

Celebrating Success in District 7

Promoting an Early Love of Reading

Two literacy programs, Accelerated Reader (AR) and Significant Others as Reading Teachers (SORT) began at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Marystown in 1994.

The AR program was integrated into the school curriculum while the SORT program was a voluntary program designed for parents. The purpose of both initiatives is to foster a love of reading among young children which will enable them to succeed to the best of their ability in school and encourage them to become life-long learners.

The AR program promotes reading for all children, from the exceptionally able learner to the child receiving special support services. The program allows students to select a book of their choice from thousands of titles and read at their own pace. When they are ready, they complete a computerized test to check comprehension. Students receive reading points based on the difficulty of the book and the number of correct answers. Assemblies are held throughout the school year to celebrate student accomplishments and students are awarded individual and class prizes.

District 7 Profile

	2003-04	2002-03
Schools	16	17
Students	3757	3904
Teachers	292.5	308.3
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	12.5	12.3

SORT was implemented at Sacred Heart Elementary by a retired teacher. This community-based literacy program, developed at Memorial University, is based upon the belief that reading at home will help young children succeed at school. Funds were raised to purchase the initial set of books for distribution to the parents of Kindergarten students and, since then, a grant has enabled the collection to expand. Today the program is open to all parents with children six years of age and younger. After nine years of continued volunteerism, the program is stronger than ever and community support for both programs is evident in the financial contributions from local businesses.

Motivation Leads to Better Test Scores

Through the Accelerated Reader program, formerly reluctant readers have gained confidence. Students love the colourful interactive computer program and benefit from the quick feedback they receive on test day. Having a "target to shoot for" has motivated

students to read more books and to read better books, building higher order thinking skills and ultimately resulting in improved test scores.

The SORT program's emphasis on parental involvement and reading aloud has helped students grow to become more independent as readers and learners. Parents receive a wealth of tips and suggestions for activities to enable their children to actively participate and enjoy reading. Parents have become familiar with new research findings on early learning and exchange ideas on problems and solutions. Sacred Heart plans to continue to support Accelerated Reading and Significant Others as Reading Teachers, continuing to add to the book collection and encouraging parent involvement.