

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 9, 2008

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at Evansdale Elementary School

ORIGINATOR: S. Tingley, Principal, Evansdale Elementary School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Laurie Beggs, Louise Osland, Corrie Ziegler

INFORMATION

Evansdale School is a Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 6 school located in northeast Edmonton. The learning needs of the 350 students are met through the following programs: regular elementary; Behaviour and Learning Assistance; Full Day Kindergarten; and Early Education.

Evansdale students come from first wave immigrant families, Aboriginal families, and low and mid socio-economic families. Close to twenty per cent of the student population in the regular program is identified as students with special needs. Through a variety of learning opportunities, all students' intellectual, creative, social and physical abilities are nurtured and challenged.

The fifty-five staff members work closely with a broad range of supports, both from within Edmonton Public Schools as well as from community partners. District supports include: English Language Learners Project; Aboriginal Liaison Workers; District Social Workers; Alberta Initiative for School Improvement project supports (Community Collaboration and Differentiated Instruction), and strong ongoing use of Consulting Services staff. Supports beyond Edmonton Public Schools include: Evansdale Community League; Dickinsfield Community Partnership; Boys and Girls Club; Edmonton City Center Church Corporation; Family Centre or Literacy, Volunteers Inspiring Students to Achieve (VISTA), Faculty of Dentistry; and the Rotary club. This multi-dimensional support system provides students with much needed food, mentorship, recreation as well as mental, social, emotional and academic supports. It has also created an environment that *instills in each student the attributes of citizenship and good character in a learning environment that promotes health, well-being and positive relationships.*

An integral part of creating a positive learning environment is the development of students' language skills. The language needs of students at Evansdale are significant and require expertise and support for receptive, expressive and practical language skills as well as English language learning understandings. The school's leadership staff work collaboratively with all staff to develop integrated approaches to build language skills. As the students develop their language skills they are better able to take responsibility for their learning and behavior. Having students take responsibility for their learning and behavior has been supported and encouraged by the staff's work in 2007-08 with ideas generated by

Barbara Coloroso, internationally recognized speaker and author in the areas of parenting, teaching, school discipline, non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliatory justice. This work has led to measurable increases on the student satisfaction surveys in areas relating to relationships, health and well-being and safety. To build on this success, staff are currently engaged in further professional learning through their participation in a 'Restorative Discipline' process. This process is based on the work of Amstutz and Mullet, authors of "*The little book of restorative discipline for schools: teaching responsibility; creating caring climates*". As well, Sue Hopgood (director of the Alberta Conflict Transformation Society) and Caroline Missal (Principal with Programs) worked with staff this September to provide a model for circle meetings. Staff members continue to explore and learn about the best practices related to creating caring cultures. The leadership team models and provides ongoing coaching for teachers to support their learning.

At Evansdale, the diverse needs of students are met through a variety of broad based supports. Staff and students alike are also learning that they "...need to create a community where each citizen has the experience of being connected to those around them and knows that their safety and success are depending on the success of all others." (Peter Block). This collective work will contribute to creating bright futures for all students at Evansdale School.

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