

DATE: March 22, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Update on Providing Free Menstrual Products in Division Schools

ORIGINATOR: Kathy Muhlethaler, Assistant Superintendent, Operational and Learning Supports

RESOURCE STAFF: Karen Mills, Nancy Petersen, Christopher Wright

ISSUE

Administration is providing the Board of Trustees an update on progress towards the April 27, 2021, Board motion supporting access to free menstrual products in school washrooms.

BACKGROUND

At their April 27, 2021, public meeting, the Board of Trustees approved the following motion:

“Given that menstrual products are a basic need and that access to these products can be a barrier for students, the Board of Trustees moves that Administration explore ways to provide free menstrual products in Division schools, including pursuing partnerships, to provide what should be essential products in Edmonton Public School washrooms.”

At the June 22, 2021, public Board meeting, administration reported that on May 28, 2021, a provincial announcement saw the commitment of \$260,000 towards Alberta’s United Way’s Period Promise campaign; the provincial funding is in support of a two-year pilot. The province anticipated that the first year of the pilot would see menstrual products available barrier-free in approximately 100 schools for the 2021-2022 school year. In collaboration with the province, the Edmonton United Way announced it was embarking on a local Period Promise campaign with seed money from the provincial pilot.

The Division collaborated with the United Way to explore how best to partner together on this initiative. The United Way prioritized schools in the Edmonton area serving high socially vulnerable communities. As such, the Division began working with the United Way to identify a group of schools from the Division’s High Social Vulnerability List as a starting point for the pilot supported through the provincial funds.

While planning proceeded on pace, the provincial money targeted for the United Way appeared to be stalled. So as to not hold up the project, administration began a pilot with a small group of schools in January 2022, using the operating reserves that were identified by the Board for this project in the current budget. Schools are testing different delivery mechanisms, product placement and communication strategies. Data collected from this pilot will inform expansion into other schools.

CURRENT SITUATION

The United Way received the provincial funding in late February. Administration is now in conversation with the United Way to move forward with schools from the Division's High Social Vulnerability List. Information and data from these schools will also inform expansion of this initiative across Division schools.

Staff from Infrastructure Supports and Operations and Strategic Division Supports are working together with schools on this initiative.

KEY POINTS

- The Division is using a pilot approach to better understand the logistics of this initiative.
- The Division has been working in partnership with the United Way around a pilot focused on schools in high socially vulnerable communities using provincial funding for Period Promise; this initiative was intended to begin in the fall.
- The funding to the United Way was delayed, so the Division began a pilot with a small group of schools.
- This pilot was funded through the operating reserves identified by the Board for the current budget.
- Provincial funding was received by the United Way in late February.
- Administration is now in conversation with the United Way to move forward with schools from the High Social Vulnerability List.
- Lessons learned from schools piloting this initiative will inform broader implementation in Division schools using the operating reserve funding identified by the Board.

NP:km