



Mailing: PO Box 8600, Charlottetown
Prince Edward Island
Canada C1A 8V7
Civic: 234 Shakespeare Drive
Stratford, PE C1B 2V8
Tel: (902) 368-6990
Fax: (902) 368-6960

Eastern School District

www.edu.pe.ca/esd

August 29, 2011

Mr. Owen Parkhouse, President
PEI Home and School Federation Inc.
PO Box 1012
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7M4

Dear Mr. Parkhouse:

Thank you for your letter of May 12, 2011 regarding the resolutions passed at your Annual General Meeting. The Eastern School District is pleased to provide you with our response as follows:

Resolution 1/11 – White Boards and FM Systems in Elementary Classrooms

The Eastern School District recognizes the value of having white boards and FM sound systems in our elementary classroom settings. Presently, most of our classrooms have white boards installed in them. White boards offer educators a dust free tool that aides in instruction and links to Smartboard technology. The Eastern School District is aware that there are still some classrooms that have traditional chalk boards in them and that some teachers do not have access to white boards. We will continue to work toward the purchasing and installation of white boards in all of our classrooms.

FM sound systems historically have been purchased at the school level. The Eastern School District acknowledges the importance of these systems in the areas of instruction and learning. Research has demonstrated that many children with normal hearing experience difficulties understanding speech in typical classroom environments. Perceptual difficulties can negatively impact student performance. The Eastern School District will work towards supporting schools with their FM Sound System purchases.

Resolution 2/11 – Science Fair

The Eastern School District recognizes the importance of 21st Century Skills and supports the development of critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills through various instructional and assessment approaches, including project-based learning (PBL).

21st Century Schools pilot projects are currently underway at Souris Regional, Souris Consolidated and Birchwood Intermediate schools. The three schools benefit from the support of a curriculum specialist who provides guidance in PBL experiences across the curriculum.

Schools within the Eastern School District have been receiving information and support in adopting the instructional and assessment practices of PBL.

Curriculum specialists of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are collaborating to develop cross-curricular PBL tasks.

Science curricula are particularly suited to PBL and the Eastern School District supports and encourages the Department to integrate PBL within the curricula.

While the Eastern School District supports PBL in the science curricula, student achievement is determined against outcomes within a specific curriculum. Student achievement is criterion-referenced and is not competitive by default. As such participation in competitive activities has consistently been at the discretion of students and teachers. Therefore, the Eastern School District will continue to support voluntary participation in competitive extra-curricular activities.

Resolution 3/11 – Allocation of Educational Assistants in Schools

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the District/Boards operating under it do so within a non-categorical approach allowing schools to address student needs without requiring diagnosis. The exception to this is the service provided by the Autism Consultants.

Moving toward a funding index model could negatively impact students and further restrict access to existing supports. The current model allows schools to respond in a flexible manner to behaviours and learning needs when they arise – without waiting for a diagnosis that may or may not be attainable and in some cases may eliminate the students' eligibility for the support they need.

The Eastern School District will continue to collaborate with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to successfully meet the goals of all our students.

Resolution 4/11 – Equal Access to Value-Based Educational Experiences

The Eastern School District recognizes that valuable educational experiences can and do occur outside the classroom. We encourage curriculum-related field trips, participation in extra curricular sports, various festivals, science and heritage fairs, drama, and much more. We have always strived to give all students equal access to these, regardless of geographic and/or socio-economic factors.

We believe strongly that for some events the decisions to attend must reside with the Superintendent and/or Principal of the school. Factors such as time out of the classroom versus the educational value of the event must be considered. Administrators

have to decide if attending a one-hour event which keeps students out of the classroom for most or all of a day has the educational value to support attending. For example, occasionally a decision may have to be made as to whether an event outside the classroom is curriculum related or simply entertainment.

However, we feel good decisions are being made that do not deprive students of educational opportunities outside the classroom - regardless of geographic location. We have travel budgets for schools that reflect their geographic location and every effort is made to grant requests that schools make to attend events.

Resolution 5/11 – Minister's Directive and School Board Policy for Reporting Student Health and Safety Issues to Parents

The Eastern School District will have a parent representative from each Home and School Association serve as an observer on each School Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee as of September 1, 2011. The representative will be nominated by their local Home and School and will serve as an observer on the committee but will not have voting rights. Each parent representative will be responsible for reporting to their local Home and School membership on a monthly basis.

Joan Moore-Dennis, School Safety Consultant, has been working with the PEI Home and School Federation over the past few months to develop the observer and selection processes associated with the position. The Eastern School District is confident that the inclusion of a Home and School representative on the Joint Occupational Health and Safety committees at schools throughout the District will result in improved communication flow of health and safety related issues between parents and schools.

Resolution 6/11 – Provision of Translation Resources to Support Newcomer Families

The Eastern School District is in agreement that there is a benefit to have parents engaged in their children's education and in the activities of their local Home and School Association.

This resolution dealing with simultaneous translation services and the translation of written documents has been directed to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development as a funding issue. Due to the budget requirement for these services, the District will await direction from the Minister.

Resolution 7/11 – Academic Outcomes

The Eastern School District recognizes the importance of academic standards and benchmarks to establish student achievement of the curriculum. District staff has been collaborating with Department specialists on achievement standards for reading and writing across the grade levels.

The Eastern School District recognizes the value of professional growth plans in meeting the ongoing professional development needs of instructional staff. As well the District has implemented an online school development reporting site.

The Eastern School District notes that an effective accountability structure needs to be supported by mechanisms for curriculum review and development, educational process and structures, human and operational resources, and ongoing professional development.

The Eastern School District acknowledges the importance of literacy to the success of student achievement in reading, mathematics and science. The District Literacy Action Plan (DLAP) has been devised to enhance student literacy and achievement. The DLAP working group implemented 17 of 53 actions in its first year and will continue to partner with educational stakeholders to positively affect student achievement across the curricula.

The Eastern School District is committed to improving student achievement through a systemic, and comprehensive accountability structure.

Thank you for the opportunity to consult on these important matters. Please feel free to contact me if there are questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patsy MacLean". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Patsy MacLean
Official Trustee

/cjm

c Ricky Hood, Superintendent of Education