

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

January 2009

Facilities Update

Teachers and parents/guardians of St. George's Elementary were recently updated on the status of work at their school. It will be another couple of weeks before new floor tiles are installed and final cleaning and classroom preparations completed. Preliminary air quality test results have indicated the school is ready for occupancy. As soon as a firm date for reopening can be set, parents/guardians and teachers will be advised immediately.

ESD Response to Auditor General's Report

The recent release of the Auditor General's Report put the spotlight on indoor air quality in schools. Increased funding from government over the past three years is helping the District address maintenance and air quality issues in schools.

We submitted to government a priority listing for window repairs and replacements as well as roof replacements, and are working with government to prioritize schools to participate in the enhanced inspection program. To date, 21 schools in ESD have been part of this program.

We have an action plan in place to remove all carpet and chalkboards by September 2009. We also have a draft protocol developed to help direct staff in addressing air quality concerns. We expect to have this protocol fully implemented in September 2009.

We are also working on the development of a database for monitoring and responding to issues that are raised in annual school inspections.

Finally, with respect to asbestos and other hazardous materials, we have a current listing of all schools that have had asbestos assessments completed. We are currently completing Hazardous Materials Assessments on approximately 50 schools throughout the district. These assessments are scheduled to be completed by March 2009.

Strategic Planning Meetings Underway

During the month of January, board trustees and senior staff met with community stakeholders in St. John's and Spaniard's Bay to outline the key elements of the Board's strategic plan. The meetings were very well attended and overall feedback from both sessions was very positive. The meeting for Vista Region is scheduled for February 25 while the Burin Region meeting will take place February 26.

Homework Policy Under Review

The Eastern School District supports homework as a valuable part of the educational process. Homework can serve as a bridge between home and school that is most effective when there is an active partnership between teacher, parent/guardian and student. In this regard, our District is in the process of developing a homework policy for all students.

To gain viewpoints from the stakeholders, surveys were distributed to all school and District staff members, as well as each school council. Several schools throughout the District were randomly selected and they collected feedback from their parents/guardians. Nine focus groups were also held with student representation from various grade levels in all the regions. These focus groups gave students the opportunity to voice their views on the issue of homework.

The information collected from the stakeholders, as well as a review of policies from school districts across the country and current research in the area of homework, was reviewed and integrated into a draft homework policy that was distributed to all schools for feedback.

Online Personnel Package to Improve Staffing Efficiency

Eastern School District has developed a unique online personnel package that is fully supported by in-house staff. The new system will help to streamline the teacher hiring process and increase our efficiency. The enhancements include improved

job request options, automatic email to successful candidates, reduction of our dependence on the collection of confidential data such as birth dates and SIN, and the addition of new forms to speed up the process.

Intermediate Mathematics Professional Development

The past two months have seen the formation of seven Intermediate Mathematics Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) throughout the District. Each PLC consists of 14 to 20 Intermediate Mathematics teachers in addition to Mathematics personnel from the District.

Working together in their initial meetings, teachers were given the opportunity to explore new resources that they could take back to their classrooms to enhance their teaching and student learning. The opportunity was also afforded for teachers to discuss new ideas and strategies with one another and to discuss how they have implemented these ideas and strategies in their classrooms. Topics for discussion also included the use of technology in teaching Mathematics, differentiated instruction in the Intermediate Mathematics classroom and the use(s) of varied forms of assessment.

Teachers were very receptive of the resources made available and to the opportunity to sit with colleagues and discuss best practices and "what works" in the Intermediate Mathematics classroom. Future meetings of the Intermediate Mathematics PLC's are planned for early spring.

French Policy Under Review

A review is currently underway of Policy IHAH - French as an Official Language in Education. The Programs Division has held focus group sessions with teachers and administrators from Kindergarten to Level III and all schools have been provided the opportunity for input.

It is anticipated that changes will be forthcoming for the registration process for Early French Immersion and the organization and implementation criteria for Intensive Core French. This review is expected to be finalized prior to the end of February 2009 and recommendations will be forthcoming to the Board for review and discussion.

CDLI Art and Technology Integration Project

In partnership with the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), 10 K-6 teachers from across the District will engage in a unique professional development experience.

This project will be used to engage teachers in technology integration in their respective classrooms but will also be focused upon the Art curriculum area, at the targeted grade levels of K-6. The project will provide opportunity for single-graded, multi-grade and French Immersion classrooms to become involved with exploring, developing and sharing technology-enhanced Art learning activities and projects among themselves and other technology enhanced classrooms already in existence.

Changes to Intensive Core French and Late French Immersion Registrations

This year, the registration processes for Intensive Core French (ICF) and Late French Immersion (LFI) were moved ahead from previous years and completed in January. The earlier timing will facilitate planning for the upcoming school year and will coincide with the staffing process.

ICF registrations were received at elementary schools in the District up to Friday, January 23. Information sessions for parents/guardians were held at the school level. District Programs staff will be reviewing ICF registrations to determine program viability and the best model to maximize program delivery. Parents will be notified by school administrators of class groupings in March.

Information sessions on the LFI Program were held in St. John's, West and Vista regions. Applications for LFI were due on Friday, January 23. The applications will be forwarded to the District Office where Programs staff will review the applications and determine school groupings. Parents/guardians, as well as, schools will be notified by District staff of student placements in March.

Support Staff Recruitment

The HR division is continually advertising for casual school secretaries and other support staff positions. The most recent advertisement generated a lot of interest. We continue to examine new methods for attracting candidates in some of our regions that typically experience shortages.

Applause

Congratulations to:

- **Derrick Reid**, Principal, Lake Academy, on being named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals by the Learning Partnership.
- **Epiphany Elementary** in Heart's Delight on celebrating their 40th anniversary!
- **I.J. Samson Junior High's** improvisational team, Fantastic Five x 2, on being named provincial junior high champs at the Newfoundland Improv Games held January 21, 2009 in St. John's.

