

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 11, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: George H. Luck School – Focus on Writing

ORIGINATOR: R. Tyson, Principal, George H. Luck School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Terry Mah

INFORMATION

George H. Luck Elementary School is located in Brookview Community in Riverbend serving 345 students, from kindergarten to grade six. Students are organized into 15 classrooms. George H. Luck has an active school council, a dedicated teaching staff and a committed parent population.

George H. Luck School is very familiar with “focus on instruction” work. In 1998, the school was involved in a “quantum leap” project, when staff and students focused on teaching and learning in science. In successive years, the staff focused on math problem solving, collaboration, assessment, and for the past three years on student writing. The shift to a focus on writing was a result of a staff review of data from Provincial Achievement Tests, HLAT results and teacher assigned marks. Although results were very strong, the percentage of students achieving the standard of excellence was lower in writing than in reading.

Staff are following the work of Ruth Fulham and Vicky Spandel, who developed a program called “6 + 1 Writing Traits”. Our journey with writing has included the process and content of writing as well as the assessment of writing. The instructional leadership team (called “SWIFT” for School Wide Instructional Focus Team) is guiding staff in ways to involve students in assessing their own work and the work of their peers. The entire staff visited Abbott School and learned how Abbott staff involves their students in recognizing good writing traits including: good ideas, organization, word choice, voice, conventions and fluency. Staff then brought these best practices back to George H. Luck and modified them to meet the needs of staff and students from George H. Luck.

Results on the Provincial Achievement Tests in the last three years have remained consistent at the grade six level, with 100 per cent of the students reaching the acceptable standard in all subjects. Results have risen dramatically for grade three students. The percentage of students achieving the standard of excellence in grade three language arts went from 17.4 per cent in 2001-2002 to 36.0 per cent in 2002-2003 to 54.9 per cent last year.

At George H. Luck we are committed to the concept of a “Community of Learners” and have layered our curricular focus with involvement of parents and community in our school. We

pride ourselves on having introduced an excellent website for parent and community information gathering. We also have teachers who have embraced Edmonton Public's own School Zone to keep parents in the know with respect to classroom expectations and happenings.

Staff at George H. Luck see a focus on instruction as the "way we do things around here". It has been part of the school's culture for many years. The Supporting Teaching and Learning framework has provided staff with a structure to assist them in making connections between the work in their classrooms and the work of all stakeholders within the George H. Luck learning community and beyond to other schools in the district. Staff have appreciated the value of ongoing, school-wide professional development and collaboration related to the writing focus. It has been a win-win-win situation – staff, students and parents all benefit from this approach to teaching and learning. The George H. Luck learning community will continue this tradition, as we strive for superb results from all students.

RT:gj