

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

March 2007

Student Assistant Allocation Pilot

The Department of Education has allocated the student assistant hours to school districts to manage for the 2007-08 school year. This is a pilot project in response to the Student Assistant Allocation review conducted by the Department. Included within this allocation is a separate four per cent allocation for employee leaves which previously had to be held back from schools.

Student Support Services staff have begun the process of reviewing, deploying and managing the student assistant allocations which were previously maintained by the Department. While this change will enable the Student Support Services (SSS) Division to have direct control over student assistant allocations to schools, it will create a challenge for staff to attempt to meet all the needs in the district.

All profiles and documents related to student assistant allocations and appeals will now be reviewed by district office staff for the 2007-08 school year. This will mean a significant increase/change in the workload of all district level Student Support Services staff.

To address some of the issues that are anticipated to come forward, the SSS district-level team has devised an appeal protocol to ensure consistent review, deployment and management of appeals submitted by schools.

Staffing/ Teacher Allocations

During the month of March, the Human Resources Division presented at four administrators' meetings to outline staffing guidelines as we prepare for 2007-08 staffing. Feedback from schools was very helpful in planning for the next three months.

Government's recent announcement regarding the 2007/08 teacher allocation means that we retain our current allocation of 2,731 units plus we receive an

additional 25 units to cap class sizes in Grade 3 at 25. The mathematics units have yet to be finalized.

We have posted our first job competitions for the new school year. These competitions include 16 administrative positions and pools in the area of Guidance, Special Needs, Primary, Elementary and French. We are anticipating a decrease in available candidates for most pools and are very conscious of staffing our schools early to attract the best candidates to our district.

Capital Update

Spatial program requirements are being finalized for the new elementary school for Torbay and the extension to Roncalli Elementary. Design consultants for both projects are in place. Potential sites for the new elementary school for Torbay have been assessed by the school district and are currently under review by the design consultant.

PHB Group has been commissioned by the Department of Transportation & Works as design consultants for the new Grade 7 – Level III school for Placentia. An initial planning meeting has been held with the consultant and officials of the Department of Education and the process of site selection has begun. As well, the Department of Education recently announced approval of approximately \$1 million for the extension to Beachy Cove Elementary.

Tenders have been called for window replacement at Newtown Elementary and roof repairs and replacement to St. George's Elementary. A number of consultants have also been commissioned to conduct roofing assessments on the following schools: St. Theresa's Elementary, St. Catherine's Academy, Fatima Academy, Holy Cross Elementary, All Hallows Elementary, Swift Current Academy, St. Peter's Elementary, St. Mary's Elementary, and St. Lawrence Academy.

Insurance (general liability)

Government has advised of pending changes to its blanket coverage insurance policy to include after hours usage by outside groups. A number of clarifications are being sought from the Department. The new changes will be incorporated into the Board’s recently revised policy on Community Use of Schools, as per the Minister’s requirement.

Impaired Bus Driver

We were deeply concerned about a recent charge of impaired driving against one of our bus drivers on the Burin Peninsula. An internal investigation, which was carried out immediately following the incident, concluded that all policies and procedures with respect to this case were followed.

However, due to the media attention around this issue, and in consultation with various stakeholders, the district will implement a centralized public complaints tracking system. This will ensure that in future, all complaints will be acknowledged and responded to, and will be followed up internally.

We will also enhance our bus driver safety training program by placing increased emphasis on alcohol and drug awareness, and public safety.

Phase II Multiyear Planning/Transition Teams

Transition teams are in place and we are working closely with school administrators and school councils to ensure a smooth transition in September for schools facing changes as a result of recent board decisions on the multi-year plan.

A number of trustees and a senior management representative also attended a meeting of the West End parents committee who are lobbying for a new high school in the West End of St. John’s. Local MHAs and the Minister of Education were also in attendance.

Meetings with MHAs

In the last few months, we have met with the majority of sitting members of the House of Assembly who represent constituents in the Eastern School District.

I believe I can speak for senior management and all trustees in saying that these sessions were very valuable and provided MHAs an opportunity to learn

more about the challenges we face in this district. I wish to thank the MHAs, and trustees, for taking time out of their busy schedules to attend these evening sessions.

Board Retreat

On March 30/31, senior management and trustees attended a series of sessions on school board governance, facilitated by Brenda Kelleher-Flight.

The session, Governance: Influencing the Quality of Education in the 21st Century, provided some very important ideas for trustees to digest with respect to board governance and policy development. Another session is scheduled for June.

