

## GET CAUGHT READING

### Good Shepherd School

### Peace River, Alberta, Canada

In Alberta, Provincial Achievement Tests are administered to all students in grades three, six, and nine. This year the third-grade teachers felt that students were weak in the area of reading and possibly not getting adequate support at home to participate in the existing home reading programs. During a designated week each month, school staff called each third-grade student at home to “catch” him or her reading. The goal of the project was to encourage the third graders to read more at home. The Action Team for Partnerships got the initial idea from the 2002 volume of *Promising Partnership Practices*, but they adapted the practice to catch only third-grade students on a monthly basis.

Starting in December, the Action Team sent pledge forms home every month with each of the 53 third-grade students. Students signed the pledges to read at home five times a week, for at least 10 minutes each time—the minimum already requested by the third-grade teachers. The parents signed a pledge to support their children in their reading at home and included their phone number. Parents could also indicate if they would be away on one of the program nights (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday).

As students returned the pledges, the AISI Coordinator made call sheets with the students’ names and phone numbers. Staff members who volunteered to call (the princi-

pal, vice principal, librarian, support staff, and teachers) received a call sheet and made their evening calls. The next morning, the AISI Coordinator made a list of the students who were caught reading. Students on the list had their names announced at morning assembly, received prizes donated by local businesses, and had their pictures taken for a bulletin board. As a result of the project’s visibility, student participation increased each month so that by the third month staff called all the third-grade students.

Students completed a short reading survey before the program began, after three months, and again after six months. In the fourth month, the calls home included a question for parents, “Do you think your child is reading more at home than he/she did in the past?” Seventy-five percent of the parents responded emphatically, “Yes.” The student reading surveys showed that the previously less enthusiastic readers read more often and longer. Students often told teachers about the books they read even if it was not a Get Caught Reading Week. Students frequently asked when their next chance to get caught reading would be. Even the second-grade students asked if they could be included.

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