

Report – Meeting of the Learning Roundtable – September 22, 2006

Attendance

Government	Premier, Gordon Campbell Minister of Education, Shirley Bond, Chair
BCSTA	Penny Tees, President Connie Densiuk, First Vice-President
BCCPAC	Kim Howland, President Lori Tedrick, 2 nd Vice President
BCPVPA	Les Dukowski, President Tom Hierck, Past President
BCSSA	Harry Janzen, President Sheila Rooney, Past President
BCTF	Jinny Sims, President Irene Lanzinger, First Vice President Susan Lambert, Second Vice President Jim Iker, Executive
Ministry of Education	Emery Dossdall, Deputy Minister Rick Davis, Superintendent, Liaison
Staff	Lisa Dominato, Ministerial Assistant Larry Kuehn, BCTF Lee Southern, BCSTA Ron Broda, First Vice President, BCCPAC

1. Agenda accepted with comment by the BCTF that it was surprised to see use of facilities as a priority for discussion as not an issue of high priority to the BCTF. Minister and BCCPAC comment that accessibility to facilities by community, parents and students is an area of interest and should be discussed.

2. Implementation of Bill 33 – Comments
 - BCSTA – Boards are working to implement the new provisions. The importance of compliance has been stressed. Most Boards will not be “hands on” until they receive the superintendent’s report.
 - BCPVPA – Feedback indicates that it is “business as usual” in many schools although there are additional time pressures. Secondary schools are particularly pressured to ensure the required consultations occur. Meaningful conversations about class organization are occurring.
 - Minister requests that BCPVPA encourages documentation of particular challenges and experiences to inform review.
 - BCCPAC – Parents have not been closely involved yet as BCCPAC waits to hear feedback from members. Concerns regarding pressure on students with special needs have not materialized. In individual circumstances, superintendents have intervened to problem solve. Some concerns with

delays in timely organization of schools and classes. Minister requests examples and details for follow-up.

- BCSSA – Concerns with the timelines and their efficacy in large secondary schools. Good conversations about student needs are occurring. The legislation seems to work.
- BCTF – Confirms the comments of the partners with similar findings. Some teachers are delighted with the consultation that is occurring but others are reporting that the consultation is perfunctory. On the whole, things are moving along with consultation.
- Minister emphasizes the need to hear when consultation is not occurring as intended and commits to follow up through Ministry staff.
- BCSTA – Expresses expectation that local parties get the first opportunity to resolve challenges where things are not working well. Minister concurs.
- BCCPAC – Supports local problem solving first – will inform Ministry if issues cannot be resolved at the classroom, school and district levels.
- BCTF expresses a number of concerns it is tracking -
 - Numbers of students in shop and home economics classes;
 - “Delisting” of students with special needs;
 - Wait lists of assessment of students (Minister comments that this is an area she has requested more information from staff regarding);
 - Compliance with timelines in secondary schools;
 - Reductions in non-enrolling staffing levels.

3. School Planning Councils

- BCCPAC – Parents are pleased with the roles they play in school and the way in which school planning councils have functioned. BCCPAC is concerned that SPCs are seen as closed to the participation of others and now very concerned that teachers have withdrawn from participation. BCCPAC see great promise for SPCs and do not want them to come to an end. While there are implementation challenges, BCCPAC seeks a commitment to continuing with SPCs. BCCPAC sees the tension regarding the accountability framework between Ministry and the BCTF and is worried that SPCs may be causality. Teachers and parents value conversations and need a place to have them.
- The Minister expresses support for SPCs. She acknowledges there are implementation challenges but has also heard of many successes. The Minister expresses concern about teachers not participating.
- BCTF – Surveys of teachers indicated that teachers regard the SPC and the process of planning “bureaucratic” and preoccupied with “number crunching”. Teachers want real dialogue. “We are opposed to phony data”. The view of the annual general meeting is that teachers want to work with parents but they found that venue (the SPC) “toxic”.
- BCCPAC – Concerned about the characterization that the conversation is about “Phone data”. Teachers have not been meaningfully involved in PAC.

The SPC was a place for meaningful conversations between teachers and parents.

- BCSTA – Supports the key role of the SPC in planning for school improvement. It is critically important that teachers are involved to inform this discussion. School Boards would like to have teachers at the table.
- Continued discussion ensues – the BCTF expresses its concern with standardized testing and invites participation in its annual education conference focused on the accountability framework. The Minister reminds the partners of the need to strike a balance in the accountability framework. The system is accountable to deliver results. She has not heard parents expressing concerns that “we are into any testing mania”. BCSTA comments that the focus has been on doing better for our students – getting better results for kids. The conversation has shifted to how to support teachers to get better results for students. The school improvement plan is the focus and teachers need to be involved in it.

4. Future agenda items

- Brought Forward – Improving Public Confidence in Public Education
- Brought Forward – Use of School Facilities
- Class size data
- Accountability Framework
- Special Needs Assessments
- Premier – The Premier challenged the members of the Learning Roundtable to take a broader view of what the Roundtable set out to accomplish. Take a step back and take a more visionary view of what the Roundtable sets out to accomplish. The partners have many common interests in making things as good as they can be for the province’s students. The Premier cautioned the Roundtable about bogging down in details and arithmetic of class size. He suggested future agendas should be future looking and creative.