

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 12, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Satoo School – Focus on Reading Comprehension

ORIGINATOR: J. Sawyer, Principal Satoo School

RESOURCE  
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INFORMATION

Satoo School, located in south-east Millwoods, serves a population of 164 students in kindergarten to grade six. Currently there is one classroom for each grade, an additional combined grade 1/2 class and a division two Behavior and Learning Assistance class. Results from the 2004 Provincial Achievement Tests were superb.

Satoo School began its Instructional Focus journey in the pilot year, 1999. At this time two staff members attended a three day institute in July to outline the process of implementing an instructional focus. At a November 1999 professional development day, teaching staff examined Provincial Achievement Tests and HLAT results and agreed on a focus statement:

*Satoo has a focus on cross-curricular comprehension of what is read, viewed and heard. By teaching the best reading comprehension strategies, our students will show measured growth as indicated by HLAT and Provincial Achievement Tests as well as other assessments, both formal and informal.*

From that point, all professional development at Satoo related to reading comprehension. Staff selected four best practices for each division. Students came to learn these practices as “BURPs” (Best Used Reading Practices).

**Division I**

- Oral reading checks
- Word wall strategies
- Highlighting key word in questions
- Story maps

**Division II**

- Jot Notes
- Pre-reading prediction activities
- Graphic organizers
- Story Maps

Posters were developed and placed throughout the school asking students whether they had “used their BURP’s today.” As well, staff carefully examined some of the school activities that may have pulled away from instruction (e.g., “fun days”) and worked to eliminate these. In June 2000, small increases in achievement were noted.

Beginning in September 2000, a consultant met with the staff on a monthly basis to teach them a protocol for the “Looking at Student Work” process. Through this process, staff critically examine samples of student work related to the school’s best teaching practices to better understand the impact of those practices on student learning. Following this process, teachers developed specific strategies for implementing the best practices in their classrooms and spent time in each others’ classrooms observing and learning from each other.

The Gates McGinitie test, a standardized multiple choice test that assesses reading comprehension, was chosen as an interim measure. Teachers administered this test at the beginning of the year, in February and in June; it proved to be a good measure of individual student growth in reading and helped teachers identify students who required additional assistance in their reading. By June 2002, HLAT scores indicated all Satoo students were reading at grade level. Furthermore, 100 per cent of grade three students and 96.2 per cent of grade six students had achieved acceptable standard in Language Arts on the Provincial Achievement Tests. At grade six this represented a 4 per cent increase since the supporting teaching and learning work development began, while at grade three it represented a 23 per cent increase.

In September 2003, the instructional leadership team (including one additional staff member and a newly appointed principal) continued to plan and run the monthly collaboration meetings, providing an opportunity to share information from the district professional development sessions and from the instructional walk-throughs. As a result of these meetings, staff recognized a need for a diagnostic reading tool to use in addition to the Gates McGinitie. They chose to purchase and implement the CARS/STARS program (a combination reading assessment and remediation program). At collaboration meetings, strategies were shared for students who were identified as not reading at grade level. As well, several strategies for involving families were developed including a Family PJ Reading party, instructional leadership team presentations to school council and the inclusion of reading information in the school newsletters. Results at the end of the year were outstanding. At the grade three level, 100 per cent of students who wrote the Language Arts Achievement Test achieved the acceptable standard and 58 per cent achieved standard of excellence. At grade six, 95 per cent achieved acceptable standard and 20 per cent standard of excellence.

This year, in addition to continuing the excellent work already established all teachers are committed to attending at least one district professional development session or instructional walk-through and sharing the information at the collaboration meetings. As well, the staff are looking at ways to use the best practices to support instruction in writing.

The Satoo School community is extremely proud of the language arts results as well as the results achieved in the other subject areas. The superb results from all students at Satoo School are an excellent testimony to what can happen when an entire school staff commits to improvement and when families and students support positive initiatives for change.

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