

DATE: January 21, 2014
TO: Board of Trustees
FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT: Lost Prizes Program (Response to Request for Information #002)
ORIGINATOR: Mark Liguori, Assistant Superintendent of Schools
RESOURCE STAFF: Fred Hines
REFERENCE: November 26, 2013, Board Meeting (Trustee Martin)

ISSUE

Provide information regarding the Lost Prizes program for at risk students; including the purpose of the program, outcomes achieved and any potential for implementation in the District.

BACKGROUND

In the early 1990's, three Manitoba school districts established Lost Prizes, an initiative to reclaim at risk, talented high school drop outs who had been lost to the system. The three school districts involved were Lord Selkirk School Division, (city 10 minutes north east of Winnipeg), Sunrise School Division (rural district 30 minutes east of Winnipeg), and Interlake School Division (rural district 30 minutes north of Winnipeg). The majority of the students targeted had withdrawn from school, were unproductive and were involved with the Justice system. Lost Prizes was an initiative to reconnect these at risk individuals, tap into their creative potential and motivate them by building their self-esteem and self-worth so they could become productive citizens.

In the initial stages of the Lost Prizes program, a facilitator worked directly with the participants in an off-site classroom setting. The classes focused on career awareness and creative problem solving training. By incorporating creative problem solving tools, the re-engaged students learned to make meaningful choices in the areas of careers, life decisions and they considered how to move from their current reality to a desired future state. Students designed individual growth plans to help identify and work towards goals. The second phase of the program focused on students gaining skills through on- the-job placements with an opportunity to have authentic hands on learning experiences with trained mentors in the business community. Lost Prizes proved to be a success with 57 of the 88 participants (65 per cent) returning to high school, entering the post-secondary programs at university or community college, or obtaining employment.

CURRENT SITUATION

Lost Prizes program connects theory and practice from both the enrichment and at risk domains. Currently, with support from the University of Winnipeg faculty and staff, a vision is emerging that features three levels of Lost Prizes intervention:

- Lost Prizes training centres that provide the facilities, materials and human resources necessary to train new practitioners.

- Programs that involve trained practitioners using the Lost Prizes philosophy and approach directly in their work with young people.
- Schools that embody and practice Lost Prizes principles at all levels throughout the school environment.

The results of these efforts are evident in a number of interesting new ventures. In Thailand, a new Lost Prizes free school called Por Peang (self-sufficiency) will soon be built for village children Buriram and a prototype demonstration centre is also being planned for Bangkok. Kenya will be soon opening a Lost Prizes school and program in Nairobi and a training centre in Kisumu. Planning sessions were held in July 2013 to follow-up on earlier discussions and interest in Jordan, India, Turkey, Israel, Cuba, Mexico and Peru.

The goal of Lost Prizes program has always been to improve the talent identification and development process. Once educators are equipped with appropriate training, skills commitment and experience (in both the enrichment and at risk areas), they strive to identify and nurture the talents of these highly capable but disconnected children and youth. As new challenges arise, they approach them with hope, flexibility, and perseverance. As a result, many young people who have been otherwise marginalized now have the potential to make healthy contributions to societies around the world.

KEY POINTS

Potential implications for Edmonton Public Schools:

- Increased high school graduation rates.
- Increased student enrollment.
- Increased student engagement.
- Improving literacy, numeracy and citizenship.
- Foster positive relationships with students, educational staff and community partners.
- Strengthen urban community building, leadership and skill development.
- Mentoring opportunities
- Staff professional development opportunities

ATTACHMENTS & APPENDICES

N/A

FH:ja