

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

March 2006

MULTI-YEAR PLANNING

Immediately following the public release of the draft Multi-Year School Organization and Capital Works Plan on March 3rd, your chair, Milton Peach, and I met with principals and school council representatives throughout the district to explain the board's draft recommendations.

In addition, we accepted invitations from xx school councils to discuss the Report in more detail and to listen to local concerns about potential changes to school systems.

Five public hearings were also held since the release of the draft report. This was a great opportunity for trustees to hear first-hand the feedback from local communities in order to debate recommendations and make decisions.

PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2006

The 2006 provincial budget was, overall, a good news budget for education. The retention of teaching units, the increase in the instructional budget and the removal of school fees are very positive moves for the Eastern School District. There are still some details that have to be worked out as to how these changes will be operationalized in our district but overall the changes are good news for teachers, students and parents.

There was some funding announced for new school buses, extra resources for board staff and funding for major capital works projects. We require further information from the Department of Education on how this funding will be directed to our district.

We are also very pleased with government's announcement to review the ISS/Pathways Model of student support services. This is welcome news and we look forward to advocating on behalf of our teachers to see some positive changes that will lighten the burden of our classroom teachers.

TEACHER ALLOCATIONS/STAFFING

There was a little good news this month from government about teacher allocations. Education Minister Joan Burke announced that there would be no teacher cuts this year and that the allocation formula would be reviewed. For Eastern School District, we'll retain approximately 64 teachers.

As I stated in our media release of March 21, this move will give us a measure of flexibility with staffing our schools for the new school year. While staffing continues to be a challenge despite the retention of these units, our focus is on keeping class sizes as low as possible in primary and elementary grades. The district allocations will be distributed to schools before the Easter break.

TEACHER FOCUS GROUPS

Since my last report, I have met with approximately 125 teachers in seven focus groups held throughout the district. These sessions, which were also attended by Mr. Ed Hancock of the NLTA, provided an opportunity for us to hear about teachers' concerns and to explore ways to improve communications with our teachers. The session also provided me an opportunity to clarify some issues of concern with teachers who don't normally get the opportunity to meet with me directly.

The feedback received from these meetings will direct our efforts in preparing our strategic communications plan for the district, and will assist us as we begin our strategic planning process later this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance provided by Ed Hancock and his staff at the NLTA in helping to organize and facilitate these meetings.

FACILITIES UPDATE

EDUCATION WEEK 2006

On Monday, March 6th, Christ the King School, Rushoon, played host for the launch of the provincial Education Week 2006 activities. I was pleased to bring greetings on behalf of the board and the district and to participate in this annual NLTA sponsored event.

Congratulations to the organizing committee, host committee, volunteers, teachers and students from the six area schools for making this event a truly entertaining and enjoyable experience.

HEALTHY AND ACTIVE SCHOOLS

On March 31st, I visited Frank Roberts Junior High School in Foxtrap to participate in their Energizer Day. This event was organized to encourage students to make healthy eating and active living choices.

The event involved a guest speaker from Eastern Health and a number of community representatives and sponsors participated. The Virginia Vaulters – a tumbling group from Virginia Park Elementary and St. Paul's Junior High – provided the "athletic" entertainment.

Students also participated in a wide range of activities, from Latin ballroom dancing to anti-smoking seminars. The day was a great example of a school putting the Healthy and Active Schools concept in motion! Congratulations to all who took part!

SCHOOL VISITS

On March 10th, I had the pleasure of attending the Grade 5 graduation for the DARE (Drug Abuse and Resistance Education)

STUDENT CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to St. Bernard's Elementary on the official opening of their school extension. In September 2005, St. Patrick's Elementary and St. Bernard's Primary were combined to create St. Bernard's Elementary school. This school now houses a new gymnasium and cafeteria, something neither school had prior to the renovations.

Congratulations to the following schools on their placement in the 9th Annual Skills Canada Skilled Trade and Technology Competition:

First Place: Ascension Collegiate

Second Place: Carbonear Collegiate

Third Place: Marystown High School

CONDOLENCES

We are saddened to report the untimely passing of one of our students, 17-year old Brenda Lewis, Carbonear Collegiate. Our sympathies are extended to the Lewis family.