

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Review

Questions and Answers resulting from the parent meeting held Thursday March 13, 2014

Meeting held:
Thursday March
13, 2014

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- 1 | How accurate was the percentile data, given that it was aggregate across the sites?

Given the disparity in the various program sizes, neither aggregating nor disaggregating the data is totally reliable. For example, even Alberta Education does not report PAT results for small groups. I believe the data was sufficiently valid, in combination with all the other information, to lead to appropriate recommendations

- 2 | Will the guiding document also govern the programming needs of the 250 plus students integrated into neighbourhood schools?

At this time, the plan is to focus on programming for the students enrolled specifically in the system site classes. However, the intent is to contact and get input from students who have transitioned into community schools, to provide increased depth to the work. Once the documents are complete, they can be reviewed for applicability to students in community schools and the contents made known to those families and school staff.

- 3 | Can we address vocational/option programs for DHH kids?

DHH students, as with other students, are to be provided with reasonable access to complementary courses and options at each school site.

- 4 | Will classes be in the same location?

The junior/senior high school will remain at the same location. The CBE Planning group will begin the work of looking for a common site in the fall of 2014, and there will be opportunities for parent input before any decision is made. Once final September 2014 enrolment numbers are in, and the resulting 3 year projections for each school, parents will be made aware of all the steps that lead up to a final decision.

- 5 | Can there be one site ECS-12?

This may be possible. First, there needs to be space in an appropriate facility to accommodate the wide range of environmental and learning needs. Second, we would need to ensure that it is good educational practice. As Planning does their work, the two committees can help inform them around this possibility.

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- 6 | Does the recommendation mean pre-school/K will happen by 2015? Are we partnering with Connect Society in Edmonton?

The goal will be to have this happen for September 2015, assuming there are enough parents interested and committed and that CBE can thus afford a program. Partnering has a variety of policy and financial considerations/meanings in a school context, but any possible partnerships would certainly be explored for feasibility; this only makes sense.

- 7 | Why so long a wait for pre-school services?

Given all that needs to be put in place, from resources to space to appropriately trained staff, it would be overly optimistic to believe this can be done properly for Sept. 2014. It is possible that a class could start mid-year 2014-15.

- 8 | Can we have deaf and hard of hearing as well as hearing children in a pre-k?

Hearing students, without an identified special education learning need are not provincially funded, so this is not likely possible. We would look to have this program located in a school where there are hearing children as we have with are other 3 programs. In addition, we would have to look at current research before considering this, as there has been some lack of success identified when mixing hearing and deaf children, and it appears to be less advantageous for the deaf learner at this stage of learning.

- 9 | What is the bottom line in terms of enrollment to make it viable?

Generally speaking, 12 children. However, in the start-up year of a program, we are sometimes more flexible if we can find the funding, in order to allow parents to find out about what is being offered and see how it plays out. We also try not to start something that is not sustainable with future numbers of participants. At this time agencies and parents believe there would be sufficient participants.

- 10 | What/who would it take to have Alberta Education consider American Sign Language as a second language in the way it does French, German etc. Can this be part of either committee's work?

We will endeavour to find an answer to the first part of the question, which will determine the answer to the second part.

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11 | What are the qualifications and requirements for a CBE Special Education teacher? A DHH classroom teacher?

Currently, our first priority is to hire teachers and staff who have both the specialized qualifications and experience for our programs. If this level of expertise is not available, we provide our staff with suitable training and opportunities, such as professional improvement leaves (PIFs), to further their practice in teaching our DHH learners.

12 | This review mentions 250 other DHH students in community classrooms, were they included in the review?

No, as this was a review of school site programming. However, the committees can certainly gather information from students that have transitioned from the site classes to community settings.

13 | Will the guiding documents and framework be for the program or by the site?

The guiding document is meant to be a framework for all DHH programming ECS-12. However, program integrity documents can become part of the documentation, and they address key aspects of specific programming.

14 | Some staff believed they were not welcome at this meeting, but wanted the information. Can they participate?

The intent was not to prevent teachers or staff from coming, but to ensure that the parents and agency representatives had a time and place to give their voice to the process. CBE staff was able to have input along the way and can continue to do so as the planning and implementation rolls out. Staff members and administrators from all three schools were present. There is no intent to exclude any particular group, and representatives will be included in all next steps.

15 | Will you leverage the high school work that has already been done?

Yes, we have no desire to start from scratch where we do not need to.

16 | Who will be on the committees and can we put names forward?

We will be looking for depth and breadth of representation from school based, system based, parental, agency, student and alumni groups. There is a short declaration of interest as part of this posting that can be submitted by anyone who so wishes, or forwarded to those who might not see this for their consideration.

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17 | What are next steps?

All the feedback and questions from the meeting will be posted. A request for interested committee members will go out, followed by selection and then first meetings to discuss next steps of each committee, and the possibility of having sub-committees to move the work forward more quickly. What participants at the Thursday meeting said will influence the choosing of committee members, which will be done by Elisabeth Gouthro, Susan Church and Donna Crawford. Donna will be facilitating first meetings, and responsible for feeding back to the overall community via the websites and future meetings when the work is underway and needs broader feedback. She can be contacted at docrawford@cbe.ab.ca.