

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 22, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: High Park School – Focus on Literacy Development

ORIGINATOR: J. Gibson, Principal, High Park School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Margaretha Ebbers

INFORMATION

High Park School is located in west central Edmonton. The current enrolment is 110 students from Kindergarten to grade six with 44 per cent of students coded with special needs, mainly mild to moderate academic disabilities. High Park is also a district site for Literacy. Teachers in the Literacy Program work collaboratively with teachers in the regular program to provide a strong Literacy Program for all students.

To help guide “the work” staff have adopted the following instructional focus:

At High Park School our instructional focus is a school wide effort to improve literacy for all students in the area of reading comprehension.

Prior to the 2004/05 school year, High Park staff focused on a school wide effort to improve the quality of writing from all students. However, staff realized that improvements in student writing needed to be supported by improvements in reading. To maximize impact on student achievement, the staff decided to focus on both reading and writing.

Therefore, in the fall of 2004, a new best practice to improve reading comprehension was introduced: visualization. This practice teaches students how to “make a movie” in their minds which, in turn, helps them to better understand what they have read or heard. To introduce and begin the work of visualization with the students, an artist in residence was engaged. The artist worked with the students and staff to produce watercolour paintings. Using the watercolour paintings as a prompt, students used visualization and reflective thoughts to create poems and writing to share with parents and other students. In science and social studies, students are using the skill of visualization to enhance understanding of concepts being taught.

Providing examples of high quality children’s literature is a second practice added during the 2004/05 year to support students in reading and writing. The library was re-organized to promote author studies and to provide an environment where students can come to read and research.

Although the work conducted over the past four years has been demanding and challenging, the payoff has been improved student achievement. In grades three and six, 100 per cent of students achieved the acceptable standard on 2003/04 Provincial Achievement Tests. Students in the literacy program, who demonstrated near grade level instructional proficiency, were included in the grade six testing sample. High Park's district 2003/04 HLAT results indicate that 93 per cent of the division one students are reading and writing at grade level. In division two, because 50 per cent of the students are coded and working below grade level, the staff has identified other indicators of success, beyond the HLAT results. Ninety-five per cent of coded students show growth in reading and writing as measured by their Individual Program Plans.

Finally, staff work collaboratively and meet regularly both formally and informally to ask the following questions:

What are our students expected to learn?

What are we doing to ensure learning takes place for all students?

How do we know that learning is taking place?

How can we improve our teaching so that all students can learn?

At High Park staff is committed to achieving "Superb Results from All Students".