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TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Update on Operational Efficiencies 2022-2023

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REFERENCE N/A

ISSUE

Each year Administration provides an update to the Board of Trustees on operational efficiencies undertaken in the past year as well as other operational efficiencies being considered as a way to direct as many dollars as possible to the classroom.

BACKGROUND

This information report includes an update on efficiencies that have been continued from prior years, new efficiencies that were realized during the 2022-2023 school years, and other efficiencies currently being explored.

CURRENT SITUATION

Energy Efficiency

Under the Division's Solar Strategy initiative, a number of solar installation projects are now complete and are delivering reduced energy costs. It is estimated that completed projects will combine to generate 5,500 megawatt-hours of energy and save \$650,000 in 2024. These solar installations are expected to offset about 7.5 per cent of the Division's electricity consumption, or the equivalent of about 800 Alberta homes per year.

Collaborative Transportation Service with Edmonton Catholic Schools (started 2017-2018)

In the spring of 2018, a shared transportation arrangement was pursued by Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic Schools to expand the number of shared bus routes and to find efficiencies. While students from each jurisdiction ride separately, the buses operating these routes are shared and the costs and efficiencies are split between the divisions.

Since 2018, the number of shared routes has varied in response to a variety of factors such as changes in yellow bus ridership and alignment of School Hours of Operation. Currently, the Divisions share 22 yellow bus routes using the shared transportation arrangement. This shared agreement is expected to result in cost savings of over \$550,000 for Edmonton Public Schools each year.

Administration continues to meet regularly to identify and implement additional shared routes.

Sale of Electronic Transit Passes (started 2021-2022)

In 2021-2022, a SchoolZone interface was successfully developed and tested in collaboration with the City of Edmonton to sell electronic ETS transit passes (Arc cards) directly to Division families. Arc cards offer students a number of benefits including:

- the ability to recover lost or stolen passes
- the option to purchase transit passes without having to visit the school office
- the continued option for students to pay for their pass in cash if they wish.

As of January 2024, the Division successfully initiated a pilot of the technology in four schools. Results from the pilot show that the technology reduces the amount of time that Division staff require to sell and distribute ETS passes by approximately 75 per cent, allowing them to focus on other duties. The technology will continue to be rolled out to additional schools in 2024.

Technology Evergreening Strategy

Display systems: Improved logistics resulted in better coordination of deliveries and installations of TES classroom display systems, reducing disruptions to classrooms. With an automated delivery system established through the Distribution Centre, Technology and Information Management (TIM) and Integrated Information Services (IIS) were better able to track deliveries to schools and coordinate installations. Bi-monthly meetings between TIM and IIS installers also helped address installation issues, and developed Division standards for installation. Last year just under 1000 displays were installed in the Division. This is an increase of almost 350 more boards than the previous year.

Print systems: Print audits were completed at 76 schools. The Enterprise Print process, like the system used at the Centre for Education, is now currently being deployed to all schools as we replace end-of-life copiers and stand-alone printers with higher efficiency print devices and print management software. The benefits of Enterprise Print include reducing excess print jobs, improving security of printed documents, and reducing the cost-per-page printed. For example, a typical school converted to Enterprise print today will see a 15 to 20 per cent reduction in their total cost of printing (including hardware, software, paper, and click-charges) over the next five years. For a small elementary school, this would translate to \$5,000 to \$6,000 in savings per year. Network printers can be an entry point for malware. Last year the Division removed just under 40 non-compliant print machines that did not meet Division security requirements. The removal of these older print devices reduces costs as they consume more energy than our new Enterprise machines and cost more from an operational perspective (ink, repair costs, paper consumption).

Staff workstations: During the 2022-2023 school year over 3,000 staff workstations were deployed to replace end-of-life computers across the Division. Leveraging a micro-team's approach and using the new automated delivery system through the Distribution Centre we were able to deliver and deploy these machines across the Division in less than three months. This is our third year of the Technology Evergreening Strategy (TES) and we continue to improve upon our efficiencies and streamline installations by using similar models of machines procured through bulk purchasing. Testing was initiated on using Chrome OS devices as the staff primary workstations and continues in 2023-2024. Chrome OS device advantages in comparison to Windows OS include lower cost (both procurement and power consumption), increased security, and ease of use.

