

## **Joint Report**

### **Conversation with the Minister**

#### **Meeting with DPAC Chairs**

**March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

**DDF:**

On Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 47 DPAC Chairs from around the province were invited to a day of conversation with Minister Shirley Bond and Ministry of Education staff. Along with the 47 DPAC Chairs, BCCPAC Board Directors and two office staff attended as well. We were pre-assigned to tables which had a Ministry staff person as facilitator, one BCCPAC Director and the rest were DPAC Chairs, or designates. The tables were to assign a minute taker and a person to do the reporting out of the discussion held at the individual tables.

**JD:**

Prior to the meeting with the minister, many of the DPAC chairs were able to get together for a meeting of our own. The evening before and at breakfast the next morning, chairs had a chance to compare concerns and share some good ideas.

**DDF:**

The day started with an address by Minister Bond along with BCCPAC President Kim Howland. We were descended upon by the media, demanding what were discussing behind closed doors. After a brief interview, the day began.

We viewed a power point presentation by Rick Davis, on Student Centered Leadership. This led into a discussion on School Planning Councils. We took notes, talked among ourselves at our table and then each table was asked to report their findings. The discussion was all over the map. Some districts were extremely successful at their councils, others not. Some concerns were that the parents were completely left out, told that they were not "educated" enough to understand the issues, some parents reported of principals who made decisions without consultation and many other different types of complaints. On the other hand, some were functioning at a very high level and found the process to be very successful.

**JD:**

We also heard that parents are feeling over burdened and burnt out. Some said they were tired of fundraising for everything.

Some parents were clear in saying they did not want the added responsibility of being on SPCs. Concerns were raised that would have to be addressed before asking parents to take on more work.

**DDF:**

The next discussion was on Graduation Portfolios and we followed the same format. We discussed challenges and barriers and how we could improve the Graduation Portfolio process. Hard questions were asked about the students who did not have any parental support, and may not be able to pass Grade 12 because they may not be able to complete the portfolio. Good questions were raised and Minister Bond took it all in stride. She answered everyone's queries and promised to get the answer if she could not provide us with the answer at that particular time.

**JD:**

In some districts, the grad portfolio is on the timetable. There are dedicated teachers assigned to it, and in these cases, it's working well. I suggested they need to have more resources available for the ESL parents in their own language so they can help their kids.

**DDF:**

After lunch we launched into the discussion about a Parent Education Network and a Parent Congress. These were not pre-conceived concepts, they asked the parents for input. I feel that they are trying to reach out to all parents, to provide a service that would not be limited to certain parent groups; it would be as equitable as possible. We asked that it not be a government rhetoric style of reporting out and I do believe they got that message loud and clear.

We also talked about the "Parent Congress" and what that would look like. There will be a Parent Congress at one point but details will be released later. All the tables had the opportunity to provide input, so I imagine that will be taken into consideration. There were lots of good suggestions, but all the notes were taken by Ministry staff to be drafted into a summary, which will be available at a later date.

To recap the day, I felt that this was a positive step for parents. I have been advocating for meetings like this with DPAC Chairs, as I feel that the DPAC Chairs have a real sense of what is happening in their districts. I have found the DPAC Chairs that I have worked with over the past few years to be a bright, intelligent, articulate group that network well together and come up with some excellent ideas. I applaud the Ministry for taking the initiative to make the first move to start a dialogue with groups like ours. I hope that they continue to have conversations with the other partner groups as well. Relationship building and respectful dialogue is one of the keys in creating a strong supportive education system for our children.

**JD:**

I agree that it was a very good step in recognizing that the Minister needs to meet with diverse groups of parents. I hope that she does take note of some of

the concerns she heard from parents, and I'm looking forward to hearing the results.

I'm also pleased that we had the opportunity to network with DPAC chairs from around the province.

Respectfully submitted by:

Debbie Desroches-Fulton, Vancouver DPAC Chair  
Julianne Doctor, Vice Chair  
District #39