

Western School District Director's Report to Board

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The end of the year is fast approaching. It is at this time that our efforts must be strategically focused on maximizing student learning outcomes. I thank all teachers and staff for your commitment to students and encourage you to continue the targeted instruction/intervention that will help all students succeed as they enter into the final assessment period of the school year.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ **Balanced Literacy Approach – Literacy Blocks**

As new curriculum in English Language Arts evolves, it becomes increasingly more important for teachers to familiarize themselves with the concept of a Literacy Block. We all need to understand the underlying pedagogical rationale for using it, as well as the organizational structures required to create a successful literacy block.

In essence, the Literacy Block is intended to provide a sustained time of 75-90 minutes when students are focused on skill development in oral language, reading and writing. It is a time when explicit teaching and learning is taking place through a balanced literacy approach which is intended to help students become competent communicators who have reached a level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The format for a Literacy Block entails a whole group lesson of 10-20 minutes. This is generally followed by group or independent work where students practice skills and concepts previously taught, which lasts for about 40-50 minutes. During this time, the teacher facilitates the learning through working with individual students and/ or small groups. For example, the teacher may be working with a guided reading group while other students work on independent reading or writing activities, or are involved in small group learning. The key is that all students are actively involved in “purposeful and meaningful” learning activities for the duration of the Literacy Block.

The block concludes with a whole group sharing session, for 10-15 minutes, where the teacher provides time for a small number of students to share something they have worked on during the literacy block. This sharing time is very valuable as it empowers and motivates students through gaining recognition for their work, and also provides ample opportunity for new learning to occur.

For teachers who wish to learn more about how a Literacy Block works, the new Grade 4 English Language Arts curriculum guide is a good resource.

■ **English Language Arts**

District common exams will be constructed, administered and scheduled by the district in English Language Arts Grade 8 and English 2201. The Provincial Assessment in English Language

Arts Grade 9 is scheduled for May 7. This will assess Non-fiction Reading and Creative Writing. Results of this assessment will be returned to schools at the end of May.

The Department of Education will be implementing new Courses in September 2013 in high school English, including English 1201, 1202, and English 1204.

■ **Provincial Assessments**

The Department of Education has begun a new approach to the delivery of Provincial Assessments for Grades 3, 6 and 9. Provincial Assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics will now be rotated annually, beginning this year with English Language Arts. The new schedule is available on the Department of Education and the Western School District websites.

■ **Canadian Parents for French Speak-off**

In March, Junior and senior high students in French programs across the district were given the opportunity to participate in the regional *concours d'art oratoire*, sponsored by Canadian Parents for French. The Western School District was pleased to help organize and support this event. These speak-offs were open to all students from Grade 9 to Level 3. Participation was very good this year and prizes were awarded to students in the following categories: Core French A (Grade 9 and Level I core French students), Core French B+ (Level II and III core French students who have spent time in a French milieu, or who have completed the Grade 6 Intensive Core French program), Early French Immersion A (grade 9 and Level one French immersion students) and Early French Immersion B (Level II and level III French immersion students). All speeches were very interesting and brought a huge amount of praise from judges. Winners at this level have been invited to represent the district at the Provincial *concours d'art oratoire* in St. John's at the end of April. Winners at the provincial level will then be invited to travel to Ottawa to represent the province at the National *concours d'art oratoire* at the end of May, where a \$20,000.00 scholarship to the University of Ottawa will be awarded to winners in each category.

■ **Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELFP)**

The Western School District is pleased to be a part of the DELFP Pilot Project which will be carried out in select schools in our District at the end of April. The DELFP is an official diploma from France's national Ministry of Education. It is valid for life, and awarded and recognized around the world. The DELFP officially certifies the ability of students to use the French language in real-life situations based on the six competence levels identified within the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages and international standards. There are six separate examinations, including adaptations for all ages and all segments of the population. Schools involved in this pilot project are: Appalachia High, St. George's; Piccadilly

High; Stephenville High; Corner Brook Regional High; and Gros Morne Academy, Rocky Harbour.

