



Renfrew County District School Board

Director's Report - September 24, 2007

RCDSB Review of Special Education

Within the Renfrew County District School Board, approximately one in four students is a student with special learning needs. Recently, the Ministry of Education has focused on the design and delivery of special education within Ontario schools, publishing documents that signal program, policy and funding changes. For these reasons, and in accordance with its three key outcomes, the Renfrew County District School Board initiated a review of special education and held consultations in the spring with parents, staff and community members at seven "family of schools" meetings and at a meeting of the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee.

The feedback collected during the first series of public consultations acknowledged the efforts by teachers and school staff to support students with special needs, described concerns relating to the support of students with behavioural or mental health challenges, and offered suggestions for communication at classroom, school and system levels.

The Renfrew County District School Board is holding a second set of consultations to further explore each of the three major themes that have emerged in the review. Meetings will be held at the secondary school in each family of schools from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on the following evenings:

- 🌳 Madawaska Family of Schools - Tuesday, 09 October 2007
- 🌳 Petawawa Family of Schools - Thursday, 11 October 2007
- 🌳 Opeongo Family of Schools - Wednesday, 17 October 2007
- 🌳 Deep River Family of Schools - Thursday, 18 October 2007
- 🌳 Renfrew Family of Schools - Monday, 22 October 2007
- 🌳 Pembroke Family of Schools - Wednesday, 24 October 2007
- 🌳 Arnprior Family of Schools - Monday, 05 November 2007

School Start-Up

September has proven to be a busy month for elementary schools as an increase in enrolment over what was projected and implementation of the primary class size cap resulted in the addition of ten elementary teachers across the system. RCDSB is in full compliance with primary class size with over 90% of kindergarten and primary classes at 20 students or fewer and no primary or combined grade three/four class exceeding 23 students as of last Friday. Elementary enrolment is 5740, which is 65 more than what was projected although approximately 90 fewer than last year's total. The changes to elementary class organization occur early in the school year and further adjustments are not required by the Ministry in the event that students move into the primary division during the school year.

Secondary schools are also busy in September making adjustments to student timetables and staff assignments. Secondary enrolment is approximately 4300 FTE, which is slightly higher than projections and close to last year's enrolments.

Leadership

RCDSB is pleased that the Ministry is continuing to support our elementary principals through funding a third year of the Leading Student Achievement Project. This project develops principals as instructional leaders through evidence-based inquiry and decision making. Our team attended a training session in August at which the focus was on Teacher Teams that Get Results - a new book by Gayle Gregory and Lin Kuzmich about Professional Learning Communities. The RCDSB principal group was invited to present a workshop on how they have been applying the work of Fullan, Hill and Crevola in their leadership.

Last week, the Ministry held training sessions for principals and supervisory officers at which a new, draft School Effectiveness Framework was shared. This tool will assist school staff and central program staff in assessing progress toward meeting improvement targets and developing improvement plans.

Safe Schools

The Ministry of Education has made changes to the legislation regarding Safe Schools which become effective in February 2008, and is issuing memoranda to give direction on its expectations for programs for expelled students, programs for students on long-term suspensions, anti-bullying programs, and progressive discipline. The Ministry has provided \$213,563 to assist our Board in implementing the new requirements. There will be training for administrators and other staff during this fall.

As a first step to implementation of the new policies, staff has initiated a review of all administrative procedures dealing with safe schools to ensure that our procedures are in alignment with Bill 212 (Progressive Discipline and School Safety) and with other safety regulations and requirements. Representatives from all employee groups and administration met to review approximately a dozen of our current procedures and to give input on what clarification or changes are needed. Revisions to our procedures will be done in conjunction with work that is underway through OPSBA and OESC.

Student Vote

Students in grade five social studies and those enrolled in the compulsory grade ten civics course learn about government, policy-making and democratic processes as part of the Ontario curriculum. "Student Vote" is an initiative that provides materials to schools free-of-charge so that students can conduct elections that parallel provincial and federal elections. Endorsed by the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Ontario Principals' Council, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Student Vote engages students in the electoral process with the hope that greater numbers of young people will exercise their right to vote in the future. To date, fifteen RCDSB schools have signed on to participate. More information about the program is available at www.studentvote.ca