

Senior High School Model

Discussion Paper

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Please send written comments to the following address before June 15, 2008.

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Summary of Committee Mandate Tasks and Proposals

In summary, the Senior High Model Committee proposes the following in response to the committee's mandate:

I. Tasks of the committee will include:

examining the hour value of high school credits (110 hours) and making recommendations as to how the hour value of credits can be changed to offer more options to students and to offer more language arts and mathematics

- A.** *The committee proposes the explicit integration of LA (literacy) and Mathematics (numeracy) into the curriculum.*
- B.** *The committee proposes that the Department of Education develop a full or ½ credit course in LA/Literacy at the grade 10 level.*

II. Tasks of the committee will include:

examining how to integrate a career/life skills program into high schools

- A.** *The committee proposes the expansion of community-based learning opportunities as well as the use of flexible time scheduling for such learning opportunities.*
- B.** *The committee proposes the development of Career Academies within schools.*
- C.** *The committee proposes that the Department of Education develop a*

compulsory ½ credit course in Career Education/Development at the Grade 10 level.

III. Tasks of the committee will include:

examining various scheduling models to accommodate the above two items

The committee supports flexible scheduling within and around the four-block, two-semester system.

IV. Tasks of the committee will include:

examining strategies to enhance student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships at the high school level

Career Academies, and other similar structures, provide opportunities for student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships at the high school level.

V. Tasks of the committee will include:

recommending changes to minimum graduation requirements if necessarily caused by previous recommendations.

The committee proposes that the Department of Education establish a compulsory ½ credit course in Career Education/Development at the grade 10 level.

Background

In December, 2005, the Prince Edward Island Task Force on Student Achievement published its final report on student achievement entitled *Excellence in Education - A Challenge for Prince Edward Island*. The report contains a total of 20 recommendations which came from the research and discussions by the Prince Edward Island Task Force on Student Achievement committee as well as from 40 submissions from individuals and organizations. The Task Force on Student Achievement committee believes a positive enhancement of student achievement will result if the recommendations are addressed and implemented.

The Senior High Model Committee was tasked with addressing the fifth recommendation in the final report on student achievement which deals with the subject of student engagement. The more detailed recommendations from the report regarding student engagement are:

- the Department of Education investigate and adopt a more effective scheduling model for intermediate and high schools;
- the Department of Education develop strategies to enhance student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships;
- the Department of Education address the credit value of courses currently offered in the education system. In doing so, serious consideration should be given to increasing the teaching time (and relative course credit value) for mathematics and the language arts;
- new strategies be employed in the delivery, value, and structure of alternate programs at the intermediate level, as well as general and practical courses at the senior high level;
- new instructional strategies be examined, developed, and introduced which take into account differentiated instruction, particularly with regard to instructional strategies that work for boys;
- the Department of Education develop a strategy for students who need academic enrichment;
- the Department of Education accredit programs, including, for example, trades experience

or Royal Conservatory of Music Programs, taken by students outside the existing school system.

Research generally classifies student engagement into three types: academic engagement; emotional engagement; and behavioral engagement.¹ The task force recommendations related to student engagement can be related to these various ways in which students engage at school.

In the spring of 2006, the Department of Education decided to establish a committee to address some of the recommendations as they relate specifically to the senior high school. The mandate of the Senior High Model Committee is as follows:

The High School Model Committee will respond to the recommendations of the Task Force on Student Achievement. In its response, the Committee should make recommendations aimed at improving student engagement in the pursuit of improved learning.

Tasks of the committee will include:

- examining the hour value of high school credits (110 hours) and making recommendations as to how the hour value of credits can be changed to offer more options to students and to offer more language arts and mathematics
- examining how to integrate a career/life skills program into high schools
- examining various scheduling models to accommodate the above two items
- examining strategies to enhance student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships at the high school level
- recommending changes to minimum graduation requirements if necessarily caused by previous recommendations.

