

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 27, 2004

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Glenora School's Instructional Focus – Higher Level Thinking Skills in the Area of Evaluation

ORIGINATOR: M. Michailides, Principal, Glenora School

RESOURCE

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### INFORMATION

Glenora School is located in the west end of the city and serves 170 students kindergarten to grade 6. Our programming involves French as a Second Language, the International Baccalaureate Program and a Fine Arts Program. Glenora School is a working partnership between students, staff, parents and our community. The enrollment at Glenora is very stable and there are high expectations for academic excellence for all students.

In-depth work on establishing a school-wide instructional focus began at Glenora in August 2000. Being one of the pilot schools to initiate the school-wide instructional focus, a review of school and provincial data indicated students at Glenora were already attaining high levels of achievement. The staff reflected on their students, conducted extensive research, consulted with the parents, and made the decision to instill higher level thinking skills in problem solving to continue challenging and maximizing the potential of all students. In the second year of implementation, the staff came to realize focusing on math problem solving was very narrow and excluded all other subject areas. By working closely with the student assessment team, our staff, parents and students it was agreed that having students evaluate their thinking was a skill that needed to be incorporated throughout all our programs. Out of this process our focus for Glenora emerged:

*The Instructional Focus for Glenora School involves students enhancing their Higher Level Thinking Skills in the Area of Evaluation across all subject areas. Growth will be measured by provincial achievement tests, student performance and a school-developed interim measure.*

Working through the research and by collaborative planning, the staff at Glenora identified Bloom's Taxonomy as one of our best practices, which led us into the work of Graham Foster and Dr. Costa in the area of metacognition. Implementation was challenging because most students and teachers do not take the time to "think about their thinking" as a necessary part of enhancing achievement levels.

Glenora's leadership team devoted time to discuss strategies which could be used across all grades and all curricular areas. Through this important work and professional development

activities, staff created an evaluation template and rubric which would allow students to evaluate their thinking.

Our students were expected to make judgments about their work based on the differentiated rubric. The information gathered from the rubric indicated that students needed assistance in the following areas: students as critical thinkers, analyzers of their work, self-evaluators and finally, self-directed learners. In collecting our data throughout the year, we were searching for a correlation between the teacher evaluation and the student self-evaluation.

The motto, Think Back, Look Ahead, was derived from the evaluation tool and permeates all aspects of learning at Glenora School. This has become a best practice and a life long learning tool utilized daily in assisting students to reflect on many situations. Another best practice incorporated at Glenora was using Performance Based Projects supported by rubrics.

Staff recognized that we could not effectively implement our best practices without professional development sessions in the area of evaluation. Collaboration time was spent looking at student work samples, asking essential questions about our programming, and participating in interschool visitations. Parents became an integral part of this process in attending professional development sessions, attending district inservicing and incorporating many of the strategies at home.

In the continuous journey of maximizing student achievement at Glenora School, our metacognitive strategies, essential questions and best practices were embedded in the entire curriculum. The collaborative model of success at Glenora includes:

1. Staff becoming self-reflective practitioners
2. Staff examining and discussing student work samples in division groupings
3. Staff asking essential questions pertaining to their planning, programming and assessment strategies
4. Staff collaborating by sharing their success stories and challenges
5. Staff planning units of study in collaborative models
6. Staff developing effective teaching strategies and observing each other at work in a team teaching model

Our focus at Glenora School has encouraged students to slow down, think about their thinking, check their work and make revisions after some goal setting before turning it in to their teacher. We have seen outstanding growth in how students enhance their higher level thinking skills in the area of evaluation. We recognize that effective implementation of an Instructional Focus is dependent on a variety of factors; staff dedication, commitment, embedded implementation, collaboration and the engagement of our school parent community.

Our shared leadership model at Glenora School has had a profound effect on the academic achievement and the pedagogical aspects of the teaching process. All staff embraced this work and together as a team makes a significant difference daily in the lives of our life-long learners.

MM/rl