Student devices: Google Chromebook Auto Update Expiration (AUE) was extended (by Google) on all Chrome OS products as of September 2023, meaning all Division Chromebooks will receive automatic

operating systems and security updates for ten years from date of release. This means more flexibility for the Division's evergreening strategy. While we don't expect these low-cost devices to be serviceable for ten years (current lifespan is 4-5 years) this extension provides more options for the evergreening schedule.

Adding Single-Sign-On (SSO) Access to EPSB Digital Library

Access has been streamlined so staff and students can access the Division's full catalogue any time and from anywhere at library.epsb.ca. Students and teachers can go directly to library.epsb.ca or alternatively, search for *epsb library* or *School Name library* to get to the library catalogue. Previously, connection through Connect, SchoolZone or the Division network was required. This new functionality enables more convenient access for students and staff to explore our collections and manage their borrowing. It also makes it much easier to share links to titles and searches. This work extends discovery in the catalogue when titles are unavailable at a user's school by referring searches to the Division's 'Sora' digital library and Edmonton Public Library's catalogue.

Parent attendance entry in SchoolZone

The 2022–2023 school year was the first full year where the function that allows parents to enter their child's attendance directly into SchoolZone was available. This was embraced by over 70 per cent of the schools by the end of the school year. Schools that chose to activate this function reported very high levels of parent and staff satisfaction with the tool, and significant time savings for office staff. Enhancements were introduced in the 2022–2023, with further enhancements planned for the 2023–2024 school year.

Streamlined approval of third-party apps

Third-party apps are digital tools used for educational purposes (EdTech tools) which use Division (Google Account) credentials to log in. The use of these EdTech Tools require Third Party App FOIP consent and parent notification of how the tool will be using student data prior to student use. A new database has been created to make this process much simpler and less time consuming for staff.

Division staff can view the [EdTech Tools Privacy Review Database](#) to see all the EdTech Tools that have been reviewed. Each reviewed tool has an associated Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) which includes the precautionary measures that need to be taken by the teacher to be compliant with the FOIP Act. This database also includes the associated 'Parent Notification' schools can share, which outlines for parents how their child's data will be used outside of the school.

This new process provides the Division a consistent approach in evaluating privacy concerns, reducing the workload on schools. This "consistent use approach" allows the Division to leverage educational data for other aligned applications without always requiring parental consent, streamlining the process. The approach is practical and privacy-protective, ensuring responsible use within the original purpose.

Monthly Maintenance Windows

Starting in September 2022, TIM adopted a schedule of recurring system and hardware maintenance periods. The second Saturday of each month was set aside to have scheduled downtime on systems for required maintenance. By establishing this regular schedule, required security and maintenance was implemented with less unplanned downtime.

Fiber Network Transceivers

Over the last several years the Division has migrated to using fibre optic cables as the connection medium for school and central networks. While fibre optics and their peripherals are costlier than their copper counterparts, they offer higher speeds and allow for longer cable lengths, reducing the number of wiring closets in schools. To make this transition less impactful on budgets, research was done to find a low-cost supplier of one of the key components - fibre transceivers, the laser emitters and detectors that “light up” a fibre optic cable. TIM technical staff discovered a solution that reduced our unit cost from \$500 to \$50, making the transition to fibre optic significantly more economical. We have continued to use these over the past five years reducing the costs in networking by roughly \$95,000 annually.

Chromebook Repair Depot

The Chromebook repair depot at the Distribution Centre has been in full operation for one full year. Data has been collected on the types of repairs and which models are most impacted. This data, along with which schools are seeing higher numbers of repairs have been used to inform awareness campaigns on how to reduce damage, thus saving repair costs. The depot has streamlined repairs so that turnaround time is predictable and schools will have technology available for students when needed.

