

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 8, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

ORIGINATOR: Angus McBeath, Department Head, School and District Services

SUBJECT: Alberta Initiative for School Improvement Interim Results

RESOURCE

STAFF: Jenise Bidulock, Susan Burghardt-McNeill, Neil Robblee

INFORMATION

For the last nine months, 102 district schools have been involved in nine Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (A.I.S.I.) projects. (Appendix I) As of April 30th, a report was submitted to Alberta Learning indicating interim indicators of success. In all nine projects, evidence exists at this interim reporting time to recommend to Alberta Learning the continuance of these projects into year two. A final report on measures supporting the success of the projects will be submitted to Board and to Alberta Learning by October 30, 2001.

This report summarizes the best practices and promising strategies, not only within each project, but across all nine projects (Appendix II). The nature of the promising strategies have implications for the future of district A.I.S.I. projects as well as potential district-wide implications.

Promising Strategies Common Among AISI Projects

1. Best Teaching Strategies

- Project teachers in teams with consultants, are identifying, learning and using effective research based teaching strategies.
- School teams are building expertise and changing and refining practices.
- Best practices in assessment and standards setting are shared.
- Teachers have a much greater depth of understanding of curriculum expectations.

2. Aligned, Targeted Professional Development

- Staff in each project are part of a network of schools where each can share experiences and expertise.
- Teachers receive coaching from consultants, project managers, and field experts to support their work.
- Teachers work together to identify student needs, improve instruction, and assess student progress.
- Professional development is tied to the focus area (e.g. mathematics or literacy) and keyed to student learning results.
- Teacher-leaders are involved in intensive ongoing project professional development with frequent opportunities for practice and coaching.
- Effectiveness of professional development is measured by growth in student learning and growth in teacher confidence and practice.
- Teacher-leaders share their expertise with school staff and develop professional development plans with staff.

3. Teacher Collaboration

Teacher-leaders work together to address:

- Sharing of best teaching strategies among teachers in the projects.
- Sharing the results of student work and analyzing that work in relation to standards.
- The creation of a wide variety of common assessment tools and strategies for school and district use.
- An in-depth review, mutual understanding, and application of curriculum standards.
- Inter-school visitations and follow up debriefings and communication of learnings with school colleagues.
- Creation of materials and activities that will potentially improve instruction.

4. Developing Professional Learning Communities

- A shared purpose and a focus on student learning and student work drives the projects.
- There has been a team approach to gaining an understanding of the practice of teaching through an “open door” approach to classroom observation and rich reflective dialogue.
- Collaboration around mutual respect and professional standards has resulted in a high degree of professional esteem and confidence among teachers in the projects.
- The collaborative model that has project managers working with lead consultants, who then work with teacher-leaders has resulted in increased communications among schools and central services staff.

- Teacher networking, professional dialogue, and professional exchange have increased.

5. Developing Shared Instructional Leadership Capacity

- Principals co-ordinate the projects within their schools. They design the organization and implementation of the project, staff involvement and assignment, resource alignment, budget planning, and review of data and monitoring of student results.
- Teacher-leaders are selected by school principals and join a project team of consultants and managers. Principals and teacher-leaders are involved in on-going project reviews and updates.
- Principals with their teacher-leader(s) and leadership teams host site coaching visits for project consultants and managers.
- Teacher-leaders become an integral part of the professional development teams in project schools.
- School teams work closely with coaches, consultants, and project managers, with a goal of setting high expectations for all staff and students. School teams work cohesively on practices that improve instruction.

6. Continuous Review of Student Achievement Data

With the principal's guidance:

- Standards and baselines have been set for every project.
- Schools in the projects have established clear, measurable goals including multiple measures of performance for students.
- Student performance data is examined regularly at the school level in addition to large-scale assessment.
- Based on data, instruction is examined and adjusted.

