

Director's Report – September 27, 2016

1. RCDSB Launches Review of Strategic Plan

On Monday, September 26th, RCDSB trustees and senior staff started the process to review its current strategic plan. The current strategic plan will finish its planning cycle at the end of the 2016-2017 school year. The Board felt it was important to review its plan prior to the end of its cycle to ensure stakeholders and board staff had the opportunity to comment on the effectiveness of the plan's vision and mission statement, three guiding principles, goals and selected interventions. While it's anticipated the plan will be refreshed in several areas, there will only be minor changes to the Board's three guiding principles as they have served the Board well as it continues to meet the needs of its diverse student population. The stakeholder analysis, which will include input from our various employee groups, is expected to be done this Fall with a new strategic plan being revealed to the system in early 2017.

2. Math Day EQAO Data Review

On September 22nd the Renfrew County DSB hosted Mike Young, Outreach Officer for EQAO. Mr. Young met with school teams which included principals and teachers from all schools as well as system support personnel. The focus of the learning for the day was on the effective use of EQAO school and board data to inform practice and to support the planning of co-learning opportunities both within and between schools. Teams received instruction on how to access personalized data and used this data to formulate good questions, and to identify strengths and areas of needs in mathematics. Next steps from this learning opportunity will involve collaboration between Family of Schools to further understand student learning needs.

3. Strong Districts

On Thursday, September 15, Senior Executive team members attended a Job Embedded Professional Development workshop in Sudbury. Hosted by our colleagues at the Rainbow District School Board, Algoma District School Board and Near North District School Board, the day-long session provided attendees with the opportunity to consider and share best practices for engaging our school and board staff in professional development opportunities that satisfied personal professional needs as well as Board goals. The pursuit of leadership best practices and improving the learning for all students is the fundamental role of senior leaders and Directors of Education in the province of Ontario. Quality leadership practices are necessary to support this. In the 2012/2013 school year, the Council of Directors of Education in partnership with the Institute of Education Leadership (IEL) commissioned Dr. Ken Leithwood to explore and articulate those qualities and conditions that research has shown create successful school districts. The groundbreaking paper that was produced was titled *Strong Districts and their Leadership*. This paper was launched for school systems in the winter of 2014. This work summarized evidence about:

- The characteristics of schools systems, boards or districts that are successful at improving the learning of their students ("strong districts");
- The leadership practices needed to develop and sustain such districts on the part of the director and superintendent positions ("senior district leaders");
- The personal leadership resources especially valuable for those in director and superintendent positions;
- A possible vision of strong future districts;
- The value strong districts add, over and above school and classroom contributions, to the achievement of their students.

4. Augmented Reality Sandbox

The RCDSB is now one of five school Boards across the country to have as part of its curriculum, an Augmented Reality Sandbox. This unique and innovative tool was built by Peter Cudmore and his robotics crew did an amazing job building this innovative tool for our students at Walter Zadow PS and ADHS. The Sandbox allows users to create topography models by shaping real sand, which is then augmented in real time by an elevation color map, topographic contour lines, and simulated water. As we strive to foster the character traits of innovation, creativity and problem solving in our students, this is a great tool for provocation and inquiry and begin conversations about elements of our physical world. The plan is for the Sandbox to live in the kindergarten rooms as we see it fitting well with the play based learning through inquiry approach. We will be inviting media to see the Sandbox next week - Tuesday, October 4th at noon at Walter Zadow PS.

5. Orange Shirt Day

To commemorate the victims and survivors of residential schools, this Friday, September 30th will be Orange Shirt Day. Orange Shirt Day is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission (SJM) residential school commemoration event held in Williams Lake, BC, Canada, in the spring of 2013. It grew out of a story of a little girl named Phyllis who wore an orange shirt to her residential school. Phyllis was stripped of this shirt when she got to school, and never saw it again. It has become an opportunity to keep the discussion on all aspects of residential schools happening annually. The date was chosen because it is the time of year in which children were taken from their homes to residential schools, and because it is an opportunity to set the stage for anti-racism and anti-bullying policies for the coming school year. It also gives teachers time to plan events that will include children, as we want to ensure that we are passing the story and learning on to the next generations.