

## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 27, 2007

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Improving Student Achievement at McLeod Elementary School

ORIGINATOR: E. Thomsen, Principal, McLeod Elementary School

RESOURCE  
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### INFORMATION

McLeod School is an elementary school located in north-east Edmonton. The school offers programming for 380 students in Kindergarten to Grade six. Students with special needs are fully integrated in regular classrooms. Extensive parent involvement and strong community supports have been established.

McLeod staff make collaborative decisions about the school's direction for enhancing student achievement based on data analysis and student needs. Analyses of achievement data such as Provincial Achievement tests, Highest Level of Achievement tests (coordinated through Student Assessment), and school based assessments over the past five years have assisted staff in making effective decisions about literacy and numeracy instruction. Literacy supports are varied and include Balanced Literacy programming at all grade levels. McLeod School is one of 22 schools involved in the district's Reading Recovery Pilot Project, which provides one on one support for struggling readers at the grade one level. McLeod School also offers Early Reading Intervention for grades two to six. In the Early Reading Intervention program, selected students are organized into small guided reading groups to receive lessons targeted to their learning needs, on a daily basis. Overall, these best practices have resulted in increased reading comprehension for these students.

To support mathematics instruction, McLeod teachers voiced a desire for a more interactive and student-centered approach to learning. In the spring of 2006, staff reviewed literature and research from various sources and selected a research-driven practice called *Math Menus* as a school-wide approach to improving math learning. Math Menus engage students through: a) problem-solving, b) games, and c) math manipulatives. This approach also provides opportunities for students to make choices about which math activity to pursue, thereby giving them ownership of learning.

During the 2006-07 school year, all students at McLeod were surveyed three times about their attitudes towards learning math. The data gathered indicated a positive change. In April of 2007, 80 percent of students "liked math", an increase of six percent from the baseline; while 85 percent indicated that they were "good at math", an increase of 12 percent

from the baseline. In addition, staff observed enhanced student achievement results through anecdotal observations and classroom based assessments.

McLeod School's professional development opportunities vary. Current topics include Balanced Literacy, Reading Recovery, Early Reading Intervention, 6 + 1 Writing Traits, Assessment for Learning and Math Menus, all supported through Consulting Services. In addition, school leadership staff attends district professional development sessions about effective assessment practices. School leaders subsequently share key ideas and strategies with the rest of the McLeod staff in meaningful and connected ways. Since the fall of 2005, teachers have systematically implemented the following assessment practices: student self- and peer-assessment, and setting and using criteria with students.

This year, teachers are developing new strategies for providing students with descriptive feedback for learning, using a classroom coaching model. During the coaching sessions, teachers observe while a consultant from Consulting Services models a lesson, followed by a conversation focusing on students' responses to the lesson. Through this type of professional dialogue teachers share their collective expertise. Another opportunity for professional collaboration occurs during intervisitations between McLeod staff and the staff at their cohort schools, Dunluce and Northmount.

McLeod teachers value experimenting with new strategies and processes for enhancing teaching and learning. Teachers feel safe to take risks and to share innovative teaching and learning experiences with colleagues within the school, with cohort schools and with support from central. Through this approach, McLeod staff consistently models what it means to be a learner. Consequently, creativity and leadership emerge at a classroom level within a research-based framework, creating learning opportunities and bright futures for *all* students.

ES:gj