

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 24, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: B. Holt, Acting Superintendent

SUBJECT: Braemar School A School in the “Using Assessment to Enhance Learning and Success” AISI Project

ORIGINATOR: S. Bell, Principal, Braemar Senior High School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Braemar Senior High School is located in the southeast part of the city and has a student population of 120. Braemar offers support, encouragement and educational opportunities exclusively to pregnant and parenting students 13 to 20 years of age.

As most of the students at Braemar would be considered at-risk, the staff at Braemar, through both observation and research, ascertained that student self assessment strategies would best improve the academic achievement of this particular population. During the 2005 – 2006 school year, Braemar teachers worked diligently to create a solid understanding of assessment for learning as a practice, with a particular focus on self assessment strategies.

To reach the goal of high-quality self assessment, all teachers set “clear learner objectives and criterion” for students. Research indicates that this is an important initial step if self assessment strategies are to be fully implemented within classrooms. To address this goal, Braemar teachers targeted the following best practices: setting criterion with students, identification of critical learning goals in all curriculum areas, development of rubrics and marking criterion with students, and the use of self assessment tools to ensure student understanding of curricular objectives. In the spring of 2006, staff at Braemar School determined that participation in the *Using Assessment to Enhance Learning and Success* Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) Project would provide a natural continuation of the work already begun and would best meet the academic needs of Braemar students.

Braemar’s 2006/07 targeted professional development plan was based on the goal of effectively using high quality assessment practices in each classroom, every day. Staff have been involved in monthly half day professional development sessions, coupled with collaborative projects initiated by teachers. Four of these sessions are directed by district consultants, the other six sessions are collaborative projects developed by teachers. The collaborative projects encompass a wide variety of initiatives created by teachers in an effort to infuse sustainable change within classroom practice. As Braemar is a small school with only one teacher per subject area, teacher collaboration can present a challenge. Therefore, teachers have taken advantage of opportunities to engage in cross curricular collaboration

within the school as well as departmental inter-visitations with the six high schools participating in the *Using Assessment to Enhance Learning and Success* AISI project. Teachers value the opportunity to visit classrooms and collaborate with their colleagues, both within Braemar and with other schools. Through these visits the teachers are exploring differing perspectives and fresh ideas have emerged.

Braemar staff understands that assessment practices presented in isolation will not improve student achievement. Therefore, the staff continues to incorporate assessment practices with other best practices that have proven to be essential when working with a population of students considered at-risk. These practices include monthly interim progress reports (with self assessment as a focus), second chances to write exams, scheduling that facilitates four student intake opportunities per year, and offering Reading 15 and Learning Strategies each semester. Also, staff is utilizing the most current technology (a Promethean Activ-Board and a Smart Board) in the classroom to support assessment practices.

Staff at Braemar believe that continued involvement in the *Using Assessment to Enhance Learning and Success* AISI project will enhance and improve the teaching and learning for the unique academic needs of the students at Braemar. Ongoing commitment to the goals of their professional development plan will ultimately result in enhanced student achievement and high school completion rates.

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