

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 27, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Alberta School for the Deaf (ASD): Character Counts

ORIGINATOR: B. Dean, Principal, Alberta School for the Deaf

RESOURCE

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INFORMATION

Alberta School for the Deaf (ASD) serves students from grades 1 to 12 with programming and support including balanced literacy, reading intervention, one on one tutoring, on site interpreters, speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, school nurse, psychologist and native liaison services.

Our instructional focus, *increasing comprehension by building vocabulary* is developed through specific vocabulary building strategies and initiatives. In a variety of ways, we work to ensure students understand the vocabulary they use and that they use vocabulary effectively.

One of these initiatives is Character Education. With our partner school, Tevie Miller Heritage School Program, we identified Character Education this year as one of our Instructional Focus “Best Practices”.

As described in Edmonton Public Schools Framework for Character Based Citizenship Education, Alberta School for the Deaf recognizes the value of students experiencing learning in an atmosphere which reflects and promotes the development of character and citizenship. We recognize that this atmosphere is critical to student achievement and to the development of student success in the world of learning, work and life after graduation.

Character Education at the Alberta School for the Deaf focuses on ten Key Virtues leading to the development of citizens of character and integrity:

- Respect
- Self discipline
- Compassion
- Sharing
- Cooperation
- Friendship
- Creativity
- Forgiveness
- Honesty
- Responsibility

Members of the Instructional Leadership Team work with other staff members on program development and support. They provide structure and lesson suggestions to facilitate effective implementation within the context of our day to day school and classroom operations.

One character trait is introduced each month in classrooms. Instruction occurs in word study, challenge word walls, targeted spelling lessons, and in comprehension and writing strategies. The concept and vocabulary are emphasized in shared and independent writing, story telling and role playing. Behaviours are reinforced with improvements shown on graphic organizers in the classrooms and halls. School assemblies are opportunities to celebrate student achievement related to character education and other areas of success.

Parents of ASD students are active participants in our character education program. The parent council recognizes student growth, and uses the parent bulletin board to post notes of encouragement, appreciation and support. They join our month end celebrations, often providing small rewards or treats as tokens of their appreciation for the good job our students do.

Perhaps the most important component of ASD's Character Education program is the integration into the daily life of the school. It can be seen in our classrooms as targeted word study and concept development in our American Sign Language classes, as a theme for an art project, or as writing stimulus. Character Education has become the context for conversations about relationships, respect, behaviour and tolerance.

The link between character development and student achievement is well documented. It is our expectation that the continuation of a strong Character Education program will stimulate further student growth in citizenship and in curriculum achievement. We will continue to work together to help students to be successful in the world of learning, work and life after graduation.

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