

Ward H Update, May 2011

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New Vision, Mission & Priorities Supported by New District-Wide Strategic Plan

In early March, the Board of Trustees passed a new Vision, Mission, and 2011-14 Priorities statement. Once this direction was set, it became our Superintendent's responsibility to "make it so" – in other words, to lead our 7,300 staff in living out the Mission and delivering on the Priorities so we may achieve our Vision of "all students learning to their full potential and developing the ability, passion, and imagination to pursue their dreams and contribute to their community." You can see the full Statement at <http://www.epsb.ca/about/mission.shtml>.

After deliberation with his principals and central department leaders, the Superintendent responded with a ten-year strategic plan. The plan consists of four core strategies: 1) Enhancing staff capacity, 2) Enhancing quality teaching practices, 3) Enhancing supports for diverse learners, and 4) Ensuring effective and efficient business practices.

Initiatives that you are likely to hear about at a school level are: K-12 Literacy Plan for 21st century learners, improving transitions between elementary and junior high schools and then between junior high and senior high schools, developing inclusive learning environments in all schools, enhancing partnerships, redesigning central services to better meet the needs of students and staff, and improving communication throughout the district. All good

things, I believe! More details on the tactics and initiatives under each of these areas can be found at http://www.epsb.ca/board/april26_11/item07.pdf (APPENDIX 1).

Funding Realities 2011-12

In 2010-11, EPSB received almost \$823 million from the Province. We topped this up by \$9.6 million out of our operating reserves, so that our total budget for the current school year was \$832.5 million.

This year, EPSB received \$818 million from the Province, \$4 million less than last year, and it appears that our operating reserve (which currently consists of reserves held by individual schools and central units) will be modest this year. Thus, the Superintendent has recommended a balanced budget with no "top down" drawing upon reserves. That said, he is encouraging his principals with reserves to consider using them to supplement staffing costs. However, utilizing reserves to support staffing costs is not sustainable.

On April 26, the Board approved the Superintendent's proposed distribution of the \$818 million in the following way: Schools will receive 1.2% less than last year and Central, 3.7% less. After April 26, Schools and Central Units worked on their preliminary budgets based on these assumptions, and on May 24, the Superintendent will share with the Board how these reductions will play out "on the ground." Likely, they will result in fewer staff and higher class sizes. On June 14, we will approve a final budget.

Working to Deliver Supports to Students More Effectively than Ever!

Over two years ago, the Superintendent began to examine the delivery of services to support students and schools. Was the current model the best it could be? What could be done differently and without spending any additional monies? The result has been a redesign of Central Services. This began last year with a change in the roles and responsibilities for Senior Administrators (such as Assistant Superintendents). For example, four Assistant Superintendents now exclusively focus on supporting schools, which have been organized into high school catchment areas. In the southwest, for example, Asst. Supt. Bruce Coggles has responsibility for Lillian Osborne High School and all its feeder schools while Asst. Supt. Ron MacNeil has responsibility for Harry Ainlay and its feeder schools.

Also, the decision was made to centralize Maintenance and Communication functions for all schools. Until now schools have had to pay for these services on a cost-recovery basis.

This year further work has been done to create a new structure for Student Learning Services, which will move into action in September. This department will consist of four main strands: 1) Support for Staff and Students (in Literacies, Diversity, Comprehensive School Health, Leadership Development), 2) Projects and Research, 3) Inclusive Learning

(Service Teams of experts will be created to regularly serve groups of schools), 4) Executive Services (including appeals, expulsions as well as Policy & Partnerships).

Three Year Capital Plan Approved

On May 10 the Board approved the Three-Year Capital Plan. For the first time, the Province requested an aggregated list of projects from three main categories: New Construction Projects, Major Modernization, Preservation and Upgrading Projects, and Leases and Other Projects. The top ten priorities are 1) Esther Starkman (modulars), 2) Johnny Bright (modulars), 3) Major General Griesbach lease, 4) Amisckawicy Academy lease, 5) Value Management Studies, 6) Asbestos Abatement, 7) Strathcona, Part 2, 8) Forest Heights, Part 2, 9) Rutherford Essential Upgrade, and 10) Highlands Essential Upgrade. It is not known if the Province will fund any of these requests this year or not.

New Education Act!

It's arrived! The Honourable Dave Hancock introduced Bill 18, the new Education Act, into the Legislature on April 27, and it was my privilege to be in the House for what I consider to be a historic event! It's not every session that such an Act with far-reaching consequences gets introduced.

Some positive highlights: Natural person powers are proposed for Boards, which will give us more flexibility to deliver programming as well as to make decisions on transportation/school closures/fees/appointment of a Superintendent among others; an expectation that school environments must be safe, caring and respectful (which mirrors a policy EPSB already passed last November); parent and student responsibilities are spelled out; compulsory attendance age rises to 17; support for students to

finish high school is raised to 21....

To find out more and to provide feedback to Alberta Education, please visit: <http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/engage/current-initiatives/action-on-legislation>

I hope to hold a follow-up session for Ward H on the Education Act in the fall. One comment made by a resident at "Let's Talk: The Education Act!" in January was *"There appear to be lots of responsibilities, but no evidence of any resources. Will this Act continue to add more responsibility to the public school system (special needs, medical issues, family issues) without the supports in place?"*

Policy Work

Currently under discussion at the Board table: Community Use of District Buildings (to receive 3rd reading on May 24). Having already been online for feedback and input, the following will be coming to Public Board in the near future: Instructional Time, School Library Learning Commons, Field Trips, Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs and Services, Student Attendance, and Instructional Fees. And currently online for feedback: Student Programs, Student Admission to the District, and Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity. Visit <http://www.epsb.ca/policy/policyReviewListings.shtml> Also, feedback is being sought on a definition of bullying.

Do you have solutions for supporting and sustaining schools?

The Board's Moratorium Committee would like to hear from you! As a lead-up to an interim report in November, the Committee is exploring in depth the issues contributing to school viability and closure. If you are free from 2-4 pm on the following

dates, please join in! May 31: PO&M funding and Student Instructional Funding, June 14: District Enrolment Trends; September 13: Space Utilization, September 20: Leasing, and September 27: Alternative Programs and Open Boundaries. For more information see <http://www.epsb.ca/trustees/ClosureMoratorium.shtml>

Other

All EPSB Councils are now IN!

On May 10th the Board voted to try out a district membership arrangement for all EPSB Councils with the Alberta School Councils Association for the next year, a "free of charge" offer made to the district. The Board will be seeking feedback from Councils early next spring before committing to a district membership on an ongoing basis. Stay tuned, and please keep me posted as to what services you make use of, what you like/dislike, etc.

Community Resource Fair (Hosted by the Southwest Edmonton Mapping Project (SWEMP), Newcomers Sub-Committee) Please spread the word about this collaborative community event focusing on mentorship opportunities and resources for newcomers to Canada. It will be held at Riverbend Junior High (14820 53 Avenue) on Saturday May 28, 2011 from 11:00am - 3:00pm. The fair will be an opportunity for community residents to gather information regarding mentorship opportunities and other services.

Looking Ahead:

Who's Not at our School Council Table... and Why.

The Narcissism Epidemic (book study)

Conversation with SW Community Constable (maybe with Community Leagues?)

Developing SW Citizenship Fair for Students/Schools