

Western School District Director's Report to Board

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December 2012

The holiday season offers time to reflect on our achievements over the past year both as individuals and as an organization. The Western School District is very proud of the accomplishments of our students this past year and I thank our trustees, teachers, administrators, and all our staff for your support and dedication to the students of our district. I wish the trustees and staff of the Western School District a very safe and happy holiday and I wish you all the best in the New Year.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ District Common Assessment – Grades 3 and 6

The Western School District will be administering a District Common Assessment to Grades 3 and 6 students in February. This assessment will include components from both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Students will write the Mathematics components during the week of February 4 – 8, and the English Language Arts component during the week of February 11 – 15.

In addition to teachers scoring their students' assessments, they will submit a percentage of the assessments to the District for scoring by a Scoring Team. Teachers are encouraged to apply for the Scoring Team, as it will provide for a rich professional learning opportunity. After the student work is scored, it will be returned to the respective schools. At that time, teachers will be able to compare the scores they gave their students to those of the Scoring Team, providing affirmation and/or reflection regarding their assessment standards.

More importantly, this mid-year formative assessment informs teachers of their students' academic achievement at that point in time. Teachers use the information gleaned from the District Common Assessment, along with their own internal assessments and the rich learning opportunities they provide throughout the year, to enable students to have the best chance of achieving success. Students in these grades will write a Provincial Assessment in these same subjects later in the year.

■ Intermediate and High School Language Arts

Novels ordered through the Intermediate Print Text initiative should now have arrived in schools. Some titles are on back order so schools who have not yet received novels, or who received incomplete orders, can expect these as soon as they become available.

A committee of teachers from across the district recently finished constructing the ELA Grade 9 district common mid-year examination. A district common midyear examination has also been constructed for English 3201. Further information on distribution, scoring, and reporting of results will be communicated early in the New Year.

A working group is currently in the process of reviewing the English 1201/1202 program, with new program implementation anticipated for September 2013.

■ Mathematics Curriculum Implementation – Senior High

Mathematics 2200 teachers recently completed an inservice on new curriculum. Teachers participated in an on-line virtual collaborative environment, hosted by the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), and using software called Blackboard Collaborate. Overall, teachers were very pleased with this process and a follow-up session will be planned for February.

The Department of Education has begun work on a new Level III Mathematics curriculum which will include four new courses (Mathematics 3200, 3201, 3202, and 3208). Teacher inservice will occur in May-June, with full implementation scheduled for September 2013. Many teachers from the Western School District continue to be an integral part of the curriculum guide writing process with the Department of Education.

■ Common Examinations - Mathematics

A common mid-year examination for Mathematics 3204 students will be administered in January. A detailed analysis of the selected response items will then be compiled by District Office staff to help inform student learning for the remainder of the school year. Common examination committees for Mathematics Grade 8 and Mathematics 2201 will be selected in the New Year to construct district common examinations for June.

■ Mathematics Promotions

The Department of Education has once again allocated a significant amount of money for schools to help promote Mathematics through activities/events for students. Applications from individual schools were submitted to the Department of Education in November. Department personnel have started to review the proposals, and decisions regarding allocation of funds are expected in the near future.

■ Outdoor Education

The Outdoor Education Program at Killdevil Camp in Gros Morne National Park has concluded its fall season. Over 400 elementary students from 20 schools participated in the program this fall, coming from as far away as St. Anthony and Isle aux Morts. The two and a half day camp is designed for hands-on student learning opportunities in nature that are linked to many curriculum outcomes. The program begins again in the spring.

■ Enrichment

On November 23, a Young Artists/Learning Through The Arts workshop was held for Grade 5 students in Stephenville. There were 60 students involved in one day workshops involving

dance, drama and visual arts. Local artists offered sessions to students from St. Michael's Elementary in Stephenville Crossing, EA Butler All-Grade in McKays, and Stephenville Elementary. During the session, teachers were given resources to assist them in applying the information in their own classrooms.

On November 24, eight schools from the Western School District attended the First Lego League (a science-related robotics competition) in St. John's. The schools involved were William Gillett Academy in Charlottetown, Pasadena Academy, St. James All Grade in Lark Harbour, St. Michael's Elementary in Stephenville Crossing, Belanger Memorial in Upper Ferry, St. Lewis Academy, Jakeman All-Grade in Trout River, and Our Lady of Mercy Elementary in St. George's. In the best project category, Pasadena Academy placed first, Our Lady of Mercy second, and William Gillett Academy third. St. James All-Grade placed third in the core values category. Congratulations to all participants.

The elementary and junior high Math League competitions are currently underway throughout the district. In addition, Math League competitions are being offered via Blackboard Collaborate (an online classroom) for junior and senior high students, enabling participation by students who cannot attend the in-person events due to geographical constraints.

■ **Assistive Technology**

The Itinerant for Assistive Technology delivered eight professional development sessions throughout the district this fall. Sessions were delivered to student assistants, instructional resource teachers, classroom teachers, and students. These sessions provided an overview of the many different applications that are available for iPads, as well as software available for laptops. These applications can be used with/by students with various exceptionalities to enhance student learning.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **Professional development**

The Student Support Services Division recently held regional meetings for Lead Instructional Resource Teachers (IRTs) and Administrators in Stephenville, Corner Brook, and Plum Point.

The agenda for the IRT meetings included Service Delivery Model for Students with Exceptionalities, School-based Service Delivery Teams, Supporting Students with Behavioral Challenges, Verification Process for Programming, and a Professional Learning Session related to assistive technology for students with Autism.

The agenda for Administrators included a Safe and Caring Schools focus (managing student behavior, positive behavior support, code of conduct, bullying), Supporting Behavioral Challenges (The Role of the IRT and Student Assistant), Alternate Transportation, School-based Service Delivery Teams, and Assessment Practices.

■ **Inclusive Education Pilot Initiative**

Ten Phase 4 schools were selected for the 2012-13 school year. So far this year, full staff inservice has been provided to nine of the ten schools selected. At the end of this school year, 38 schools will have received training under the Inclusive Education Pilot Initiative.

Ten Phase 5 schools will be selected before the end of December. Training for all Phase 5 school administrators will take place in February and March. Money for resources will be available for all schools and orders will be sent in before the end of this school year. All Phase 5 schools will receive full staff professional development on *Moving Towards an Inclusive Environment* in the fall. Phase 5 schools will receive substitute days for collaboration and planning within their schools as well as with other schools in the district.

■ **Suicide Intervention**

The Itinerant for Safe & Caring Schools attended a 5-day training course in St. John's, offered by the Department of Education through Living Works Education, on the application of a Suicide Intervention Model for caregivers. She is now available to provide Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) workshops in the district. ASIST is a 2-day, interactive workshop that prepares caregivers to provide suicide first aid interventions. A priority focus for the district is to ensure all guidance counsellors and educational psychologists are trained in the ASIST program to support students in suicide prevention.

■ **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

The Department of education has sent Autism Resource Backpacks to every school in the province. The Department will be providing additional resources to augment these materials and is currently exploring online training opportunities for teachers working with students with ASD.

The Itinerant for Autism conducted two professional learning circles in November in Stephenville and Lower Cove. The focus of the learning circles was mainly on visual supports for students with ASD. In addition to the emphasis on visual schedules, topics included communication and behaviour in autism, twelve essentials for classroom setup with students with autism, and transition plans for students. The latter part of the learning circle involved teacher sharing of best practices and innovative ideas, as well as a brainstorming session on collaborative problem solving.