

Western School District Director's Report to Board

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June 2011

As the end of the school year approaches, I take this opportunity to thank all staff and students for your effort and focus on student learning over the past year. I wish everyone a safe, healthy, and enjoyable summer.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ **Formative and Summative Assessment (K-6)**

During the spring Leadership Meeting in April, the K-6 Program Specialists had the opportunity to present to a number of administrators during two 1.5 hour sessions. The administrators in attendance were representative of most, if not all, of our 53 schools for which there are students in Grades K-6. The first session was on *formative assessment*.

The intent of the session was to provide time for administrators to reflect on their individual beliefs about formative assessment with the goal of creating a common understanding among all, as well as examining their role in supporting teachers in shaping their understanding. Through analysis of current research and conversation, administrators discussed how formative and summative assessment practices are both essential for enhanced student achievement. The key message was that formative assessment, when done appropriately, assists students in attaining greater achievement levels in summative assessments.

The second session was on *Inclusive Schools and Differentiated Instruction/Assessment*. Participants had the opportunity once again to examine their beliefs about inclusionary schools by using conversation starters as points of discussion in small groups. Discussions were then shared with the whole group. It gave everyone a chance to develop a deeper understanding of inclusionary education and differentiated instruction, and to analyze the role of leadership in developing inclusionary schools. Both sessions were activity oriented and provided opportunity for rich discussion among colleagues. We plan to expand these discussions with other staff in the new school year.

■ **End-of-Levels Summative Assessments**

Students in the Western School District are now involved in writing end-of-level provincial assessments in Grades 3,6,9 for English Language Arts and Mathematics, and high school public exams. In addition to these external cumulative examinations, Western School District students are also writing district common cumulative examinations in English Language Arts (Grades 7, 8, 1202, 2201), Mathematics (Grades 7, 8, 1204, and 2204) and Science (Grade 9, Biology 2201, Chemistry 2202 and Physics 2204). These assessments have been constructed and validated by panels of teachers throughout the district. In the fall, schools will analyze achievement data to inform instruction, maximizing learning opportunities for all.

■ **New Course Implementation**

The Department of Education will be implementing the following new courses in September 2011: Kindergarten English Language Arts, Grade 2 Religious Education (French Immersion) and Health, Grade 3 Social Studies (FI), Grade 6 Visual Arts (FI), Grade 8 English Language Arts, Grade 8 French Language Arts (Early and Late French Immersion), Grade 9 Social Studies (FI), Core French 2200, and Entrepreneurship 3209. Curriculum Guides are also being revised for Intermediate Physical Education, Physical Education 2100/2101, Canadian History 1202 (FI) and Earth Systems 3209.

■ **Intermediate English Language Arts Print Texts**

As part of the renewal of the English Language Arts Curriculum, every school providing instruction for students in Grades 7-9 will, in September, receive two new print texts per student, to be chosen from the list in *Selecting Young Adults Texts: An Annotated Bibliography 2011*. Now in its second year, this initiative enhances opportunities for students to select, experience, and respond to a wide variety of texts.

■ **Science in Motion**

This spring four teams competed in ROV (Remote Operated Vehicle) competitions. Students designed robots to complete underwater tasks. In the SCOUT Class (Junior High Division), there were two first time teams from our district, E.A. Butler and Belanger Memorial. Each school did quite well and the students had a great learning experience. In the RANGER Class (High School Division), there were two teams from our district as well. Corner Brook Regional High placed fifth out of 14 teams, and St. James Regional High placed sixth. Congratulations to all students and staff who participated in these competitions.

■ **Safe and Caring Schools**

As a follow up to the professional development session *Creating Safe Spaces: Affirming Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth and Adults (LGBTQA)* that took place in Corner Brook April 7 and 8, the Safe & Caring District Committee invited a representative from Corner Brook Gay Pride to speak at the May 26 committee meeting. The LGBTQA are interested in partnering with the Western School District to expand the knowledge of the LGBTQA community with the students, parents and public in general. The LBGTA are seeking to support schools by collaborating in the development of information sessions with updated information pertaining to gender stereotyping, homophobia, etc., for students. It was noted by the committee that this particular collaboration is very timely as bullying issues related to gender stereotyping and homophobia have been highlighted in the Comprehensive Bullying Survey as needing some attention.

