

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 30, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Londonderry School – Focus on Reading

ORIGINATOR: D. Skoreyko, Principal, Londonderry

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Kerri Charpentier, Patrick Johner, Ward Patterson

### INFORMATION

Londonderry School is located in north east Edmonton serving a student population of 710 students in grades 7 to 9. It is a district site for Academic Challenge, Mandarin Bilingual and Opportunity students. Currently we have students from 42 district elementary schools.

During the spring of 2001, teachers engaged in extensive discussions about the student achievement results at Londonderry School. As the work proceeded it became evident that the school needed to focus on reading comprehension to increase student achievement. The following statement was developed in the fall of 2001 to express our focus:

*A school wide effort to have all Londonderry students show growth in their ability to read for understanding through the implementation of a variety of reading strategies as measured by HLAT, provincial achievement results and school based reading assessments.*

Londonderry staff began their focus on reading for understanding by identifying essential strategies teachers could use to improve reading comprehension in every subject area. Staff also decided they needed an interim measure that would provide clear, concise information related to progress around the focus on reading comprehension. District consultants provided key assistance in all areas of our focus work.

The initial Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at Londonderry School was made up of 11 staff members, who represented each subject area and grade level within the school. This range of staff demonstrated the commitment our teachers had to the success of this school wide initiative. During the first few months the ILT identified numerous effective reading strategies. With the assistance of Edmonton Public School consultants, a large poster was created that outlined the focus statement and the related reading strategies. This poster is strategically placed at the front entrance, to be viewed by everyone as they enter the school.

For the past two years, monthly staff meetings have centered on discussions of specific reading strategies such as: Graphic Organizers, SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review), RAP - Read (the paragraph), Ask (what is it I just read?), Put (it in your own words), and Main Idea. At each meeting teachers are given ideas about how a specific strategy could be implemented in their classroom, including subject specific examples so that the focus on reading touched every subject area. Often teachers implemented the strategy in their classroom the very next day.

Recently, the ILT and a district reading consultant identified a powerful set of strategies that we have grouped together and called the *Reading Process*. Key elements of this process outline teacher and student behaviors during pre-reading, during the reading and post reading activities. Preliminary indications are that this will be a significant factor in raising the achievement levels for Londonderry students, particularly those who have been identified as being at risk or not reading at grade level.

Our ILT considered several measures that would be useful in assessing student performance levels for reading. Analysis of the Provincial Achievement Tests and HLAT scores were obvious sources of information and were useful. An appropriate, effective internal measure proved difficult to identify. For the past three years the interim measure used at Londonderry School was a locally developed survey. This survey was administered to staff and students asking about the use and usefulness of the particular focus strategies. The data from this survey was analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses related to the strategy and its implementation in all subject areas. This information was the basis of staff discussions around developing appropriate next steps. Currently, with the assistance of a district reading consultant, staff are developing an interim measure that will provide timely, specific information regarding progress with the implementation of strategies grouped under the *Reading Process*.

Londonderry School's successes are well documented and show higher than ever numbers of students meeting the acceptable standard on Provincial Achievement Tests in Language Arts and a reduction in the number of students reading below grade level on the HLATs. Last year, every student identified at risk in reading gained at least one year's growth in their HLAT scores, with 86% of them achieving two or more years of growth in one school year. Staff have every confidence that the focus on reading for understanding will prepare these remaining students to enter high school reading at grade level. Our focus on reading has given us the tools to ensure superb results from all students.

DS:ds