

March 11, 2008

Deborah Morrison
Community Partnership Enhancement Fund Facilitator
10220 121 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1K7

Dear Deborah:

On behalf of Edmonton Public Schools, I would like to provide this letter in support of the Community Partnership Enhancement Fund's submission for the Premier's Award of Excellence. In my capacity with our school district, I have been involved in the Community Partnership Enhancement initiatives in a number of contexts and have developed a significant understanding of the value and impact of this work.

Our district has always worked with community partners. However, in the last several years, this kind of collaboration has become increasingly important as the demographics of the city have been changing with increased numbers of Aboriginal people, immigrants, and refugees. These changes have been mirrored in our schools and as a result, we have been looking for ways to understand more clearly the resources available in the community and ways we can work more effectively with community partners in terms of providing needed supports to students and their families.

The community mapping work has been fundamental in advancing our collaborative work with community. It has enabled us to obtain a snapshot of the needs of students and families based on geographic areas in the city. This in turn has allowed us to connect more quickly and efficiently with community partners, and to understand the resources that are in place. We have been able to identify needs, to align resources, and to plan projects and initiatives more effectively. The mapping work has also enabled us to communicate with our trustees and district staff about the demographic changes and therefore, the impact across district schools and the need for increased understanding regarding the educational needs of Aboriginal students and newcomers. The work has also been the foundation for an Alberta Initiative for School Improvement project that focuses on school-community collaboration. We are currently implementing this project in 29 schools in the district.

Ultimately, the significance of the community mapping work is that it is making a difference to the way children's services, family and community support services and partnering organizations collaborate in support of children, youth, and families in the city. It has shaped our work with community and has enabled us to use approaches that are more effective. As a result, I am extremely pleased to have this opportunity to voice my support for the work that is being undertaken by the Community Partnership Enhancement Fund.

Sincerely,

Gloria Chalmers
Director Programs