

Western School District Director's Report to Board

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The Western School District's vision of a learning organization in which all students achieve their maximum learning potential continues to remain a priority focus. We are entering into an extremely important instructional period as we begin the New Year and staff are encouraged to optimize learning opportunities for students through our collective focus on the use of multiple instructional strategies and the wise use of time and resources.

I thank all teachers and staff for your continued commitment to our vision and to the students in the Western School District.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ Early Development Instrument Survey

For the past two years, the Department of Education has been a part of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) initiative for kindergarten students with a number of schools from each district being involved in the pilot phase of implementation.

As a part of an ongoing commitment to improve the well-being of children across our province this year, all school districts in the province are participating in the collection of data on kindergarten-age children. This research is being conducted to better understand and measure developmental health at school entry level as an outcome of early childhood development.

The EDI is a teacher-completed checklist that assesses children's readiness to learn when they *enter* school, which means it measures the outcomes of children's *pre-school* (0-6 years) experiences as they influence their readiness to learn at school.

The EDI assesses children's readiness to learn when they enter school by looking at five key areas of child development:

- Physical Health and Well-Being
- Emotional Health and Maturity
- Social Knowledge and Competence
- Language Development and Thinking Skills
- Communication Skills and General Knowledge

Results from the EDI will enable the Department of Education to adjust school programs to meet the current needs of incoming students, adjust early childhood programs to help ensure children are ready to learn, and make it easier for children to make the transition to the school environment. The results will not be linked to an identifiable individual student. Rather, data will be collated and reported by region.

Kindergarten teachers will receive training on the EDI survey in early February. At that time, teachers will become familiar with the electronic survey, as well as begin to complete the survey for each of their students. Training will be offered by the K-6 Program Specialists for the Western School District.

■ English Language Arts (ELA)

Professional Development for English Language Arts Grade 9 will occur in February. This is the remaining half day of the new course implementation session delivered in the fall. Teachers will meet regionally with colleagues for a morning session with dates and times to be communicated by the end of January.

Teacher constructed common examinations were administered in ELA Grade 9 and English 3201 in January. The results will be compiled by District Office staff and reported to schools.

■ Safe and Caring Schools

The Student Support Services folder on First Class is now available for viewing and will be updated on a regular basis. All School Administrators, Instructional Resource Teachers and District Student Support Services personnel have been notified of this update to First Class. Please feel free to offer suggestions about what should be placed in these folders or for the creation of other topic folders as we continue to develop this resource.

To access this, simply enter Teacher Area on First Class and enter the Student Support Services folder. Information on a wide range of topics within the umbrella of Student Support Services is available such as:

- **Newsletters** (past District and a direct link to all Department newsletters)
- **Power Points** and relevant information shared in **Lead IRT sessions**
- **Verification Process / Documentation (forms)** for modified prescribed courses / alternate curricular courses; **Assistive Technology**
- **Referral Forms** (direct link to Department's forms for consent for assessment; Itinerant for Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Guidance Counselor/Educational Psychologist; Speech Language Pathologist; Referral to Special Education; Referral to Service Delivery Team)
- **Referral Tracking System / District Central Referral Committee**
- **District Reporting on Alternate Programs, Courses and Curriculum**
- **Alternate Curriculum Autism Group** (direct link to websites e.g. www.autism4teachers.com, webinars and teacher resources)
- **Service Delivery Model for Students with Identified Exceptionalities** (direct link to Department PL document and video clips)

■ Safe and Caring Schools Project Grants

The following schools/projects were selected to receive the Safe & Caring Schools - Special Project Grants (\$500.00 each) through the Department of Education for the Western region for 2012-13:

- Labrador Straits Academy, L'Anse au Loup – Creating SADD group (Students Against Destructive Decisions)
- CC Loughlin Elementary, Corner Brook – Enhancing Social Interaction through Supportive Group Intervention
- Our Lady of the Cape. Cape St. George – Safe & Caring Christmas
- LeGallais Memorial, Isle aux Morts – Beyond the Hurt: Be a Bro not a Bully.
- St. James Regional High Port aux Basques – Positive Behavior Supports
- Elwood High School, Deer Lake – Elwood Pride (Gay Straight Alliance)
- Grandy's River Collegiate, Burnt Islands – Welcome Home: Supporting Positive Relationships
- EA Butler, McKay's – Let's Get Schooled on Drugs, Alcohol and Bullying
- St. James All Grade, Lark Harbour – Character Building: Caring Tree

Thank you for all submissions and the interest shown. Our district submitted twenty-four school applications. Please continue to apply as opportunity arises for such important grants which support us in providing safe, accepting environments in which our students can thrive.

■ **Friends for Life: Anxiety Prevention Program**

The Friends for Life: Anxiety Prevention program is an internationally recognized, school-based early intervention and prevention program that builds resilience and reduces the risk of anxiety disorders in children. This program is the only anxiety prevention program acknowledged by the World Health Organization, with over 15 years of comprehensive research evaluation and practice.

The Western School District has received a total of \$10,000 in funding through the Community Addictions Prevention & Mental Health Promotion (CAPMHP) Initiatives, offered by Western Health and Labrador Grenfell Health, to implement this program. Thank you to both Health Authorities for their financial support. Training for K-6 guidance counselors will take place over the next few months.

■ **First Responders Program**

The Western School District, in collaboration with Canadian Red Cross, has received funding from Ocean Ex to implement a First Responders Program within the district. This funding provides for first aid training for one teacher and 20 students and the purchase of necessary equipment to assist in emergency preparedness and responsiveness.

The program focuses on students using their training at local events such as sporting events, concerts and other extracurricular functions. In addition, they will be able to set up displays and do presentation for younger students about first aid and safety. This is intended to be a long term commitment. Corner Brook Regional High School was identified as the school for the western region. The training is now completed and the teacher

sponsor and students are looking forward to providing support services to their school and schools in the Corner Brook area.

■ **Assistive Technology: Reading and Writing**

Many students throughout the Western School District who have an identified exceptionality and are struggling with reading and writing have been using software such as Word Q/ Speak Q and Kurzweil. The Department of Education, along with Western School District, is also providing teachers the opportunity to try **Read and Write Gold** software. This software is designed to help computer users with reading and writing difficulties. It can read text aloud and help with sentence construction. It also has many other features such as advanced spellchecking, document scanning, and internet tools. This software has been found to help students improve their reading and writing skills. As a result, it gives students a sense of encouragement and confidence among their peers in an inclusive school environment.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **Professional Development**

The Student Support Services Division will be facilitating the final regional meeting for administrators in Labrador during the week of February 11. Agenda items will include: Safe and Caring Schools (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.

■ **School Development**

Currently, 11 of the 14 schools involved in the School Development renewal stage have completed their internal review, their one year plan, and their long term plan. Two of the remaining schools will complete their plan by the end of February, and one school will be completed in the Spring, using the small schools model.

The external validation process is scheduled to begin on January 23 and will be completed in all 14 schools on the model by mid-May. All external review teams are now in place.

School Council training sessions have begun, with training being delivered to 22 of our schools by April.

■ **Leadership at Work**

Over the past two months, school administrators in collaboration with district staff, have been planning Leadership at Work professional development sessions. Two of the three regions in our district have a session scheduled on Leadership and Coaching through the Achieve Training Centre. The Central Leadership at Work Cohort: New Cohort Retreat will be held January 27 -29. The Southern Leadership at Work: Working with At-Risk Teachers session will be held February 8.