

Western School District Director's Report to Board

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March 2011

This year has seen significant focus on student assessment, evaluation and achievement in efforts to celebrate the potential in all students. We continue to focus on the goal of student learning in which all students achieve their maximum potential. Thank you to all staff for your continued contribution and commitment to the achievement of this goal.

Education Week

March 6-12 is Education Week. This year's theme "*I Think I Can – I Think I Can!*" is sub-divided into three sub-themes: Technology, Community, and Personal Development. We take this opportunity to celebrate Education Week and student learning.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ Common District Examinations

In the February Director's report information was shared regarding the district's initiatives around mid-year common assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the elementary, intermediate and senior high school levels. In addition to this focus on common mid-year assessments, district committees are currently developing common "final" examinations for common examinations in Grades 7 and 8 English Language Arts, Grades 7 and 8 Mathematics, English 1201 and 2201, Mathematics 1204 and 2204/2205, Grade 9 Science, Biology 2201, Chemistry 2202, and Physics 2204, to be administered in June 2011. Grades 7 and 8 English Language Arts and English 1201 and 2201 to be administered in June 2011. These common examinations help maintain a focus on the core curriculum outcomes. Teachers who serve and/or have served on the examination construction committees consistently indicate that this experience provides them with valuable professional development. The Western School District leads the province in this initiative and we thank all those involved for your time and commitment to this work.

■ English Language Arts - New Course Implementation

All teachers in the district have now had the follow-up half day session to provide feedback on the new resources and changes to the Grade 7 ELA curriculum. A new Grade 8 program will be implemented in September 2011, with Grade 9 to follow. The Professional Learning Model that was launched by the Department of Education to introduce any new curriculum will be the model employed in the implementation and professional learning for the English Language Arts 8 program.

■ French - New Course Implementation

Ten schools in our district are offering the new French 1200 course this year. This course is currently in interim implementation and will be fully implemented in all schools across the province in September 2011. French 1200 is intended to bridge the gap that currently exists between Grade 9 Core

French and French 2200. As well, the senior high Core French program is currently under revision.

Grade 7 French immersion students across the province have a new Français program this year. A new Français program will be introduced in Grade 8 French Immersion in September 2011.

■ Intensive Core French

The Intensive Core French program continues to grow across the province and, in fact, the country. An institute related to the implementation of the Intensive Core French will take place in Gander on Thursday and Friday, March 17-18. The purpose of this institute is to provide information on Intensive Core French for district and school leaders. The institute is intended for school administrators considering Intensive Core French implementation in September 2011 or 2012, as well as district and Department staff who would assist in implementation.

■ Concours Oratoire

"*Concours Oratoire*" will be held in March. This competition is sponsored by Canadian Parents for French. The contest is open to Core French, French Immersion and Francophone students in Grades 9 to Level III. French speak-offs will be taking place in our district over the next couple of months. The Regional Concours will take place in Corner Brook on Thursday, March 15. Winners in each category will then have the opportunity to participate in the Provincial Concours, which is being held in Corner Brook on Saturday, April 9. Winners at that level will then travel to the National Concours in Ottawa in May, where the first place winner in each category will win a \$20,000 scholarship to the University of Ottawa. We wish all participants an enjoyable learning experience and the best of luck in the competition.

■ French Immersion Writing Contest

Elementary French immersion students are now participating in the Heather Huxter Memorial Writing Contest. This contest is sponsored by Canadian Parents for French. The event is held each year in memory of Heather Huxter, a Grade 4 French Immersion student who died tragically in a car accident in November of 2000. Winners will be selected on May 14 and prizes will be distributed on May 28, Heather's birthday. French Immersion students are encouraged to participate in this contest.

■ Cultural Connections

Western School District schools submitted a current inventory of Fine Arts equipment used in support of curricular and co-curricular activities. For the first time, in addition to being supported with a promise of a 50/50 cost share in the acquisition of new equipment, the Department of Education also offered schools the opportunity to cost share the expense associated with repairs to existing equipment, a decision that was welcomed by all schools.

■ **Arts Infused Curriculum Project**

Cloud River Academy in Roddickton is in the initial stages of piloting an Arts Infused Curriculum project. This project involves a local artist working directly with students and their teacher to enhance the integration of the Arts in existing curricula.

