

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 29, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of School

SUBJECT: Living Caernarvon School's Instructional Focus in Two Languages

ORIGINATOR: J. Elaschuk, Principal, Caernarvon

RESOURCE
STAFF: Caernarvon Staff

INFORMATION

Caernarvon School, located in north central Castledowns, is an elementary school serving 390 students. Caernarvon is a district site for the Mandarin Bilingual program with 138 Kindergarten to Grade 4 north Edmonton students currently enrolled in the program. The challenge of determining and working toward a common instructional focus in both programs has been met through the cooperative efforts of a professional staff and supportive parent community.

Caernarvon School has been involved with the Blueprints initiative for the last two school terms. After examining results and considering student needs in both programs, the instructional focus of literacy in 2000-2001 was narrowed down to reading comprehension for 2001-2002. Our instructional focus involves:

A coordinated school effort to have Caernarvon students show growth in their ability to read and comprehend through the implementation of a balanced literacy program (cross-curricular) as measured by local measures, HLAT, and Alberta Achievement exams.

Caernarvon School is "living the focus" through the following initiatives and actions.

Since 2000-2001, Caernarvon School has been an AISI (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) project school which has enabled Division I teachers to learn about and integrate balanced literacy strategies into the Language Arts program. AISI participation has also made a half time Reading Recovery teacher available last year and this year that has been expanded to a full time Reading Recovery teacher. Last year eight Grade 1 students and this year 15 Grade 1 students will have the advantage of this one on one reading intervention program for at risk students.

With the success of the Balanced Literacy in Kindergarten to Grade 3 during the 2000-2001 term and the recognized need for a common language and continuity, Grade 4 to 6 teachers also committed to balanced literacy professional development beginning in September, 2002.

Built into the school plan are opportunities for professional development, coaching and collaboration. Staff addresses the various components of the focus during formal professional development days, early Thursday dismissals, regular monthly noon hour meetings, and ILT and staff meetings. The evidence that even more teacher collaboration time would be productive is demonstrated by the many informal instructional focus meetings taking place among teachers, administrators, consultants, support staff, and parents.

An Instructional Focus Leadership Team of four teachers and the two administrators researched and identified strategies to address the reading comprehension focus within the current school framework and resources. Under the leadership of Mary Shearer, assistant principal and reading specialist, it was determined that using background knowledge to enhance comprehension would be our first SMART e goal. Instructional activities and a rubric to measure progress have been introduced at all grade levels.

At each School Council meeting parents are given suggestions for home activities that complement the focus. This information is also provided in newsletters and discussions with parents.

The Mandarin bilingual program and teachers were included in the previously mentioned initiatives and at the school level implemented many of the same reading comprehension and writing strategies in their language arts program. This was a natural extension of collaborative work done at the system level by the Chinese bilingual sites to translate and adapt language arts curriculum, HLATs and some balanced literacy strategies. Alignment of the two language arts curriculae has created consistency and continuity for students.

Many of the aspects of addressing an instructional focus are common to many school sites. Caernarvon's uniqueness is seen in the way both programs work collaboratively to meet a common goal. By engaging in common activities, a common language for discussion about student work has enhanced student achievement.

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