

October 12, 2007

The Superintendents from the Ministry's new Student Achievement Division have begun their work in visiting school districts and looking at ways to build the success of Student Achievement Initiatives. Over the course of the next few weeks, my Report on Education will provide some reflections on what we are learning from these district visits and highlight some of the exciting initiatives in which teachers, principals, students and parents are engaged.

## Reflections on District Visits....

These Superintendents, sixty school districts, and a goal to visit each school district during the fall term for a focused discussion with the district superintendent. The meeting agenda includes discussion of:

- The school district context
- The transition from an 'Accountability Contract' to an 'Achievement Contract'
- Transitioning to a focus on individual student success
- The Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement that will be due December 15<sup>th</sup> each year
- FSA
- District Literacy Plans
- Leadership Development and succession planning
- Teacher supply and demand and other human resources issues

It is a comprehensive agenda that intends to lead conversations to the heart of what we all desire... success for each and every student. In the past few weeks, we have had the privilege of meeting with the Superintendent and senior staff in School Districts 53, 58, 73, 35, 42, 51, and 22. We have found the discussions in these meetings to be rich and 'hopeful'. In each case the superintendent and staff are very proud of the

work being done in their districts. And in each case the Superintendent has worries about the learning or success of some students. The 'hopeful' part is that we have found each superintendent to be seriously and sincerely wrestling with how to identify and meet the needs of the students they are worried about. For example, in SD 53, Superintendent Juleen McElgunn found that Ministry data had raised concerns about the number of students transitioning between grade 10 and grade 11 as well as the number of first-time grade 12 students graduating. In order to try to understand issues related to this data, she reviewed the final report card for each grade 9 student in her district. Through this review, she identified students who had failed courses in core subject areas and had report card comments that indicated they were 'struggling' and may have difficulty achieving graduation. She has shared this data with school principals, along with Ministry transition and graduation data, and has initiated an exploration into questions such as:

- What do you think are the key reasons why students are not transitioning from grade 10 to grade 11?
- What is the key barrier to non-completion for students?

The district will pursue discussions and actions related to these questions in a project they are calling 10's to 2010...Leading and Learning with Hope...Building Student Success.

In School District No. 19, Superintendent Anne Cooper described the success of a Precision Reading initiative that is showing results in improved student achievement evident in primary grades. Continued attention to this initiative holds promise for improving reading fluency for students at all levels.

In all of our discussions with superintendents so far, we have found the message regarding focussing on the individual learner to be resonating. School Districts

are finding a variety of approaches to move beyond the trends and averages that data represent, to get underneath to individual students and meeting their needs. This is a very hopeful development that builds on the previous work in gathering evidence of students learning.

Many students in our districts are experiencing success, learning and thriving. However, some are not. The visits made over the past few weeks indicate that we don't yet have the answers to what will work best to engage all students in successful learning...but superintendents are seeking ways to engage with principals, teachers, students, parents and the community to seek answers to our most challenging questions.



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Deputy Minister of Education

## Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence

I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry has announced the creation of the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence. I would like to provide you with information on the Awards that you may find useful.

The Awards have been created to recognize and celebrate BC's most outstanding teachers—individuals who have made exceptional contributions to one or more school communities and dramatically improved student achievement.

The Awards are open to all teachers who are currently teaching authorized courses within the BC K-12 public, independent or band school systems. Awards will be given in the following categories:

- Literacy
- Career Education and Workplace Learning
- Distributed Learning
- Healthy Living and/or Physical Education and Coaching
- School Leadership
- Aboriginal Learning
- Community Engagement
- Lifetime Achievement (20+ Years)
- Beginning Teacher (0-5 Years)
- Environment

Nominations are welcome from all BC citizens, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, trustees and community organizations. The deadline for nominations is December 10, 2007. More information on the awards, including a downloadable nomination package, can be found on the Premier's Awards for Teaching Excellence website ([www.bced.gov.bc.ca/teacherawards](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/teacherawards)).

An Awards Selection Committee comprising education partners and other members of the education community will select finalists in early 2008, and the Premier will announce the first-ever recipients of the awards in March 2008. Award recipients will receive a certificate, plaque and \$1,500 for professional development.

Teachers are vital to the cultural, economic and social well-being of the province. The Ministry is proud to have created awards that celebrate the enormous contributions of BC's most outstanding teachers.