The committee would be chaired by Clayton Coe, Secondary Education Coordinator, and representatives from the educational community. These included:

- One administrator from each of the school boards
 - ▶ Dale McIsaac, Bluefield High School, ESD
 - ▶ Duncan McKillop, Three Oaks Senior High School, WSB
 - ▶ Paul Cyr, École Évangéline, Commission scolaire de la langue française
- One teacher from amongst the school boards
 - ▶ Margaret MacDonald, Montague Regional High School
- One school board staff person chosen amongst the school boards
 - ▶ Brenda Millar, Director of Student Services, WSB
- One Department of Education representative from each of English Programs, French Programs and Student Support Services
 - ▶ Frank Hennessey, Director of English Programs
 - ▶ Monique Brisson, French Immersion Language Arts Program Specialist, French Programs
 - ▶ June Sanderson, Counselling Specialist, Student Support Services
- One parent on an as-needed basis

After a series of meetings of the committee and the sharing of associated readings, research and presentations, the committee formulated a number of proposals to be shared with the wider public education community and to seek feedback about these proposals. Educators and other interested partners would be invited to submit feedback around these proposals. Educators at the high school level would have the opportunity to invite the chair of the committee to meet with staff or staff representatives to discuss any of the proposals during this consultative process.

On the following pages are the five main mandate tasks for the committee and the proposals associated with each. Following each task and the proposal(s) associated with the task is the background information for each proposal. For additional background related to some of the proposals, readers are invited to visit the endnotes indicated at the end of the document.

Mandate Task I

Tasks of the committee included:

examining the hour value of high school credits (110 hours) and making recommendations as to how the hour value of credits can be changed to offer more options to students and to offer more language arts and mathematics

- A. The committee proposes the explicit integration of LA (literacy) and Mathematics (numeracy) into the curriculum.***

The committee reviewed and studied current research related to ways in which additional language arts and mathematics can be enhanced at the secondary level ^{2, 3, 4, 5}. Specialists in the areas of language arts/literacy and mathematics were invited to make presentations to the committee. After debate and discussion, the committee proposes two ways to support students in having more opportunities to advance their knowledge and skills in the areas of language arts and mathematics.

There are opportunities in the curricula of the content areas to infuse explicit learning outcomes related to language arts and mathematics. The students would learn about the processes, knowledge, and skills related to the content area and use the content area to apply and practice literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills. Curricula in the content areas would be constructed in such a way as to permit time for the infused and integrated literacy- and numeracy-related learning outcomes to be addressed.

In addition to infusing and integrating literacy and numeracy learning outcomes, curriculum guides and resources could contain explicit examples on how teachers could use pedagogically-sound learning and teaching strategies that would support the contextual use of knowledge and skills related to language arts and mathematics.

- B. The committee proposes that the Department of Education develop a full or ½ credit course in LA/Literacy at the grade 10 level.***

One of the greatest challenges that educators encounter on a regular basis is working with and supporting students who experience significant difficulties with basic literacy. Some courses are presently available to support students with literacy difficulties. The committee, after considerable research into initiatives and programs in other jurisdictions and discussions with literacy and language arts specialists, proposes that our province develop a full or ½ credit course in LA/Literacy based on reading and writing strategies at the grade 10 level.

Students would be supported with reading, writing, and general learning strategies that could be presented in the context of some of the content areas that they would be taking in their other courses. In addition, students who continue to experience significant literacy challenges could be identified and further assessed in order to provide more focused and individualized support to help address their literacy needs in a resource context, for example.

Mandate Task II

Tasks of the committee will include:

examining how to integrate a career/life skills program into high schools

- A. The committee proposes the expansion of community-based learning opportunities as well as the use of flexible time scheduling for such learning opportunities.***

Community-Based Learning

Community-Based Learning is an umbrella term capturing the wide range of learning activities connecting the school and its extended community. Cooperative education and experiential learning programs offer students opportunities to expand their interests, explore their career options and apply their learning. Cooperative education is a planned learning experience in the community that complements and enhances the curriculum and provides students with an opportunity to learn and to apply their skills and knowledge in practical situations.

