with students and families as required. The identification of a transition class and its location will be confirmed in mid September once enrolment information is confirmed.

Next Steps: Meetings have been arranged with the school clusters for mid September to confirm numbers and priority needs. At this time, a decision regarding the need and location of a transition class serving the cluster, as well as the mix of services responsive to that particular cluster, will be made.

Based on the recent announcement from Alberta Education regarding funding for foreign and Canadian born pre-school ELL learners, the intent is to offer a pilot early learning opportunity in one of the three clusters. The early learning pilot will be based on sound early childhood development principles and language acquisition knowledge. It will be developed collaboratively with immigrant and refugee families and community partners. The pilot will enable the district to develop a program that clearly meets the needs of these families and to determine need for, and location of, additional sites for September 2008.

GC:ee