

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 22, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

SUBJECT: Waverley School: Fostering a Community of Learners

ORIGINATOR: B. Crossman, Principal, Waverley School

RESOURCE

STAFF: Val Bergstrom; Laurie Clare, Betty Kelman; Sherry Lemke;
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INFORMATION

Waverley School is a kindergarten to grade six school and a district site for Early Education. The elementary program serves 196 students, and the Early Education program has 82 pre-school children with severe special needs for a total of 278 students.

The focus at Waverley School is on student achievement. Clearly a definition of student achievement must include not only academic growth but social, emotional, physical and cultural growth as well. At Waverley, we believe that we promote student achievement by encouraging active participation and student leadership in a variety of ways. We are committed to doing this by building a professional learning community. Dr. Rick Dufour states that “the path to change in the classroom lies within and through professional learning communities”.

Michael Fullan maintains that in order to improve school achievement, there is a need for a collaborative culture. At Waverley, student participation is fundamental to our collaborative approach and we know that this collaboration results in a supportive environment. As Alfie Kohn states:

“taking the time to help children care about each other might just affect their enthusiasm about academic learning. Students need to feel safe in order to take intellectual risks; they must be comfortable before they can venture into the realm of discomfort. Few things stifle [learning] like the fear of being judged or humiliated. Thus a supportive, [collaborative] environment will allow people of any age to play with possibilities and challenge themselves to stretch their thinking. The moral is: if you want academic excellence, you have to attend to how children feel about school and about each other.”

Some successful initiatives we use to promote student leadership and participation include paired readers, peer tutors, recess assistants, Waverley announcers, safety patrols,

“performance improvement plan” (PIP) leaders, school council members and room representatives. Empowering students to take ownership for their actions and learning promotes academic improvement, but also fosters a positive school climate. At Waverley, we are committed to giving students meaningful opportunity to practice a variety of roles and responsibilities to encourage growth and good citizenship.

We believe that student leadership and participation have had a profound impact on academic success for our students. Our achievement results are excellent, and in the 1999-2000 student attitude survey, 100 per cent of students found school work to be interesting.

Clearly, student participation is at the heart of building a community of learners at Waverley. We believe that meaningful participation and student leadership opportunities at the elementary level will not only positively support students and enhance student achievement throughout their elementary years, but will have a significant impact as our students enter Jr. High and beyond.

BC:jj