Community-based and work-based learning experiences are those that engage the community and worksite as extensions of the classroom to test, validate, expand upon, supplement and enrich classroom learning. They provide structured career exploration and learning experiences for students through exposure to a range of careers and activities. Students learn by observing and/or doing real work. Learning in the community and workplace is connected to and supports learning in the classroom. Community-based and work-based learning experiences promote the development of broad, transferable skills.

There are a number of reasons that community-based learning opportunities can support student engagement and student achievement:

- Students have the opportunity to see and experience the connections between what they are learning in school and activities in the community.
- Students can undertake projects in their local community and solve issues which are relevant to themselves, their school and their community.
- Students involved with community-based learning can undertake meaningful work placement and learn about the nature of work in its different forms.
- Community-based learning provides the opportunity for the facilitator/volunteer to model and develop in students, generic and transferable skills, knowledge and attitudes.
- A community-based learning experience can help prepare students for structured work

placement in the future.

Presently, there are a number of community-based learning opportunities in many Island high schools. These include:

1. The offering of Cooperative Work courses to students.
2. Visits by community members to classrooms to support the learning and teaching in a number of courses.
3. Transitions course and presentations in which students learn about and/or experience a variety of community-based work or learning opportunities.
4. Certificate programs at several schools.

Presently, most, if not all of the community-based learning experiences to which students have access are during the traditional school day schedule.

Many educational jurisdictions in North America are using a more flexible scheduling framework in order to better serve the needs and interests of their students. Evening, weekend, and holiday periods are often taken advantage of in order to expand the opportunities for community-based learning for students.

Students who have an interest in exploring careers and opportunities within the agriculture and tourism and hospitality sectors, for example, are more likely to have a wider selection of community-based learning opportunities in the spring, summer and early fall than during the regular school year.

Cooperative Education or community-based learning teachers can provide valuable opportunities for all students in secondary schools choosing post secondary destinations including the workplace, apprenticeship, college or university. In order for students to be able to access these opportunities, community-based learning teachers must also be given flexible schedules to work

with and support the students who take advantage of these learning opportunities. Community-based learning teachers would need to be given the opportunity to work within a flexible schedule in order to support students.

In addition to the current community-based learning opportunities in Island schools, there are a number of other community-based learning possibilities that the PEI public school system should explore in order to expand the opportunities for students. Following are a number of community-based learning activities and programs that should be explored and possibly developed for Island schools:

1. Academic Cooperative Education course(s)

This type of a course would have some of the same characteristics as the current Cooperative Work course(s) that are presently offered in most schools. In order to be considered for an academic designation, however, this type of course would require evidence of academic rigor and accountability.

The following is an example of how this course could both resemble and differ from the traditional cooperative education course. A student who had a particular interest in biology and wanted to explore possible career options in the health sector could work with a community-based learning teacher and a volunteer from the health sector to develop a learning plan that would permit him or her to expand knowledge and skills in some aspect of biology as well as to learn how this subject is foundational in this sector. A written learning log and culminating project and/or activity could be used to help the community-based learning teacher and volunteer from the sector assess the learning during the course.

2. Project-based Learning course(s)

Project-based learning, or PBL (often "PjBL" to avoid confusion with "Problem-based

Learning"), is a constructivist pedagogy that intends to bring about deep learning by allowing learners to use an inquiry based approach to engage with issues and questions that are rich, real and relevant to their lives. In addition, engagement in the project can provide an opportunity to the student to explore and experience a career or variety of careers associated with the project.

With the aid of a community-based learning teacher, a community volunteer mentor or mentors, and perhaps a teacher who has expertise and interest in the area of study, a student could identify a question or issue to investigate and develop a learning plan to address it.

