



Report on Education

from the Deputy Minister of Education

March 24, 2006

In the March 10th Report on Education, we discussed the significant succession challenges in school and district leadership. You saw some data that indicates there will be large numbers of principals and district leaders retiring over the next few years. What is being done to address this challenge?

Last year, at about this time, government announced the formation of an independent society under the provisions of the *Society Act*. This society was provided a \$5M grant by government as a foundation grant. The main purpose of the society was to study the succession challenge, and plan and implement strategies to address the challenge. While a creation of government, the society is to operate independently of government with a Board comprised of many of the education partners. The society is named the British Columbia Education Leadership Council (BCELC).

Who is on the Board of the BCELC?

The education partner organizations are represented by members who sit on the Board of BCELC. Current Board members are:

- **Rick Davis**, President, representing the Ministry of Education
- **Wendy Lee**, Vice President, representing British Columbia School Superintendents Association
- **Lyle Boyce**, Secretary and Treasurer, representing British Columbia School District Secretary Treasurer's Association
- **Stanley French**, Director, representing British Columbia Principals and Vice Principals Association
- **Terri Watson**, Director, representing British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
- **Teresa Hebert**, Director, representing British Columbia School Trustees Association
- **Jim Soles**, Director, representing Ministry of Advanced Education

During the first year of operations Dr. Lee Southern, Executive Director, BCSTA, has acted in a part-time capacity as Chief Executive officer of BCELC and his office has provided infrastructure to support the work of BCELC.

Provisions exist in the constitution of BCELC to appoint up to two additional directors to the Board from partner organizations.

What has BCELC done so far?

You are probably wondering why you have not heard of this before – sounds like important work but what has been done? In early meetings the Board identified “sustainability” as one of its major challenges. It would be very easy to spend its \$5M grant on programs offered by school districts, organizations and institutions developing leaders. The leadership succession challenge is a long-term one. BCELC decided to go slowly and develop structures that would be sustainable in the long term.

BCELC set out to research the scope of the challenge and study approaches taken by other jurisdictions to solving the succession issue. Dr. Lee Southern structured a consulting partnership to investigate the challenge thoroughly. Mr. Mike McAvooy, retired superintendent from Vernon, led the partnership.

- The Superintendents Association undertook to explore the nature of programs of leadership development currently offered by school districts throughout the province.
- The Principals and Vice Principals Association conducted a survey of its members regarding skills and training that practicing principals viewed as essential.
- The Association of BC Deans of Education (ABCDE) studied leadership development programs currently available in the post-secondary community.

- International research and initiatives were studied with the assistance of consultants from abroad.
- Corinne Clark assisted by Patricia Shields, Bev Rundall and Dorothy Fowler put their minds to the smartest leadership program delivery system that could be designed.

On February 17 and 18 this information was shared with a symposium involving close to 100 participants from the education community including parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, university faculty and others. The Board of BCELC now need to consider the advice and feedback gathered from that group to determine the smartest design of a sustainable leadership development program that will address the succession challenge now and in the long term. Stay tuned as the outcomes of this planning are announced.

BCELC has also undertaken some other significant projects. BCELC has supported, with grants, the newly minted Certificate in School Management and Leadership (CSML) offered by the University of Victoria (UVIC). This innovative graduate certificate ladders into Masters programs and provides learners with a firm foundation to undertake school leadership. The program was developed by UVIC in conjunction with the expertise of Dr. Judy Halbert and Dr. Linda Kaser. BCELC's support for this program established the first cohort of 24 students last July. It is anticipated that up to an additional 90 students will enroll over the next academic year. UVIC and associate Dean, Dr. Yvonne Martin were central to this exciting partnership.

BCELC supports the Network of Performance Based Schools (NPBS) by offering administrative and business services in the background for this BC grown networking phenomenon. Many teacher leaders emerge from network schools and continue as teachers to lead in schools or move on to formal leadership roles.

BCELC has several proposals from school districts and other organizations under consideration. The board is now

wrestling with the task of considering those proposals in light of the growing framework of sustainability.

You may be interested in the following websites. If you think the leadership development field is empty, you should know that several districts have existing quality leadership programs. Kamloops, for example, has a long history with its program. Surrey has an extensive program that is web accessible (www.leadershipacademy.sd36.bc.ca/leadershipdevprog/index.htm).

The BCELC website is under development but worth a look. (www.bcelc.ca/main/)

Odds and Ends

What did the BCTF decide at their AGM regarding School Planning Councils (SPCs)?

It is our understanding, based on reports coming out of the BCTF AGM, that a resolution to cease participation in School Planning Councils was passed. We do not know the details of the implementation of this resolution and understand that the BCTF executive are yet to determine when teachers will be asked to withdraw for SPCs. For now, it should be business as usual. The BCTF believes the SPCs are preoccupied with evidence, student achievement results and data arising from high stakes testing as they develop the school plans. It seems incongruous that teachers will not be involved in planning to improve student achievement in each school in the province. Next week, we will write about our assessment, testing and evidence framework – Is FSA really bad for kids?

What about the Learning Roundtable?

The Roundtable continues to talk about the complex issues related to Class Size and Class Composition. All parties at the Roundtable are committed to providing the best learning conditions possible to our students. The BCTF calls for a system of class size maximums and staffing ratios similar to what was in place prior to 2002. The remaining partners are looking for other solutions that provide greater discretion and flexibility but support student learning. Much of the last meeting was

spent discussing the way communications about the Roundtable's work is conducted. Although we conducted the most extensive data collection ever on Class Size and Composition, we have not yet spent much time in making meaning of it.

Education Week

Remember next week is Education Week in British Columbia - a chance to showcase our outstanding public education system and the many dedicated teachers and others working in our schools. There will be a number of provincial media events. We heard again on the Tuesday news how surveys and polls show confidence in BC schools is low compared to other provinces. The Minister commented, when asked, that it is important to remember that we have one the best systems in the world and we have evidence to support that view. The Minister acknowledged that we do have challenges with climate within public schools and we are working on improving relationships that will improve the public view.

How do our class sizes compare?

Alberta announced a class size reduction plan in 2003/04. How do Alberta's class sizes compare for the 2005/06 school year? The groupings of classes are a little different but this will give you an indication.

Alberta	British Columbia
K – 3 average – 21.7	K average – 17.7
4 – 6 average – 22.0	1 – 3 average – 20.8
7 – 9 average – 22.7	4 – 7 average – 26.3
10 – 12 average – 23.0	8 – 12 average – 25.0

BC averages are calculated using actual class sizes – only classroom teachers are counted. Alberta averages are calculated using all teachers so include teachers who are not assigned classes. This has the effect of making Alberta averages, particularly in the 7 – 12 grades where they tend to be more non-enrolling teachers, appear lower than BC averages. BC and Alberta are the highest performing provinces on international assessments.