

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 28, 1999

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Continuing Education: "Cool School"

ORIGINATOR: G. Reynolds, Department Head

RESOURCE

STAFF: Lori McKinnon, Sandra Jewell, Bill Strickland, Carol Suddards

INFORMATION

Cool School is a customized K-9 program designed and delivered by Continuing Education, Edmonton Public Schools. Currently Cool School is offered on a cost-recovery basis on Saturday mornings three times per year (fall, winter, spring); during Teacher's Convention (Grades 1-6); and during July (Grades 1-9). From September 1998 to July 1999, 2034 students took advantage of the Cool School opportunity.

Initially designed in 1995 as a remedial service for students with difficulties in learning, Cool School has since grown into an extensive program which offers courses to assist school-aged children to maintain and improve their skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science as well as enhance their life skills. They are also designed for students who may lack motivation, feel overwhelmed, seek enrichment or wish to progress more rapidly. Children who attend these programs gain the skills, personal resources and habits necessary to become more successful, academically and personally.

Cool School courses are intended to supplement the instruction that students are already receiving in school. Learning plans are developed and implemented by learning assistants who are third or fourth year University students; the learning assistants are overseen by an On-site Program-Organizer and Team Leader who are experienced certified teachers. The major strength is the low student to teacher ratio – seven students to one learning assistant. This ratio ensures each student receives extensive personalized help using the student's abilities and interests as a starting place for further development. Communication with parents is an integral part of the planning to better meet student needs. Although all core subjects are weighted for academic achievement, Cool School has a balance of personal development, well-being and fitness courses that bring excitement and fun to the learning environment.

Cool School is experiencing excellent growth as well as positive evaluations. Success was measured in 1998 and 1999, utilizing a comprehensive two-part survey. The survey was designed for parents to give feedback on their children's accomplishments and improvements over a six-month period after attending one or more courses. Forty-four completed surveys showed:

- 99% of students and parents were satisfied with their Cool School experience

- 90.5% of students met or exceeded standards set by themselves and their parents
- 9.5% students did not meet their expectations
- Increased interest in school because confidence levels were higher
- Increased interest in attending post-secondary levels of education
- Improvement in homework assignments completed as well as improved study habits
- Increased levels of achievement

Because of the cost-recoverable nature of the program, many students with the greatest needs do not have the benefit of participating in Cool School. To address this issue, Continuing Education has established a trust fund called "Invest in Success" that provides dollars for financially disadvantaged students to attend Cool School courses. The trust fund has generated awareness and positive interest. Trust fund dollars donated from a variety of businesses and organizations will be used to reduce the financial barriers to participation and focus on helping students improve their achievement in school. Monies are available to pay registration fees and transportation costs which may restrict or limit accessibility to courses and programs. To date there as been \$1,338 dollars donated enabling three families access to Cool School programming.

One of our long term goals is to partner with inner-city schools to provide funding for disadvantaged children who would not otherwise have access to Cool School programming and, in so doing, provide the students the opportunity for higher levels of achievement. Although in its planning stages, this initiative will provide a unique opportunity to disadvantaged students while breaking down barriers for high-needs children to be successful in school. It is our continuing commitment to improve achievement in a range of educational outcomes for disadvantaged children and to ensure high-quality teaching in every Cool School classroom. The success of this year's effort will have a significant impact as the initial building block for customized Cool School programming in Edmonton inner-city communities.

CS:tdm

ATTACHMENT I -