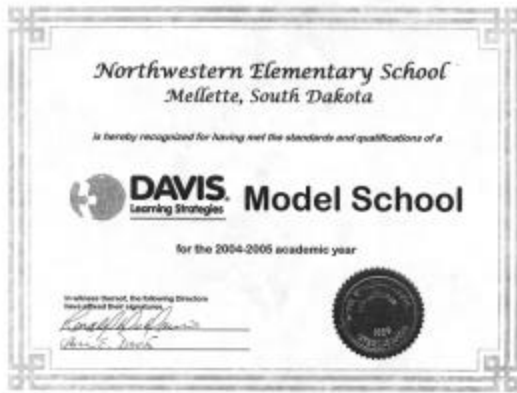


## **Congratulations to Northwestern School! First Davis Learning Strategies Model School in the USA**



Northwestern Elementary School in Mellette, South Dakota has been recognized to have met the qualifications and standards of a Davis Learning Strategies Model School for the 2004-05 academic year.

Kim Carson, DLS Mentor and Workshop Presenter and owner of Smart Start Dyslexia Correction Center in Brookings, South Dakota nominated Northwestern for this award.



The criteria for this award are:

- Administration should be knowledgeable and supportive of DLS.
- All primary teachers must have attended a DLS Workshop.
- Staff has received 2 years of mentoring from a DLS Mentor.
- The school community is enthusiastic about DLS, and clearly understanding that Davis Learning Strategies are lifelong strategies for ALL students.
- The Staff is willing to allow other (outside) school personnel to visit.
- The school can demonstrate positive results through test scores and/or teacher/principal observations of incorporating DLS in the curriculum and school environment.

The following is Kim's description of how Northwestern School has implemented Davis Learning Strategies over the last three years and met these criteria.

Northwestern School is a consolidated school in a rural setting. It encompasses K-12 under one roof with an enrollment of 305 for the 2004-05 school year. This district meets the No Child Left Behind criterion of employing 100% highly qualified staff members. Administrative leadership is provided by Mr. Ray Sauerwein, Superintendent/High School Principal and Miss Kathy Graves, Elementary Principal. Economic base for this district is primarily agricultural. In the elementary, class size ranges from 10 to 33, kindergarten through fifth grade. Resource Room and Title I programs are also part of the elementary grades.

Currently, 100% of the staff encompassing grades K-4 are trained in Davis Learning Strategies. This has occurred over each of the past three summers. This includes: six certified teachers (K-4, Resource Room, & Title I), three classroom aides, one elementary principal, and myself as DLS Mentor.

As a DLS Mentor-in-training these past two years, I played a significant role in leading this district toward the DLS training and implementation. Administrators and school board members were witness to the positive gains made by students with whom I worked through the Davis Correction Program. This led to seeking information about how the district could reach all students, not just those in need of a Davis Correction Program. I recommended the DLS program. We started with a core group of certified staff. Since then, Northwestern has trained new and support staff to be at 100%.

The DLS strategies are used regularly (daily) in the K-4 classrooms, Resource Room, and Title I classroom. The Focusing strategies are used most consistently and significantly

throughout the grade school. They are used to manage the classroom, class work, recess, extra-curricular activities, and discipline. All areas implement the Reading Strategies, as well, with Sweep-Sweep-Spell being the one most widely used in most all discipline areas. Although all classrooms implement Davis Symbol Mastery, the Title I classroom is the one that uses it the most. It is used in that classroom on a daily basis. Each child averages two words per week.

Administrators and teachers alike embrace the DLS strategies. It started as a one-year pilot program with an evaluation at the year's end to determine its destiny. Teachers expressed an overwhelming support for the program and dictated its continuation. Through administrative observation, Principal Kathy Graves agreed with the teachers. The program is now beginning its third year of implementation. Students also respond positively to the strategies as it helps them improve in their academic tasks and learn to control their behaviors. Parents respond positively to this, as well.

I observe the DLS strategies to positively impact all students. The above average students generally are willing to use the strategies, but because they are often very naturally oriented, they may not see the same significant gains that the below average students may experience. Even so, I hear from them that the Focusing helps them to be at their best. Also, I have seen some of these same (above average) children take the strategies and apply them to areas that provide more personal challenge—sports or a specific skill, for example. For the average and below average student, I have observed numerous times when a child has used the strategies and made corrections on a paper or has improved the fluency of their reading.

Northwestern teachers reiterate many times that they feel classroom management has improved significantly with the implementation of the DLS strategies. Through my leadership as a Mentor, they have learned to use it throughout the school. It doesn't stop at the classroom door; it continues to PE, recess, music, art, and into the principal's office, when necessary.

Northwestern does not have standardized test scores that can "prove" with numerical statistics that DLS has improved academic performance. In order to have that, they would have had to select a control group that did not receive the DLS strategies. All other parts would have needed to be carefully monitored to insure the comparison groups were the same throughout, with, of course, the difference of DLS between the groups. Northwestern School did not want to select a group of children who were not allowed to receive DLS.

They do, although, have numerous oral testimonials from teachers and students who have seen and observed first-hand that the strategies improved specific academic performances.

Examples of that are as follows:

- Corrections made on spelling tests, independent decoding of difficult words, and improved fluency after using the Sweep-Sweep-Spell strategy;
- Improvement in decoding, fluency, and comprehension after using Symbol Mastery;
- Ability to more efficiently complete a worksheet after implementing Focusing Strategies;
- Improved understanding and usage of the alphabet when using the dictionary.

The list is almost endless.

#### **Video of Davis Learning Strategies in Action at Northwestern Elementary School**

Northwestern Elementary School successful implementation of Davis Learning Strategies is the subject of a video documentary filmed by Kristi Thompson, Davis Facilitator and DLS Workshop Presenter in Walsh, Colorado. This 30-minute video features interviews with Kim Carson, Principal Kathy Graves, Superintendent Ray Sauerwein, teachers, parents, and students, and shows classrooms using Davis Learning Strategies. Copies are available for \$9.00 USD. To order, call 1-888-805-7216.