

P.E.I. HOME AND SCHOOL FEDERATION INC.
FÉDÉRATION FOYER-ÉCOLE DE L'ÎLE DU PRINCE-ÉDOUARD INC.

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June 20, 2008

Clayton Coe
Secondary Education Coordinator
EDUC-English Programs
Department of Education
PO Box 1012 Charlottetown
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Dear Clayton,

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the discussion paper tabled by the Senior High School Model (SHSM) Committee. The Federation forwarded the paper along with your email to the Presidents/Co-Chairs of the 48 local Home and School associations across PEI and to the provincial board. We received a few comments, but unfortunately none from parents with children in high school. This is not all that surprising given the time of year and that there are only 3 high schools on PEI with local associations: Charlottetown Rural, Bluefield, and Westisle Composite. Hence, I encourage your committee to seek other avenues to get feedback from parents with children in high school.

I also want to thank you for taking time last Friday to meet with me to provide greater context to the recommendations put forward by your committee. This was very helpful and I believe speaks to the positive working relationship the Federation has with you and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

General Comments on Discussion Paper

It was noted that the committee membership is entirely composed of educators with the exception of a parent on an as-needed basis. The voice of parents on this matter would certainly be strengthened if a parent were named as a full member of the committee. The Federation is certainly available to help facilitate parental involvement on the SHSM committee. The Federation has been successful in finding parents to sit on a number of government committees.

The Federation believes that the language in the discussion paper may not be accessible to lay people. The executive summary would only really be comprehensible to educators in the field. Perhaps this may be a reason why we did not receive much feedback when soliciting input from parents.

Mandate I

It is not clear what is meant by the integration of literacy and mathematics into the curriculum. I suspect that you do not mean adding new literacy and math courses, but rather look to identify learning strategies that reinforce literacy and math concepts in existing relevant course offerings. If so, what courses and how will this be implemented? This is certainly an interesting concept, and the federation would be interested in learning more about the details.

As we discussed, it was unclear whether the full (or half) course credit in LA/literacy at the grade 10 level is targeted to struggling students or all students. I gather from our conversation that this course would be developed to support those students identified as having difficulties with the reading and writing curriculum. How would the students be identified? Are resources available to provide ongoing support for these students?

Mandate II

The Federation is highly supportive of enhancing learning opportunities that are outside the school and community based. Such relevant “real world” experiences are value-added components to a high school education and are key to supporting students in making career decisions. The Federation is also highly supportive of a compulsory ½ credit course in career education/development. We are concerned about how much time young adults spend post high school before settling on their final career path. Career development is needed to ensure that this time is minimized and that students make informed and appropriate decisions. We recognize a number of challenges specifically around flexible instruction schedules and teacher availability, as you also indicate in the document. We see this as an opportunity to engage parents in the community as learning and teaching partners. Parents have a wealth of experiences and many are eager to share this knowledge with their children and other students in the schools. As we discussed the community based learning opportunities could extend over weekends and into the summer with parents acting as mentors.

Mandate III

The Federation is highly supportive of flexible scheduling, especially if it enables enhanced community based learning opportunities. However, it appears that the proposal is still firmly within the standard four course two-semester model. How will the delivery of the new courses (i.e. Technology Education and Career Education) differ from the current model?

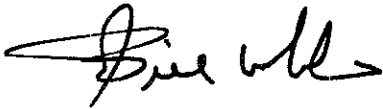
Mandate IV

The Federation is highly supportive of the recommendation to enhance closer student-teacher contact and mentoring relationships. However it appears from the document that this recommendation is limited mainly to Career Academies. What happens if the Career Academy initiative does not proceed? The Federation encourages your committee to explore opportunities to integrate these strategies into all aspects of the high school curriculum so that all students can benefit. We recognize that the quality of the relationships between students and teachers is a key indicator of student success. Perhaps this is the time to revisit the one home-room teacher model.

which Wendy MacDonald informs me was piloted at Colonel Gray. This would certainly enable stronger student-teacher relationships. This model would also allow for better monitoring/identification of student progress and needs.

As a final thought, the Federation believes, as supported by evidence-based research, that engaging parents is a key first step towards improving student engagement. Hence, we encourage your committee to look to opportunities to involve parents and local Home and School Associations in your proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Whelan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill Whelan
President