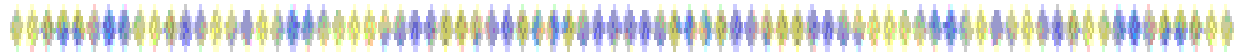




# EFFECTIVE PRACTICES in Special Programs

No. 8 Fall 2004

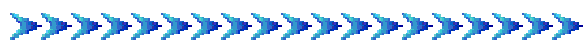
## GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING



A comprehensive guidance and counselling program is an integral component of an effective and caring school.

Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs include a variety of group and individualized activities designed to improve students' attitudes and values, assist students with specific personal/social issues and provide information and advice on educational and career issues. Counselling services may be developmental, preventive or crisis-oriented.

This *Effective Practice* issue features two school programs that focus on developmental guidance instruction that provide relevant information and skills to students in small groups.



### EXPECTING RESPECT PROGRAM

(Grades 7-9)

Fort Junior High

Fort Saskatchewan, AB

Elk Island Public School District



Expecting Respect is an innovative peer education program in which students are trained to make presentations to their peers in classrooms on health-related topics. It is based on the principle that peer education is an effective strategy to deliver messages that encourage healthy decision-making in teens.

Fort Saskatchewan Junior High (FJH) focuses on providing an academically strong, child-centered junior high program in which students feel safe, happy and challenged. In addition to studying the core subjects, the school offers honours, occupational core, behaviour improvement and literacy programs. Students may also choose from a variety of complementary courses such as art, band, computer literacy, French, wildlife, industrial arts, and home economics.

The program is made possible through a collaborative partnership among the following agencies:

- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) Youth Services, Edmonton
- Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre
- Capital Health, Community Health Services
- City of Edmonton Community Services
- Faculty of Education, University of Alberta
- Planned Parenthood, Edmonton
- Sexual Assault Centre, Edmonton
- Canadian Red Cross
- Students and staff in Edmonton and area schools.

"This whole thing started out three years ago (at FJH). There were lots of negative articles about youth getting into trouble all the time. When I heard about this program at a Safe and Caring Schools conference, I thought it was a great way for kids to get a chance to be positive leaders for each other."

— Lori Nelson, FJH Guidance

### **How does Expecting Respect work?**

Each fall, ten youth from grades 7 to 9 and the school counsellor attend a two-day conference in Edmonton to receive training required to make presentations to their peers. FJH Parent Council pays for the conference registration fees. The training days provide the students with materials, including lesson plans, and teaches them to deliver interactive, peer-led presentations on the following health-related topics:

- tobacco
- bullying
- healthy relationships
- drugs and alcohol
- media
- healthy sexual decision-making.

Following the training, the school coordinator and students practice and implement the program. The youth learn different teaching methods, such as role-playing and clear public speaking, to get the messages across.

Students from each grade level are trained on a specific topic. For example, grade 9 students teach about how the media affect body image. They also discuss the dating environment and healthy relationships. FJH invited Toastmasters International to the school to help the students conquer public speaking fears.

Nelson says she has no problem finding ten students to participate in the program. Over time, the students have helped the program evolve. They bring in their own ideas and resources for teaching. For example, in the elementary schools, students in grade 7 teach grade 6 students about transitioning into junior high. The grade 6 students also learn how to deal with such things as bullying and other pressures they might face.

"Some of the students were very intimidated about going to junior high. When they see these students from Fort Junior come in with confidence it helps them become more comfortable. The whole idea is wonderful."

— Shirley Cockburn, Grade 6 teacher  
at Fort Elementary

### **How has the program been evaluated?**

Questionnaires were administered to peer educators, school coordinators and students. In 2002/2003, 32 participating schools delivered approximately 521 presentations. 76% of students attending the presentations indicated they felt the information would help them make healthier decisions. School coordinators and students have indicated that the presentations are easy to understand and relevant. Students particularly like the interactive nature of the classes, including games and role-plays. The feedback is used to guide program development and improvement.

"They made it fun, but also let us learn something."

— FJH Student

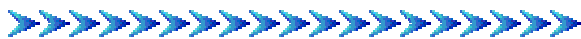
## How is the Expecting Respect Program effective in preparing peer educators?

Since the program's implementation in Alberta eight years ago, annual evaluations have consistently shown that the program is effective in preparing and supporting peer educators to present in their classrooms and in making a positive impact on peer educators and schools. For example, the program helped develop leadership and presentation skills, as well as confidence in the peer educators.

