

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

December 13, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Northmount School – Focus on Reading Comprehension

ORIGINATOR: N. Butterfield, Principal, Northmount School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Pam Gray

INFORMATION

Northmount School is located in the northeast section of the city and serves students from the local community of Northmount as well as the newer subdivisions of Matt Berry, Schonsee and Eau Claire. Northmount School serves a wide range of student needs and is a designated Learning Strategies site for children with learning disabilities.

In 2000 the staff and school community made the decision, based on data analysis, to identify reading comprehension as the school's instructional focus. Research supported the belief that this would be an all-inclusive method to improve student achievement in all the subject areas. At that time the school's instructional focus was:

“A school-wide effort to ensure all Northmount School students demonstrate measurable growth in their ability to comprehend literature through the implementation of strategies based on a variety of questioning techniques, as measured by HLAT reading, school, performance assessments and Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs).”

Over a five year period student achievement increased at the school as evidenced in PAT and HLAT results for that time frame. In 2004 – 2005, student achievement increased in all subject areas for grade three and six students. More grade three students are reaching the acceptable standard in language arts and mathematics. More grade six students are reaching the acceptable standard in all subject areas. The percentage of students reaching the standard of excellence also grew significantly for grade three students in mathematics and for grade six students in mathematics, science and social studies.

While pleased with increases in student achievement, the challenge was how to increase the percentage of students who reach the standard of excellence in language arts. Given the information about students' areas of strength and need, it was determined first by the ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) and then by all staff to maintain the focus on reading comprehension, but to address the relatively lower percentage of students who reach the standard of excellence in language arts.

Staff made the decision, after examining multiple sources of data, that an additional focus on writing would assist students in moving from acceptable standard to standard of excellence in the area of language arts. The instructional focus statement this year is:

“A school-wide effort to ensure all Northmount School students demonstrate measurable growth in their ability to comprehend literature and **express themselves in their writing** as measured by HLATs, school interim measures and provincial achievement tests.”

The school staff has been fully involved in professional development sessions over the past four years to increase their expertise in developing students’ reading comprehension. This year’s professional development plan will build on this work and has staff attending professional development sessions to discuss the 6 + 1 Writing Traits program and assessment for learning activities. In addition they will collaborate to look at student work and design effective programming for students on intervention plans.

The trio work with Athlone and Prince Charles Schools offers another opportunity to continue to collaborate, share and grow. Northmount School hosted the first of three Instructional Walk-Throughs (IWTs). The feedback received from the IWT provided staff with significant information related to the implementation of new practices in writing. Inter-collaboration days for the three schools have been planned and dates have been established with the focus on grade level sessions providing opportunities for the teachers to build expertise with 6 + 1 Writing Traits and to mentor and support each other.

At Northmount School, staff will continue to improve the quality of teaching through job-embedded professional development to achieve superb results from all students.