

REPORT OF THE ELLIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Another year has passed, another year of collaboration between the community of Fremont, parents, students and of course teachers, staff and administration.

In the elementary school we continue with our Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop and Everyday Math programs. Our students are excited about learning science and social studies as well. Teachers supplement these programs and differentiate instruction as necessary to meet the educational needs of all children. It is this creativity and dedication that is one of the hallmarks of the wonderful and skilled teaching staff at Ellis. These efforts are enhanced by collaboration; shared responsibility and a desire to make sure all children are reaching their full potential.

This past year had many highlights. I will only mention a few and while challenging at times, these initiatives directly enhanced the quality of education at the Ellis School. The first is a state wide initiative called Follow the Child. Follow the Child emphasizes personalized learning focusing on each student's needs: Academically, Socially, Physically and Personally. Our acceptance was based on the quality of education and supports and services we currently offer all children, our relationship and support with our community and parent organizations; but most importantly our desire to provide a personalized education to all students. Like all new projects, they come with success and challenges but with the continued support from our community and our dedicated staff, we will succeed.

Another important highlight was being chosen by the Timberland Company of Stratham, NH to be the recipient of a "Day of Service". Initiated and coordinated by Mrs. Lynn Linville, a parent of two children at the Ellis school and project leader for Timberland, over 100 volunteers spent the day at Ellis School. At the end of the day the volunteers constructed a green house. This has been providing valuable learning opportunities, especially in the area of science. They also constructed an outdoor classroom that provides a place for students to learn, explore and expand their imagination beyond the traditional four walls of an Ellis classroom. The walking trail is used for outdoor exploration, exercise and a peaceful place to spend time. Compost bins are enhancing our efforts to teach students about the environment. The beautiful herb gardens have supplied our cafeteria with fresh herbs to use and our butterfly garden has provided students with an opportunity to become skilled observers, and develop an understanding of our connection with the life cycle and environment. Volunteers also helped clean the area surrounding the school, build a sand box enjoyed by our younger students but most importantly demonstrate to our students what a vital, significant and important impact volunteering can have on a community and individuals.

It is this spirit of community, caring and giving that I find very unique among our students and families here at Ellis. Our families and students have worked tirelessly to provide for food and clothing drives, fundraising for children of our community who are

very ill and providing countless hours volunteering their time to help the efforts of our teachers and helping each other in time of need. I say this every year, but I believe this is what sets Fremont apart from other communities. It is why I am honored to work here.

In our classrooms, our students are engaged and excited about learning. While sometimes I hear reports of children saying they may not want to go to school, I never hear them say they do not want to learn. This is evident when I visit classrooms and talk with students.

At the Elementary school level we strive to design school wide systems of success. We achieve this by using a three- tiered approach for both academic and behavioral systems. Universal interventions include all students and are preventative and proactive. Universal intervention is what happens in a classroom everyday working toward mastery of grade level expectations. The second tier is targeted group interventions. While some students are at risk, others need further investigation of concepts and we provide rapid response that is highly efficient. The third tier is intensive, individual interventions that are assessment-based and offer highly intensive instruction. Each tier provides a system of assessment and student monitoring.

An example of this system is our Eagles Soar program. This was created last year with the addition of a gifted and talented teacher. This program is in the second year and much has been accomplished. The needs and interests of all children are being met through the three-tiered system. Mrs. Carol Foley provides enrichment activities and resources to all classroom teachers and students. These students who desire to investigate and develop skills beyond the regular curriculum continue on with Mrs. Foley both by working with them individually and their classroom teacher. Then we have students that present very unique skills and talents, often these children are far above grade level expectations. Individual plans are created and again Mrs. Foley works with the classroom teacher and the students individually and in small groups to meet their needs. These children learn quickly and have a deeper understanding of concepts beyond their age and peers. They have a unique desire to seek more knowledge.

Using the three- tiered approach we are able to meet their needs. The same approach is used with students who are struggling to learn concepts. While a different group of professionals work with teachers and students the idea is the same. Children can move up and down the tiers as appropriate to their skill level and at any given time.

Lastly our biggest undertaking was the development of Standards Based report cards and progress reports. The elementary staff took last year to research the most appropriate practices that meet the needs of our students, teachers and parents. Assessment of skills can not be separated from curriculum and instruction, so by looking at assessment we had to also look at our instructional practices and curriculum. This was a huge undertaking for our staff. I am very proud of their work. We will continue this year in refining this process and finishing by 2009.

In reflection upon the 07/08 school year we accomplished much. We will continue working towards mastery of the grade level expectations and providing support services as necessary to ensure success of all children. The elementary school takes a cautious and thoughtful approach to systems change. Change can be difficult but not if learning accompanies the process.

In conclusion I thank the Parents and the Community of Fremont for their support. I appreciate the support from Superintendent Tanguay and the staff at the SAU office, as well as the Fremont School Board and the PTA.

I also wish to acknowledge our office staff at the Ellis School. Theresa Blades, Sherri Ficker and Nan Perry are three of the most dedicated professionals I have ever had the pleasure of working with. Their support, knowledge, caring and expertise in their jobs is unmatched by many.

I also want to thank Mr. Scott Brown, as The Ellis School Facilities Director he keeps our building in tip top shape. Creativity, ingenuity and dedication are all attributes that make Mr. Brown a respected and valuable member of our school community. Lastly I also have the privilege of working with Mr. William Marston. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to work with such a dedicated and seasoned educator. He brought stability and comfort to the staff during a time of change.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn M Lewis
Elementary Principal



Ellis School Students helping in a Town-wide clean-up for Memorial Day
23 May 2008
Photo Courtesy: Fremont Garden Club

"Liberty cannot be preserved without education."

~ John Adams