Electronics Recycling Program

In 2022–2023 the Division diverted more than 42,000 pounds (or 19,000 kilograms) of old technology and electronics from landfills, approximately the weight of four school buses. The Division’s recycling partner provides \$30,000 due to their reuse and recycle IT Asset Disposition process. Those funds were allocated to assistive technology for students.

Cell Phone Administration

The Government of Alberta (GoA) awarded a new wireless services and products contract to Bell Mobility Inc. exclusively. Our Division is participating in this contract which now includes the annual licence fee for our cell phone management system (annual savings of \$24,000) and the procurement of cell phone products. Managing the purchase of cell phones through iProcurement aligns cell phone purchasing practices with other Division technology.

Prior to this change, the annual spend on Division cell phones was unknown. The purchase of a cell phone was typically processed with a Division credit card and purchased online or at a cell phone retailer. The result was a fleet of over 1,100 devices of various makes and models and an inaccurate inventory. Tracking cell phone assets, the same way as other Division technology will allow for standardisation of hardware resulting in lower support costs.

Additionally, travel rate plans are included in the new GoA rate plan, reducing resources (Help Desk) required to administer these on behalf of staff travelling outside of Canada (Winter, Spring and Summer Break).

Online Timesheets

The Division implemented a pilot of online timesheets in several central areas. This pilot reduced duplicate entry of time information into our time reporting system and has resulted in time savings for the team members involved in this work. It has also reduced paper and printing. The pilot has expanded to other central areas and a representative sample of schools was added to the pilot early in 2023. Based on the feedback from central decision units and schools, a decision will be made regarding a broader rollout for the 2023-2024 school year.

Professional Learning (PL)

In 2022-2023, the Division continued to focus on offering engaging, meaningful professional learning opportunities in both online and in-person formats. Central departments continue to leverage the flexibility of different delivery methods of professional learning for staff. For example, nearly 60 percent of professional learning delivered by Curriculum and Learning Supports was offered online. The Division also introduced Spotlight professional learning sessions which are short, online, targeted PL offerings, allowing teachers to drop in as their time allows. In total 30 Spotlight sessions were provided with over 1,100 participants. Curriculum and Learning Supports also developed asynchronous professional learning resources for Division staff to access as needed.

Diversity Education created five asynchronous staff professional learning resources to be used as an opportunity to start/continue anti-racism and equity dialogue and learning. The resources are flexible and allow for schools to use them in a variety of ways. The topics are:

- An Introduction to Integrative Anti-Racism
- Basics of Being an Ally
- Learning about Microaggressions
- Understanding Power and Privilege Through an Intersectional Lens
- What is Bias?

Incident Submission (Archibus)

The Risk Management & Insurance unit identified the need to transition student incident and property loss damage reporting to an electronic format versus the paper process. In consideration of ongoing costs, and existing licensed software applications within the Division, the decision was made to use the Archibus system for electronic reporting of student incidents and property loss damage. Originally implemented for the facilities unit within the Integrated Infrastructure Services Department in 2009, Archibus is currently being utilized across many other central units and schools including Facilities Maintenance, Fleet Management, Security, and Risk Management & Insurance. The new electronic reporting system supports a unified approach to our data collection and will improve on insurance industry required risk reporting and streamline incident data across all central DU's and schools.

All central DUs started utilizing the Archibus system for Property/Damage Loss submittal in the 2022-2023 school year with 1,855 property damage related incidents reported to Risk Management in the school year. This move to electronic reporting has resulted in comprehensive data collection for all Division schools, Facility Maintenance, Custodial group, Security and Risk Management & Insurance.

In addition, beginning in January 2022, administration started to pilot Student and Non-Staff Accident electronic reporting. Six schools were selected to exclusively utilize the program. During the pilot, schools reported 740 incidents. The pilot project was crucial for the development and utilization for all Division schools starting in September 2023.

Banking

In the 2022-2023 school year Financial Services continued to work with schools to transition school bank accounts to the Division's centralized ScotiaConnect banking platform.

By moving to ScotiaConnect schools can receive support and oversight from Financial Services on banking matters, thereby increasing efficiency in internal control in schools. Once all bank accounts are on ScotiaConnect, schools will see more efficiency through electronic banking.