Teacher PD

We continue to support our teachers through ongoing professional development. A number of sessions were held in March, including: Media Literacy & Critical Thinking; Assessment for Learning; FBA for Non-categorical Teachers; Poetry & Drama (K-6); Grade 5 Mathematics; Intermediate Mathematics; Grade 1 Math; Assessment for Learning; and Inclusive Education

Math Supports

I am pleased to report that we have hired eight new Math Itinerants (K-6) to support the primary/elementary Math program throughout the district. These include five itinerants in Eastern Region, and one each in Western, Vista and Burin regions.

External Reviews- School Development

We continue to focus on school development plans and recently completed external reviews in the following schools: Brother Rice Junior High, Anthony Paddon Elementary, and Southwest Arm Academy.

There is a considerable amount of work involved in the school development process and I wish to take this opportunity to thank our administrators, school councils, teachers and district office staff for their support of this initiative.

Occupational Health and Safety

We are actively involved in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) initiatives including monitoring our worksites, administering the Return to Work policy and providing training on an “as needed” basis to our school teams.

The OHS manual is in final stages of preparation following adoption of the policies related to Return to Work and Occupational Health and Safety which were approved at the March Board meeting.

Leadership Development

We conducted our fourth and final formal Leadership Development session on March 22 and 23. The Finance and Administration Division staff presented on various areas of administration including school finance, purchasing, budgeting and other important aspects of school and board management. The candidates are in the process of completing final documentation and an evaluation of the program is planned for this month

Support Staff

We continue to staff temporary and permanent internal positions regularly within the bargaining units of each region. We continue to interview in all regions as candidates become available. Keeping our replacement and temporary workers’ lists updated is a priority.

Physical Educators Meet

Our district was represented at the recent Future Directions in Physical Education Forum. The Forum brought together Newfoundland & Labrador’s leaders in Physical Education including representatives from the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, school boards and Physical Education Special Interest Council. It was an opportunity for administrators, policy makers and teachers to discuss the future of physical education in the province.

Boating Safety Program

The program specialist for Active & Healthy Living attended a two-day workshop on Canoe and Small Craft Safety Program. This workshop was also attended by administrators from St. Kevin’s Junior High and Baccalieu Collegiate. Both schools are piloting this resource this Spring and next Fall.

Our district was also represented at a follow-up provincial meeting to review progress to date in the development of a set of provincial safety guidelines for Canoe and Kayak use. This has direct application to the new high school Physical Education Course as well as the Intermediate Program. This project is sponsored by the Office of Boating Safety in partnership with the Department of Education.

BRIDGES Program

Through the BRIDGES program, computer sessions are being offered free of charge to adult learners. In Western Region, seven facilitators have received training and started working in the following schools: Amalgamated Academy, All Hallows Elementary, Baccalieu Collegiate, Carbonear Collegiate, Cabot Academy, Holy Redeemer, Perlwin Elementary and Woodland Elementary.

Career Resources

Seven facilitators for the Career Resource Assistant (CRA) Program have been placed in the following schools: Ascension Collegiate, Carbonear Collegiate, Crescent Collegiate, Laval High and Fatima Academy, as well as their feeder schools. Sessions are being held with students to discuss various career choices

Teacher Liaison

In March, I, along with some of our board members, met with School Board/Teacher Liaison committees in Burin and Vista regions. These meetings, which are held regularly in each region, are important avenues for hearing about issues affecting our teachers.

Special Events

March month is often a busy month in our schools and this year was no exception. District events during March included the Regional Drama Festivals in each region as well as Vista Heritage Fair, Skills Canada Provincial Competitions, school and regional Science Fairs, and the 5th Annual Screen Arts Student Festival.

A special thanks is extended to teachers, school volunteers, parents and the community for supporting our schools in these very important school activities.

School/Community Visits

During the month of March, I had the pleasure of visiting the following schools: Beaconsfield Junior High, Mt. Pearl Senior High, St. Kevin's High, Paradise Elementary (School for the Deaf), Villanova Junior High, St. George's Elementary. I also met with the Terrencville School Council and the Town of CBS.

I also had the opportunity to meet with the executive board of Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador when they met in St. John's recently. I was invited to discuss our Board's policy on Community Use of Schools and I've been invited to their AGM in Gander to address this issue with their full membership later this spring.



**Reading Relay
St. George's Elementary**