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## Edmonton Public Schools Invited to World Chinese Conference

Last spring, the Ministry of Education of China issued an invitation to Alberta Education and the district to participate in the First World Conference on teaching Chinese. The conference was held in July in Beijing. A group comprised of district teachers and Central Services staff were invited to participate. Preceding and following the Conference, a small delegation of four Alberta Education staff and a representative of three Alberta jurisdictions, met with leading Chinese responsible for education and teacher training. Stuart Wachowicz, Director of Curriculum, represented Edmonton Public Schools.

The purpose of the visit was to learn of the new developments in the teaching of Chinese (Mandarin) and to examine and develop opportunities for our students and teachers. A series of meetings were held with the Ministry of Education and Colleges from Beijing, Nanjing and Shanghai. Several Chinese schools were also visited. China has made great advances in the teaching of Chinese as a second language.

Immediate results of the meetings and the conference include:

- Edmonton Public Schools has been selected as the North American site to pilot the new HSK Proficiency Exam for "Young Learners." This exam will allow students to start building internationally recognized credentials in Chinese language, leading to employment or study opportunities.
- Teachers and students will have access to the latest on-line learning supports for Chinese language, as developed by East China University.
- Opportunities for teachers to visit China and study language, culture and/or pedagogy, on a short (from 3 weeks) or long term basis in Beijing, Nanjing or Shanghai.
- Opportunities for short term student visits to China, to study at some of the nation's finest schools, developing their Chinese language and awareness of culture.
- Developing opportunities for additional twinning of schools between EPSB and China.

The trip established a close working relationship between Edmonton Public Schools and the Chinese educational organizations. The district's Mandarin program is highly regarded in China as one of the best in the world outside of their country. Mian Xie, a Mandarin bilingual teacher at Ottwell, was profiled on national Chinese television, discussing the Edmonton Public Schools' Chinese language program. One of our bilingual program graduates is now employed as an intern at the Canadian Embassy in Beijing.

Edmonton Public Schools will also be actively seeking to help more parents and students recognize the benefits of learning the Chinese language, taking advantage of our internationally acclaimed Chinese program.