

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Reporting to Public Session, Tuesday, October 11, 2011

The Education Committee met on Tuesday, October 4, 2011 at 4:00 pm. In attendance were Trustees Ron Burton (Chair), Baljinder Narang and Assistant Superintendents Gina Niccoli-Moen, Heather Hart, Kevin Kaardal, and DPAC Representative, Jennifer Mezei.

1. Settlement Workers in Schools Program (SWIS)

Ruby Chan, Coordinator Cultural Transition Services, provided an update on the Settlement Workers in Schools Program (SWIS) and the services it provides Burnaby families and students. SWIS workers assess settlement needs and provide orientation and information regarding schools, the community and government services. Services have expanded to assist families with the delivery of settlement workshops, parenting workshops, youth support programs and cultural interpretation. Additional student needs such as trauma counselling and conflict resolution are addressed within the program. SWIS workers have worked with families that come from a variety of immigration categories from Skilled Worker to Refugee Claimant and who speak 64 different primary languages. Over 5000 individuals have been served since the program's inception in 2007.

Recommendation: THAT the Board receive this information

2. Advanced Learning - Twice Exceptional Program

The Burnaby School District offers a myriad of learning program options for students. The twice exceptional learner can be identified as gifted in one or more areas of exceptionality, but who also has a learning disability as defined by the Ministry of Education. Principal of Alpha Secondary, Ron Hall, presented to the committee, the program housed at Alpha to support the twice exceptional learner.

The Program is currently serving students through innovative, personalized delivery of the Humanities program. Teachers provide opportunities to meet the individual needs and diverse abilities of the students. There is a focus on helping students identify areas of interest and through this process meet intended learning outcomes to satisfy requirements for English and Social Studies 8 or 9. Students are provided guidance to work through independent directed studies in an area of interest that can challenge their intellectual abilities.

This is the first year of the program and, to date, has proven successful in assisting students with socialization skills as well as offering each student the choice, structure and process needed to be successful.

Recommendation: THAT the Board receive this information

3. Personalized Learning for the 21st Century; Independent Directed Studies

Assistant Superintendent Kevin Kaardal and District Principal Donna Scott provided an update on district direction supporting Personalized Learning for the 21st Century. A district committee comprised of parents, teachers, trustees and administrators is collaborating to develop a framework for personalized learning. The framework currently identifies five areas of focus for student learning: Engagement - Core Learning, Engagement – Extended Learning, Self Regulation supported by Continuous Assessment, 21st Century Skills, and Living in a Digital Environment.

A number of specific approaches to support student learning opportunities in the Engagement – Extended Learning focus area were presented. The first approach, “Innovative Curriculum Design” allows students to use independent directed study courses to pursue areas of academic interest in a more thorough way than can occur within a typical four credit course. The program is being offered in partnership with Dr. Kieran Egan of Simon Fraser University who will assist students to focus on their specific curricular inquiry. Current independent directed study choices include but are not limited to documentary film making on social justice issues, fashion design, modern languages, and history. The skills learned during the focussed independent study will help develop critical thinking skills, independent working skills and a deeper understanding of the theory of knowledge.

The second example, The Clubs for Credit, is an approach to learning whereby students receive credits towards graduation for the learning that occurs in some school clubs. An example presented was the Robotics Club, at Moscrop Secondary School. The club was so successful that it has been developed into a Board Authority Approved course. Students from the Moscrop Robotics Club received national recognition at provincial and national competitions.

The most recent example of The Clubs for Credit approach is the District’s United Nations Connections Club organized by the district’s Global Learning initiative. The club is open to students across the district. Students participate in a model United Nations symposium and work on real world issues representing countries from all over the globe. The preparation to defend positions on international papers and propose initiatives is extensive and academically rigorous. The club provides opportunities for students to meet actual diplomats and professionals employed at the United Nations, as well as students from other schools, jurisdictions and countries.

Other examples of Independent Directed Studies noted were developing Apple Applications and training for elite athletic and music programs. Schools continue to explore and create exemplary opportunities for Personalized Learning.

Recommendation: THAT the Board receive this information

4. Next Meeting

The next committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 1, 2011 at 4:00 pm.

5. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:00 pm.