

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 10, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent

SUBJECT: Menisa – A School in the “Deepening Literacy Instruction” AISI Project

ORIGINATOR: P. Christensen, Principal, Menisa School

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Sig Jensen, Corrie Ziegler

### INFORMATION

Menisa School, located in Southeast Edmonton, serves a population of 150 students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It is a district site for two Literacy Program classes.

Menisa School’s focus on literacy instruction began during Cycle 2 of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS I) project. At that time, staff selected reading comprehension as the focus for the school and students learned to effectively use seven key reading comprehension strategies in all subject areas. The strategies were: making connections, visualizing, determining importance, asking questions, synthesizing, inferring, and monitoring. In addition, teachers complemented this work with the application of the principles of balanced literacy in their classrooms.

In the fall of the following year, staff chose to shift their instructional focus to writing. Staff worked with students to help them understand how the reading comprehension strategies they learned could support the development of effective writing skills. The principal monitored and supported implementation of these strategies, through active involvement and participation in all professional development sessions, collaborative meetings, and regular visits to classrooms.

Achievement results demonstrate the value of the work completed and the decisions made. The school’s 2006 Highest Level of Achievement Tests (HLAT) results show that all regular students are reading and writing at grade level. Ninety-one per cent of the literacy students are demonstrating a year’s growth in reading and writing on HLAT exams. On provincial achievement tests regular program students are scoring well above provincial averages.

In the spring of 2006, Menisa staff chose to be involved in the Deepening Literacy Instruction AIS I project. As part of the school’s AIS I plan, a decision was made to prioritize the writing outcomes in the Language Arts program of studies and translate them into student-friendly “I Can” statements. For example, Kindergarten Outcome # 4 - 4.1 is stated in the Program of Studies as “Enhance, Improve and Appraise Others Work”. When translated into student-friendly language it became “I can talk about my pictures, stories and talk. I can

talk about my friends' pictures, stories and talk too." This process is based on strong research showing that it is critical that students understand what they are expected to be able to do as a result of new learning.

With a sound understanding of the connections between reading and writing, as well as deep understanding of the mandated curriculum, under the direction of a language arts consultant, staff is now exploring the specific characteristics of the "6 + 1 Write Traits" program. This work is supported and enhanced by Menisa's involvement in the Deepening Literacy Instruction AISI project professional development (PPD) sessions. At each PPD session, staff have participated in breakout group sessions, which have kept teachers abreast of research based developments in the instruction of writing skills. Menisa staff continues to be actively involved in various collaborative activities with their cohort schools: Bisset, Crawford Plains, Kameyosek and Sakaw. These professional development events have served to deepen all staff's understanding of literacy instruction.

Through this consistent and collaborative approach to improving literacy instruction, the staff at Menisa is confident that more and more students will experience success in their reading and writing skills. This will translate to increased student achievement for all students at Menisa.

BH:gj