

DATE: January 22, 2019

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of School

SUBJECT: Annual Update on Operational Efficiencies: 2017-2018

ORIGINATOR: Todd Burnstad, Chief Financial Officer

RESOURCE

STAFF: Angela Anderson, Janice Aubry, Lisa Austin, Marlene Hanson, Brenda Gummer, Darwin Martin, Nancy Peterson Madonna Proulx, Chris Wright

REFERENCE: N/A

ISSUE

At the January 23, 2018, Board meeting, Administration presented an information report on operational efficiencies being undertaken to maximize the amount of education dollars directed to the classroom. This information will now be updated and reported on annually.

BACKGROUND

For purposes of this discussion, the following information includes: efficiencies that had been initiated during the 2017-2018 school year; efficiencies/opportunities currently being investigated and future planned initiatives/opportunities.

Collaborative Transportation Service with Edmonton Catholic Schools

Following discussions between Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools in the spring of 2018, a shared transportation arrangement is being pursued to expand existing shared bus routes and to find efficiencies. While students from each jurisdiction will ride separately, the buses operating these routes will be shared and the costs and efficiencies will be split between the districts.

Effective September 4, 2018, Administration has implemented 25 bus routes using the shared transportation arrangement. This shared agreement is expected to result in cost savings of over \$600,000 for Edmonton Public Schools.

Integration of Transportation Service Types

Effective September 2018, shared service types are being piloted at three locations. The pilot is intended to align the service model with program goals where some students attending special needs programs have been transitioned from a curb-side pickup to a walk-to-stop service model. This service model has resulted in shorter ride times, improved route reliability, and anticipated cost savings of approximately \$150,000.

School Technologies Equity Project Initiatives (2017-2018)

Access to surplus funds provided an opportunity to reduce inequity in devices and infrastructure in some District schools. Without access to surplus funding or a targeted allocation, the replacement or

evergreening of these technologies would occur over a longer period depending on other priorities in each school.

The first project included \$3.2M made available from surplus funds to provision, supply and deploy staff and student devices to 158 school sites. Between May and the end of August 2018, 3,407 student devices (Chromebooks) were deployed to over 72 schools. A further 42 schools also received upgraded mobile carts for secure storage. Access to surplus funds also enabled District Technology to replace 1,666 aging staff devices (personal computers & 445 monitors) at over 123 different sites. Bulk purchasing of hardware resulted in cost savings of approximately \$151,000.

The second project was a \$1.3M initiative that facilitated the upgrade of aging network cabling infrastructure in 63 schools. This project resulted in a better internet experience for staff and students as well as improved technical response time by the school technicians that manage those schools. The upgrade of network cabling allowed for a consolidation of network equipment in a number of schools thereby reducing the replacement costs due to less equipment needed. In one extreme case, 33 network devices were reduced to nine consolidated devices leading to an overall lower cost of equipment as well as the option to reuse equipment in other locations.

Enterprise Print

The Enterprise Print process, which many businesses have been using for years, is currently being deployed to schools based on modern technologies available.

Enterprise print can alleviate printing issues such as:

- documents printed and not retrieved
- duplicate printing of documents in error
- print jobs accidentally retrieved by another staff member resulting in duplicate printing
- issues with sensitive information being printed and not picked up right away
- using work time to search out the owner of a document not retrieved by a staff member

An HP 5040 printer cartridge costs approximately \$640 and can print up to 40,000 pages at five per cent coverage which equals to 1.6 cents per page. The industry standard is five per cent coverage, yet most printed pages in our organization are about 7-10 per cent coverage which equals approximately 2.8 to 3.2 cents per page.

The large copiers cost about 0.5 cents per page for black and white and 4.5 cents per page for color. Some of the District's most expensive monochrome standalone printers cost over 20 cents per page to print.

Technology Services tracks printers and uses ten per cent coverage as our base to evaluate the cost effectiveness; the percentage rate also includes costs for other consumables such as maintenance kits and waste toner cartridges.