APPENDIX I: Schools Involved in Projects and Total Allocations
 APPENDIX II: Promising Practices and Interim Indicators of Success by Project

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SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN PROJECTS AND TOTAL ALLOCATIONS

EARLY LITERACY

Abbott
 Alex Taylor
 Beacon Heights
 Eastwood
 Glendale
 McCauley
 McDougall
 McKee
 North Edmonton
 Norwood
 Parkdale
 R.J. Scott
 Rundle
 Strathearn
 Spruce Avenue

\$2,860,031**MIDDLE LITERACY**

Avalon
 Britannia
 Edith Rogers
 Riverbend
 Rosslyn
 Vernon Barford
 Westmount

\$593,812**BALANCED LITERACY**

Belmead
 Caernarvon
 Crawford Plains
 Daly Grove
 North Mount
 Griesbach
 Grovenor
 Rideau Park
 Riverdale
 Sifton

\$793,210**DIV. II MATHEMATICS**

Afton
 Dovercourt
 Duggan
 Holyrood
 Lendrum
 Lorelei
 Malcolm Tweedle
 Mount Royal
 Newton
 Scott Robertson

\$455,248**DIV. III MATHEMATICS**

Balwin
 D.S. MacKenzie
 Dickinsfield
 Hardisty
 Highlands
 Hillcrest
 Horse Hill
 Kenilworth
 Killarney
 Lawton
 Ottewell
 T.D. Baker
 Wellington
 Westlawn
 Westminster

\$1,297,651**DIV. IV MATHEMATICS**

Centre High
 Eastglen
 Edm Christian School
 Harry Ainlay
 J. Percy Page
 Jasper Place
 McNally
 M.E. LaZerte
 Old Scona
 Queen Elizabeth
 Ross Sheppard
 Strathcona
 Victoria
 Vimy Ridge
 W.P. Wagner

\$742,469

**MAXIMIZING STUDENT
POTENTIAL K-6**

Belvedere
Brightview
Earl Buxton
Fulton Place
Glenora
Greenview
J.A. Fife
Julia Kiniski
Kildare
King Edward
Lee Ridge
Lauderdale
Virginia Park
Windsor Park
Woodcroft

\$406,967

**MAXIMIZING STUDENT
POTENTIAL 7-9**

Academy At King Edward
Alberta School for the Deaf
Crestwood
Donnan
Laurier Heights
McKernan
Ritchie
S. Bruce Smith
Sherbrooke
Talmud Torah

\$513,327

**MAXIMIZING STUDENT
POTENTIAL 10-12**

Learning Store On Whyte
Jasper Place
Queen Elizabeth
Tevie Miller Heritage

\$271,467

PROMISING PRACTICES AND INTERIM INDICATORS OF SUCCESS BY PROJECT

The promising practices and interim indicators of success will be reviewed in three sections:

1. Literacy projects Mathematics projects
2. Maximizing
3. Student Potential projects

Literacy Projects

Early Literacy Project

Promising Strategies

All schools involved in the Early Literacy Project have implemented the four major programming components, as follows:

1. Full day kindergarten
2. Small class size at grade one
3. Reading Recovery programming
4. Balanced Literacy programming

Teachers have been enthusiastic about the professional development component of the project because it is sustained and includes inservice training, modeling, feedback, and collegial support. Teachers feel they have the organizational elements and the expertise to ensure student success.

Interim Indicators of Success

Principals and participating teachers report very positively of the success of the programming approaches. In particular, kindergarten teachers indicate outstanding gains for their students, both academically and socially. Grade one teachers feel that they can address student learning issues, and students who are experiencing significant literacy difficulty have access to Reading Recovery programming.

Because of the reorganization taking place in the City Centre Project, Delton School will be joining the Early Literacy Project in the 2001-2002 school year.

Balanced Literacy Project

Promising Strategies

In the Balanced Literacy Project, the ten participating schools all have implemented Balanced Literacy and Reading Recovery programming at division 1.

The opportunity to engage in sustained professional development that includes inservice training, modeling, feedback, and collegial support is viewed as highly productive by those

involved. Teachers observe that they have the right resources combined with an enhanced repertoire of literacy teaching strategies to ensure the success of their students.