Elements of a good project-based learning experience include:

- A fertile question or issue that is rich, real and relevant to the students' lives
- Real world use of technology
- Student-directed learning and/or the deliberate engagement of student voice
- Collaboration
- The production of an artifact, report, presentation, or action as a result of the inquiry that demonstrates learning from doing the project.

A student may, for example, have an interest in a particular area, such as bio-technology. A community-based learning teacher would help the student identify opportunities to work in and experience first hand, with the help of volunteer mentors, a question or issue related to bio-technology.

A student, with a particular interest in historical inquiry, for example, could work with a community-based learning teacher to develop a learning plan that could involve working with researchers, historians and archivists in order to address a particular question or issue related to history.

3. Academic Service-Learning course(s)

Academic Service-Learning is a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.⁶

Students would work with a community-based learning teacher to identify and plan for a learning experience that could complement a course already taken or being taken in school. By working with a community-based organization, a student could explore careers and opportunities related to the work of the organization with which they would be working.

For example, a student taking a foods-related course might want to learn about, through active participation, the work that a local food bank might be doing. Learning outcomes could be developed both from the corresponding academic course(s) and transferable essential skills practised and acquired in the community-based learning opportunity.⁷

4. Apprenticeship Learning Opportunities - Apprenticeship courses/credits

The youth apprenticeship program enables students in grades 11 and 12 to complete their high school diploma while starting their apprenticeship training. Students earn credits for their workplace experience in the apprenticeship program, and time they spend in the placement counts towards their apprenticeship training requirement.

B. The committee proposes the development of Career Academies within schools.

Career Academies

Career academies or, “schools within schools”, have been created in a growing number of high schools over the past several decades. The concept and practice first began in 1969 and has been continuously growing and expanding across North America ever since.⁸

Career academies have been developed and institutionalized in many high schools for a variety of reasons. Some of the main reasons for the growing interest and popularity of career academies include:

- It is a structured, supportive framework whereby students have the opportunity to explore a particular career interest
- A cohort of students within a larger student population is monitored and supported by teachers associated with the career academy
- Students, through a series of expectations (curricular and extra-curricular), eventually earn an “Academy Certificate” which demonstrates additional work and learning on the part of the students during their high school years.

Career Exploration and Career Education Focus

A school and the school’s community may decide to support the establishment of one or more career academies. The theme of the career academy is usually based on the anticipated interest of students as well as the potential for community and industry support in the school’s community. The essential components of some career academies are currently established in several Island high schools. Other potential career academies are also listed below. These include:

- an Agriculture Career Academy (components of this type of academy presently exist at Westisle, Kinkora and KISH)
- a Tourism and Hospitality Career Academy (components of this type of academy presently exist at KISH)

- an Arts and Culture Career Academy
- a Skilled Trades Career Academy
- a Health and Wellness Career Academy
- a CIT Academy
- an International Baccalaureate Academy* (The IB diploma programme has most of the attributes of a career academy. The one aspect of a career academy that it does not have is a focus on a particular career.)

In order to establish, support, and coordinate a career academy, two committees or working groups are usually struck. First, a career academy steering committee is formed to help establish the requirements and expectations for students in the career academy and to support the work of the academy once it is formed. Members of a typical career academy steering committee usually include:

- educators(s) and administrator(s) from the school
- school board and Department of Education administrators
- representatives from the community associated with the career
- representatives from post-secondary institutions associated or closely linked to the career academy. (Often, because of the involvement of this sector of the learning community, articulated agreements are made with post-secondary institutions leading to advanced study, preferential standing and/or the awarding of credits.)