Although our industry requires a large amount of printing (the District average is approximately 2,000 pages per student count); the Enterprise Print process allows us to be more efficient in working to reduce this amount of printing and the costs associated with it.

Participation Under Government of Alberta Standing Offer Agreements (2017-2018)

For many years, the Government of Alberta (GoA) has included provisions in their government-wide standing offer and blanket contracts for a variety of goods and services to allow other Alberta Municipalities, Academic, Schools and Hospitals (MASH) sector entities to 'piggy-back' off of their contracts.

Edmonton Public Schools continues to use the government program for the following:

- Cell phones
- Office supplies
- Task chairs
- BMO District Credit Card Program

Routers, switches and wireless access points have now been added to the program.

Point of Sale (POS) and Online Payments

The goal of this initiative is to reduce the amount of physical cash being handled in schools and to reduce the service fee costs associated with processing payment transactions by debit or credit card.

Schools currently collect cash and cheques for school fees, transportation fees, etc. (school generated funds). The largest drawback for smaller schools is the transaction fees charged by the third party debit and credit card payment processing vendors. With service fees being reduced, the goal is to onboard more schools to accept debit and credit payments.

In the spring of 2018, through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, Global Payments was announced as the preferred payment processing vendor. The contract with Global Payments results in competitively lower rates for POS and online transactions, as well as the ability to provide cost reporting at a District level. The transition to Global Payments supports the initiative of moving our schools to cashless transactions. This is not only more convenient for our parents and end users, but it also reduces the amount of time our administrative staff spend counting cash, driving to the bank for deposits and ensuring that cash controls are correctly in place.

Based on estimates prepared by Financial Services, a school should see a reduction in transactions fees of approximately 33 per cent. From June 2018, when our first POS transactions began to be processed, to October 2018, our schools have collectively saved approximately \$6,100 in transaction fees. To date, there are 79 school and central departments that have transitioned to the new contract and are actively accepting payments via their POS machine. Currently, fifteen schools are set up to accept online payments, through Global Payments via SchoolZone. Finance will continue to work with schools to transition over to electronic payments

PeopleSoft Strategic Roadmap

A review of the PeopleSoft Human Capital Management (HCM) product concluded that it is not supporting the current and anticipated day-to-day work needs of the Human Resources team, the accurate/timely flow of information required for end-to-end business processes within Central decision units, or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP).

A Three Year Strategic Roadmap for PeopleSoft HCM was developed out of stakeholder conversations, identifying 55 projects to improve the use of system functionalities and maximize the return on investment in the coming years. In June 2017, approval was received to move forward on this Roadmap.

This work will ensure the District is better accessing existing capacity in PeopleSoft, enable more efficient processes, support an enterprise approach to core District systems and ensure that the District's Human Resource Information System can support current and future needs.

In 2017-18, Human Resource security and governance practices were reviewed and updated, including processes regarding roles, access and permissions. The updates ensure that we have solid practices and provide continued compliance with external audit requirements. Additionally, updates were made to the system to introduce current functionality requirements for online application and mobile capability.

Work was initiated in 2017-18 to review Human Resource Staffing business processes from posting through to hire for both business and teacher staffing. Functionality for online applications for external hires was built. This included building the platform, creating the steps and language required for external careers, creating new forms and documents for external candidates, and developing and documenting the required business processes. This functionality will be launched in late January 2019 and will provide a more streamlined process and experience for the applicant, as well as create efficiencies internally, eliminating paper, increasing security, and providing mobile functionality.

In 2018-19 work continues on initiatives outlined in the PeopleSoft Strategic Roadmap. To date, password controls have been amended to align with industry, a new interface with ASEBP has been built and tested for implementation, and PeopleSoft licensing has been migrated to the Oracle model.

Staffing Processes

The staffing team has migrated the paper-intensive processes used for continuing contract recommendations and other staffing processes to Google Share. This shift to a paperless process has resulted in a significant reduction of paper and also has resulted in employee time efficiencies.