In the 2022-2023 school year, 22 schools opened a new ScotiaBank account and a further 66 schools transferred their existing ScotiaBank account to the Division ScotiaConnect account for a cumulative total of 137 schools with 82 schools remaining. The Division has mandated that all schools convert to ScotiaConnect by the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

Global Payments

In the summer of 2023, the Division consolidated its contract with Global Payments. Global Payments is the approved service provider for facilitating the receipt of credit card payments from families, customers, and donors. Having all schools under one contract permits the Financial Services to represent schools when they are having problems or need routine tasks completed. This not only reduces duplication of effort in schools but also positions the Division to work toward Payment Card Information (PCI) compliance in the future.

Contracts

In an effort to streamline the procurement process and increase compliance to the Division's trade agreement obligation, Purchasing and Contract Services has been diligently working for the past three years to establish blanket and contract purchase agreements. There are currently over 250 blanket and contract purchase agreements (CPA/BPA) in place that can be utilized by schools and Decision Units including furniture, library services, grounds services and sensory equipment to name a few.

Having established blanket and contract purchase agreements in place significantly reduces the time and resources required for schools and decision units to procure goods and services as they can proceed directly with the purchase.

Established contracts reduce the risk to the Division as there is an agreement governing expectations and liability with properly vetted vendors. This in turn will reduce the time and resources needed to manage any issues that arise.

The Provision of Instructional Support Services to Alberta Education, School Divisions and Organizations

Division departments continue to provide support to Alberta Education, other school divisions and organizations, either through partnership agreements, grants or informal collaboration, enabling access to professional learning services and events or contracted services, such as resource development.

Examples of this support include:

- In collaboration with the other major Metro Boards, Curriculum and Learning Supports represented Edmonton Public Schools in leading the establishment of a grant to develop a provincial science resource for Kindergarten to Grade 6 which will support teachers in delivering the new curriculum.
- The Division established a provincial grant to develop and pilot an Educational Assistant Intern Program. The training program consists of five training modules:
 - Supporting Literacy
 - Supporting Mathematics
 - Child Brain Development
 - Managing Anxiety
 - Supporting Complex Behaviours

This pilot program was utilized by school divisions across Alberta.

- Collaborative development and/or use of resources such as Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLAT) with other school jurisdictions.

Infrastructure Planning

Infrastructure Planning provides educational facility and capital planning support to school jurisdictions through contracted services. Revenue generated through the provision of contract services helps to ensure that the Division's professional capacity is retained and supported.

- Planning staff completed a Leduc Accommodation Study for the Black Gold School Division, in support of the Leduc Schools Boundary and Grade Configuration Review. The review was related to school grade configurations and attendance areas, precipitated by the upcoming Ohpaho Secondary School, a new opening in September 2024 in the City of Leduc.
- Planning staff initiated a review of school capacity and utilization on behalf of Elk Island Catholic Schools, and will be developing recommendations for an updated Ten-and Three-Year Capital Plan for submission to Alberta Education in the spring of 2024.

Infrastructure Planning supported parent groups at multiple schools who successfully received over \$340,000 in grant funds from multiple agencies that will be available for playground development in the 2024 construction season. Continued support will be provided to schools and parent groups fundraising for future site improvements, including playgrounds, outdoor classrooms, courts, etc. which have no other funding sources.

Centre High at Alberta College

During the 2022-2023 school year, the Division finalized the purchase of the former Alberta College building from MacEwan University. Following a three-year lease term at the Alberta College site, as well as several years of leasing at the former location, Centre High is now situated in a permanent home and the Division is able to utilize operational funds that were previously required to support lease payments. Annually, the Division can expect to reallocate approximately \$1.5 million in operational funds into core instructional and support needs.

KEY POINTS

As noted above, Edmonton Public Schools continues to collaborate with other school divisions, organizations and working committees. This collaboration not only maximizes provincial education funds, but also creates efficiencies resulting in cost savings and the ability to provide better supports and services for all students in the province of Alberta.

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