

Curriculum Corner

Submitted by David MacFarlane

The first Curriculum Committee meeting of the year was held on October 2, and was very informative with several Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Personnel on hand.

Monica Williams, Executive Director, Centre for Learning

Excellence briefed the committee on year two of implementation of the Minister's Action Plan. Williams outlined many of the undertakings that have occurred this year such as; four Early Years Centers throughout the province, nine early intervention Math Pilots in Grades 2 to 3, an increase in math mentors (P-3 increased from 18 to 28 and Grades 4 to 12 has increased to 24), Reading Recovering is now in 102 schools, two additional classes of Grade 6 intensive French, Brilliant Labs for hands on technology learning and coding, expansion of 02 Programs to 69 high schools, Skilled Trades now in 16 sites and five sites offering Discovering Opportunities at the Grade 9 level.

The Centre for Learning Excellence is preparing the framework for implementation of the new teaching standards. The Standards will focus on the following key areas, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Teacher Certification, Accreditation and Performance Management. The Department has researched countries that have the most successful educational programs and have found that the most important factor affecting student achievement is high quality teaching. The guiding principal for the teaching standards is that a focused and cohesive system along with strong leadership and teaching expertise will produce an environment to increase student success.

A new model of school improvement is being prepared by EECD. The goal of the new plan is to align school improvement with the Action Plan and with the school boards business plans. The new program will be called Student Success Planning (SSP).

Sue Taylor Foley, Director of Learning Resources and Technology Services, brought us up to date on this year's P-3 roll out. Although the changes were significant the impact on teachers was lessened through in-service days, having all the curriculum resources in one place and the Q & A, and FAQ's section on the website. With the success of the Q & A, and FAQ's the Department is planning on opening it up again around report card time so teachers' questions can be answered quickly.

Taylor-Foley also outlined the steps that will occur this year in the streamlining of the Grades 4 to 6 Curriculum. The intent is to have the curriculum ready to be rolled out next year with many of the same features that have been incorporated in the P to 3 curriculum. The EECD is also planning a review of the PSP with a focus on whether its fundamentals are inclusive.

Kim Jackson gave an update regarding PowerSchool and changes to the P to 3 report card. She highlighted the changes made in the report card, specifically those changes to Grade Primary and 1 to meet the needs of music and physical education teachers who had difficulty

recording first term marks given the limited exposure they had with students. Jackson also discussed the new terminology that will be used to describe student learning.

Anti-Bullying Coordinator, Joanne Syms, gave an overview of the Code of Conduct which is in its first year of implementation and focused on supporting safe and inclusive schools. Syms noted that, following presentations to school administrators, several changes were made to the draft document in response to their feedback. The Code of Conduct will be reviewed this year to ensure that it is fulfilling its purpose in working to support and create safe and inclusive schools. Funding will be provided to school boards based on per student enrolment to support positive student behaviour and safe schools. Dr. John LeBlanc, pediatrician at the IWK Health Centre known for his research and clinical work focusing on disruptive behaviours and bullying in elementary school children reviewed numerous evidence based programs promoting the development of social and emotional skills in children and recommended several for use in our schools. Dr. LeBlanc also recently completed a study of anti-bullying programs to see if they in fact have a positive impact in schools. The results of this study will be made public in the near future. There has been some indication that programs that introduce appropriate social emotional skills at an early age and restorative approaches hold more promise in reducing disruptive behaviours and bullying.

As the Action Plan continues to roll out, we will see changes in homework standards and stream-lined curriculum in Grades 4 to 12 as well as the development of a Minister's Forum for Teaching Excellence, an Inter-University Chair in Research, a Business Education Council and a Transition Task Force.



*Above are this year's members of the NSTU's Curriculum Committee. **Seated:** members: Kelli Burgess (Halifax County), Sheri Scott (Halifax County), committee chair David MacFarlane (Antigonish), Wendy Gould (Colchester-East Hants). **Standing:** NSTU staff liaison Debbie McIsaac, Keith Partridge (CSANE), provincial executive liaison Darlene Bereta (Northside-Victoria), Chad Hannahan (Northside-Victoria) and Adam Boyd (Hants West).*

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