Effective December 1, 2018, the teacher application moved to a fillable format, including a decrease of requested documents that applicants are required to submit. Additionally, applicants may now submit applications electronically. It is anticipated that in early 2019 we will move to online applications for all staff groups, resulting in reduced printing costs as well as time efficiencies.

Electronic processes have been implemented in all areas of Human Resources Consulting. For example, leave letters, one-year term leadership letters, and offer letters are now sent via email. Communications between our unit and school and central decision units now maximize Google Share.

As the PeopleSoft roadmap work continues there will be further opportunities for streamlining some of these processes.

Edmonton Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (ERCSD)

ERCSD delivers services that were previously coordinated under Edmonton Student Health Integrated Program (ESHIP), Children and Youth with Complex Needs (CYCN) and Edmonton Regional Education Consulting Services (ERECS/Inclusive Learning Outreach). Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, Inclusive Learning in partnership with ERSCD coordinated an enhanced delivery of services and supports to students, families and school staff within their schools. These initiatives continue within this present school year.

Through this development of Information Sharing Agreements, wrap around service providers can efficiently access the information required to provide timely and integrated services. Pinpoint, the

digital student record, provides a common repository of critical documents to inform and target services.

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

Many District departments annually provide supports to Alberta Education, school jurisdictions and organizations, either through partnership agreements, or informal collaboration, enabling access to professional learning services and events or contracted services. Examples of this include:

- Contracted services to Alberta Education for curriculum and resource development for provincial use.
- Contracted services to regional learning consortia for workshop presentations and resource development.
- Collaborative development and/or use of resources such as the Math Intervention Programming Instrument (MIPI) and Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLAT) with other school jurisdictions.
- District professional learning events (conferences, in-service sessions, etc.) accessed by other school jurisdictions.
- Collaboration with numerous jurisdictions to share expertise and plan and develop resources for the implementation of the new curriculum.

New for the 2018-2019 school year is SOGI 123, a collaborative educator network between districts in BC and Alberta, in support of policy information, creating of inclusive classrooms, resource sharing re: sexual orientation and gender identity.

Online receipt of tender documents

In order to streamline processes, Purchasing and Contract Services (PCS) increased use of the third party online tendering software, Bonfire, for receipt of tender documents. This benefits both PCS staff and external vendors by eliminating the need for in-person public openings and preparing pricing summaries. It also enables evaluations to be done online by reviewers versus trying to schedule in-person meetings to look through complex paper submissions. Vendor responses are focused on required information, making evaluations simpler and information easier to find and evaluate. It also creates efficiencies for the vendors as they no longer have to be present at the Centre for Education to submit proposals. They can submit them online in real time right up to closing, and see results immediately after the tender closes.

New Intranet “Connect”

In May 2018, the District launched its new intranet, called Connect. Connect took information from more than 130 internal websites and consolidated that information into a central location where staff can find the District applications and content they need to do their jobs. Connect provides the most accurate and up-to-date content staff need. It has improved efficiency by allowing staff to easily find the content they need. To date, more than 120,000 searches have been performed on Connect. This ability to easily search and find the information quickly has saved significant staff time.

Enhancements to SchoolZone

In fall 2018, enhancements were released on SchoolZone that allow parents to complete the Student Information Correction Form and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Form through SchoolZone. These enhancements have a number of benefits including reduced staff time to enter changes; ease of access for parents to complete the form; and the ability for staff to track completed forms through a familiar SchoolZone interface. Additionally, as the FOIP Form is captured and

tracked digitally, there will no longer be a need to update the form annually, resulting in further efficiencies. Additional refinements to these processes are expected for fall 2019, based on feedback from the first year of implementation.

