

April 5, 2007

Exploring our Future

On Monday of this week the Honourable Gordon Campbell, Premier, and the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education, met with approximately 120 students randomly selected from across the province in the first annual Student Congress. You can imagine the energy and enthusiasm of these involved young people at this full day of discussion. The Premier started the day with the statement, "Imagine what the education system in this province could be". From that opening challenge the students through discussion and short presentations talked about student engagement, program changes, barriers, opportunities and exciting possibilities. One presenter at the end of the day, Michael Furdyk, co-founder and Director of Technology for TakingITGlobal.org, spoke specifically about student engagement. He cited studies where students admitted dropping out because classes were boring. He stated classes that do not engage students drive them to misbehaviour and to dropping out of school. I think to a large extent he summed up much of the day's discussions. The question is "How do you get students inspired, informed and action-oriented in a positive manner?" He suggested this Congress was an excellent start and encouraged students to become connected and to keep connected. He encouraged them to go back to their districts and get involved. Do not take no for an answer and build positive coalitions within your respective districts, was his advice.

The Premier offered an opportunity for all students to continue the discussion and find ways in which they could have input to government and to themselves. He offered an email address: whateveryoucando@shaw.ca for students to follow up with their ideas and with further suggestions.

All in all it was an exciting opportunity to see these young people at work and to see them working together.

I like this story from Charles Hayes Secondary in Prince Rupert. It interests me in the way they have used very concrete school data to demonstrate growth. I suspect there is a very committed Principal and teachers behind this story.

Charles Hayes Secondary School

Success for all Students Academic Intervention Plan

In the spring of 2006, a committee of staff and the Vice-Principal, Darrell Wright, sat down to address concerns about an excessive student failure rate. The committee devised a plan to be implemented in the fall of 2006, initially for grade 8 students, with other grades being targeted later if the intervention was successful. This intervention was modeled after the Adlai Stevenson High School system documented in *Whatever It Takes* by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek, 2004.

CHSS currently operates on a ten week quarter system. After three weeks, grade 8 teachers met and discussed every student, noting whether they were being successful at that time. Students whose grade was less than 50% (in any class, including electives) were invited to attend study tutorials with their teacher(s). Teachers divided up the at-risk students and called home to let parents know that they were inviting their child to attend help sessions. The calls were designed to indicate care and concern and be supportive of students and their parents.

At five weeks, a second review was held. Those students who still were not meeting with success (defined as 50% or better) were required to attend a mandatory study hall monitored by volunteer teachers and our First Nations Family Resource Worker. Parents were contacted again at this time. If a student missed study hall three times, he or she was sent home until a set amount of work was completed.

In the first term, only one student was sent home and she returned with the work completed the next day.

At every step of the process, parents were contacted and were very supportive of the process.

First quarter report cards showed remarkable improvement over the results of the previous year as shown below.

Subject	First Quarter % failed	
	2005/2006	2006/2007
Humanities	16	4
Science	15	0
Transition Math	35	5

Given that these were different cohorts, we wondered if the 2006/2007 cohort could simply be a stronger group. We looked at the Gates McGinitie testing done on both groups in September, dividing into "Not Yet Meeting" and "Meeting" grade level expectations. The 2005/2006 cohort had 70% of students meeting grade level expectations in September 2005, whereas the next year's group showed 74% of students "not yet meeting." It seemed that although we were working with a much weaker group of students, we were seeing greater success. Second quarter results (below) were similarly strong.

Subject	Second Quarter % failed	
	2005/2006	2006/2007
Humanities	20	4
Science	12	7
Mathematics (all)	19	6

Following this, we extended the intervention into grade 9 and early indicators are promising.

Several key matters are of importance:

- All classes are involved – core and elective
- Discussion amongst teachers regarding students is a key component
- A positive tone and strongly cooperative focus with parents is vital

- Students know we are not "giving up" on them
- The focus is on **learning** and **succeeding** and is not punitive

Launch of ActNow Healthy Schools Program

On April 3, 2007 a number of new strategies under Government's ActNow program, were announced by Minister Bond at Waverley Elementary School in Vancouver.

The announcement highlighted a broad strategy to improve nutrition and physical activity in the school environment for B.C. students. Program initiatives will be rolled out in phases over the coming months. The Healthy Living Guides for Families, however, were released as part of the announcement and provide tips and ideas for families and youth on how to be more physically active and eat healthfully. The Guides can be found online at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/. Over the coming months you will see a number of other initiatives introduced, such as the Healthy School Performance Standards and new Health Matters teacher resources for K-12.

The Ministry of Education will be working closely with other ministries and education partners to implement this strategy in a way that maximizes resources and impacts the greatest number of British Columbians. We will continue to provide you with more information on the various initiatives under the ActNow program as they roll out.

It has been a great week, and I wish you a great weekend. The legislation introduced will work its way through readings in the Legislature and at the end of the day, we anticipate an improved public policy framework that enables improved student achievement.



Emery Dosdall, Ed D
Deputy Minister of Education