

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 26, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Donnan Elementary/Junior High

ORIGINATORS: H. Madsen, Principal

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Sig Jensen, Corrie Ziegler

### INFORMATION

Donnan School is located in south-central Edmonton and serves 440 students in Kindergarten to grade nine. In addition to the regular elementary and junior high programs, Donnan is a district site for the Sports Alternative Program for students in grades four to six.

Through achievement data analysis of students in the Sports Alternative Program, staff noted a positive link between active living and improved academic performance. This success prompted the staff to begin a school-wide initiative called "Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds" (HBHM), in September, 2007. HBHM is built on three key elements: daily physical activity for all; healthy eating and the development of a positive social environment.

#### **Healthy Bodies**

Donnan School promotes active living for every student through daily physical activity, planned and delivered by a physical education specialist. Donnan also follows the principles of a program called "Long Term Athlete Development", which consists of developmentally and age appropriate physical activities for students. To promote and encourage healthy eating, healthy alternatives are provided in the school store, the vending machine and during Special Lunch days hosted by the Parent Advisory Council. All fund raisers are restricted to healthy food choices. In addition, collaboration with nine businesses and community organizations brings health knowledge and expertise about active lifestyles into the school on an ongoing basis.

#### **Healthy Minds**

Donnan School has promoted a positive social environment through a strong focus on the character trait of *integrity*. Assemblies provide opportunities to share student success. In addition, staff provide support to students in effectively managing stress, building relationships, and promoting mental health and global citizenship. Collectively, these strategies serve to assist in creating a healthy and positive school environment, as a foundation for learning.

Donnan School's instructional focus is literacy development, an expansion of the original focus on reading to include writing as well. In the fall of 2007, staff implemented a new

initiative to enhance writing through a program called “6+1 Writing Traits.” Teachers support each other in enhancing instructional skills through weekly collaborative meetings about literacy instruction, by collectively looking at student work, and by examining ways to effectively link HBHM to learning. Members of the school’s Instructional Leadership Team select articles and facilitate discussion around current educational research during a monthly staff development activity called “Teachers as Professionals.” Further professional learning occurs through Donnan’s involvement in the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) “Teacher as Coach Pilot”. This pilot is exploring how to collaboratively develop lessons, in conjunction with visits to colleagues’ classrooms and engagement in reflective dialogue about lesson implementation.

## **Results**

The emphasis on Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds connects to the new District Priority for 2008-2011: “To instill in each student the attributes of citizenship and good character in a learning environment that promotes health, well-being and positive relationships” and it has definitely had a positive impact on staff and students at Donnan school. There is evidence of high levels of student learning within the healthy, supportive environment created at Donnan School. Donnan School is proud of its progress; the already strong relationships amongst students, staff and the community continues to deepen, staff have identified and enhanced their leadership skills to promote deep learning for all and students are continuing to demonstrate higher levels of achievement as identified through various assessment measures. The dedication and commitment demonstrated by teachers, parents and the community have resulted in clear benefits for Donnan students. The entire school community looks forward to continued progress as they strive to create bright futures for all.