Centralized response to Alberta Education Audits

Through the use of Google tools and Pinpoint, central staff across departments and schools worked together to respond to an Alberta Education Enrolment Verification Audit. The severity of the potential claw back of funds was significantly reduced by this collaboration. The Enrolment Verification Audit for 2018-2019 has recently commenced and also includes a Registration and Attendance (RA) Audit. Central departments will continue to work with schools to improve the registration processes to minimize the potential impact to funding and the work required by schools. This work includes both the addition of programming controls in PowerSchool and monitoring of enrolments by Student Information staff.

Digital Provincial Student Record

The District has invested in a digital student record (Pinpoint) since 2008, in a partnership between District Technology and District Information Management. As the province is requiring all school boards to transfer student records digitally by the 2020-2021 school year, many school boards are requesting information and advice from the District on how to move forward. Opportunities for collaboration and economies of scale exist and are being considered.

Quickbooks Upgrade

District schools have used Quickbooks software to manage school generated funds since 1997. This initial version was no longer supported by the vendor as it was not Windows 10 certified and required a high degree of support due to the aging technology; most importantly, it introduced a risk where the School Generated Funds (SGF) business function would be impacted should the system stop working. After evaluating options, schools were transitioned from Quickbooks 2007 Pro Desktop to Quickbooks Online. Implementation for all schools was completed in February of 2018. All existing data was converted by the software provider and school staff were fully trained upon project completion.

By selecting Quickbooks Online and eliminating future desktop upgrades, the District will save approximately \$360,000. Technician time is no longer required for the installation of the product and information is hosted by Intuit Software so there is no server requirement by the District. With the online version, the software is constantly being upgraded by the vendor so there is no requirement for downtime for upgrades.

Equipment to Support the Alberta Education School Nutrition Program

As part of the Alberta Education School Nutrition Program being used in 22 District schools, a Request for Proposals was completed to identify a vendor and a list of items that directly support the safe storage, preparation and serving of food. These items help schools to meet Alberta Health standards for safe food handling and include commercial-grade appliances, equipment and small kitchen wares. Through this process the District was able to obtain many of the items at a cost savings to date of \$23,346. All District schools can now purchase any of these items to support their own school nutrition program from the approved vendor through the Edmonton Public School Board store in E-Biz.

The Provision of Educational Facility and Capital Planning Services to School Jurisdictions

Infrastructure provides educational facility and capital planning support to school jurisdictions through contracted services. Examples of this include:

- Development of 10-Year Facilities and 3-Year Capital plans for Black Gold School Division and Elk Island Public Schools in 2017/2018.
- Development of a Five Year Grant Investment Facilities and Capital Report to Northlands School Division in 2018/2019.
- In discussions with Parkland School Division to provide capital and facility planning support for the upcoming Capital Plan Submission to Alberta Education (due April 1, 2019).

Provincial Brokering Model Initiative

In September 2017, the District became aware of the following Provincial Brokering Model Initiative:

Alberta Education is currently developing a business case to explore options for establishing a Provincial Brokering Model for the procurement of select goods and services, in order to reduce costs and administrative duplication of effort and increase equity among all school authorities (Public, Separate, Francophone, Charter, Private, and First Nations).

Edmonton Public Schools has an active role in this working committee with Todd Burnstad, CFO, being nominated as the representative for CASS and Stephanie Galba, Manager, Purchasing and Contract Services as the representative from the District.

The working committee drafted a recommendation report that was forwarded to the province detailing what they believe is the most cost efficient and viable solution. The committee determined that development of a third party brokering body was unnecessary, as there are already several mechanisms in place. The preferred approach was to better coordinate those mechanisms into a one-stop-shop portal with access by all jurisdictions.

Edmonton Public Schools has already commenced including clauses in our tender and contract documents allowing participation by other jurisdictions as part of this initiative. Some examples are:

- desktops, laptops and chrome devices
- virtual reality kits
- custodial equipment.

Other commodities will be added as they are tendered.

KEY POINTS

As noted above, Edmonton Public Schools continues to collaborate with other jurisdictions, 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.

TB:ja