Interim Indicators of Success

Participating principals and teachers report significant student learning gains and feel they have the tools to address literacy deficits among their students.

It will be interesting to compare the results attained by schools in this project with those in the Early Literacy Project to determine the added impact of full day kindergarten and small class size at grade one.

Middle Literacy Project

Promising Strategies

The eight schools involved in the Middle Literacy Project have provided staff to work with grade seven students whose school success is jeopardized by a lack of literacy skill. A teacher leader from each school has engaged in regularly scheduled professional development in order to broaden their knowledge of literacy teaching strategies. These teacher-leaders then work with other teaching staff at their schools to ensure that specified literacy strategies are used across all curriculum areas. They value, as well, the opportunity to share with teachers located at other schools.

All schools in the project have purchased grade level controlled fiction and non-fiction books so that identified students have a broad range of appealing literature suitable for their independent reading. As well, teacher-leaders are receiving training in a literacy resource entitled “Soar to Success”, which is used to teach effective reading strategies

Interim Indicators of Success

Involved staff report significant gains in reading ability of involved students, and there is consensus among participants that this project be continued next year, and expanded to include grade eight students.

Mathematics Projects

Mathematics Division II Project

Promising Strategies

Organizational structures are in place to allow for collaborative planning among teachers. Schools are regrouping students in mathematics to meet student needs and enable activity-based mathematics including single grade instruction and small group instruction. Students in grades 4 – 6 have access to school organized, extra curricular mathematics activities. Schools have determined reorganization strategies for students,

including homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings that allow smaller groupings of students.

Division II math teachers in this project are involved in an ongoing series of in-services to provide current pedagogy with respect to the teaching of mathematics. The in-service model includes follow-up monthly coaching.

Interim Indicators of Success

Monthly professional development sessions have been held for all teachers in each grade level.

Each school has scheduled time for division II teachers to meet collaboratively to plan, share, and discuss project implementation. Grade 6 teachers worked together and have developed 5 performance assessments to be used in each grade 6 classroom in the project. Grade 5 teachers have implemented a problem solving focus in their math classrooms, with most classrooms including weekly at home problem-solving activities. Teacher leaders are taking on leadership roles.

Approximately 1100 students are directly involved in the program with teachers who are more confident about their teaching and using new strategies, aligning assessment with curriculum and teaching, and working cooperatively. All teachers express satisfaction with the monthly professional development sessions.

Mathematics Division III Project

Promising Strategies

Common in-servicing regarding teaching strategies linked to current research for improving student achievement in mathematics use an in-service/coaching model. Teacher-leaders for each school attend in servicing and provide a cascade-training model for other mathematics staff at their schools. Organizational structures are in place to allow for collaborative planning among teachers. Schools are regrouping students in mathematics to meet student needs and enable the use of manipulatives in mathematics. This includes rotating small group instruction, team teaching, teacher and peer tutoring, and leveled mathematics classes.

Interim Indicators of Success

Monthly professional development sessions have been held for all teachers in grade 7 and grade 9. Eight meetings have been held with teacher leaders from each school to assist with project implementation, data collection, progress, and results. Fifteen teacher-leaders have been involved in peer and reciprocal coaching sessions.

Each school has scheduled time for mathematics teachers to meet collaboratively to plan, and for peer coaching sessions. Grade 9 teachers worked together and have developed a very impressive bank of written, multiple choice, short answer, and performance assessments which is currently available to all project schools on a CD. All teachers have implemented student math journals in their classrooms, and all schools have exchanged mid-term exams.

Teachers are more confident about their teaching and using new strategies, aligning assessment with curriculum and teaching, and working cooperatively. Teachers report a more thorough understanding of the Mathematics curriculum. All teachers express satisfaction with the monthly professional development sessions.

