

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A Monthly Report to the Eastern School Board

December 2006

Roncalli Elementary

In mid December, following the identification of a number of structural issues with Roncalli Elementary in St. John's, we made the decision to remove the portable classrooms that housed the school's music program.

An investigation by both Occupational Health and Safety and district staff revealed a number of structural concerns, water damage and potential mould in the ceiling and roof joists of the portables. A further investigation of the main building did not show any evidence of mould.

A tender has been awarded to have the portables removed from school property by January 31st. We are now waiting for the appointment of a consultant to design the school's extension and interior redevelopment. We remain optimistic that this work will be completed by September.

Paradise Elementary Update

On December 5th, I attended a very successful meeting with the Paradise Town Council to discuss the status of Paradise Elementary.

As agreed at our December school board meeting, senior staff continue to gather information in support of a multi-year plan for the Paradise/CBS/Mount Pearl area. A report will be presented at the February 2007 public school board meeting at which time a motion will also be made to request government funding for a new facility to replace the existing Paradise Elementary.

Budget Planning

As the district approaches the mid-year point, all indications are that revenues and expenses are on track. We expect some budget adjustments related to various capital projects, in particular Paradise Elementary. The next budget status

update is due on January 29th at the next Finance committee meeting.

In keeping with government's multi-year planning process and the recently passed Transparency and Accountability Act, budget planning for fiscal 07/08 and 08/09 has begun with initial consideration being given to enrolment projections and capital projects. We anticipate school operating allocations may experience a slight decrease because of declining enrolments. However, this will be offset by the next three per cent public sector wage increase scheduled for April 1, 2007, and expected increases in the cost of utilities. No other major shifts in budget are anticipated. Input will be sought from all operations and stakeholders.

Capital Update

In December, the Department of Education awarded contracts to two separate engineering consultants to assess the Board's request for an extension to St. Edward's Elementary in Kelligrews and Beachy Cove Elementary. In addition, the Department approved a window and siding replacement project for St. Peter's School, Upper Island Cove and appointed a consultant to conduct a window assessment at Newtown Elementary in Mount Pearl.

The Department of Education also approved the installation of new whiteboards for various schools throughout the district at a cost of \$100,000.

Teacher Earns Prime Minister's Award

Congratulations are extended to Jessica Webb, teacher, St. Paul's junior high school, on being awarded a Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. This prestigious award recognizes outstanding teachers who instill in their students a love of learning and help them develop the

skills they need for success. Jessica received her award at a special school assembly to recognize her achievement.

HR Planning

The Human Resources Division continues the task of formally reviewing staffing procedures in preparation for the staffing task for next school year. There has been a review of past practice and consideration of the new organizational structure within the district.

Recruitment is an ongoing activity for the HR Division. During the month of December, the HR Division posted a total of 38 positions:

Job Category	# of postings
Primary/Elementary	16
Intermediate	3
High School	8
Administration	2
District Office	9

Staffing - Support Staff

We have been posting external recruitment ads for casual support staff in Avalon West, Vista and Avalon East regions in newspapers and on the HRDC website. We are having difficulty replacing staff while they are on a leave of absence. In this latest recruitment drive, we received very few applicants and as a result we are reviewing our recruitment process.

Information Technology

The district received a new infusion of technology with the arrival of 80 new notebook computers to replace the existing four to five-year-old models presently being used by program specialists and school administrators.

A re-designation of technology support will see technicians from the Burin region assist with virus management in the Avalon West Region. This is the first step in what we hope will continue to be a truly "district" support model.

Occupational Health and Safety

OH&S Training was conducted in Avalon East Region in December. School committees have been meeting on a regular basis and submitting minutes to the district office. Training is

ongoing and sessions are scheduled as demand warrants.

Succession Planning

The second Succession Planning session took place on December 8th and 9th at the District Conference Centre and they were well-attended. The session included presentations on Instructional Leadership, Access to Information rules, Professional Growth Planning and support for decision making through understanding the Idea Action Gap. District personnel presented the various topics and feedback has been very positive.

Principals Meetings

During December, we conducted meetings with all of our principals. Grouped into regional and family of schools, these five meetings included professional development information sessions on provincial assessment results, the importance of a hands-on approach to science instruction, the changes in the K-6 music program to incorporate more movement and instrumental components, and creative technology applications of recently acquired computer stations and high tech flex camera.

Healthy Living

We continue to be quite active in the promotion of healthy schools/healthy living for students and employees. Five professional development sessions, "Creating a Living Healthy Community," were completed during December. Participants included 144 teachers, 29 parents and 61 students from 82 schools across the district. As well, Mr. Paul House, Program Specialist attended the first of a series of NLTA Ad-Hoc Committee Meetings with a focus on Teacher Wellness.

STEP Program Receives Funding

On December 7th, our district received \$38,110 for year two of a three-year pilot for a proposal, *Student Transition into Educational/Employment Program (STEP)* at Gonzaga High School. The Department of Education endorses this program as an alternate route to graduation for students who are challenged to achieve high school graduation through current learning opportunities. The Department is looking at possible provincial implementation.

Alternate School Proposal

We are also looking forward to receiving approval of our *Alternative School Proposal* which was submitted to the Department of Education in December. This program will allow for academic recovery and graduation of high school students who have disengaged from mainstream community-based programs. If approved, this proposal will allow us to offer programming that addresses the diverse personal and social needs of a small group of students who are at-risk of dropping out of school.

Peaceful Schools International

Sacred Heart Academy joined the Peaceful Schools International family on December 11th. The mission of Peaceful Schools International is to provide support and recognition to schools that have a declared a commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of peace.

At the flag-raising ceremony, Sacred Heart principal, Mr. Paul Pike, told the students that their school “will ensure that students are free from intimidation, harassment and aggression of any kind.” Congratulations to the school staff and students on achieving this recognition.

School Visits and Special Events

The senior management team was busy throughout the month of December attending Christmas concerts and school events. I had the pleasure of attending awards ceremonies at three schools: Carbonear Collegiate, St. Lawrence Academy and Marystown Central High School. I also visited Baccalieu Collegiate, St. Andrews Elementary and Lake Academy.

I wish to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our teachers and school volunteers who make these annual events such a great success. From coordinating Christmas concerts such as the “Holiday Moosical” at Topsail Elementary, to students of Lake Academy sending letters of support to soldiers in Afghanistan, every event makes the Christmas season more special.

We also hold many awards nights for graduating high school students during the months of November and December. I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge our high school teachers and administrators who, year after year, dedicate so much of their time and energy into making these events a memorable occasion for students and their families.

Christmas: A Season of Giving



The students of St. Anne’s School in South East Bight know the true meaning of Christmas! They collected three bags of coats for Family Aid’s Coats for Kids Campaign; 27 gifts for the Happy Tree; and approximately 20 pairs of mittens, socks and wool hats for the Warm Hands, Warm Hearts project. That’s a lot to collect in a community of less than 100 people! Congratulations to the St. Anne’s school community for participating in this kind and thoughtful campaign.