

Western School District Director's Report to Board

Volume 10, No. 6

June 2013

I would like to recognize the work of our students, teachers, and all staff throughout the year, and especially in the last few months. Through our focus on learning, we move closer towards our vision of maximizing learning for all students.

I extend appreciation and thanks to the trustees of the Western School Board for your commitment to the students of the Western School District, and the sound governance you have provided to education. The success of our students is your success as well. I thank you for your contribution to education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

~ FOCUS ON STUDENT LEARNING ~

■ Provincial Assessments (K-6)

As you are aware, primary and elementary students will now write provincial assessments in either English Language Arts (ELA) or Mathematics, alternating annually. This year students wrote four components in ELA between May 23 and May 28: non-fiction reading, fiction reading, persuasive writing and creative writing.

■ Curriculum Implementation (K-6)

Plans are underway for the implementation of both Grade 1 and Grade 5 English Language Arts for this coming Fall. While there are no definite decisions made at this time, Department of Education consultants are hopeful that teachers will receive two days of professional development in this new curriculum.

The Grade 1 curriculum guide will be available online during the week of June 17-21 and will be received in schools, along with 5 boxes of resources from Learning Resources Development Centre, during the week of June 24 -28. Resources include 10 strategy and inquiry units, 12 read alouds, 12 shared reading texts, an active learning kit, a guided reading kit, and a professional support component.

The Grade 5 English Language Arts Curriculum Guide, along with the authorized resources, will be in schools for September.

■ English Language Arts (Intermediate/High)

The High School English program will see revised courses in the next three years, beginning with English 1202/1202 in September 2013. English 2201/02 will be revised and implemented in September 2014, followed by English 3201/02. A new course, Literacy 1204, is being implemented in September 2013 and will replace the current English 1200 course which will be delisted after the 2012-2013 school year. Professional Development in all new courses will take place in the fall of 2013.

District common examinations are being administered in English Language Arts 8 and English 2201. The English Language Arts 9 final examination will come from two marks: the ELA 9

Provincial Assessment written on May 7, and a school-based examination composed of items chosen from an item bank created by teachers and the Program Specialist. The intent is to build on this item bank so that it spans English 7-12 in 2013-14. From May 18-20, a provincial scoring panel gathered in St. John's to score the ELA 9 Provincial Assessment. Results of the assessments have been compiled by the Department of Education and will be communicated to schools by the end of the first week in June.

■ Mathematics Assessments

Students in the Western School District will write a common final examination in Mathematics 8 and Mathematics 2201 in June. These examinations have been constructed and validated by a committee of teachers. A detailed item analysis of the results of these examinations will be provided to schools to inform future instruction.

■ Mathematics Curriculum Implementation

As part of the provincial Excellence in Mathematics Strategy, new course implementation is scheduled to occur in September 2013 for Mathematics 3200 (Advanced), 3201 (Academic), 3202 (Applied), and 3208 (Calculus). Initial inservice has occurred in many regions of the District with further inservice to continue in the Fall.

■ Science

This year there will be common final science exams in Grade 8, Grade 9, Biology 2201, Chemistry 2202, and Physics 2204. As well, the District has participated in a new partnership with Grade 8 and 9 Science in which our District created the Grade 8 Science final and the Central District created the Grade 9 final exam. For the other exams, Western created the Physics 2204 exam, Central created the Biology 2201 exam, and Eastern created the Chemistry 2202 exam.

■ Mathematics Awards

The 16th annual Math awards ceremony was held at Presentation Junior High on Thursday, June 6. This year, over 100 students were recognized for their achievements at either the team or individual level. Congratulations to the schools, teachers, students and parents in making the event a success.

■ Cardboard Boat Races

In May, the Western School District hosted the third annual cardboard boat race at Grenfell College for senior high Science students. Seven schools and over 100 students participated in this event in which students had to design, build and then test a boat capable of holding at least one team member. Construction materials consisted of two sheets of 4' X 8' corrugated cardboard and one roll of duct tape. It was a great day of fun and learning, and the event was well received by teachers, students and parents. Awards were distributed for the best time, best weight and best team spirit. The overall first place winner was Templeton Academy, Meadows.

