

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 13, 2007¹

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Killarney Junior High School

ORIGINATOR: Dave Devin, Principal, Killarney Junior High School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Sig Jensen, Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Killarney Junior High School is located in north-central Edmonton. Within the student population of 419, approximately 28% of students are coded as special needs. The diversity of Killarney's population is supported through the six programs offered: Regular Junior High Program, Logos Christian Education Program, Arabic Bilingual Language Program, Opportunity Program, Community Learning Skills Program and Behaviour and Learning Assistance Program. Extensive parent involvement and strong community supports have been established. Beginning in 2007 – 08 , Killarney is also involved in the new English Language Learning Cluster Initiative, coordinated through the Programs Decision Unit.

The school vision, "Killarney: A School of Excellence," is increasingly shared and embraced by teachers, support staff, students and parents and helps sustain the mission to have all students achieve success. A critical component in realizing this vision of excellence is creating ongoing opportunities for staff collaboration. To that end, teacher teams are organized in subject-based groups across programs and meet each week to examine data, discuss effective teaching strategies and plan improved student learning. These professional conversations have led to school wide decisions about how staff can best meet the learning needs of students, especially students identified as at risk. For example, staff members have agreed to realign resources to support one small class at each grade level, which allows teachers to provide support for the school's English language learners. Another example at the grade nine level is the creation of special intervention classes to help students solidify foundational learning skills as they transition to high school. These collaborative staff decisions exemplify the staff commitment and determination to do whatever is required to support all students.

Killarney School staff and students are currently learning about, practicing and refining the philosophy of differentiated instruction. Several staff members have been identified as instructional leaders, whose role it is to provide school-based professional development opportunities for all staff at Killarney, especially in the area of differentiated instruction. This team attends district professional development sessions together, where they connect the research and strategies of differentiated instruction to the work at the school. Each professional development session this team attends becomes a collaborative leadership opportunity and provides ideas for how they can lead monthly professional development

sessions with the full staff at Killarney School. The staff appreciates and responds positively to these professional development opportunities delivered by their school colleagues and leaders. Further sharing between teacher teams at monthly staff meetings deepens the staff's understanding and expertise in realizing the school vision.

Killarney teachers are also involved in collaborative professional development opportunities through their work with a cohort of schools that includes all staff from Ellerslie School, Hardisty School and Winterburn School. These four schools are all focused on differentiated instruction. Teachers from all four schools are organized into subject-based teams and meet regularly to share ideas, discuss teaching and learning challenges and support each other in the development of ever-improving teaching and learning practices. A practical tool that has evolved from the cohort work is an electronic resource base that makes effective practices and resources easily and readily accessible by teachers from all four schools.

The combination of commitment and collaboration found at Killarney School has resulted in a learning community that believes in building effective teaching practices and supports that will lead to high levels of learning for all students.