

Curriculum Committee Annual Report 2015-2016

Committee Members: David MacFarlane (Chair), Adam Boyd, Chad Hanrahan, Darlene Bereta, Keith Partridge, Kelli Burgess, Sheri Scott, Wendy Gould, James King, Debbie McIsaac

Meeting Dates: October 2, February 19, & April 22.

The Curriculum Committee was fortunate to have several staff from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) present to us over this past school year. The committee was able to hear from Department Staff of the many initiatives they have undertaken and how these will impact the classroom environment for teachers and students.

Much of the focus of the Department has been the rollout of the new 4-6 curriculum. Sue-Taylor Foley applauded the efforts of the teachers who were part of the advisory committee. She felt the members of the committee went well beyond the department's expectations to ensure the programs offered met the needs of both teachers and students. She noted that it was because of the teachers input that they have put all resources at teachers fingertips. All curriculum related documents are linked so teachers do not have to open several documents rather if they click on highlighted words in one document they will be brought directly to the supporting document.

The committee was concerned with the time required by teachers to meet the expectations of the new curriculum. Specifically, we question the time that was allotted for teachers to become familiar with all the resources that have been made available to them. Sue Taylor-Foley felt confident that the three days provided were enough to meet the needs of teachers and that they would be comfortable accessing the resources.

Monica Williams presented on The Centre for Learning Excellence preparation for the implementation of the new Teaching Standards. The Standards will focus on the following key areas, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Teacher Certification, Accreditation and Performance Management. The guiding principal for the Teaching Standards is to have a focused and cohesive system along with strong leadership and teaching expertise which has been proven to increase student success.

The committee was concerned that the new Teaching Standards becoming additional paperwork to be completed by the teacher that is not used to inform anyone on the teachers' classroom practices. Ms. Williams assured us that this would not be the case and the purpose was to ensure that all teachers across the province are being evaluated on the same bases. The standards are going to be extend to administrators to ensure their practice are uniformly evaluated throughout the province.

Jennifer Burke, newly appointed Director of Curriculum Development, briefed the committee on the implementation process for the new 4-6 curriculum and that the Publics School Program (PSP) is due for a review. Ms. Burke and Ms. Taylor-Foley discussed that the PSP has not been reviewed since 1996 and is overdue for a review and it is their expectation that this will begin soon.

The committee was also able to see and use many of the technologies that will be used to introduce students to coding. Sphero's, and Bee-Bots can be programmed by students so they will move to the information that has recorded. The DEECD is hopeful that this early exposure will peak student interest in perusing coding as a career.

The committee raised concerns over the Mathematics 4-6 curriculum and 1.5 hours/day to be spent on mathematics. The committee wondered if the "The Time to Learn" released by the DEECD was based on other provinces curriculum or on research that has shown this much time to be effective in increasing student mathematical competence. Ms. Taylor-Foley assured that committee that different provinces do different things but she felt the 1.5 hours could be used for cross-curricular activities which allow teachers meet several outcomes not just for mathematics.

A final point made by the committee concerned all the new tasks that teachers are required to complete as part of the new evaluation/reporting procedures. We felt that a great deal of teacher time was being taken to complete reports on student achievement on specific outcomes which left little time for actual teaching to occur. With all these new tasks is the department planning to see whether or not these are working well in the classroom or providing little to no improvement to students learning. Ms. Williams said that the department was going to start tracking and asking for feedback from teachers as she also felt that it was important that work being completed by the teachers was worthwhile in improving student achievement.

The budget for the committee for 2015-16 was \$7,440.00, the committee spent \$6,803.75.

Respectfully submitted,

David MacFarlane, Chair