

# **Existing School Data: Instructional**

## **School Organization**

Aukamm is a grade K-5 Department of Defense elementary school located in Wiesbaden, Germany. During school year 2006-2007, Aukamm consists of ten classrooms: one kindergarten, two first grade classes, one combination first and second grade, one second grade, two third grades, one fourth grade, one combination fourth and fifth grade, and a fifth grade class.

Over the last several years the fourth grade teachers have used a “block schedule” for their students. One teacher is responsible for science/health and the other teacher for social studies/current events.

The top fourth and fifth grade math students (based on standardized test results, pretest, and teacher recommendations) are placed in a separate class for math instruction. These classes of 8-12 students are led by the teacher of Gifted Education and follow a quicker pace through the math curriculum as well as extended opportunities to work on problem solving. The students in the remaining general education classrooms, ranging from low to above-average in math skills, follow the fourth and fifth grade math curriculum at a regular pace. This arrangement allows all students to receive more direct contact time from adults.

## **Support Programs**

Reading Recovery is a one-to-one program for first grade students who need help in reading and writing. This program lasts 16 weeks and consists of a daily 30-40 minute session. Parent involvement is an integral part of this program.

Literacy Coaching (Compensatory Education) is a reading and writing support program for at-risk students in the third grade.

Read 180 is a reading support program for students in grades four and five with Terra Nova, Second Edition scores below the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. Other factors are also taken into consideration for student selection. This is the third year Aukamm has implemented Read 180.

Learning Impaired services are given to students with learning disabilities and cognitive impairments. Services may be in the Resource Room, in the General Education Room, or a combination of both. This is determined at a Child Study Committee meeting with parents.

Speech and Language Therapy provides services for disabilities or delays in articulation, language development, voice, and fluency. Services may be provided in the

Speech/Language room, in the general education classroom, or a combination of both, as determined at a Child Study Committee meeting with parents.

Gifted Education is available for students identified in the top 3-5% of the population. Selection is made using multiple criteria. Teachers or parents can recommend students and a staff committee makes selections.

English as a Second Language is provided for those students demonstrating a need for English language support.

Counseling services are offered for small groups of children or individuals as needed. The counselor also teaches behavior guidance lessons for whole class groups.

*Reading Counts* is a computer-aided program used to help assess children's reading comprehension.

*Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)*, a computerized reading assessment, is used to determine student reading levels at the beginning of the year and to evaluate their progress in reading comprehension each quarter.

*Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)* is a DoDEA mandated assessment for third grade students. The DRA is individually administered to assess accuracy and comprehension (story retell).

## **Curriculum**

Aukamm ES teachers use the *DoDDS Content Standards* for daily planning of instruction. Fully trained specialists support Art, Music, P.E., Host Nation, Gifted Education, Library, Counseling, Special Education (Learning Impaired and Speech/Language), Reading Recovery, Literacy Coaching, and English as a Second Language.

Parent conferences are held three times a year. Portfolios are shared with parents to discuss student progress and plan for future work.

Extra-Curricular Activities have in the past included the following clubs: Math/Problem Solving, Homework, Yearbook, Young Authors, Drama, Activities for Those with Deployed Parents, Basic First Aide, Art, Crafts, Chess, Model Airplanes, and Chorus.

## **Common Instructional Techniques**

Modeling thinking aloud is a strategy practiced by teachers at Aukamm across the curriculum. Teachers use the strategy for teaching students the thinking processes that we want them to learn or improve. Examples of how this strategy is used might include decoding a word from context, organizing notes for a report, solving a word

problem, reading a large number, figuring out an analogy, or deciding on a procedure for a science experiment.

Problem solving strategies are taught to students at all grade levels across the curriculum. In addition to textbook based problems, each grade level uses a systematic program called *The Problem Solver*. This program includes specific strategies we have chosen for focus at Aukamm, as well as supplemental work for students requiring more challenge.

Graphic organizers are used in all grade levels across subjects to help students visualize and organize information. In past years, Venn Diagrams, Cause/Effect, and Idea Webs have been emphasized.

Technology is an integral part of our school. Students learn to use correct keyboarding techniques through use of the *Type to Learn* program. They also use *Reading Counts*, *Scholastic Reading Inventory*, *Read 180*, *Inspiration*, *Excel*, *Word*, *Power Point*, photo programs, and the Internet to develop skills in reading, researching, outlining, or mapping in all subject areas. The educational technologist helps teachers integrate technology into every subject.

An interdisciplinary approach to units of instruction is often used. All specialists demonstrate willingness to extend classroom activities at the classroom teacher's request. Recent examples include the art specialist working with teachers to coordinate student work on early Native American groups and the music specialist collaborating with teachers on a jazz unit.

Discipline at our school is based upon the principle of helping others. Various methods are used in each classroom to insure that students demonstrate kindness and politeness in order to insure maximum utilization of teaching time.

## **Staff Development Opportunities**

Aukamm Elementary School has two full day in-services per school year. These are used to address school improvement issues such as scoring of locally developed assessments, interpreting test data, reviewing research, and discussing interventions and strategies. Time is also used to train teachers on the use of technology and for teachers to collaborate within and across grade levels.

DoDDS and the Heidelberg District offer various staff development opportunities throughout the school year. Teachers receive relevant training whenever new materials are introduced into the system. On-line courses are sponsored and summer workshops are offered for specific curriculum areas. Teachers regularly take advantage of *Scholastic Red* online reading courses offered by DoDDS.

Teacher-led groups exist after school and at lunch for the purpose of professional development. One current group discusses the teaching of young gifted children in the

regular classroom. Other groups have included reading topics and strategies for teaching mathematics. Teachers have the option of taking these classes for credit through *Project Read*.

Teacher evaluation, conducted by the principal, is mandatory for probationary teachers and then once every three years. All “permanent” teachers have individual “Professional Growth Plans” (PGP). The PGP includes identifying a professional goal, setting a timeline to accomplish it, listing resources needed, and a self-evaluation at the end of each year.

Teachers are aware of the *Quality Indicators Map* and have been provided with copies to assist with self-assessment and to facilitate their progress along the continuum toward excellence in teaching.

## **NCA Report**

The NCA-CASI Team last visited Aukamm Elementary School April 20-22, 2004. The “Next Steps for School Improvement” were extremely positive. “Findings” were:

- The team observed that all staff members have ownership of the school improvement process. Staff members have many opportunities for input.
- The school leadership sets the tone for the implementation of the school improvement plan by providing proactive leadership and empowering the staff members.
- The SILT provided supportive leadership by doing research and providing suggestions for implementing the school improvement plan. The entire SILT team is accessible and willing to assist.

“Next Steps” were:

- Continue to involve the faculty and staff through student support meetings during the day and involve as many members of the support staff as possible.
- Utilize teacher-made assessments that require open-ended responses in order to give the students repeated opportunities to explain their thinking processes.
- In utilizing the locally developed assessment the same pre-test and post-test should be given so that student growth can be shown from the beginning to the end of the school year and the variables measured remain the same, e.g., if form A is given for a pre test, then form A must be given for the post-test.

These recommendations have been implemented at Aukamm.