

# Western School District Director's Report to Board

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I take this opportunity to welcome all school and district staff to the start of a new school year, and to thank you for your continued commitment to excellence in student learning.

## ~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

June 2010 provincial assessments results indicate continued student growth in many areas, as well as some challenges for special attention. Department of Education officials will be presenting Western School District assessment results in detail to district personnel during the third week of September and schools will continue to assess their data on their October 12 Professional Development day, so as to identify strategies that can further enhance student learning. The assessment results will be one of the main topics of the Leadership meeting with all principals, and many vice-principals, on September 29-30.

### ■ PRIMARY LANGUAGE ARTS

This assessment consisted of two sections. One was administered to all grade three children throughout the province. The second was administered to a very small (10%) randomly selected sample. The District was at or above the province in five of the eight components which comprised the section that was administered to all students. It should be noted that for the three components below the provincial average, two of the district averages were 80.8% and 93.9% respectively. The district was at or above the province in two of the six components associated with that part of the assessment administered to the sample of students. Overall, the district's performance was strongest in Demand Writing, Informational and Poetic Text. Challenges were seen in Process Writing, a component administered to the randomly selected sample.

### ■ PRIMARY MATHEMATICS

In Primary Mathematics, the District was at or above the province in all but two of the twelve components comprising this assessment. On the two components below the provincial average, multiplication and addition facts, the district averages were 75.7 and 90.3 percent respectively. The District's performance was strongest in Space and Shape, addition and subtraction facts, and the process standards for Number Operations. Challenges were seen with multiplication facts and those rubric accessed items associated with Number Concepts.

### ■ ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS

This assessment consisted of two sections. One section was administered to all grade three children throughout the province. The second was administered to a very small (10%) randomly selected sample. The District was at or above the province in two of the eight components which comprised the section that was administered to all students. It should be noted that for five of the six components below the provincial average the district averages were in the high seventies to mid – eighties range. The District was at or above the province in one of the six components associated with that part of the assessment administered to the sample of students. The District's performance was strongest for Informational and Poetic Text and Demand Writing. Challenges were seen in

Process Writing, the component written by the randomly selected sample of students.

### ■ ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS

In Elementary Mathematics, the District's students performed better than the province on all ten of the components comprising the assessment. Despite the favourable provincial comparisons, the district averages associated with the rubric assessed items for Number Concepts still require attention.

### ■ INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

In Intermediate Language Arts, the District exceeded the provincial average on all five of the components comprising this assessment. It should be noted that, with the exception of one component, District averages for the other four components are in the low to mid-eighties range. The fifth component has a district average of 77.5%.

### ■ INTERMEDIATE MATHEMATICS

In Intermediate Mathematics, the District exceeded the provincial average on all eight of the components which comprised this assessment. The District's total test score average was 72.4%.

### ■ PUBLIC EXAMINATION RESULTS

This year's Public Examination results indicate that the District performed above the provincial average on nine of the twelve public exam courses. Furthermore, of the three courses that were below provincial average, two were less than 1.0% below. Additionally, the percentage of students who passed the public exam courses was above the provincial average in nine of the twelve courses.

Overall, district performance in public exam courses was better than the 2008-09 school year when the District performed above the provincial average in seven courses.

At the provincial level, of the 5389 potential graduates, 4906 (91.04%) graduated, compared to 89.5% in the 2008-09 school year. Of those who graduated, 25.23% received honors status, 39.52% met the academic graduation requirements, and 35.24% graduated with a general status.

Of the 1092 potential graduates in the District, 1003 (91.85%) graduated. This was up from the 88.77% who graduated in the 2008 - 09 school year. Of those who graduated, 24.03% graduated with honors status (19.4% in 08-09), 35.96% with academic status (40.4% in 08-09), and 40.28% with a general status (40.2% in 08-09).

It should be noted that the percentage of Western School District students who are graduating with a general status has declined from a high of 45% in the 2007-08 school year to 40.28% in June 2010. As well, the percentage of Western School District students who are graduating with an honors status has increased from a low of 22.9% in the 2007-08 school year to a high of 24.03% in June 2010. Finally the WSD has approximately 60% of its students now graduating with either an honors or academic status.

**Challenges.** The above data are indicative of student growth in many areas. There are also a number of challenges. First, the

district has to continually focus on attaining or exceeding these levels in the areas of greatest achievement. Second, in those areas noted above where the district is still below provincial averages, our focus has to be in improving achievement. Thirdly, graduation rates, and graduation status, at the high school level is a priority of the Western School District.

