

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 27, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent

SUBJECT: Spruce Avenue – A School in the “Interagency Collaboration” AISI Project

ORIGINATOR: N. Petersen, Principal, Spruce Avenue School

RESOURCE  
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INFORMATION

Spruce Avenue School provides programming for students from diverse backgrounds in full day kindergarten through grade nine. The school is part of the City Centre Education Project (CCEP) and is also the location for the Community Mental Health Classrooms, a collaborative project with Edmonton Student Health Initiative Partnership.

Many challenges to success faced by students at Spruce Avenue and their families extend beyond the area of teaching and learning. Staff at Spruce Avenue have embraced participation in the Interagency Collaboration AISI Project because it supports their belief that successfully supporting students at-risk lies in collaborative partnerships with families, the community and external agencies. This understanding is further supported by the longitudinal research and report by Dr. Jose da Costa, ([www.epsb.ca/board/nov2905\\_agenda.shtml](http://www.epsb.ca/board/nov2905_agenda.shtml)). In his report, Dr. da Costa recommended that other school and community supports are needed to maintain the student gains in achievement that result from a full day kindergarten program. Thus, in this third cycle of AISI, full-day kindergarten has evolved into one key component of a larger, more encompassing, Interagency Collaboration Project. This project focuses on creating an environment which fosters community supports for children and families in high needs schools. The other two components of this project are: engaging with families and developing partnerships and working relationships with community agencies. These components are not limited to the kindergarten classroom. This work requires a *school wide* philosophical, collaborative approach to teaching, learning and engaging families, continuing well beyond the child’s first year of schooling.

Spruce Avenue staff believe that their involvement in the Interagency Project builds on their past work to bridge the efforts of families, schools and communities in developing a shared responsibility for the optimal development of children. Kindergarten is recognized as the point of entry into the school system, so priority is placed on establishing strong parent relationships. This emphasis has resulted in 100% of kindergarten parents attending parent/teacher conversations. Through the framework of the CCEP, Spruce Avenue School is

continuing to develop significant partnerships to provide families with in-school support from a diverse range of professionals and programs. These partners and programs help to mitigate potential barriers to student achievement and have a tremendous influence on the teaching and learning environment at Spruce Avenue School. Involvement in the Interagency Project will provide opportunities to enhance existing partnerships as well as extend these partnerships to the other schools involved in the Interagency Project.

To that end, Spruce Avenue School, along with the other six CCEP schools, is providing mentoring, support and assistance to the eleven remaining schools in the Interagency Project as one part of the project's professional development. As an example of this support, principals and kindergarten teachers recently visited three CCEP schools to observe existing school-agency partnerships. Participants engaged in professional conversations about how schools can involve families and the community in purposeful ways, to address the diverse needs of the children and families. Participation in this professional development session helped staff to deepen their understanding of collaborative efforts while supporting staff new to this type of work.

Seven year trends in student achievement data at Spruce Avenue School provide evidence of the successes of full-day kindergarten programming in conjunction with interagency supports. Each year, 100% of kindergarten students demonstrate significant gains in the skill of letter identification which research identifies as a key indicator of future reading success. Additionally, results from Provincial Achievement Tests, reveal that 100% of tested students, who previously attended full-day kindergarten at Spruce Avenue, achieved the acceptable grade level benchmark in grade three Language Arts, while 86% met the benchmark in Math. Students have also demonstrated patterns of improved results on Highest Level of Achievement Tests in reading and writing since the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

The goal of the Interagency Collaboration AISI project is to develop and enhance the connection between home, school and community partners. Spruce Avenue staff will work with the other 17 schools to achieve the goal of supported, healthy families that foster supported, healthy and successful learners who can build on early school achievement to successfully complete high school.

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