

February 2, 2007

Graduation Portfolio

On February 1, 2007, the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education, made an announcement regarding changes to the Graduation Portfolio requirement in which she communicated the decision to move from a mandatory Portfolio to a more flexible, choice-based model. This decision was not one made lightly and was considered only at the end of a comprehensive review of the Graduation Portfolio.

As you may recall, in response to feedback from the field, the Ministry conducted a review of the Graduation Portfolio in fall 2006. As part of the review, the Ministry facilitated information sessions with parents, educators, administrators and other education partners on the effectiveness of the requirement and how it might be improved to better address student achievement.

Nine school districts were contacted to host regional Portfolio Review sessions for educators, students, parents, and other interested parties from their own and neighbouring districts. In addition, the Independent Schools Branch of the Ministry organized a review session for independent schools. In total, approximately 950 teachers, 200 parents and 200 students participated in the sessions.

Two experienced secondary school principals, Rick Oliver from Rutland Secondary School in School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan) and Andy Leathwood, Secondary Principal, Mount Sentinel in School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake), were enlisted to facilitate discussions.

Information was also collected from the following partner groups:

- BC School Trustees' Association
- BC Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association
- BC Teachers' Federation
- Association of British Columbia Deans of Education
- The Education Career Society
- The BC Cross-Sector Portfolio Working Group

With little exception, the overwhelming response was that the intent and objectives of Portfolio were supported, but that it needed to be simplified and more student-focused.

The decision to institute a more flexible, simplified graduation requirement is based directly on this feedback. The Graduation Portfolio is no longer the mandatory delivery method that schools must use to meet standards. Instead, the Ministry is working to strengthen existing standards for:

- Physical Activity
- Education and Career Planning
- Work Experience and/or Community Service

The standards are currently under development by Ministry staff, as is a new Program Guide which will be available by September 2007.



This change in policy allows school boards to determine the delivery method to meet the Graduation Transition Standards through whatever method they deem most appropriate.

While the Graduation Portfolio is no longer mandatory, it is not obsolete. We know that many schools have found tremendous success using the Graduation Portfolio, and these schools are encouraged to continue to use it to successfully meet prescribed learning outcomes. And we anticipate that many schools will continue to provide students with opportunities to publicly share and celebrate their learning.

Regardless of the methods used, school districts are encouraged to continue to look for new and innovative ways to increase student achievement and encourage their intellectual, social and career development.