■ **The PARTY program**

On May 17, Western School District representatives attended a training session offered by Labrador-Grenfell Health at the Charles S. Curtis Memorial Hospital on the P.A.R.T.Y. program (Prevent Alcohol and Risk Related Trauma in Youth). This program involves the delivery of an interactive presentation that utilizes facilitators to deliver the injury prevention message to school age youth. It is designed to educate primarily Level I students about the consequences of risk and injury related to alcohol use and risk taking behaviour. This program is sponsored by Safety services Newfoundland and Labrador.

Community partners throughout Western Newfoundland have been trained to support school staff in delivering this valuable program to students. Several student information sessions are being planned for the fall.

■ **Enrichment**

The Western School District hosted two Heritage Fairs this year. The Labrador Straits Heritage Fair invited the schools north of Daniel's Harbour and was held on April 16 at Sacred Heart All-Grade in Conche. The Western Regional Heritage Fair invited the schools south of Daniels Harbor and was held on May 7 at Corner Brook Regional High School. In total, there were 20 schools and 180 students that displayed their projects. In addition, each school held its own Fair to select its representatives to attend the Regional Fairs.

Prizes and medals were awarded for the top 20 projects at each Regional Fair. A new award for best overall project was donated by Transcontinental and this provided an extra incentive for students since the award was a new i-pod touch. The Western School District would like to thank the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland for their monetary contribution for the Fairs, and to also thank the schools, administrators, teachers and parents who encouraged the students with their wonderful projects. A final thank you is extended to the students for all their hard work and dedication.

■ **Engaging Parents in School Nutrition**

The Western School District is partnering with Western Health, Labrador-Grenfell Health, and the Department of Health to develop and offer an educational session for parents on school nutrition and healthy eating. Public health nurses will deliver a 15-minute session at the September curriculum night to present information on the School District Nutrition policy, Provincial School Food Guidelines, the health benefits of nutritious eating, and how parents can support our schools' efforts for healthy eating.

Communication tools are being developed to augment the messages delivered in this session. Posters will be available to schools for display and brochures will be made available to be sent home to parents. The goal of this initiative is to promote healthy foods and beverages being brought to school for snacks and lunches.

■ **Math Competitions**

On June 7, the Western School District hosted the 13th Annual Mathematics Awards ceremony at Presentation Junior High. Students from all across the Western School District, both team and individual, were recognized for their achievement in nationally sponsored mathematics contests. In total, there were 125 students acknowledged at the ceremony. Every student received either a gold, silver, or bronze medal and banners/plaques were awarded to the top school teams at each grade level. Congratulations to all participants.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **School Development**

The 2010-11 school year has been a busy one with respect to the School Development Process. Twelve schools progressed through their second iteration of the internal review and plan writing processes, while two other schools finished writing their first school development plan under the new model. All schools within the Western School District are now fully engaged in the new school development process, and have had their strategic educational plans externally validated.

■ **Leadership at Work**

Leadership at Work, a professional development program for administrators, continues to be a success. There are currently cohorts in all zones, each at different stages of the program. The Northern cohort recently completed year one of their three year program with a session hosted in Labrador on June 3, entitled *Leadership for Professional Learning Communities*. In March, the Southern Cohort participated in a two-day retreat in Rocky Harbour, at which time they developed a learning plan for the next three years. The Central Cohort recently completed year two of a three year learning program, with a session on June 1, entitled *Leadership for Building Positive Staff Relationships*.

~ SPECIAL EVENTS ~

■ **Official School Opening**

French Shore Academy, Port Saunders, was officially opened June 6 by Wallace Young, MHA. The Western School District thanks the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for their commitment to education, and especially for this new school. Thank you to students who performed at the opening, to the staff who coordinated the event, to volunteers who prepared food and gave of their time, and to the community at large for their ongoing support of the educational community.

The Western School District is committed to excellence in student learning and this facility broadens learning opportunities for all students. Congratulations to students and staff on the opening of your new school.