

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Monitoring of Early Reading Initiative

ORIGINATOR: A. McBeath, Department Head

RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

Background: This is the second year of the Early Reading Initiative established through the creation of an allocation category introduced in the 1997-98 school year which redirected monies to all elementary schools to support the implementation of early reading success approaches. The initiative was kick-started a year earlier, in 1996-97, with a three-year Early Reading and Writing Success Project involving seven schools. This report provides monitoring information on the second year of the Early Reading Initiative and a final report on the Early Reading and Writing Success Project. The project involving seven schools has served its purpose by enabling the dissemination of information to all elementary schools in the start up years regarding successful strategies.

Early Reading Initiative: The monitoring information (Appendix I) for the Early Reading Initiative indicates that in the second year of the initiative, there was improvement in six out of seven measures. The results for 1998-99 were:

- 85.0 per cent of grade one's were reading at or above grade level (an improvement of .8 per cent over last year and 1.9 per cent over baseline) and 84.0 per cent were writing at or above grade level (an improvement of .7 over last year and 4.9 over baseline), based on Highest Level of Achievement Test (HLAT) scores; 1996-97 HLAT results serve as baseline
- 84.0 per cent of grade two's were reading at or above grade level (an improvement of 1.0 per cent over last year and 1.6 per cent over baseline) and 90.0 per cent were writing at or above grade level (an improvement of .9 per cent over last year and 4.3 per cent over baseline), based on HLAT scores
- 85.4 per cent of grade three's were reading at or above grade level (an improvement of 1.5 per cent over last year and 1.4 per cent over baseline), based on HLAT scores
- 85.9 per cent of grade three's met the acceptable standard for language arts (an improvement of 3.6 per cent over last year and 3.3 per cent over baseline) and 13.8 per cent of grade three's met the standard of excellence for language arts (a decline of .4 per cent over last year but an improvement of 2.7 over baseline), based on the Alberta Learning Achievement Test

Early Reading and Writing Success Project: The year, 1998-99, was the last year of this pilot project. Seven elementary schools and a cohort group of 111 students from kindergarten to grade three were involved in the project. Two forms of assessment were used to monitor student growth each year of the three-year project: the district's Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLATs) and teachers' performance based assessments. The results of the project indicate that a majority of students in the cohort group were achieving at grade level by the end of the three years of the project. A summary of the analysis regarding this cohort group of students is provided below:

- 81 per cent of the cohort group were at grade level in their reading at the conclusion of the three years of the project, based on HLAT scores
- in 1998-99, 73 per cent (decrease of 9 per cent from the previous year) of the cohort group achieved at least one or more grade levels of growth in their reading, based on HLAT scores; of this 18 per cent demonstrated two or more grade levels of growth
- in 1998-99, 87 per cent (increase of six per cent from the previous year) of the cohort group demonstrated one or more grade levels of growth based on teacher assessments; of this 21 per cent demonstrated two or more grade levels of growth

In addition, the staffs involved have indicated that the project increased the following:

- student confidence in their knowledge and skills in reading
- student enjoyment of reading and writing
- staff use of educational research
- staff collaborating as a team in division one
- staff recognition of effective strategies that promote early reading success

Key Strategies identified in initiatives: Information has been gathered from school plans for the Early Reading Initiative and from interviews with staff involved in the Early Reading and Writing Success Project. This information has identified the following key strategies as effective in promoting reading success for students in the early years of school:

- setting of high expectations for students
- collaboration and cooperative planning amongst staff
- development of a structured plan that clearly addresses reading, writing, and spelling strategies
- frequent daily assessment of reading by the teacher through running records and informal comprehension activities
- teaching of language arts instruction in the morning
- use of reading recovery, reading intervention, and phonemic awareness strategies
- implementation of paired reading, shared reading, and school-wide home reading programs
- acquisition of a wide range of reading books at multiple reading levels
- implementation of small class sizes and learning groups
- use of a sound amplification system in the classroom
- involvement in professional development activities which target effective reading and writing skills

KB/GC:dh

APPENDIX I:- Early Reading Initiative: 1997-99 Monitoring Information