

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 10, 2009

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at S. Bruce Smith Junior High School

ORIGINATOR: M. Michailides, Principal, S. Bruce Smith Junior High School

RESOURCE
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INFORMATION

S. Bruce Smith Junior High is situated in southwest Edmonton and serves over 670 students and their families. In addition to providing programming at the regular junior high level, the school is a district site for the Strategies Program, the Opportunity Program and a Pre-Advanced Placement Program.

Staff at S. Bruce Smith School are dedicated to providing students and staff with rewarding experiences in a learning environment that promotes health, well-being and positive relationships. By working collaboratively with parents and the community, staff hope the students of S. Bruce Smith School will become confident, self-directed, responsible, and productive citizens of a global community.

The staff at S. Bruce Smith School embodies a community of learners, by deeply engaging in many professional development opportunities in which teachers lead teachers in learning. Staff recognize the expertise within disciplines and learn from each other. They are willing to take risks; reflect and measure impact; celebrate successes and, if something is not working, explore other solutions or strategies. Every teacher has a mentor, creating open classroom doors throughout the school. Teachers share ideas and resources and work to build common assignments, common assessments and common unit plans, resulting in similar best practices across subject areas and grade levels to connect with students.

Staff are deepening their focus on practicing and refining the philosophies of Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Assessment for Learning (AFL) in every classroom, everyday for every student. They continually engage in dialogue around the following reflective questions: "How do we support students in feeling 'capable, connected and contributing' members in our daily lessons?" and "How do we address the individual needs of our students?" Through the application of DI and AFL best practices, students are continually encouraged to reflect on learning outcomes, articulate what they are doing and why they are doing it.

A school-wide best practice is the completion of a daily agenda and the provision of a daily "Focus Question". These two activities are meant to initiate thinking and engage students

quickly at the beginning of each class. This work has become so integral to the school culture that when new staff arrive, it is the students who prompt them for the daily agenda information and the Focus Question for the class.

Staff believe technology stimulates, engages and motivates students. Teachers utilize a variety of technologies including two wireless mobile labs, and 18 interactive white boards. Not only are students given the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways, but teachers have also committed to the learning necessary in becoming confident with integrating interactive technology in their classrooms.

Fostering a deep-rooted sense of belonging for all who work and learn at S. Bruce Smith School is key to student learning and success. This is supported through the creation of Guidance and Support Groups (GSG), which consist of cross-graded homerooms, designed so that students have the same teacher for all three years at S. Bruce Smith School and are able to spend dedicated time building a sense of connection with classmates from other grades. GSG groupings promote student leadership, positive peer relationships and a strong sense of community. The students spend their time together working on a variety of activities with a focus on personal growth, development of leadership skills, study and organizational skills. As a result of this work, students have cultivated a social conscience evidenced by classmates looking out for and seeking support from each other.

At S. Bruce Smith School, there are high expectations with regard to student learning and behavior. The dedicated staff works collaboratively with each other, with community partners, with district staff, and with students and their parents to ensure that expectations are met and everyone continues to improve. The caring nature of the staff and community, coupled with the ongoing focus on meaningful student and staff learning will assist the school in reaching the goal of success for every student.

ES:gj