

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 13, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Montrose Elementary School

ORIGINATOR: S. Paul, Principal, Montrose Elementary School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Sig Jensen, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Montrose School is located in north-central Edmonton and serves 170 students in Kindergarten to Grade six. In addition to the regular elementary program, Montrose is a district site for the division two Behaviour and Learning Assistance Program, the Opportunity Program for divisions one and two, and has a Full Day Kindergarten Program.

The staff at Montrose are striving to create a healthy and innovative workplace that builds on the strengths of individuals and the collective group. By providing multiple opportunities for shared leadership and collaboration that are aligned with District Priorities, staff engage in ongoing professional conversations about what is best for all students' learning and the development of citizens of good character.

Shared Leadership

Teachers at Montrose are learning about and practicing leadership skills through a school-wide focus on literacy development. The following example illustrates how these two ideas are integrated. Montrose contracted a district consultant to work with all teachers to carefully examine the Language Arts curriculum. They began this work by identifying which writing outcomes would be most important for student success. During this process, teachers also developed and honed effective facilitation skills. As a result, teachers will now be able to lead colleagues in further work to examine other core curriculums. As one Montrose teacher stated, "We believe that we are developing into a community of literacy leaders."

Collaborative Opportunities

Montrose teachers assume leadership roles in planning and facilitating collaborative meetings to address the wide range of student learning needs. The staff worked collaboratively to create a school-wide guided reading program, placing students in cross-graded groups in which they receive reading support at their own reading level rather than at their nominal grade level. Within this plan, Montrose teachers share and analyze data on a regular basis. This analysis has resulted in regrouping students when needed, celebrating student progress, and creating specific plans to further support students who are stalled in their reading growth. Montrose students benefit from the collective strengths of all school staff. These collaborative opportunities have deepened and refined all staffs' leadership development as they learn and coach each other.

Montrose staff believe that all children can be successful. When Montrose teachers discover a roadblock in a student's learning, they utilize their collective capacity to identify ways to meet the student's needs. This may include referencing professional readings, participating in targeted professional development sessions or engaging in conversations with others who may be able to support the student. Staff also turn to professionals outside the school who may be able to support a student in need. One example of this type of support occurred when four Grade one students faced literacy challenges, yet did not meet the criteria for special needs programming. An analysis by the teachers showed that these students faced delays in their language development. Staff made the decision to realign the teaching expertise available in the school so that a teacher could engage with the students in intensive language development support. In addition, these students have been included in an alternate classroom setting for scheduled time with a speech language pathologist. This comprehensive approach to the literacy development for these students is built on the individual and collective expertise of the staff at Montrose.

Bright Futures

The collaborative culture of Montrose School, built through shared leadership among staff, is based on persistence and perseverance at finding solutions to every student's learning needs. Montrose staff constantly consider three questions: "How will we make our learning plans work?" "Who do we need to be involved to ensure success?" "What supports will be provided to students, parents, and staff as a plan unfolds into action?" With this commitment to student success, Montrose School aims to fulfill the District Priorities and truly provide bright futures for its students and staff.