

January 21, 2008

Report on visit to Amiskwaciy Academy
Grade 7-12
Edmonton Public School Board

1. Governance – Amiskwaciy has a Principal (presently non-aboriginal) who reports to an Assistant Superintendent of Schools EPSB who of course reports to the Superintendent who then reports to the Edmonton Public School School Board.
 - there is a part-time Vice-Principal who is onsite part-time with responsibilities for other Schools as well.
 - Metis Child Welfare Officer on site
 - Liaison Workers on site 3 days per week and then to other other Schools with Aboriginal Students.
 - Amiskwaciy has an Advisory Group made up of; Elders, Community Agencies, Trustees no Aboriginal Education Board.
 - No Liaison Trustee as Edmonton elects their Trustees on the Ward System so the Trustees are the Liaisons for the Schools in their Wards.
 - Staffing – 14 staff of whom 7 are Aboriginal.
 - Aboriginal Task Force appointed and reported back in 2007 including recommendations and draft policy/regulations which have now been accepted by the EPSB and are now in practice. The Task Force also looked at structures which were already in place and the desire of the District. The Task Force went out into the Community, Community Groups and Agencies, Aboriginal Community as well as all of their Educational Partners.
2. Facility
Amiskwaciy Academy is a grade 7-12 Aboriginal Secondary School within the Edmonton Public School Board System. The School is in the former Municipal Airport Public Terminal Building and is being leased. There are no grounds only a gymnasium which was added to the original building. The School was established under an agreement with the Provincial Government for building costs, staffing for 12 years. This included \$12 million which was used up in the first 6 years. 50% of the present lease costs come from the Provincial Gov't.
3. Funding
Block Grant from the Provincial Government
Level 1 basic \$5165.00 per pupil.
Facilities costs are extracted from the School Budget and paid by the District (i.e. maintenance, utilities etc.)
Currently the EPSB provides \$2.2 million to the School to operate for the 2007/2008 School year. Funding this year was based on 271 students.

4. Other Aboriginal Schools in Edmonton

Awasi Elementary School K-6 operated by EPSB
This School was established in the 1970's and serves high needs students. It is interesting to note that a lot of parents of these students want their children to go to their neighbourhood Secondary rather than to Amiskwacy.

R.O.P. (Rights of Passage) School grades 7-9 with 35 students. Smaller setting but higher needs students. This is in an old EPSB Building but operated by a Professional Society called Broken Arrow – the District provides the staffing for this School.

5. Aboriginal Student Population

90% of EPSB Aboriginal Students have self identified. EPSB has the 2nd largest Aboriginal Student Population in Canada and 62% of those are urban native. Amiskwacy presently has 271 students.

6. Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is hard to get. The District, School, Principal and Staff are all very welcoming to parents and try to meet with each students parents at least once per year. Amiskwacy has two Feasts or Lunches per year, an Art Fair, Talent Show to get parents into the School. These are The main times during the year that Amiskwacy is successful in getting parents into the School. Report Cards are not sent home with students but given to parents by hand to ensure receipt.

7. Academic Achievement

IEP for each student at Amiskwacy.
Focus on Literacy and Numeracy as per EPSB programs.
Celebrate individual student growth.
Struggle with Achievement and Graduation Rates.
Admit that Stats could look better.
Amiskwacy is making a difference.
It may take some students 5 years to complete their Secondary program but they do complete.

Do you focus on Graduation Rates or Success Rates?

Amiskwacy is making a difference in the SUCCESS of its' students. Meaning that although the graduation rates are not increasing as much as hoped students are going on to jobs and making a success out of their lives.

EPSB is in negotiations with NAIT and Grant McEwan College for assistance with Trades Training.

8. Meeting with Board Chair Bev Eslinger along with Ass't. Sup. Donna Barrett

During this meeting we had very frank discussions about Amiskwaciy

Governance – EPSB would not and would also not recommend an Aboriginal Education Board their preference is for an Advisory Committee to the EPSB only.

Achievement – do not dwell on Graduation Rates rather Success of Students which may mean being trained to get and keep a job. Thereby becoming a contributing member of society. They are now trying to work on a method of somehow tracing their students once they leave Amiskwaciy so that they have some data for success rates.

Establishment of any School such as Amiskwaciy should be from the grassroots and up not from the top down. When Dr. Dodsall was the Superintendent of Schools a Committee was established to consider establishing an Aboriginal Secondary School. One of the members of that committee was Dr. Dodsall's father who was a Principal at a Reserve School in Alberta and this committee recommended that an Aboriginal Secondary School be established. There was mistrust as this was seen as coming from the District and being sort of imposed. Amiskwaciy could have been more successful from the start had it been initiated by parents or the Aboriginal Community at large.

Closing the GAP Conference for Alberta will be held in Kananaskis in April. This Conference will be focusing on Aboriginal Education. Bev Eslinger will provide SD57 with information on the Conference so that SD57 could send some representatives. She thinks that it will be beneficial.

Submitted by Trustee Bill Christie