

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

September 2006

NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Mr. Ed Walsh is the new Assistant Director of Education (Rural Education and Corporate Affairs). Previously, Ed was a Senior Education Officer, Human Resources, in District Office.

Ed has over 15 years experience in education with a diverse teaching and administration background in both isolated small schools and large rural schools. Ed's insights into the educational needs of students in rural Newfoundland, combined with his professional and leadership experiences, will enhance the District's efforts in better understanding the challenges and opportunities of rural education in our district.

STAFFING

This past summer, the Human Resources Division handled a record number of job competitions. Over 800 job competitions were posted since April 16th. Of these 800 positions, 63 were for administrative positions, approximately 20 were for district positions, and the remaining 700 plus were for teaching positions. This year's hiring included approximately 75 new teachers and 28 new administrators.

STAFFING AND TECHNOLOGY

The District continues to use technology-based solutions to streamline our work and provide more support to our schools. Our new *Personnel-Package* software program was a great investment and facilitated this year's recruitment process. This new technology increased efficiencies by saving approximately 400,000 sheets of paper, as well as the related person-hours to handle this volume of paper.

Utilizing the same software, we have automated our process for selecting substitute teachers. Schools can now access a current list of substitute teachers available in all regions of our district. The next scheduled project is to provide the same level of support to schools in the hiring of students assistants.

CAPITAL UPDATE

Forty-seven capital projects valued at \$20.3 million are either in the planning stages, in progress, substantially completed or completed. These projects

involve new roofs, windows, extensions, plumbing retrofits and new school construction.

Construction for the new school in Mobile is now underway. The first phase of demolition has been completed and site work, foundations and structural steel work should be completed this fall.

There were two delayed openings in September due to ongoing renovation work. The removal of the portable classrooms at Andrew's Elementary created a two-day delay, and St. Lawrence Academy experienced a one-week delay to allow for the substantial completion of a major plumbing retrofit with involved asbestos abatement. Renovations were also completed at Leary's Brook Jr. High and the extension to this school is currently underway.

Minor restructuring work was carried out at several schools and a number of renovation projects were completed over the past couple of months to accommodate challenging needs students.

TRANSPORTATION

Through the 2006-2007 tender process, extensive changes were made to bussing contracts in the Western Region of the District. This change created a busy September with many phone calls and school visits to address bussing issues.

In cooperation with the Department of Education most problems have now been corrected. Numerous buses have been put back into the system to alleviate overloads, and extensions on existing bus routes have been put in place to cover new streets or areas that were overlooked on the original tender process. To date, approximately \$400,000.00 has been reinvested to address these problem areas.

The total budget for contracted regular transportation is approximately \$16 million.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The District places a great deal of emphasis on leadership development and support for administrators and in keeping with that goal we have developed a comprehensive leadership program. This program covers five components: leadership development (succession planning); support for new administrators; leadership at work for existing administrators; personal development for leaders; and, individual and small group support.

UPDATE – NISEP

The AD, Rural Education, is currently reviewing the District's Newfoundland International Student Education Program (NISEP). Work is underway to formalize a number of policies and to develop a business plan, a recruitment plan, and a budget for the corporation.

Meetings have already been held with a Chinese delegation and agents from Mexico and Korea. NISEP will also be part of a mission traveling to Eastern Europe in October and plans are underway for a provincial mission to Brazil in early March. Forty-one students participated in an English as a Second Language program for six weeks this past summer and planning is underway for a mid-year camp.

ISSP/PATHWAYS AND TEACHER ALLOCATION REVIEW

Contact has been made with the provincial commissions on Pathways and the Teacher Allocation Review. Consultations are set to begin in mid-October and we are preparing to make formal representation at these hearings.

These two issues are of critical importance to ESD and it is extremely important that we participate to effect positive change and influence the outcome of these reviews.

