

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 20, 2000

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Developing a Foundation of Literacy - Strathearn School

ORIGINATORS: N. Spencer, Principal, Strathearn

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Deanna Wiens

### INFORMATION

Strathearn is a kindergarten to grade-9 school that is located in southeast Edmonton. The school was built in 1952 and serves 217 students in four programs.

At Strathearn School our focus is to ensure that an excellent foundation for literacy is created. In our elementary program we are building a base for students to become confident readers, writers and learners. We believe all our students can acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes for literacy through teamwork, flexible organization of instructional groups and carefully structured programming. Our achievement results and the satisfaction of students, parents and teachers with this approach are indicators of the success we are experiencing.

In order to organize students in Division One so that they experience the most success, the teachers meet together as a team and determine groupings for literacy instruction. Students in grade one remain in a group of fifteen or less for both language arts and math. Students in grades two and three work in small groups with either the classroom teacher or intern teacher. There is also flexibility within these groupings in order to meet individual needs. Teachers remain with their students for two years, and as such, continuity of learning has been maintained. On a very regular basis these teachers meet together to discuss student progress, assess student work, plan lessons, share resources and coordinate thematic units. Realizing that many of our children need the opportunity to interact positively with each other and have tactile experiences, teachers have created a "Discovery Room." This room is designed to provide all Division One students with access to activity centres which focus on specific objectives from the curriculum. It has been exciting to see that the flexibility, continuity and unity that are demonstrated in this model have proven very successful for our school community.

The Division One teachers are aware of the latest research and practices in literacy development and they have implemented these findings in their classrooms. Language Arts instruction is focused and objectives are clearly communicated to parents and students. High quality literature is used to spark a love of reading but this is balanced by carefully sequenced phonemic instruction. Children's reading progress is frequently monitored through running

records. This is possible because of our small groupings for literacy instruction. Each child has a daily take-home book that is at his or her level of reading and parents support their child by sharing a reading time each evening. Our classrooms are filled with hands-on, individualized activities that are used to teach and reinforce concepts. During each writing project, a child experiences one-to-one editing time with the teacher. The close collaboration between the elementary teachers ensures that expectations in Language Arts are consistent and at a high level.

This model of organization and instruction was implemented seven years ago and we have been refining it each year. The students who began grade one at Strathearn wrote their grade six achievement exams last year and their results were the highest we have had thus far. The organization of our elementary classes, the teamwork of the teachers and our focus on the most effective methods of literacy instruction have resulted in students who love to read, write and learn here at Strathearn School.

NS:jj