#### ■ **NEW COURSE IMPLEMENTATION**

New courses are being implemented across the curriculum as follows:

Kindergarten: Health; Science and Physical Education.

Primary: Religious Education, Grade 1; Health, Grade 1; Mathematics, Grade 3.

Elementary: Social Studies, Grade 4; Visual Art, Grade 5; Mathematics, Grade 6.

Intermediate: English Language Arts, Grade 7; Mathematics, Grade 9.

Senior high: Power and Energy 3201; Core French 1200; Robotics Systems Technology 3205; Ethics and Philosophy 2101; Ethics and Social Justice 2106.

#### ■ **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT**

Throughout the Western School District, school development is proceeding with much success. To date, sixty-six schools have been externally validated and are implementing their plans, six of which have had a second plan validated. In 2010-11 another twelve schools will reach their second external validation stage. Once validated, these schools will once again move forward with their new plans, focusing on the teaching and learning process and enhancing student achievement.

Assessment for learning is closely linked to the school development process. All schools have received the district Internal Common Assessment data, and will receive the latest provincial results prior to the September Leadership Meetings. On October 12 staff will participate in a *Strategic Planning Day* with a focus on student achievement.

### ~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

Student learning is the most important goal of the Western School District. It is critical to support student learning through recruiting and supporting the best staff. The Western School District is also committed to improving school organization and school infrastructure for enhanced student learning environments.

#### ■ **NEW PLACEMENTS, NEW TEACHERS**

While staffing schools is an ongoing process for the Western School District, the main staffing period begins in April and concludes in early September with the opening of schools. The Human Resources Division filled approximately four hundred positions for this year's staffing period. This number includes reassignments due to school consolidation, recruitment of teachers and administrators, and the recruitment of support staff.

This year the Department of Education visited Memorial University and other Universities in Nova Scotia in early May to recruit candidates for our rural schools and hard to fill positions in areas such as Special Needs, Guidance, and French. The Department established a connection as well with one University in Ontario. In WSD, three hundred teaching and administrative positions were filled with the majority of the positions being in the primary/elementary, administrative, and student support services

areas. While fewer in number, positions in Special Needs, Guidance, French, and Music remain harder to fill. As well, forty positions were filled during the summer in the various support staff areas.

The Human Resources Division wishes to thank all district staff, Principals, and referees who assisted with the staffing process this summer.

#### ■ **NEW ADMINISTRATORS ORIENTATION SESSION**

On August 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, the Western School District facilitated an Orientation Session for new administrators. This session was designed to welcome new administrators to the district team and to provide professional development for their new roles as instructional leaders.

The new administrators took part in district led sessions on Programming, Human Resources, Finance and Operations, and Student Support Services. As well, they took part in a session on constructing effective School Development Plans and leading effective Professional Learning Plan meetings. These sessions were facilitated by an experienced school administrative team.

The district welcomes five new principals and seven new vice – principals to the District Leadership Team for the 2010 -2011 school year.

#### ■ **NEW TEACHER ORIENTATION**

On September 1 and 2, the district held an orientation session for new teachers. Thirty-six of the thirty-eight new teachers attended the orientation. Sessions were delivered by district and school staff personnel. In addition, the NLTA and Johnson's Insurance provided a session relating to teacher benefits and also funded an evening meal. Welcome to all new teaching staff.

#### ■ **SUMMER INSTITUTES – SSS**

During the summer, approximately 75 teachers from all areas of the district participated in two Summer Institutes in St. John's. The "Inclusive Education Practice: Effective Leadership for Schools and Communities" institute focused on sharing best practices for making schools more inclusive. The "Autism Summer Institute 2010" offered training sessions for teachers and administrators that focused on structured teaching practices and transition strategies for students with Autism.

#### ■ **ITINERANT FOCUS**

The Student Support Services Division has three new itinerant positions in place to support schools in meeting the diverse needs of students. The itinerant for autism will focus on the coordination of services and programming, coordinate and facilitate professional development sessions, liaise with community partners and ensure a common district approach to meeting the needs of students with autism. The Safe and Caring Schools' itinerant will coordinate efforts around Positive Behavior Supports, promote and support school based Safe and Caring Schools initiatives, assist in the coordination of alternate education and alternate suspension programs. Finally, the itinerant for Assistive technology will facilitate and coordinate resources, consult with student support services teams, liaise with various community partners, provide professional development opportunities, coordinate and maintain a district loaner program for assistive technology equipment, and assist in the assessment of students' AT needs, as well as the acquisition of necessary equipment.