

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 23, 2006

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Acting Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Rio Terrace School – Focus on Writing

ORIGINATOR: R. Hutchinson, Principal, Rio Terrace School Schule

RESOURCE

STAFF: Hayley Caouette, Elexis Ortlieb.

### INFORMATION

École Rio Terrace School Schule is located in west Edmonton and has a student population of 205 students. Rio Terrace is unique in the district, in that it has French Immersion and German Bilingual programs, but no regular English program.

The Instructional Focus at Rio Terrace is writing in English and a Second Language with an emphasis on improving expression and voice. The staff began working on this focus in September, 2004. Although a review of achievement data indicated that the majority of students were writing at grade level, there was room for growth in the number of students reaching the standard of excellence. Staff felt they could ensure superb results from all students through a focus on writing skills. To do this they set out to build expertise and enhance practice in writing instruction.

Staff began to build expertise by enhancing their skills in the teaching of writing in French, German and English. By working with a district consultant they learned about the best practice of using literature as a springboard to writing. Staff also learned more about the use of graphic organizers as a tool for planning writing and thinking. The organizers were translated into the three target languages. Selected staff members also attended 6+1 Writing Traits training and shared their knowledge with others at staff meetings, thereby building capacity and ensuring change in practice.

Collaboration within the school through collegial marking is another best practice used at Rio Terrace. The teachers realize that marking in isolation can skew their perception of marks. In order to keep their writing standards “normalized” teachers marked writing samples together. District and provincial standards are also utilized to enhance consistency in assessing student writing.

Further collaboration occurs through the trio work with staff at Greenfield and Greenview Schools. The instructional walkthroughs and facilitator training sessions have helped to develop many positive relationships that will be continued and expanded next year. As well, plans are underway for a joint Professional Development day in August looking at developing strong relationships among the language and grade level teachers for the three schools. This will assist staff in taking this collaboration deeper next year.

To monitor student learning, the HLAT-style writing prompt was adopted as an interim measure. This measure indicates that students have made progress in increasing their writing skills.

Specifically, the school's interim measure indicates that 98% of the students are writing at grade level. The larger goal has been to improve the performance of students within their grade level and there have been changes in that area as well. The number of students rated as "1 or Limited" has gone down to 11%, and the number of students rated as "3 or Proficient" has gone up 14%. Currently, 91% of the students are rated as "Adequate or better" in English and their target language writing.

École Rio Terrace School Schule reflects a culture of continuous improvement. Staff will expand their knowledge of the 6 + 1 Writing Traits program next year so they can continue to meet the needs of students. In addition, staff will be looking at learning more in the area of Assessment for Learning. The path may change, but the destination is always the same: To achieve superb results from all students.