■ **Provincial Theatre Festival**

The Western School District will host the 37th Annual Provincial Theatre Festival in Corner Brook May 9 - 11. Regional Festivals were held at Corner Brook Regional High, Canon Richards Memorial Academy, Flower's Cove, and Belanger Memorial, Upper Ferry on April 12-15. Deer Lake Regional High, Belanger Memorial and Canon Richards Memorial Academy will now represent the district in the Provincial Festival. These schools will be competing with seven school theatre groups from throughout the province. Thank you to all students who participated in the regional festival and best of luck to students who will be participating in the Provincial Festival.

■ **Resources for Developmental Disabilities**

Transition support is available for students with developmental (intellectual) disabilities at the high school level. Staffs providing direct support to high school students, for whom this would be relevant, are asked to please consider this opportunity as part of your students' transition plan.

Funding has been made available under the Poverty Reduction Strategy to pay for Job Trainer Support for Level 1, 2 and 3 students who have an intellectual disability. The program supports part-time and after school, weekend, and /or summer work to assist eligible students with school to work transition.

Access to the funding is through the supported employment corporations/agencies throughout the province. The corporations assess the needs and interests of the student, obtain the required verification of the disability from an approved professional (doctor or registered psychologist), secure a placement with an employer in the community, and provide the required support.

For more specific information please contact the Community Employment Corporation in your region.

■ **Speech Language Pathology**

Using Technology to Provide Speech-Language Pathology Services in School-Based Settings

The use of technology such as Polycom and Lync allow the SLP to connect with students using video and audio on either a computer or a large flat screen television. Polycom technology involves the use of a large camera that sits on top of a flat screen television. This camera has great resolution and can move 360 degrees to look around the room, zoom in on a child or to see a child's work. The Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), or other user, can control their own camera, as well as the camera of the student using a remote control. This is helpful for when a child changes positions or moves around the room. It is even more beneficial when schools devote an amount of instructional resource time to Polycom sessions. Having the teacher engaged in the session with the SLP allows for more success and carryover for the student in the long run.

Lync is an instant messaging system that has a video and audio application. The student will sit in front of the computer and be able to see and hear the SLP, or other professional, on full screen. This service is ideal for schools that have low bandwidth

and unreliable use of their Polycom. Lync also allows the student to type his/her message, see power point presentations, or to use a whiteboard for communication exchange. All teachers and district staff providing these services can have a Lync account.

Speech Language Pathologists can provide the following services through this technology: articulation and language assessments, language intervention, articulation intervention, fluency intervention, phonological awareness intervention, and team meetings and consultation with teachers and parents.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

The Department of Education has sponsored a number of meetings and professional development sessions which are intended to support teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and make their practice more consistent across the province. A working group made up of itinerant teachers, school-based staff, and personnel from the Division of Student Support Services, has been established to provide direction to future initiatives regarding education of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing student population in the province.

To date, professional development had included sessions by Lori Moore, Sharon Robertson, and Sue Ley from Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority in Halifax; Michael Charron from Pearson Publications regarding assessment tools; and Karen Anderson - author of "Building Skills for Success in the Fast-Paced Classroom: Optimizing Achievement for Students with Hearing Loss."

As well, we are presently obtaining permission from parents/guardians to have student information, including assessment results and yearly goals/objectives, placed on the APSEA database in Halifax.

■ **Process Assessment of the Learner – II**

PAL-II is a Level B research-based assessment system that helps assessors narrow down specific processing issues that may be impacting a student's academic development in the areas of Reading, Writing and Mathematics. It also offers evidence-based interventions, predesigned lessons, and resources that target specific processing issues.

PAL-II has applications at three tiers ranging from prevention to problem-solving consultation to differential diagnosis and treatment planning. The interventions, lesson plans, and resources are provided on a CD and can be printed and reproduced as needed; the CD accompanies each PAL-II kit. PAL-II kits have been distributed to all school districts throughout the province and can be used to help develop effective programming and interventions for students at various levels who struggle academically. Currently, there are a number of Instructional Resource Teachers in our district utilizing interventions specific to the PAL-II and reporting positive results.