

Western School District Director's Report to Board

Volume 7, No. 2

October 2010

The Western School District is committed to student and organizational learning and to the acquisition and wise use of resources. This fall there has been a significant focus on professional development opportunities for all staff, school planning, and detailed data analysis to ensure assessment for learning.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ Mathematics Curriculum Implementation

A new curriculum is currently being implemented for Grades 3, 6, and 9 Mathematics. For Grade 9 Professional Learning (Sessions A/B) for appropriate classroom and instructional support teachers occurred in the spring 2010, and continued into this current school year. An additional inservice day (Session C) will occur later this fall for all appropriate teachers.

The implementation of the new Grades 3 and 6 Mathematics curricula began very early this fall. Professional Development Sessions A/B commenced late last spring. However, with staffing still not finalized in many schools, the decision was made to continue with the implementation early this fall to ensure that all of our Mathematics teachers at these grade levels received timely professional development. September 17 was the final day for the first Mathematics sessions (A/B) in our district. This means that all of our Grades 3 and 6 mathematics teachers have received Day 1 of the implementation. This session provided teachers with an overview of the curriculum outcomes, the structure of the curriculum guide, as well as a look at the authorized resources that have been provided by the Department of Education. Day 2 of this professional development will occur in late November or early December. This will give teachers time to delve into the new curriculum and return to the third session (Session C) prepared to reflect on the strengths and challenges that this curriculum has to offer. It will also be a time for colleagues to do some common planning for the remainder of the year.

■ Mathematics Common Examinations

In addition to the external examinations administered by the Department of Education, students from the Western School District wrote a number of common district final examinations in June 2010. In mathematics, students wrote common examinations in Mathematics 7, 8, 1204, 2204, and 2205. At all grade levels, student achievement results showed gains from the previous year. A detailed item analysis of the selected response for these common examinations has been sent to individual schools to help inform further teaching and learning. Common final examinations in Mathematics 7, 8, 1204, 2204, 2205 will be administered again in June 2011. In addition, there will be a

common mid-year examination for all students in Mathematics 3204.

■ Intermediate English Language Arts

Grade 7 ELA teachers have been provided with a half day to review resources associated with the new Grade 7 ELA program. A full day face-to-face session was also attended by all Grade 7 teachers in the district on Day 2 of our fall professional development conference. Another half day session is planned in which district staff will work directly with clusters of schools to provide further support for course implementation.

To ensure consistency in the Intermediate English Language Arts program, all Intermediate ELA teachers will be involved in an online survey, created by District Office, in an effort to create a Literary Terms document which clearly lists those terms students will be responsible for at the intermediate level.

In 2010, teachers across the district participated in mid-year exam cohorts. Seven cohorts, made up of three schools each, collectively and collaboratively created a common mid-year exam in English Language Arts at the intermediate level. This initiative will continue this year with the hope that an even greater number of schools participates in the experience.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ Fall Leadership Meeting, September 29-30

The theme of this year's fall leadership meeting was "Student Centered Schools: Renewing and Expanding our Commitment". The main focus was an analysis of the past year's results on external and internal student achievement data. Other sessions focused on strategies for fostering greater student success, and further implementation of the District's Assessment and Evaluation Policy. All of these sessions attempted to ensure a focus on the district's goals of student and organizational learning.

■ Professional Development Day, October 12

On October 12, most schools across Western School District were engaged in their Strategic Planning Day. Teachers and administrators were activity focused on the student achievement data from the 2009-10 school year. The interpretation and analysis of the student achievement data allows schools to focus on areas of need and celebrate growth. In addition, teachers and administrators revisited their professional learning plans to reflect the updated goals of the individual schools and their professional interests.

On October 12, student assistants in the district were engaged in professional development at four different venues. In Stephenville, two of our district educational psychologists facilitated a full day refresher course in non-violent crisis intervention techniques. Student assistants in Plum Point, Port aux Basques and Corner Brook were connected via video link for a session on privacy, followed by sessions on Assistive Technology, Language Strategies, Behavioural Strategies, Hearing Strategies and Vision Strategies. Thank you to everyone for their contribution to this learning opportunity.

■ “Learning for ALL: Assessment and Instructional Practices for the 21st Century”

On October 19 and 20, the Western School District held its second district-wide professional development conference. Sessions were held for teaching staff and administrators in Corner Brook, with sessions held in Deer Lake and Stephenville for all support staff. We wish to thank all staff who participated in the organization of this event. Thank you as well to all participants for their commitment to continuous learning.

◇ Teacher/Administrator Professional Development

Nearly 1200 teachers and administrators participated in this professional development opportunity from all schools. There were also a small number of substitute teachers, students from the Grenfell Campus fast-track program, representatives from the Department of Education, the NLTA, and from the Central and Eastern School Districts.

The first day opened with a keynote address from Mr. Tom Hierck, Assistant Superintendent of School District 46 in Gibsons, British Columbia. His session, *The Heart of Education: All Students Learning and Growing*, focused on the importance of people working and learning together to build relationships between students and teachers, which will enhance student engagement and student learning. Some other sessions included *Assessment For, As and Of Learning* (Sandra Herbst); *Using Assessment for Learning to Differentiate in the Mathematics Classroom* (Marion Small); and *Six Ways to Engage Students in Assessment Practices: A Working Session* (Steven Van Zoost), and *Ten Things That Matter from Assessment to Grading* (Tom Schimmer). In total, there were 47 sessions offered.

On Day 2, speakers offered breakout sessions that focused more specifically on the themes covered on Day 1. As well, representatives from the NLTA delivered sessions which focused on technology integration, student motivation and classroom management. At G. C. Rowe, sessions on new curriculum implementations for the current school year were provided for teachers who were teaching these programs for the first time.

◇ Support Staff Professional Development

Approximately 120 student assistants from the entire district attended a two-day training course on Autism (Elizabeth Mitchell, Geneva Centre for Autism). The session, “*The Journey from Survival to Success*”, provided the student

assistants with strategies to use while working with autistic students. Student assistants indicated the session was very informative and valuable for their work.

Approximately 300 school secretaries and bus drivers/caretakers/Utility Workers attended two days of training in Deer Lake and Stephenville. Sessions included Safety Habits (Wilson Bateman); Privacy (Susan Hoddinott); Best Cleaning Practices and Indoor Air Quality (Government Services Center and the Department of Education); Simply Accounting (Diana Langford and Sherry Brake); Health and Performance (Lee Miles); Electrical Safety (Brian Hancock); and Respectful Workplace (Denise Avery); Motivational Speaking (Mark Baldwin).

■ Active Youth

Let Them Be Kids is a world-wide imitative that supports schools, community based groups, and neighborhood groups to build capacity for active children through playground sponsorship. Two district schools, Jakeman All-Grade in Trout River and St. Thomas Aquinas in Port au Port East, built their playgrounds on September 25, thanks largely to the support of some dedicated teachers, community members, and *Let Them Be Kids*. Thank you to all individuals and businesses who contributed to the playground, to those who fundraised, and to the many volunteers for their commitment and time.

■ Healthy Food in Schools

The Western District recently hosted an inservice session at Presentation Junior High School for school catering staff offering a hot lunch program. Over thirty caterers from around the district attended the inservice, with discussions focused on healthy food choices, menu planning, provincial School Food Guidelines, and food safety. Caterers shared healthy menu choices, articulating that students are eating more fruit and vegetables and whole grains in school today than they did three or four years ago. Salads and white milk sales are also on the increase. This is very encouraging and we wish to thank caterers for their support in offering healthy food choices and to staff, and parents for promoting healthy eating and active living to improve student health.