■ **Let's Talk Science – All Science Challenge**

Hibernia Management and Development Company Limited have provided \$1.9 million to support Let's Talk Science, a national charitable science outreach organization, in Newfoundland and Labrador. This investment will help to increase youth and educator participation in its award-winning science learning programs. These programs engage children and youth in science while developing their critical thinking skills, improving confidence, and building positive attitudes towards higher education. This money is also being used to further enhance the All Science Challenge for Grades 6-8.

Funding was provided for an All Science Challenge at Grenfell Campus for the first time on May 2, 2013. Schools in attendance were: Presentation Junior High, Corner Brook; E. A. Butler, McKay's; G.C. Rowe Junior High, Corner Brook; Humber Elementary, Corner Brook; Truman Eddison Memorial, Griquet; Sacred Heart Elementary, Corner Brook; Templeton Academy, Meadows; and Xavier Junior High, Deer Lake. Based on student, teacher, and parent feedback the event was a huge success with students showing much more enthusiasm for science in general. Congratulations to all students and staff who participated in the challenge. Collective efforts are continuing to increase the Let's Talk Science presence on the west coast of the province.

■ **Western Regional Heritage Fair**

On May 4 the Western Regional Heritage Fair was held at G.C. Rowe Junior High, Corner Brook. Sixteen schools from the district participated with 150 students displaying their projects at the event. In addition, each school held its' own fair to select their representatives to attend the regional fairs.

Prizes and medals were awarded for the top 20 projects at each regional fair. The Western School District also sponsored awards for the top three projects at the fair and each recipient was awarded a Google Nexus 7 tablet. The Western School District would like to thank the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador for their monetary contribution for the fairs as well as the schools, administrators, teachers and parents that encouraged the students with their wonderful projects. Thanks are extended to the students for all their hard work and to the over 50 volunteers that helped make the day a wonderful success.

■ **Enrichment Mini-courses**

For the past 16 years, the Western School District has offered an exciting program of enrichment mini courses to our junior high school students. This year students attended two-day courses offered by either teacher volunteers or volunteers from post-secondary institutions. Courses involved small groups of students in a variety of "hands-on" activities in different fields, appealing to the diverse interests of students.

The courses this year were held between April 24 and May 16. Over 160 students attended courses in areas such as carpentry, welding, science, mini-university, as well as many more. The Western School District would like to thank the volunteers that facilitate these wonderful offerings to our students.

■ **Provincial Drama Festival**

The Western School District hosted the 37th Provincial Theatre Arts Festival in Corner Brook on May 9-12, with 157 students and teachers from around the province attending. Students delivered 10 productions and attended workshops with local theatre professionals. Congratulations to all students, teachers, Festival organizers, and volunteers for making the Festival a resounding success!

■ **Assistive Technology**

Many teachers in the Western School District have been using Word Q / Speak Q software for some time. This program enhances the students' reading and writing levels, increases their confidence, and creates independence. This software is now available in an application (App) that can be used in conjunction with the new iPad (3, 4, and mini). This app, called iWord Q, can perform all of the same functions as Word Q / Speak Q, including speech recognition. This app can be purchased from App Store for less than \$25.00.

■ **Alternate Format Materials Reminder**

A number of new resources have been acquired for the AFM library, and will be available for the upcoming school year. Please ensure that you download the latest version of the Grade Level Order Forms when filling out the AFM applications. These order forms are updated regularly to reflect new resources that become available. Access to Alternate Format Materials link can be found on the Department of Education Website under Student Support Services.

~ FOCUS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING ~

■ **Learning Disability Resource**

Every school in our district recently received a copy of the "Learning Disability Intervention Manual- Revised 2nd Edition" from the Department of Education. Multiple copies have been provided to large schools to ensure easy access for staff. The intent of the manual is to give educators suggestions for student skill development. Instructional resource teachers tasked with developing pre-requisite alternate programs, and/or classroom teachers working with students diagnosed with a reading / written expression disorder or mathematics disorder, may find the sample strategies in this manual very useful. This resource should be included in each school's professional library and made available to educators working with students who are diagnosed with learning disabilities and/or struggling with reading, writing or mathematics acquisition.

■ **Leadership at Work**

Professional development opportunities for school administrators continue to be supported through Leadership at Work. All three cohorts, (Northern, Central and Southern) have held professional development sessions over the past year on topics relevant to school administrators. During the past year a new central cohort was established, and the cohort completed a retreat which identified professional development topics for the next three years. Both the Northern and Southern groups will continue to engage in professional development topics identified as priorities by the members.