E D M O N T O N   P U B L I C   S C H O O L S

April 14, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Forest Heights Elementary

ORIGINATOR: S. Carl Townsend, Principal, Forest Heights School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Pat Sachse-Brown, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Forest Heights School is a Kindergarten to Grade 6 school located in south central Edmonton. The school community is comprised of 241 students who attend either the English or German Bilingual Programs.

Forest Heights School is committed to providing a high quality education for all students which focuses on development of the whole child; academically, socially, physically and emotionally. Staff strive to develop life-long learners and provide a variety of experiences and opportunities that promote health, well-being and positive relationships. The school has a strong musical tradition, incorporating Orff, hand bells and a division two choir of over 80 students. Students can engage in physical activities through the school's Running Club, Gymnastics or Intramurals program. A strong family feeling is evident within this community of learners, demonstrated in part by the ongoing support of an active Parent Council and the Friends of Forest Heights who provide enrichment opportunities for students.

The staff at Forest Heights School have many reasons to celebrate, one being strong student academic achievement results. To further enhance the capability of students at the school to articulate *where they are in their learning, what helps them to be learners and what their next steps are*, the school has been working to shift conversations with students and parents from *grading* to *learning*. In this model, students are provided genuine opportunities to articulate the successes and challenges on their learning journey to an interested party (i.e. a parent, classmate, the principal, etc.), receive feedback and set goals for future success. This shift in practice has led to a greater sense of ownership for learning by students.

Teachers work collaboratively with grade level partners across the English and German Programs, and within their cohort grouping with Capilano and Clara Tyner schools to plan for student success. This year's collegial work has focused on the area of Assessment for Learning and in developing a school-wide assessment plan. Teams across the schools have looked at pertinent research and engaged in dialogue about ways to use reporting in the service of student learning, not just to report how well students did. Teachers have deepened their understanding of current assessment practices and built time into the day for students to reflect on learning. This change has resulted in students viewing themselves as partners in the learning process.

In keeping with the Board's priority to ensure success in the area of literacy, Forest Heights School has maintained a focus on reading fluency and comprehension. Staff recognize the importance of developing solid reading and writing skills, and demonstrate their commitment to student success through a balanced approach using leveled reading materials and the implementation of guided reading and literacy centres.

Forest Heights School provides social and emotional support to students within an inclusive setting by accessing expertise within the District, such as social workers and psychologists from Consulting Services Field Teams, Edmonton Student Health Integrated Partnership (ESHIP) counselors and Teaching and Learning Support Services consultants to assist in programming for student differences. The challenge of supporting these students in a timely and effective manner requires the staff to continually realign resources.

Forest Heights staff are committed to helping each and every student reach 'Die höchsten Leistungen' (Heights of Excellence) as partners in learning. The collaborative efforts of Forest Heights School in enhancing teaching practice, developing lifelong learners and providing strong supports for students is helping to create an attitude of success that will lead to Bright Futures for all learners.

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