

Chalkboard

Guest Author- *Gayla Wilmoth*, Gentry Primary School Principal

Dear Parents and Friends of Gentry Primary School,

We know that the quality of your child's school is a priority for you as a parent, but we also know that measuring quality is difficult. How can you be assured that your child is attending a quality school? I believe that there are several recognizable components that quality schools possess.

A quality early reading program is a component of a quality school. Our staff has focused on research-based instruction – especially in the areas of reading and writing. Our reading curriculum combines carefully designed systematic instruction in 5 areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. At Gentry Primary School reading instruction and practice last 90 minutes or more a day. All students are read to each day from different kinds of books. Students have daily spelling practice and weekly spelling tests. The connection between reading and writing is taught on a daily basis. Students write daily.

The No Child Left Behind blueprint requires that schools be held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments. Students in quality schools generally score higher on these tests. While not the only measure of quality, these scores do provide a baseline for making this determination. In March 2005, Gentry Primary School students were tested with the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Our kindergarten students scored at the 67% in Language and the 57% in total Mathematics. Our first graders scored at the 62% in total Reading, 62% in total Language, and 61% in total Mathematics. Our second graders scored at the 61% in total Reading, 66% in total Language, and 60% in total Mathematics. The teachers and I review these standardized test scores to assess student achievement. As we examined our test data we identified that we have an overall strength in reading comprehension, and an overall weakness in reading vocabulary. As a result, we have placed a very strong emphasis on vocabulary and word study school-wide.

In our efforts to provide students with a well-rounded quality education, our school curriculum includes various support classes. Technology is used to enrich, to remediate, to introduce, and to reinforce ideas and concepts. Art education, music education, library education, and physical education are daily ingredients in our student program. All students receive weekly enrichment activities provided through the district gifted and talented program.

The role of parents also contributes to quality schools. Parent input and participation are valued and sought, and parents serve on committees and out Parent Teacher Organization. I hope parents took the opportunity to complete a Parent Opinion Survey and return to our office. The goal of our survey is to improve the quality of our educational program and services. A summary of the survey results will be provided in an upcoming issue of our school newsletter and will be posted on our website.

We believe that our school offers a well-rounded curriculum with a commitment to high academic standards, while provided a caring atmosphere that uses a wide variety of instructional strategies so that all students can be successful. If you have any questions regarding this or any other topic, please call us at 736-2252. When everyone works together, quality is a certain result.