For additional information about Fort Junior High's program, contact:  
Harvey Stadnick, Principal  
Lori Nelson, Guidance Counsellor  
9607 Sherridan Drive  
Fort Saskatchewan, AB T8L 1W5  
Phone: (780) 998-3741  
Fax: (780) 992-0400  
E-mail: [principal.fjh@ei.educ.ab.ca](mailto:principal.fjh@ei.educ.ab.ca)

"They respond best to their peers.  
Kids teaching kids – that's the  
bottom line."

– Lori Nelson, FJH Guidance  
Counsellor



## COOPERATIVE LEARNING PROJECT: MULTICULTURAL LUNCH RECESS PLAY PROGRAM (Grades 1-5)

Sacred Heart School  
Wetaskiwin, AB

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic  
Separate Regional Division



Due to the geographical distance between the town of Wetaskiwin and the Hobbema Reserve, students often do not have the opportunity to build friendships. To avoid students feeling isolated and to increase their circle of friendships, representatives from the school board, Catholic Social Services, the Hobbema Reserve, a native liaison worker, a family liaison worker from the Student Health Initiative Partnership (SHIP) and the principal of the school came together to develop an innovative approach called the Cooperative Learning Project.

Sacred Heart School (K-9) has approximately 360 students, with 50% of the population being of Aboriginal descent. The majority of the Aboriginal students are bused to the school from the Hobbema reserve.

## How does the Cooperative Learning Project work?

The project is a multicultural lunch recess play program that includes cooperative interactive activities to build awareness and respect for the diversity of Aboriginal culture. The activities include playgroups, dance lessons, and a Native Art Club. All students have the opportunity to learn the concept of equity, fairness and just

treatment for all individuals within the school community.

The program is now in its second year of operation. Playgroups are scheduled three days a week for different grade groupings. Students in grades 1 and 2 attend on Wednesdays, grades 3 and 4 students attend on Thursdays, and the grade 5 students attend on Fridays.

### **What are the outcomes of the program?**

The expected outcomes are to:

- foster inclusiveness
- build trust, sharing, cooperation and respect for diversity
- increase ownership in the school community by reducing social isolation
- develop cultural awareness of Native Arts
- increase interaction between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students
- increase involvement of Aboriginal youth in school-based activities.

Funding for the multicultural lunch recess play program was provided through a grant from the Alberta Teachers' Association *Inclusive Learning Communities Fund*, which provides grants to projects aimed at creating inclusive school cultures that respect diversity, equity and human rights.

### **What research supports this program?**

In November 2002, school counsellor, Yvonne Marr, attended a conference called *Early Intervention for a Healthy Society*. The cooperative learning lunch recess play program resulted from a conference session entitled, "*Sewing the Seams of Services for School Aged Children*," by Dr. Gina Browne.

According to Browne, recreation intervention helps to develop youth

spiritually, academically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically. Youth have an opportunity to interact with an adult who cares and to develop good peer relationships while discovering something they are good at. Research shows that when youth are involved in community programming there is a reduction in child/youth problems and a reduction in costs to health care.

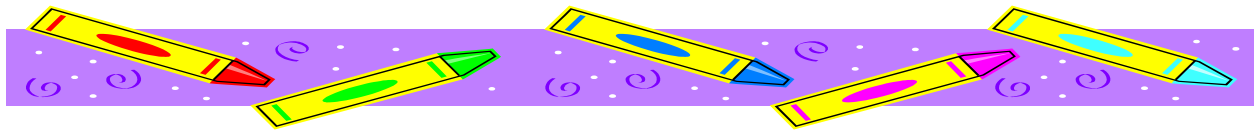
### **Is multiculturalism being supported in other ways in the school community?**

Both staff and parents identified the need for cooperative interaction and a resource centre displaying native arts to promote awareness and respect for cultural diversity. A centre was set up in the school where both teachers and students can use art resources for curriculum enhancement. The centre also provides an opportunity for students, parents and staff to interact on a social basis.

For additional information about Sacred Heart School's program, contact:

Mr. Ken Mastel, Principal  
Yvonne Marr, Counsellor  
Sacred Heart School  
4419 – 52 Avenue  
Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 2X7  
Phone: (780) 352-5533  
Fax: (780) 352-7042  
[kmastel@starcatholic.ab.ca](mailto:kmastel@starcatholic.ab.ca)





*Effective Practices in Special Programs* is a newsletter developed in response to the Special Education Review, Recommendations #51-52, identified in *Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs* (November 2000).

If you would like to share information about your school's effective practices, please contact:

Gail Sarkany-Coles

Special Programs Branch

E-mail: [gail.sarkany-coles@gov.ab.ca](mailto:gail.sarkany-coles@gov.ab.ca)

Telephone: (780) 422-6326; toll free in Alberta at: 310-0000.

***Effective Practices in Special Programs* newsletters are available on our Web site at [www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/specialneeds/practices.asp](http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds/practices.asp)**

