

March 29, 2007

The last of our legislation went to the House today. There was a big Bill of miscellaneous amendments, many of a housekeeping variety but a couple of issues that will be of interest to you. Legislation was introduced to make School District corporations more transparent and accountable to the public. The majority of directors of any company must now be arm's length from the School Board. The majority cannot be trustees or employees.

Rules governing annual general meetings are set out. Annual general meetings are to be held in public except under specific circumstances. The minutes of meetings are to be maintained and made available to the public, except when persons other than trustees of the company have been excluded from the meeting for specific reasons. The requirements for annual reports and the appointment of auditors are set out.

The purpose of these amendments is to promote entrepreneurial activities of these School District companies while satisfying the public that the companies are conducting their work in an ethical and business-like manner.

School Boards are now required to establish a Code of Conduct for students enrolled in the school districts. Many school districts and schools have these codes already in place. Now, however, parents and students can be assured that Trustees, administrators and parents have considered appropriate conduct and developed and communicated a Code of Conduct for students.

One final amendment gives the BCCT a new role. The Minister of Education may communicate through the College with its members regarding educational matters. For example, if the Minister wishes to communicate some of the success stories in schools and classrooms, engage in a dialogue with teachers and other certificate holders or create interest in a proven program or approach to improving student achievement, the Minister may

enlist the assistance of the College. All costs for these communications would be assumed by the Ministry.

Cathy Champion, Director of Instruction from Richmond sent me this Education Week story.

Teach Everyone to Read, At Any Age or Stage: Literacy for Students with Developmental Disabilities

Yes, even students with developmental disabilities can learn to read, at any age or stage. The Richmond School District has been involved in a multi-year initiative entitled "Teach Everyone to Read, At Any Age or Stage" in which participants learn more about how to match reading instruction to their students' stage of development. The focus has been on supporting students with developmental disabilities at early stages of learning to read, regardless of grade or ability level. This initiative was developed and implemented by Susan Blockberger, Augmentative Communication Consultant; Gina Rae, Vicki Rothstein, district consultants; and Rhoda Zacker, speech/language pathologist.

In an introductory strand, a series of six workshops has been offered in which teachers and educational assistants learned about current thinking in this area and had a chance to interact with real resources that exist for supporting students with developmental disabilities in their learning. Examples of classroom planning tools, IEP goals and actual experiences with inclusive curriculum were shared by both the presenters and participants. Strategies were modeled and supported by videos of students using them. In addition, participants received a goodie bag of resources at the end of the series.

School staff were encouraged to attend in teams, including Classroom Teachers, Learning Resource Teachers, Educational Assistants, Speech-Language Pathologists, Administrators and anyone else who might be interested.

In a more advanced strand, participants were invited to learn more about how to match reading instruction to their students' stage of literacy development. The focus continued to be on supporting students with developmental disabilities at early stages of learning to read, regardless of grade or ability level. Participants were introduced to the implementation of strategies and interacted with available resources that exist for supporting these students in their learning. New and improved examples of classroom planning tools, IEP goals and actual experiences with inclusive curriculum were also shared by both presenters and participants. Strategies were also modeled and participants were able to view videos of students using them.

This series consisted of one workshop session (3:45 - 7:00 pm, dinner provided) followed by three touchback sessions (3:45 - 5:15 pm) where presenters and participants gathered to share their work in progress.

In addition to the workshop series, the project developers arranged publishers' displays, held "make and take" computer lab sessions, compiled a CD of free resources, established a conference on the local district network for sharing resources and developed literacy kits for demonstrating recommended book series and adaptations.

For further information, please contact Gina Rae at grae@richmond.sd38.bc.ca

Chistine Dickinson, Assistant Superintendent in the Bulkley Valley (Smithers area) contributed this article. Poppy Dunbar, Principal, Muheim Elementary, and her staff are the architects of this work and would be happy to provide more information (pdunbar@sd54.bc.ca)

Learner Support

Until two years ago, Muheim Elementary with an enrolment of 285 students (about half of whom are French Immersion students and the other half largely vulnerable students- many of them Aboriginal) had a "special education" program consisting of an exclusive pull out resource room program for those students requiring modified programs, as well as a pull out program for students requiring individual or small group instruction.

In the spring of 2005, a Steering Committee for Vulnerable Children was formed to investigate better ways of meeting the learning needs of vulnerable students, and *all* students. A Learning Support Model was developed based on the following beliefs about kids:

- All children need to feel that they belong
- If the learner support personnel are in the classroom ALL students will benefit
- Classroom teachers, learning support teachers (both English and French), the teacher librarian, ASSET (Aboriginal Support) worker, Aboriginal Literacy worker, community support worker and educational assistant will work collaboratively as a team to help meet the needs of ALL students in the class

This team works with the classroom teacher to best meet the learning needs of the different students in classrooms by:

- Collaboratively developing and monitoring individual education plans
- Setting up team meetings or parent conferences to problem solve collaboratively
- Providing learning support in the classroom on a priority basis according to learning needs
- Supporting small guided reading groups, talking tables, literacy circles, writing focus
- Co-teaching with classroom teachers
- Collaboratively planning lessons and /or units

- Providing release time to allow for collaboration with other teachers
- Helping to assess students in reading and writing in order to determine instructional needs and also to help monitor and evaluate student progress
- Providing materials and/or demonstrating teaching strategies and approaches to help meet targeted learning needs
- Filling skill gaps with short-term interventions with specific goals (small group or individual or paired instruction in class or in learning support room)
- Using intensive small group reading or writing instruction using the FROG model (Facilitating Reading for Optimum Growth). The students in the classroom are divided into small groups and each member of the FROG team works a small group of students during the literacy block to provide intensive instruction in the four blocks of a balanced literacy program.
- Assisting in adapting or modifying curriculum
- Assisting with implementing differentiated instructional strategies for the entire class
- Providing emotional support to some students if needed.

The team meets for 1-1/2 hours each week during instructional time. Team members work with the classroom teacher to help make an effective learning environment for all the students in our care. Besides the school core of the principal, teachers and educational assistants, district support staff also participate.

The primary and intermediate learner support teachers take a leadership role in supporting students. They coordinate the agenda and facilitate all learner support meetings, write the IEP's and supervise the educational support staff.

Classroom teachers feel supported in their objective to meet the learning needs of the students in their care. All staff feel ownership for all students - like members of a big family. In a complicated school the learning support

team really helps to bring everyone together to help our children learn.

This has been quite a week for us in Victoria. Tomorrow the Legislature does not sit. As Education Week concludes, we will send the final edition of this special series of the Report on Education. We will review and take stock of our opportunities to improve student achievement.



Emery Dosdall, Ed D
Deputy Minister of Education