

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 22, 2005

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: LaPerle School-Focus on Reading Comprehension

ORIGINATOR: W. Bayko, Principal, LaPerle

RESOURCE  
STAFF: Jan Hamilton, Kerri-Lynn Heise, Lila Asiff

### INFORMATION

LaPerle School, located in west Edmonton, serves a student population of 344 students in Grades K–6. Overall, achievement results at LaPerle have been consistently very good with marked improvements in the last year.

Based on a data review in the fall of 2001, the staff at LaPerle decided to focus on reading comprehension. At that time the following instructional focus statement was developed: *To have all students show growth in reading comprehension across the curriculum.* A banner statement that is used in all communications was also developed. It reads “*A World of Reading...A World of Meaning*”, because making meaning out of text is the crux of reading comprehension.

During the past two years staff have engaged in various professional development activities related to best practices for reading comprehension such as: Balanced Literacy, engaging prior knowledge, asking effective questions, visualizing and using thinking maps to initiate thinking before writing. Strategies such as read alouds, novel at a glance, response journaling and relate, retell and reflect are used to enhance student skills in reading comprehension. Staff also expanded the literature resources both in the library and in the classrooms to accommodate this focus on reading comprehension.

The first professional development series that staff engaged in during the fall of 2001 was Balanced Literacy and all Division I staff have been trained over the past four years. The Balanced Literacy program focuses on instruction in *reading, writing and working with words*. It emphasizes movement from *supported* to *independent* literacy learning for children. As part of the ongoing collaborative work at LaPerle School, staff analyzed data gathered from various assessments, both school based as well as HLATs and Provincial Achievement Tests to identify areas of need. This analysis is the basis for further instruction. Specific areas of need within the reading comprehension focus were identified, including the ability to use higher level comprehension thinking skills. In each of these identified areas of need, staff went to the research to find the best practices to support this need, honed their instructional skills and monitored student progress.

One example of this process to support student learning will be shared tonight. At the kindergarten level it was noted that many of the students entering kindergarten at LaPerle were in need of deeper support in the “*working with words*” portion of the Balanced Literacy Program, and more specifically their ability to hear sounds in words. This observation was shared with the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) who works closely with LaPerle’s staff and students. The SLP, Kerri-Lynn Heise, suggested that she assist the kindergarten teacher in teaching some very specific listening skills to help children become more aware of sounds in words. With permission from her Capital Health supervisors, she developed a ten week intervention program, which was implemented in the fall of 2004. Once a week, a listening lesson was modeled for the teacher and the students. The students practiced the skills taught; both at school and at home. Parents received homework packages to support the students and their work at school. Pre and post measures were completed and significant improvement by all students was demonstrated over the ten week period.

This collaborative project between the school, a community agency and the home illustrates how the LaPerle staff support all children. It is *one* example of how the Supporting Teaching and Learning framework is “lived” at a school. Staff continue to review data, identify needs, review the research, create a professional development plan, implement the plan, involve families as well as the community and monitor results. This is the work of the school – it is embedded in their day to day practice. Staff are living out the Supporting Teaching and Learning framework to achieve superb results from all students.

WB:gj