Mathematics Division IV Project

Promising Strategies

The multitude of ways in which teacher leaders are collaborating is the single most promising strategy in the project. At the district level, the 33 teacher-leaders from 15 high schools have collaborated on sharing materials, looking at curriculum standards with great attention, and regularity, examining best practices and developing common unit and final assessments. Intervisitation of teacher leaders between schools is occurring and is highly valued by staff. They learn from their colleagues and, at the same time, have their own practices validated.

Interim Indicators of Success

The teachers indicate that they feel supported and that they are confident teaching the new courses. Assessment of students is improving with the curriculum standards being addressed and the group's focus on designing and implementing appropriate rubrics. Teachers and students are confident using the new technology. Teachers are experimenting with different ways of teaching. They are using more group work, more hands-on learning, more technology and different assessment techniques.

The key teachers' major accomplishment has been the development of a final exam for Pure and Applied Math 10 for use in June for all schools. Key teachers are analyzing student results to date to identify challenges and possible solutions. This analysis and collaboration is the key to success.

Maximizing Student Potential Projects

Maximizing Student Potential Kindergarten to Grade 6 Project

Promising Strategies

Among the fifteen schools participating in this project, a wide variety of approaches have been developed to improve the achievement of "at risk" and "at promise" students. Generally, the projects can be categorized under literacy or character education headings. The following examples serve to illustrate the range of strategies employed by schools in this project.

- Virginia Park—connecting writing with the fine arts
- Glenora—peer tutoring in academic core subjects
- Fulton Place—implementation of the Accelerated Reading program
- Woodcroft—focus on improving student writing
- Lauderdale—implementation of a character education program

Each school has been responsible for arranging appropriate staff profession development to ensure successful implementation of project strategies.

Interim Indicators of Success

Teachers and principals are enthusiastic about their projects and the associated professional development. They have provided anecdotal evidence of student improvement in the areas related to their project focus. They believe that year end data will support their interim observations of success.

Maximizing Student Potential Division III Project

Promising Strategies

Ten district schools are working to improve and increase learning and achievement for an identified group of students who are not working at potential in the core subject areas, with a goal of ensuring that students with the potential to meet or exceed the standards or standards of excellence meet their goals.

Each project school has provided time to a designated staff member to provide support to and monitor progress of students who have been identified as at risk or at promise. The designated staff member coordinates opportunities for staff collaboration regarding identified students.

Each school has put into place researched instructional strategies to enhance the academic achievement for students identified as working below potential. Rational Emotive Education, Solution Focused Counseling, brain based success strategies and Curriculum Compacting are among the strategies being used.

Interim Indicators of Success

Staff in each school have receiving in-service and training on one or more of the strategies included in the project plan. In addition, teacher-leaders from each school have met to discuss research-based strategies to assist students at risk and students at promise. These strategies then have been used by teacher-leaders to in-service their staff.

Teachers are tracking the progress of a cohort of identified students in each school. Anecdotal evidence is demonstrating improvement in student achievement, student conduct, and the engagement of students in learning. Teachers have prepared case studies indicating successful strategies with individual students and groups of students. Successful strategies are being shared among schools on the project. Teachers on the project analyze student results on a regular basis, and use this to inform practice.

Maximizing Student Potential Division IV Project

Promising Strategies

The key promising strategy reported by the four project sites is the way in which additional staff, both certificated and non-certificated, have joined school staff on the projects as “success mentors” and are being accessed by students. Sites see an increase of the grade ten project students that have been involved in proactive planning and career centered interviews.

Interim Indicators of Success

The schools indicate that success is seen in administrative, counseling, teaching and support staff working together to effectively problem solve issues of student retention, motivation and achievement. The reorganization of counseling centers to provide increased career and goal setting sessions for students and families is seen as highly proactive and effective. Students in all four sites are indicating increased levels of independence, responsible behaviour and future oriented decision making.

Staff within sites and across sites are collaborating on best intervention strategies and proactive counseling practices. Whole school awareness of the needs of “at risk” students and potential strategies for their success is growing.