

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 13, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent

SUBJECT: Steele Heights - A School in the "Learning with Technologies" AISI Project

ORIGINATOR: A. Gibson, Principal, Steele Heights School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Steele Heights School, located in northeast Edmonton, serves a population of 550 junior high students from multicultural and diverse socio-economic backgrounds. It is a site for Behavior and Learning Assistance and Learning Strategies students.

During Cycle 2 of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS I), Steele Heights staff implemented an instructional focus on higher order thinking skills and implemented school-wide use of Thinking Maps to enhance student achievement. The school's Highest Level of Achievement Test (HLAT) results have shown growth over the last three years. In 2005-06, HLAT results indicate that at least 87 per cent of all students were reading at or above grade level and 97 per cent were writing at or above grade level. While the percentage of students achieving the acceptable standard on the Provincial Achievement Tests has varied, the percentage of students achieving the standard of excellence has increased steadily. The school's participation rate has been consistently much higher than that of the province.

In the spring of 2006, after careful analysis of data sources, staff at Steele Heights decided to participate in the "Learning with Technologies" project as the most effective means of improving student achievement for all students at Steele Heights. The decision was made after extensive staff input and discussion and with the understanding that the project was based on two major premises:

- teaching and learning would be based on integrating technology to enhance the curriculum, not using technology for technology's sake, and
- choosing this project would not mean that extra funding would be provided to purchase technology equipment or hardware.

Staff at Steele Heights understand that learning to use technologies in isolation will not improve student achievement. Instead, staff are exploring how to select the most appropriate technology as a tool for teaching and learning within the mandated curriculum.

In the fall of 2006, staff participated in an introductory professional development day in which they looked at the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) outcomes. The

ICT curriculum is not a stand alone document, but is intended to be infused within core courses and programs. Each staff member agreed to become a “champion” or expert for one general outcome of the ICT curriculum and to build expertise of staff in that area. Subject area teams accepted responsibility to incorporate specific outcomes into their lessons and assignments to ensure that all ICT outcomes were met for each student. Through this process staff are building expertise by collaborating with colleagues as well as attending professional development sessions.

Although the primary goal of the Learning with Technologies Project is to use the appropriate technology to enhance learning, there is recognition of a need for staff to build skill in using various technologies. To that end, staff members within the school who have expertise in using technology serve as mentors to those with less skill. In addition, Steele Heights staff are collaborating with the staff at Grandview Heights School who are also in the “Learning with Technologies” project. Members of the Instructional Leadership Team from Grandview Heights visited Steele Heights to observe the integration of technology in classrooms, participate in a robotics demonstration and gain knowledge of the ICT outcome process. Staff from Steele Heights visited Grandview Heights to observe first hand the use of their wireless lab to support teaching and learning at all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 9, and the integration of other technologies. Sharing and collaboration between schools is a vital component to enhancing practice at both schools.

Staff at Steele Heights believes the integration of technologies is one best practice that supports the ongoing focus on higher order thinking skills. This continued work to enhance teaching and learning will most certainly assist in meeting the goal of superb results for all students.

BH:gj