

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 11, 2003

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Bannerman School's Instructional Focus: Reading For Understanding

ORIGINATOR: Elizabeth Norris-Kartz, Principal, Bannerman School

RESOURCE STAFF: Lise Dropko, Karen Gibson, Elaine Megley, Patrick Ricard, Elizabeth Yee

INFORMATION

Located in Clareview, Bannerman Elementary/Junior High School, serves 325 students in kindergarten to grade nine. There is an elementary program and an alternative program, the Nellie McClung Girls' Junior High Program.

The instructional focus of reading for understanding was identified on December 14, 2001 during a professional development session. At this session the staff analyzed the achievement data from the previous year and the results clearly indicated the need for an instructional focus on reading for understanding. The focus states:

A school wide effort to have all Bannerman students show measurable growth in their ability to read for understanding through a focus on selected research based reading strategies. Growth will be measured by provincial achievement tests, HLATs and school performance based reading assessments.

The Instructional Leadership Team meets regularly and drives improvement in teaching and learning. On early dismissal Thursdays the staff meets in a large group or in divisional groups to engage in collaborative discussions regarding effective instructional practices. All three divisions learn from each other.

The first school wide instructional strategy identified was the use of word/curricular concept walls. The purposes of these word/curricular concept walls are to:

- Facilitate word analysis, vocabulary building and student reference points when reading or writing, enabling students to become more independent and strategic problem solvers
- Anchor words and concepts in long term memory
- Encourage connections between new and previous learning
- Maintain a visible record of content studied, allowing teachers and students to see and monitor what has been taught and learned
- Serve as guides for determining what needs to be added to make study systematic

The second strategy is the use of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers are flexible and can be applied in many contexts. These organizers are able to show the order and completeness of a student's thought process – strengths and weaknesses of understanding become clear and evident.

Currently, the staff is in the process of determining the third school wide instructional strategy by asking themselves throughout the day, “What is the most effective reflective strategy I use to ensure that my students are reading for understanding?”

Internal measures are in place to monitor learning and the data is used as a lens for decision-making. Bannerman’s internal measures are:

- Kindergarten - Early Reading Observation Summary, 2 times a year
- Grade 1-3 - Developmental Reading Assessment, 3 times a year
- Grades 2-9 - Comprehensive Reading Assessment of Reading Strategies, 4 times a year

An Early Reading Intervention Program is in place at the division one level. This program draws its strength from research driven strategies and supports and supplements the Balanced Literacy Program that is in all division one classrooms, including kindergarten. Our objective is to ensure that as many of the students as possible who are currently reading below grade level reach grade level. The assistant principal and a teacher facilitate groups of students during the morning reading blocks. Sessions are 30 minutes long and each group is composed of four to six students. They are grouped according to achievement on the Developmental Reading Assessment and are discharged from a group when they reach grade level, hence allowing other students to be brought into one of the groups.

Bannerman supports its twenty-five ESL students by providing small group instruction three times a week. A teaching aide, who has been inserviced in ESL instruction, facilitates these groups. The learning in this group is interactive and effective.

At Bannerman we are living the instructional focus and are proud of our collaborative efforts to improve our teaching practice. We believe that:

- If children do not learn the way that we teach, then we must teach the way that they learn.
and
- If we always do what we’ve always done...we’ll always get what we’ve got.

Understanding and support for the instructional focus is encouraged and communicated through school bulletin boards, announcements, staff weekly memos, newsletters, Parent Advisory Committee Meetings, open houses and the outside sign.

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