



# News Release

*"Every Student Succeeds"*

## **For Immediate Release**

Monday, November 23, 2009

### **The GPPSD makes literacy a high priority**

The Grande Prairie Public School District's focus on literacy will get a boost this week with a visit from a renowned literacy specialist.

Irene Heffel, an English Language Arts consultant from Edmonton Public Schools, will be in Grande Prairie on Wednesday to meet with teachers about the importance of literacy across the curriculum. The all-day session will help build literacy skills in the District's high school teachers regardless of subject area.

"The session is for our department heads at the Composite High School as they will take the lead in ensuring that all of our teachers understand they are teachers of literacy. Our goal in undertaking this project is to better prepare our students to overcome any hurdles they face in subject area reading," said Melanie Matheson, Vice-Principal at the Composite High.

Literacy in the District has been given a major push in Cycle 4 of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) project. Wednesday's session with Heffel is one of many literacy-focused initiatives happening in the District this year.

"Literacy is the number one goal in our school improvement plans," said Sharron Graham, Director of Instruction for the public school district. "Our AISI project is all about literacy, no matter what subject is being taught. We're teaching literacy across the curriculum because it isn't just present English and Language Arts. Every teacher is a literacy teacher."

Heffel, who has met with Composite High staff four times over the past two years, draws on 35 years of experience in the areas of reading instruction, assessment and language arts. She offers practical approaches to the teaching of literacy and is tailoring her sessions to the specific needs and concerns highlighted by District staff.

"As the sessions continue it is becoming evident that all students will benefit from the training our teachers are receiving," Matheson said. "The strategies we are using to help our struggling readers can also be adapted to help our stronger students improve their literacy skills and move to excellence."

For more information on the AISI literacy project, please contact Sharron Graham. For information on the Irene Heffel session, to arrange to attend or interview Irene Heffel, please contact Melanie Matheson.

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