

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 26, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: L. Thomson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Interagency Collaboration –AISI Project Update

ORIGINATOR: T. Parker, Executive Director

RESOURCE
STAFF: Karen Sliwkanich, Sandra Stoddard, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

This report provides detailed information about one of Edmonton Public Schools' Cycle 3 Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects, Interagency Collaboration. This report includes an historical perspective leading up to the creation of this current project, highlights a general three year scope and sequence for project implementation, and provides information on professional development plans specific to the Interagency Collaboration project.

Background Information and Historical Perspective

During Cycles 1 and 2 of AISI, Edmonton Public Schools implemented a full-day kindergarten project, with a focus on literacy. The district worked closely with Dr. J. da Costa, from the University of Alberta, who examined the longitudinal reading and writing effects of full-day kindergarten on students up to the end of grade three. Results from his studies suggest that through participation in a full day kindergarten program, many challenges related to low socio-economic status (SES) can be reduced. Da Costa (2005) recommends that in low socio-economic communities more work needs to be done to help parents to better meet the academic and social needs of their children. He recommends that parenting centers and community supports need to be closely linked to local elementary schools.

The findings of da Costa's work provides the foundation for the development of the Cycle 3 Interagency Collaboration AISI project. The project proposes to build upon the prior data collected on full-day kindergarten to determine the added benefits of an interagency collaborative approach and will involve the eighteen schools previously involved in the Cycle 2 Full-Day Kindergarten AISI project. As recommended by da Costa the project will focus on bridging the efforts of families, schools, and community agencies in developing a shared responsibility for the optimum development of children.

Scope and Sequence

Establishing interagency/community partnerships will be the focus of the project. Year one will begin with deepening existing, as well as establishing new connections with parents, community, private sector agencies, higher education, health care providers and therapists. Establishing and building relationships with the partners is a key first step in creating collaborative connections. Year two will progress toward increased cooperation and cross delivery of programming. The end result will be full collaboration of all stakeholders in developing joint action plans and a shared responsibility for meeting the needs of at-risk kindergarten children and their families. Year three will lead to improved access to services, with project schools being viewed as a learning resource for other district schools as well as the community.

Professional Development

Professional development will be provided for teachers, administrators, and the partners involved in the project. The focus of the professional development will be to increase the capacity of families, schools and communities to work together to enhance student achievement. Professional development sessions will focus on creating a shared understanding of each partner's unique needs and developing a common understanding of new goals. Establishing joint outcomes and action plans will result in an increased capacity for working together. In addition, professional development sessions and collaborative opportunities will be provided for kindergarten teachers to continue to deepen their understanding of balanced literacy and early childhood best practices. As well, a parent inservicing component, to build capacity to support learning and development in the home, will be an important element of this project.

Communication and Knowledge Dissemination

Throughout the Interagency Collaboration project, project schools will determine how the findings can be shared and integrated into other schools and within the district. As project schools develop new relationships, strategies and practices, and disseminate this information, it is believed that there will be long term benefits to teaching and learning for all. The project's leadership team is committed to keeping the board and senior administration informed of their progress.

Summary

The purpose of the district's AISI projects is to enhance student achievement of all students, with a focus on students at risk, and enhance high school completion rates. The Interagency Collaboration project clearly addresses this goal. For all students to succeed, support must be put in place from the first day a child enters school. The project represents a proactive, innovative and leading edge approach to supporting young learners and providing the necessary early support for them to successfully complete high school.

LT:gj

APPENDIX I –List of the Schools involved in the Interagency Collaboration AISI Project

Sources:

da Costa, Jose (2005). Full-day Kindergarten: Longitudinal Effects Through to Grade 3. A study which examined the longitudinal reading and writing effects of full-day kindergarten programming on students at the end of kindergarten, grade one, grade two, and grade three within Edmonton Public Schools

Schools Involved in the Interagency Collaboration AISI Project:

Abbott School

Balwin School

Belvedere School

Delton School

Eastwood School

Evansdale School

Glendale School

Inglewood School

John A. McDougall School

McCauley School

Norwood School

Parkdale School

Prince Charles School

R J Scott School

Rundle School

Sherwood School

Sifton School

Spruce Avenue School