

October 5, 2007

This fall you have seen a flurry of new programs and initiatives from government - new programs related to healthy eating, daily physical activity, drug and tobacco free initiatives, new pilot programs in Social Justice and English 12 and the list goes on. It is an exciting time with these changes, but the real key is how you as a school leader are able to work with staff to accommodate the changes while keeping the focus on the main thing. And we all know the main thing is student achievement. The achievement of every child is paramount.

The vision we have to be “the best educated and most literate” jurisdiction continues. Student achievement will always remain #1. But sometimes we are conflicted or confused about our vision and mission. In geometry we learn that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. In education there are always numerous voices and forces that dictate we take a more circuitous route.

But the end result must be same. The research, I believe, is relatively clear. If you expect to have an effective school, a school that encourages every child to succeed, there are some well defined factors that you need to be cognizant about. One study entitled “*Effective Districts, School Boards and Student Achievement: A Comparison of Governance in High and Low Achieving Districts*” (ERS) concluded that effective districts create and nurture seven conditions:

1. Shared leadership: as a leader of your school, how are you encouraging and promoting teachers to become involved as leaders? How are you collaborating with staff to ensure their full involvement in realizing how programs might be implemented or adapted?
2. Continuous improvement: too often when we are achieving at a “satisfactory” level, we do not raise the bar to ensure we are moving and not just cruising.
3. Sustained initiatives: new programs and initiatives require sustained effort, resources and your individual attention. Too often in education we move from incentive to incentive without our full attention to ongoing implementation.
4. Supportive workplace for staff: staff need to feel they have the opportunity to collaborate, to discuss ideas, methodology and actions in a supportive, trusting workplace and that ideas can be discussed openly and solutions sought collaboratively.
5. Utilization of data for decision making: assessment data needs to be used to help teachers to develop student skills. Data gives direction to teaching and should be used as a road map.
6. Staff development: staff need to be engaged in collaborative efforts to build skills and explore new ideas. Staff development not focussed on the needs of students however, can become excuses and distracting. Staff development programs should be built with the staff.
7. Community involvement: when parents are productively informed and included, they support their schools and will work with teachers and other staff to help with student activities and programs. Schools with positive community development have high morale.

Teachers' Congress

Teachers from across British Columbia will gather in Vancouver on November 30 to explore the best ways to support student success in the classroom at the 2nd Annual Teachers' Congress.

The goal of the Congress is to help make British Columbia the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. The event will bring public, independent, band school and student teachers from across the province together to participate in a day-long dialogue with colleagues, the Minister of Education and the Premier.

Application forms are available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/atc and must be received by Friday, October 19, 2007.

Have a great Thanksgiving weekend.



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