

November 10, 2006

Zone meetings with District Staff – A Huge Success

One of my most rewarding activities of the past six months has been to attend the zone meetings of the British Columbia School Superintendents. Ministry staff have joined me at these meetings to get to know the leaders who are close to the learning action.

Beginning with the Vancouver Island Zone in Victoria last spring, I have met with the Northern Zone, the Kootenay Zone, the Okanagan Zone and last week, with the Fraser Valley Zone. This has provided an excellent opportunity to get to know the Directors, Assistant Superintendents and Superintendents close to where they live and work.

At each of these meetings, districts have shared their experiences, successes and challenges. The diversity and achievement among districts is impressive. In the Fraser Valley last week I heard how districts are “mining the data” and getting past the district, school and class averages to actually begin identifying, tracking and addressing the needs of individual students. Three Fraser Valley districts described how they were able to address individual student needs to make a difference in individual and eventually group achievement.

Abbotsford described their work in Early Learning, and I intend to have staff visit Abbotsford to learn more about their experiences as we initiate early learning pilots in the province. Maple Ridge reported on their Family Literacy programs. The stories focusing attention on supporting student learning and improving student achievement certainly give cause for hope that we are continuing to demonstrate evidence of improvement in student learning.

Ministry Reorganizes

The word is out - yes we have reorganized! But this time there are some differences. Like you, the Ministry has significant succession challenges that have motivated some structural changes. We are facing the departure of several key staff members and secondees over the next few months. I decided to change the structure of the Ministry now to allow for a period of transition and the completion of several important projects.

What does the Ministry look like after this huge change? I have established a different organizational structure that has resulted in the appointment of four new Assistant Deputy Ministers and an Executive Director. They join Neil Matheson who has been our Assistant Deputy Minister of Management Services serving both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education. The new ADMs and the branches comprising their departments follow:

Renate Butterfield, ADM, Knowledge Management	
• Data Warehouse	• Information Systems
• Performance Reporting	• Virtual School
• Online Courses	• Tutoring
• Career and Academic Counseling	• Foundation Skills Assessment
• Graduation Program Exams	• Assessments
• Learning Resources	• GED

Peter Owen, ADM, Governance and Accountability	
• Governance and Legislation	• Regulatory Reform
• Independent Schools	• Correspondence
• Aboriginal Education	• French Programs
• English as a Second Language	• Safe Schools
• Diversity and Special Education	• Accountability Framework

Keith Miller, ADM, Resource Management	
• Accounting and Reporting	• Capital Funding
• Operating Allocations	• AVID
• Career and Applied Programs	• Industry Training

Paige MacFarlane, ADM, Partnerships and Planning	
• Intergovernmental Relations	• Corporate Planning
• Internal Communications	• Public Libraries
• Healthy Schools	• CommunityLink
• Early Learning	• Community Literacy

Scott MacDonald, Executive Director, Learning Management	
• Data Management	• Common Systems
• BCeSIS	• Student Centred Leadership
• Content and Achievement (IRPs)	• Adult Graduation Program
• Western and Northern Canadian Protocol	

Naturally the realignment of work will take some time to settle out. Please let us know how these departments can add value to your work in schools and districts.

The connection of the Ministry to the field will remain very strong but it, too, changes somewhat. Of course many of you know that Gary Graf, Superintendent, Liaison, retired officially on September 30th.

Rick Davis, Sherri Mohoruk and Julie MacRae, remain with the Ministry seconded to positions as Superintendents. Rick has worked primarily as liaison with partner organizations, school districts and stakeholders. Sherri will assume these responsibilities, so expect to hear from her regularly. Julie will continue her responsibility for establishing a sustainable rural strategy on the heels of the momentum created out the rural conference. Rick's title changes to Superintendent, Student Achievement. In this capacity he will work with school districts and Ministry resources to move us beyond the achievement plateau that I have spoken of before.

I know I can count on your support of all of these talented people in their new roles – and I know you join with me in giving those leaving the Ministry our deepest thanks and good wishes.