

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 16, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Dovercourt School: Language Development Through Music

ORIGINATOR: P. Kernaghan, Principal, Dovercourt

RESOURCE

STAFF: Susan Galloway, Wai-Ling Lennon, Lois Lund

INFORMATION

Dovercourt School is located in the west part of Edmonton and accommodates 326 students. In addition to regular programming provided for neighbourhood children, the school serves as a district site for the Mandarin Bilingual Program and the Division II Basic Literacy Program.

At Dovercourt we create a positive school climate in which everyone feels a sense of belonging and respect. We provide a caring atmosphere where students, staff and parents work together as partners in learning. We believe that all students can be responsible and capable learners. High expectations are held and a variety of educational opportunities are provided for all students to achieve success. We strongly believe and participate in sharing our culture with one another in hope of recognizing diversity and promoting respect for individual differences.

Within our diverse student population we have many different dialects spoken at home and students come to us with English as their second, third or in some cases, fourth language. Last year's provincial achievement test results were not at the levels expected, particularly in the area of English Language Arts. As we were already applying a Balanced Literacy program in all Division I classrooms, staff discussions led to the decision that some of the language development concerns could be addressed through our music program.

The music program is delivered by a music specialist who provides each class with one hundred minutes of instruction per week. Kindergarten classes are provided with forty minutes of music instruction per week.

Working closely with the teachers, the music specialist chooses activities that compliment or expand on classroom objectives. Some of the language arts activities that all students participate in during music classes throughout the year include:

- Word meaning in all songs (expands vocabulary)
- Rhythm of speech in poems, rhymes and songs
- Rhyming words

- Tracking from left to right
- Syllabication
- Expressive poetry reading
- Story lines
- Sequencing
- Characterization
- Reading words of songs from charts
- Consonant sounds at the beginning or ending of a word
- Vowel sounds
- Associating a symbol with a sound
- Diction
- Research skills
- Creative song writing

Students are always excited about what they have learned in music and feel honored when they are able to perform in the community. The support that has been received from within the community has been tremendous and has supplied our students with a variety of opportunities, many of which they will only experience through the invitations extended to perform outside of the school. Students are able to successfully interact and communicate with others and are able to relate to numerous diverse groups while sharing their culture and forming new friendships.

We have seen improvement and growth in our students' English communication abilities and in their reading and writing skills. We believe that our music program plays an important role in our students' continued growth and achievement in the English Language Arts curriculum.

PK:jj