

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 12, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Sifton School's Instructional Focus

ORIGINATOR: M. R. Butlin, Principal, Sifton School

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INFORMATION

Sifton School, located in Clareview, serves 238 children in grades K – 6. It has two district sites for the Division II Behaviour and Learning Assistance program. There are eleven languages other than English spoken in our students' homes.

Sifton School's students and staff were the fortunate recipients of the AISI grant in the fall of 2000. With this grant we have been able to provide Reading Recovery to the struggling emergent readers in grade 1 and Balanced Literacy to all students in Division I. Even though not funded through AISI, Sifton staff decided to also offer full day kindergarten and has done so since the fall of 2001.

The implementation of Sifton School's instructional focus began in the spring of 2001. The principal attended a Principals' Institute where the district's initiative on *Focus for Supporting Teaching and Learning* was introduced. Through subsequent consultation with staff and parents, it was determined that a focus on *reading for participation* would benefit our students:

All Sifton students will participate in a school-wide effort to develop an awareness of print, a positive approach to reading, and show measurable growth in their participation in reading as measured by the number of students who participate in the 'Reading to the Stars' Program and an informal attitude survey on how students feel about reading (pre and post).

When the data showed that 95% of the student population was participating in the daily home reading program (*Reading to the Stars*), the staff was prepared to allow for the evolution of the instructional focus from *reading for participation* to *reading comprehension*. In February of 2002, the staff of Sifton School adopted the following instructional focus in their three-year school plan for 2002-2005:

At Sifton School there is a coordinated whole school effort to have all students show measurable growth in reading comprehension as measured by the HLAT reading assessment and provincial achievement tests and two internal measures

The students, staff and parents of Sifton are well on their way to *living* the instructional focus, based on the eight year two expectations:

- 1) We do have an instructional focus – *Reading is the Key!*
- 2) Collaborative time for teacher teams has been provided through the weekly scheduled 30 minutes admin sessions in the classroom (*Merry Mary Time*), through the bimonthly admin supervised whole school reading (*Sifton Story Hour*) and the monthly early Thursday IF sessions.
- 3) The *IF TEAM* has determined the three strategies to be used by the whole staff to improve reading comprehension: *RETELLING*, *RELATING* and *REFLECTING*. In-service training has already begun.
- 4) Professional development is becoming more closely tied to the instructional focus. All requests are weighed with an eye on the IF. There has been already extensive Balanced Literacy and Reading Recovery training of teaching staff.
- 5) Resources are aligned to the instructional focus. Supply time is provided for IF testing and IF planning. Finances have been directed towards purchasing leveled reading resources for the balanced literacy program and other curriculum areas.
- 6) Parents are heavily involved in the IF. They are becoming strong participants in our *Reading to the Stars* home reading program. They help with the extensive IF display boards and the posting of IF public charts. They also regularly use their casino funds to purchase *Best of the Best* books, and this year, leveled reading books for the library. They have also been approached to finance an IF mural for the gym. Finally, the *IF TEAM* started a *RAH! RAH! Program (Reading at Home)*, where the Reading Recovery teachers provide parent education sessions to help parents read and encourage reading with their children at home. The community is also involved. There are business sponsorships for our *Reading to the Stars* and *Parent of the Month* programs.
- 7) The measurement for the baseline data has been determined (DRA for K – 1 & Alberta Diagnostic for 3 – 6) and the fall baseline data has been charted. The 6 – 8 week *dip sticking* of the results has been planned through *Retelling, Relating & Reflecting RUBRICS*.
- 8) The principal is in the classroom approaching 50% of the time. There are weekly scheduled 30-minute admin sessions in each classroom (*Merry Mary Time*).

The most powerful strategy behind our instructional focus is the one developed last year when the focus was *reading for participation*. That strategy is *RETAIL* – the marketing of reading. Every program we have in the school, and we have some 27, has a tie to reading. *Reading* is quite constantly and clearly the focus at Sifton because of this marketing strategy, e.g., the Character Education program is called *Reading Builds Character*, the Student Leadership Program is called *Readers Taking the Lead*, the Business Partnership Program is called *Reading 'Ritng & Retail*, the United Way read-a-thon was called *United We Read*.

We have made excellent progress with our IF due to the combined efforts of our *Sifton Star Students* and our *Sifton Star Polishers*, both at home and at school. This progress has added to a deep sense of pride within the community of our little school. So strong is this sense of pride that we refer to it as the *SENSE OF SIFTON*.

MRB:mrB