

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 30, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Creating Conditions for Collaboration to Support Teaching and Learning

ORIGINATOR: D. Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent
K. Beaton, President ATA Local 37

RESOURCE

STAFF: Darren Fox, Lyndi Karbonik, Phil Prato, Karen Reschke, Rosalind Smith,
Bonnie Zack

INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2001, at a Liaison meeting, Superintendent Emery Dosedall invited President Peter McNab to form a joint committee to look at the conditions needed to support collaboration for teachers in Edmonton Public Schools. The Local accepted the invitation. With the retirement of both Emery Dosedall and Peter McNab in June 2001, the new Superintendent Angus McBeath, reconfirmed the offer to work together. The committee was formed in the fall of 2001 with Karen Beaton, President, and Donna Barrett, Assistant to the Superintendent, serving as co-chairs. The Local appointed teachers Karen Reschke (Killarney), Phil Prato (Ross Sheppard) and Lyndi Karbonik (Homesteader). The district appointed principals Rosalind Smith (M.E. LaZerte), Bonnie Zack (John D. Bracco) and Darren Fox (Westminster).

As the 2001-2002 school year was interrupted by labour difficulties, the committee only met a few times. In the fall of 2002, the committee resumed its work. It is positive to note that, in the meantime, the district launched an initiative called "Focus on Supporting Teaching and Learning" that focuses heavily on teacher collaboration. The provincial ATA also has policy and initiatives that support collaboration.

The joint committee presented to the ATA Council of School Representatives for approval the following definition and recommendations, which were unanimously approved at ATA Council on June 4, 2003.

DEFINITION

Collaboration is a process consisting of repeated opportunities for reflection and action through which a group strives to answer a question and address an issue of importance to them. (adapted from *Collaborative Inquiry in Practice*, Bray, et al 2000)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All teachers and principals will develop a clear understanding and commitment to collaboration.
 - Collaboration will take many forms, such as professional conversations (face-to-face, electronically), peer coaching, study groups, small group sessions, and formal meetings.
 - Collaboration will occur within schools, between schools, on a district level, and globally.
2. Principals and teachers will demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the importance of collaboration in creating professional learning communities.
 - The Edmonton Public Teachers' Local and Edmonton Public Schools will cooperatively compile and disseminate an inventory of effective practices related to collaboration.
 - District leadership development programs and the "Focus on Supporting Teaching and Learning" initiative will incorporate strategies for implementing and developing skills in collaboration.
 - Principals and teachers will take advantage of opportunities to develop their skills and participate in collaboration.
3. All principals and teachers will acquire and use skills to collaborate meaningfully.
 - Teachers and principals will seek assistance in becoming positively involved in the collaborative process.
 - Edmonton Public Schools and the Local, through the ATA will have resources available to assist teachers and principals in developing and supporting collaborative processes.
4. All teachers and principals will be provided with opportunities to collaborate meaningfully.
 - Wherever possible, opportunities for meaningful collaboration will be scheduled within the regular work day, through strategies such as altered school hours (early dismissal, delayed start), back-to-back prep times, and use of substitute teachers.
 - The district will support principals and teachers in creating these conditions for professional collaboration.
5. The ATA and the school district will promote an understanding of the value of professional collaboration that enhances teaching practice and student learning among stakeholders.
 - The district and the ATA will make resources available to schools to assist in communicating this message.
 - Schools will communicate the purposes, results, and impact of professional collaborative work.

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