



## **Renfrew County District School Board**

### **Director's Report - October 29, 2007**

#### **Student Leadership Conference**

In late September, student leaders from each secondary school gathered at Wilderness Tours for a day of leadership training. Students developed and shared strategies for engaging the greater student body in school activities and in projects that contribute to communities locally and globally. Student trustee Aaron Hitchins, Board Chair Dave Shields, and the Director attended and had opportunity to address the group. A special thanks goes to Gayle Bishop, Dean Zadow and the teachers who serve as advisors to student councils in each school for their coordination of the day.

#### **RCDSB Professional Development Conference**

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, the Renfrew County District School Board hosted a professional development conference for teaching and support staff. The keynote speaker, Marc Kielburger, started the day with a powerful message about volunteerism, service to others and social involvement. He shared information about Free the Children and the work that young people are doing to promote the health and education of children around the world. The philosophy of "Me to We" is a foundation for character education in Ontario schools. Following the keynote address, participants attended workshops on a variety of work-related topics. Many of the workshops were provided by RCDSB colleagues and supported the Board's three key outcomes: excellence in teaching and learning; safe, caring and respectful learning environments; and wise use of resources. A special thanks goes to the Curriculum and Special Education departments and to the planning team.

#### **Regional Special Education Conference**

In early October, the Renfrew County District School Board and its coterminous board hosted the regional special education conference titled "Meeting the Needs of Individuals". Each day began with a keynote speaker - Garfield Gini-Newman spoke about critical thinking skills and brain-compatible classrooms and Todd Cunningham spoke about learning disabilities and assistive technologies. There were several workshops provided by special educators from eastern region school districts including Margo Diamond, Scott Buffam, Angela McGregor-Stewart, Jennifer Marquardt, Allison Ryan, Donna Cox and Gayle Corbin from RCDSB. A special thanks goes to our members of the planning team - Shelley Gagne, Diane Kiser, Bill Smith and Tracey Stevens.

#### **Leading Student Achievement**

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has sponsored a third year of professional learning for RCDSB principals and vice-principals as part of the Leading Student Achievement Project. Our RCDSB plan includes monthly opportunities for school leaders to meet, learn and reflect upon evidence-based leadership practices. Recently, principals and vice-principals participated in a full-day workshop on the theory and practice of Professional Learning Communities and the impact that collaborative leadership has on student learning.

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has developed a self-assessment tool that will assist Board and school teams with improvement planning. The "School Effectiveness Framework" gives guidance to teams as they examine the work being done to improve student learning and achievement, instructional leadership, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum and instructional strategies. The LNS is providing funding to support implementation of this resource.

## **CODE Special Education Project**

Over the past three years, having successfully applied for special project funding, each elementary school has been able to place emphasis on developing and implementing individual education plans for students with identified special needs. This collaboration among special education teachers, classroom teachers, literacy teachers and administrators allowed for sharing of professional expertise and is one factor in the significant progress we have made in improving results for students.

We are pleased to have funding for one more year to consolidate this learning. Recently, the team from each school joined together in one of three RCDSB mini-conferences so that schools could learn from one another. Teachers shared strategies for differentiated instruction so that students' learning needs are accommodated in the classroom. As well, participants gained information about websites and webcasts that provide additional information.

## **Teacher Exchange**

Last week, RCDSB hosted six teacher leaders from Brighton and Hove in England who came to our school district to learn about our approach to professional development and its impact on excellence in teaching and learning. They participated in training sessions, visited schools and classrooms, learned our ways, and shared their experiences with target setting and school improvement planning in their own schools. They were most appreciative of our hospitality and expressed thanks to all those who took time to make their time in Canada informative and pleasant. A special thank you goes to Stephanie Giesebrecht, who organized all the logistics for the group.

## **Ontario Parent Involvement Project**

In recognition that parental involvement is a factor in student success, the Ministry of Education provides some funds for initiatives that encourage all parents to participate in their child's education. Schools now receive \$500 annually to enable school councils to engage parents. The Renfrew County District School Board is provided with \$6700 annually to support communication among members of its Parent Involvement Committee (PIC).

This fall, members of the PIC are attending a school council meeting at each school to share resources and strategies to assist school councils in communicating with and engaging the parent community. The PIC has recently submitted an application for a Parents Reaching Out Grant that would enable the group to sponsor a spring conference.

## **Queen Elizabeth Scholarships**

Each year, the Province of Ontario selects a number of students as recipients of a Queen Elizabeth II Aiming for the Top Scholarship. Students must achieve very high standing as they graduate from secondary school and enter college or university programs. Students maintaining an 80 percent average at the postsecondary level are eligible to continue to receive the scholarship each year to a total of four years. Fifty-six students from the Renfrew County District School Board received these scholarships, including students from each of our seven high schools and our adult high school. We congratulate these students on this acknowledgement of their hard work.