

DATE: December 10, 2019

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Trustee Michelle Draper

SUBJECT: Motion re: Seeking Federal Government Funding for English as a Second Language Supports

REFERENCE: [Trustees' Handbook – Section 5.2.2 – Notices of Motion](#)

ISSUE

Notice of motion was served at the November 26, 2019, Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools is committed to providing welcoming, safe, inclusive and responsive learning environments for all students. Edmonton Public Schools is welcoming an increasing number of newcomer families to our Division. As of September 30, 2019, we have 26,573 English Language Learners; this represents 25 per cent of our total student enrolment and is a two per cent increase from the previous year. Over the past seven years, the number of English Language Learners in the Division has risen by over 80 per cent.

To ensure students' successful transition, our ELL families are supported through multi-disciplinary teams and three reception centres, for family orientations, assessments, consultations, coaching and professional development for teachers and staff. These supports play an important role for students and their families in increasing their confidence in attending school in Canada and offering support in their first language.

This work also directly supports two of the Division's Strategic Goals: A Focus on Well-being and Student Citizenship, and Families as Partners. The intended outcomes of these goals are that our learning and working environments are welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy and that families are provided opportunities to be involved in their child's education. Both of these outcomes would be much more difficult to achieve without second language supports in schools for students and their families.

With an increasingly difficult economic climate and challenging provincial budget, our Division must consider alternative ways to be able to continue to support newcomer students and their families. Many of the Division supports align with parcels of federal funding designed to support newcomers. This motion challenges us to look beyond our existing provincial funding to advocate for funding support from the federal government.

RELATED FACTS

The ESL Reception Centres provide students and families who are new to Canada with information about the public school system and English language assessment. Student assessments and family interviews are held by appointment only, at one of three reception centres: Harry Ainlay, Jasper Place and Eastglen schools.

The goals of the Centres are to help students develop an understanding of English programming options and supports and to learn about the school system, school expectations and supports available for newcomer students

Our English language learners are a diverse group of students, representing many languages and cultures from around the world. Approximately 124 languages are spoken by families in Edmonton Public Schools. The Intercultural Services team is comprised of six full-time consultants who serve schools, providing cultural bridging, conducting family interviews, and providing first language support for parent /teacher conferences; school open houses and Meet the Teacher events; pre-Kindergarten screening and Family Oriented Programming support; Triple P parenting training; interpretation for consent forms and for the Divisions' Satisfaction Survey; and Division Attendance area engagement sessions. Intercultural consultants provided support for 364 events in the 2018-2019 school year. They provide support for the division's most frequently requested languages, including Arabic, Somali, East Indian Languages, and Vietnamese.

In addition to the permanent staff employed as Intercultural consultants, the Diversity Education Unit maintains a roster of community members who are hired on an hourly basis to support other languages, such as Tagalog, Kiswahili, Spanish and Mandarin. First language support has been provided for referrals received for the Reception Centres for 63 languages.

Language and cultural support that is not available internally is outsourced to a private company, for languages including Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinyan, Korea, Russian, among others.

Providing second language support has been instrumental in helping families and students to be welcomed into our schools and to feel a sense of belonging, well-being and citizenship. It has also helped staff to develop cultural awareness and knowledge, and to improve intercultural perspectives.

It should be noted that the Intercultural consultants provide only oral interpretation, not written translation. This is an incredibly valuable service, but it still leaves a gap in support for newcomer families: the written translation of key Division documents, such as registration and consent forms. While it has long been a desire in the Division, funding has not been available to undertake this significant project.

The related mandate of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (as taken from their website¹) is as follows:

- To develop and implement policies, programs and services that:
 - facilitate the arrival of people and their integration into Canada in a way that maximizes their contribution to the country while protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians;
 - maintain Canada's humanitarian tradition by protecting refugees and people in need of protection;
 - enhance the values and promote the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship; and
 - reach out to all Canadians and foster increased intercultural understanding and an integrated society with equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, ethnicity and religion.

¹Taken from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/mandate.html>

RECOMMENDATION

That Edmonton Public Schools share impacts of our English as a Second Language supports with the Federal Government and explore potential funding options with them to ensure the needs of newcomer students and families are being met.

OPTIONS

1. Approve the recommendation.
2. Provide feedback and request changes to the recommendation for approval.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of this recommendation, the Board will work with Administration to advocate to the Federal Government for funding for the Division's English as a Second Language supports.

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