■ **Health Promotion**

There are many exciting things happening in our schools in the area of health promotion. Significant focus has been placed on healthy eating and physical activity in schools to improve student health. Staff and students are to be commended for their efforts and contribution to such an important issue.

As March is Nutrition Month, everyone is encouraged to avail of opportunities at this time to communicate the key messages of the importance and impact of healthy eating on overall health and wellness.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **Committee to Examine High School Graduation Rates**

As part of ongoing efforts to address the challenges with our high school graduation rates, district staff have reconvened a working committee consisting of administrators and teachers from across the district. The committee will meet three times in March and the mandate is to review and finalize the draft report developed by the original working group in May 2008. The revised report and resulting recommendations will be presented to school administrators at the Spring Leadership Meeting scheduled for April 12 and 13 in Corner Brook. It is anticipated that the report will assist the district in achieving positive changes in school and district graduation rates.

■ **ArtsWorks V**

ArtsWorks V, a provincial initiative which has previously been held in the spring, will be held in the fall of 2011 to avoid conflict with other events such as the regional and provincial drama festivals. This event will provide professional learning to teachers in the areas of music, art, and theatre.

■ **Cohort Initiative for Common Assessments**

Twenty (20) schools participated in the Intermediate 7-8 Cohort Project for the construction of mid-year examinations in English Language Arts. Each cohort consisted of at least three schools, some grouped geographically, some collaborating over great distances. Teachers met in person and virtually, using SMART Bridgit Software. This has provided an excellent professional development opportunity.

■ **Student Support Services Profiles 2011-12**

Educational Psychologists from across the district met on February 9. Agenda items for the day included school profiles, modified/alternate courses for credit, and diagnoses and discussion on the Process Assessment of the Learner – Second Edition.

By March 11, School Student Support Services teams will have met with the educational psychologist assigned to their school to

outline student needs for the 2011-12 school year. This information is critical to the decision making process of deploying Instructional Resource teaching units to schools. In addition, administrators will be asked to submit an Instructional Resource Teacher Staffing Plan to the Education Officer for Student Support Services. This plan is to identify required Instructional Resource teaching units for 2011-12 and to provide the rationale for the request.

Educational Psychologists are also being asked to assist schools in verifying the applications to the district for modified/alternate courses for credit. The protocol outlined by the Department of Education states that, "As a general rule, all students, except those with cognitive disorder, should be able to achieve the outcomes of the prescribed curriculum." The district Student Support Services team is currently processing these applications, and providing support to school teams, as they make these critical decisions around student programming.

■ **Safe and Caring Schools**

The District Safe & Caring Schools committee is comprised of 24 members from across the school district, including administrators, educational psychologists, and guidance counsellors. The committee also includes community partners from the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Western Health, the YMCA – Child and Youth Programs Division, and Communities in Schools. The full day agenda focused primarily on Safe & Caring Schools policies in the following areas: Bullying; Search & Seizures; Weapons; Lockdowns; Supervising Students; Traumatic Incident Response; Physical Restraint; and Seclusion.

The Substance Abuse & Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Safe & Caring Schools District Committee, will be reviewing a proposed Substance Abuse Policy. The sub-committee will bring forward policy recommendations to the Safe & Caring Schools Committee on March 31.

■ **Comprehensive Bullying Survey**

A priority initiative for the Safe & Caring Schools Committee is the completion of a Comprehensive Bullying Survey in all of the schools under the Western School District jurisdiction. The survey is being conducted to determine the experiences of students, staff and parents with bullying in the school community. The survey has three components: a parent survey, a staff survey and two student surveys – one for Grades 4-6 and a second for Grades 7-12.

The survey was field tested in two pilot schools and the process of compiling summary reports for the school's Safe & Caring School committees has begun. School-based committees will review their school's findings and develop action plans based on identified needs.

The remainder of the schools in the district will endeavor to complete the surveys by mid-March. Action plans based on the survey results will be forwarded to the Student Support Services Division at district office. In addition to school based summary reports, a district-wide report will be generated based on the combined results of all schools. These results will be reviewed by the Safe & Caring Schools Committee to determine further initiatives.