

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 13, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Angus McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Montrose School's Instructional Focus

ORIGINATOR: Darren Fox, Principal, Montrose School

RESOURCE
STAFF: Amber Casali, Janice Hrdlicka, Joyce Seerattan

INFORMATION

Montrose School, located in the north-east area of Edmonton, is a kindergarten to Grade 6 school serving 175 students, including one behavior and learning assistance classroom. The motto of the school, "We Belong To Montrose", is reflected in the caring and supportive environment and the high quality of programming provided to our students.

During the 2000-01 school year, Montrose School was one of 25 schools piloting the implementation of an instructional focus. Through extensive work by staff, an instructional focus on writing was developed and implemented. More specifically, the focus was to develop the students' ability to organize writing for a variety of audiences. This was an entire staff decision, which was felt to be a desirable move by the parents.

Many effective strategies were implemented to support the focus on writing. To begin, an instructional leadership team was established to lead the staff through the process of identifying an instructional focus and guiding its implementation. Staff began meeting at least once each month in collaborative meetings. This invaluable time allowed staff the opportunity to critically look at student work, discuss strategies and program for our students, especially those identified at risk. By having collaborative planning meetings each month, continuity in programming and academic growth was carefully monitored and directly tied to planning. Also, the two professional development days were targeted on enhancing writing with the assistance of Edmonton Public Schools' language arts consultants. An internal accountability plan was put into place with S.M.A.R.T. goals. These goals were monitored and student progress was checked at regular intervals. Inter-school visitations were also encouraged, allowing staff networking opportunities with staff from other schools.

Other strategies used to lead our school towards living our focus were through daily announcements with respect to writing, students sharing writing during announcements, assemblies and during student meetings with the principal.

To involve our parents, information regarding our writing focus was placed on our telephone answering machine, our on-hold message and in our class and school newsletters. Opportunities for parental feedback and participation were provided in our school newsletter and parent council meetings.

To involve our greater community, we began our Writing Mentors Program. In this program, our students were involved in writing to various mentors throughout Edmonton, including Edmonton Public Schools personnel, local businesses and a local senior's lodge. Mentors and students wrote to each other approximately twice each month. As a celebration of this learning, our school hosted a volunteer tea where our students met their writing mentors for the first time. This was a wonderful opportunity for our students and their mentors.

For the 2001-02 school year, we are continuing with our instructional focus on writing, expanding our focus to include both narrative and functional forms of writing.

We are in the process of continuing our Writing Mentors Program. The support we have received from our parents and our greater community has been outstanding. They have been generous in the time they have given to our students and supporting our focus on writing. This support has greatly ensured that exciting learning opportunities exist for our students

The success of our instructional focus has exceeded our expectations, especially in the area of student interest and confidence in their writing abilities.

DF:df