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIVING PROMOTION

In partnership with the Department of Education and Eastern Health, Eastern School District is quite active and supportive of Active and Healthy Living for all students. During the month of September, students and teachers were engaged in the launch of the provincial pilot of Physical Education 3100/3101 and Career Education 2201; training for the launch of the St. John's Healthy Schools Project, and the provincial *Living Healthy Commotion* day.

I was pleased to join with students and staff of Paradise Elementary in their Living Healthy Commotion event. Many thanks to the teachers,

students, and volunteers in our 124 schools who helped to make this day a success.

PROGRAMS EXPANDED

We have devised a new Night School Program, and in conjunction with the Centre for Distance Learning, will deliver this program to smaller areas. Work is currently ongoing in organizing a Working Group on Performance Assessment for the Vista and Burin Regions as well as Avalon East and West Regions. St. Joseph's All Grade School and St. Joseph's Academy are piloting the new Environmental Science Course. We are also working with the local arts community and MUN School of Music in the promotion of the Arts in our district.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the past month, a full range of PD sessions were held to support various programs and curriculum initiatives in the district.

On September 27th and 28th, all 15 schools in the Vista region were closed for teacher PD. Approximately 250 teachers chose from among 40 sessions that were developed from individual teacher Professional Growth Plans. The sessions ranged from Performance Assessment in Science, Autism Strategies, and Movement and Music, to Responding Critical to text in Primary.

We also held our first Regional Administrative Council (RAC) meetings in early September. Two joint sessions were held with Avalon East and West regions in St. John's and Burin and Vista regions in Burin. The full-day sessions included a Programs Division update outlining staff changes and roles, issues related to professional and school development, and Human Resource/Personnel issues. Updates were also provided on the Living Healthy Commotion, Safe and Caring Schools and Public Exam results.

TEACHER INDUCTION

In August, the Human Resources Division coordinated a two-day in-service for new teachers. This in-service was well attended and covered many topics that will assist our new teachers as they make the transition into full-time teaching.

This session marked the beginning of our Teacher Induction program and further sessions are planned throughout the school year. Special thanks are extended to the Teacher Induction Committee for coordinating this session during their summer vacation.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Student Support Services (SSS) personnel continue to provide their leadership and support to schools. During the month of September, SSS staff were actively involved in meetings between school, district and regional staff in programming planning for the 2006-07 school year to help meet the needs of special needs children. Considerable attention has centered on Student Assistant concerns regarding allocation, appeals, new students, transfers, scheduling and special transportation.

STUDENT NOTEBOOK RESEARCH PROJECT

A student notebook research program is now underway at Prince of Wales Collegiate. More than 30 students and five teachers are part of a research project on the concept of student notebook programs being undertaken by Dr. Bruce Sheppard and Dr. Tim Seifert from MUN.

FAREWELL TO REO HAYWARD BLAKE



In August, we bid farewell to Hayward Blake, our Regional Education Officer in Western Region. Hayward is the new Coordinator of Field Services, Faculty of Education, Memorial University. We wish Hayward well in his new position. Recruitment is now underway to fill this leadership position.

MUN KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Last month, I accepted an invitation to be the keynote speaker for a session with Memorial University Education students. This was an opportunity to outline to aspiring teachers the qualities and attributes the Eastern School District is looking for when hiring new teachers. I also provided my own personal reflection and advice for finding success in the teaching profession.

It was a great opportunity to share information and promote our school district. Many thanks to Dr. David Dibbon and the organizing committee for this invitation to speak to students.



HEART 9/11 CENTRE OPENS

On September 11th, I had the pleasure of attending a ceremony at Holy Heart of Mary to dedicate the HEART 911 multipurpose room. This facility was made possible through the contributions of individuals who stayed at the school when their flights were diverted five years ago. Mr. Bob Thompson, Heart's physical education teacher, and former student council chair, Jessica Wade, chatted with me following the ceremony as we reviewed the equipment. This facility will have a positive impact on Heart students and the physical education program.

