

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 12, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Crawford Plains

ORIGINATORS: J. Carter, Principal

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

### INFORMATION

Crawford Plains Elementary School, located in the south-east corner of Mill Woods, serves 304 students in kindergarten to grade six. Fifteen per cent of the students are English Language Learners and ten per cent have been identified with special learning needs. With the exception of one Interactions class, all special needs students are fully included in regular classrooms.

Crawford Plain's school-wide instructional focus is building reading and writing connections across the curriculum. The majority of the teaching staff have participated in Balanced Literacy training and have embraced this model as an integral part of their language arts instruction. Ongoing professional development through Consulting Services in *Strategies that Work* and *6+1 Writing Traits* has further enhanced literacy instruction. Teacher assistants have received professional development in the area of guided reading through a series of sessions with a consultant from Consulting Services.

During the current school year, staff have made the commitment to realign resources to support the deepening of literacy instruction and more effectively meet the needs of all students. All teachers and teaching assistants have been actively collaborating as members of a multi-disciplinary team to plan and deliver guided reading instruction and discuss student progress. At each grade level all students receive guided reading instruction at the same time, at their instructional level for a minimum of three times a week. By including the support staff, the school can provide small group instruction while providing time for student/adult conversations to enhance comprehension.

The collaborative teamwork approach that staff have embraced has been further enhanced by the involvement of teachers in the school-wide Coaching Pilot which is supported by funds from the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement. In addition, further opportunities for collaboration are provided at the cohort level, whereby teachers meet by grade level with colleagues from other schools to share best practices and strategies for deepening literacy instruction.

The collaborative work of all staff has resulted in anticipated and unanticipated success. Teachers believe there are increased opportunities for ongoing assessment for each student and there is greater flexibility in meeting the learning needs of all students. The interactions between students and a variety of adults in the school have resulted in increased and broadened ownership by all staff for the learning of all students. In addition students have developed respect for each other and for all adults in the school. Finally, English Language Learners are experiencing increased opportunities to ask questions and improve their oral language development at a faster rate.

The focus on reading has also had a positive impact on student writing skills. This is attributed in part to the involvement of students in authentic conversation which has broadened their background knowledge. As a result students feel a stronger connection to the topic; they have more ideas, a greater vocabulary and the confidence to take risks in their writing. The overall result is that students are more enthusiastic about writing and demonstrate a zest for learning.

Further contributing to the successes in reading and writing is the use of technology. Staff utilize a variety of software programs to support visual learners, at-risk and reluctant writers and special needs students. Technology also provides students with opportunities to read and be read to. The use of *United Streaming* and *Video Conferencing* provides additional learning opportunities and brings the world to their classroom.

The staff at Crawford Plains truly are living up to the school motto "Together We Succeed." They have created an environment in which all students are supported in the development of literacy skills and a positive sense of self-worth. The collaborative approach to professional learning opportunities has provided staff with the necessary support to meet the learning needs of all students. As a result, the staff at Crawford Plains believe that "Together -- success is achieved."