The second committee is an internal school committee. Members on this committee include:

- the career academy coordinator or lead teacher
- one or more teachers associated with the career academy
- a school administrator

The two committees work together to develop and support several pathways and the expectations that will support students in earning a career academy certificate. Research suggests that successfully implemented career academies have the following three essential components:

- *a well-defined curricular pathway that will provide students with a firm foundation and give them experience with courses and/or course work that relates to the career.*
 - ▶ In an Agriculture Academy a curricular pathway might resemble:
SCI421A or SCI431, AGR801A, BIO521A or BIO801A, GEO521A or GEO631A
(and other compulsory and elective courses required for graduation purposes)
 - ▶ In a Health Careers Academy a curricular pathway might resemble:
SCI421A or SCI431, BIO521A and BIO621A or BIO801A, GEO521A or
GEO631A, PED401A or PED801A or PED621A (and other compulsory and
elective courses required for graduation purposes)

In some career academies, “infused” career activities are assigned to students by teachers in some courses. This provides students more opportunities to see the relevance and applications of the curriculum that they are studying with the career they are exploring in the academy. In mathematics, for example, a student could be challenged to investigate the slope requirements of farm fields when engaged with this topic in mathematics.

- *participation in a number of extra-curricular activities/experiences that provide students with an opportunity to explore and gain exposure to aspects of the career not present in a curricular pathway.* For example, some extra-curricular activities and experiences in an Agriculture Academy might include:
 - ▶ WHMIS Training
 - ▶ First Aid Training
 - ▶ field trips to the Atlantic Veterinary College, the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and a community college that has a farm technician apprenticeship program
 - ▶ participation at an agricultural trade show
 - ▶ participation in a culminating project related to some aspect of agriculture (e.g., a photo essay about current and upcoming agricultural technologies or participation in the Bio-Tech Challenge)

- *students participate in a community-based learning experience related to the career.* For example, some community-based learning experiences in an Agriculture Academy might include:
 - ▶ a Co-operative Education course/credit (working at a veterinary clinic)
 - ▶ a Community-Based Learning course/credit (working with a research scientist in the bio-technology field)

How Students Become Involved with a Career Academy

Students are advised of a career academy opportunity in the grade 9 or 10 year. Information and informational sessions related to the career academy are provided to students and their parents/guardians. Interested students are then invited to apply to enter the career academy. An interview by the school career academy team with the student occurs. If the student is accepted into the academy, the student and the parent sign an agreement that states that the student will satisfy all of the basic requirements of the career academy.

Throughout their involvement with the career academy, students will work and learn with and from students who have similar interests and goals. In addition, the career academy school team is able to monitor the progress of each of the students over the two to three years of involvement with the academy. The school team is also able to mentor, support, and encourage the career academy students.

If the student is successful in completing these requirements, s(he) is then awarded a career academy certificate upon graduation from high school. The awarding of the career academy certificate means that the student has met the requirements for a provincial graduation certificate as well as the additional requirements as set out by the career academy.

- C. ***The committee proposes that the Department of Education develop a compulsory ½ credit course in Career Education/Development at the Grade 10 level.***

**Compulsory ½ course in Career Education/Development -
Life/Work Exploration and Planning**

A career development curriculum framework would be designed to connect school learning with workplace and labour market realities; this connection will then contribute to increasing the number of students graduating from high school in Prince Edward Island. This proposed compulsory ½ credit course at the Grade 10 level and other similar elective courses will attempt to provide a smoother transition between high school graduation and more appropriate post-secondary educational programming. These courses will help students acquire and apply knowledge and skills to make appropriate decisions for life, work, and the essential post-secondary education/training that is required in today's world and economy.

This proposed compulsory Grade 10 career development ½ course would be focussed on life/work exploration and planning. It would complement the learning that will take place in the “life learning choices” component found in the grade 7, 8 and 9 health curriculum.

The new course would use the competencies outlined in the national *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*⁹ as the foundation for student learning outcomes. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs* is the result of the work of the National Life/Work Centre, Canada Career Information Partnership, and Human Resources Development Canada, along with partners in every province and territory. The Blueprint was piloted across Canada via a four-year process that included diverse public and private sector agencies in all regions of Canada.

The Grade 10 curriculum would provide students with an overview of career development outcomes with emphasis on building positive self-esteem, exploring self-assessment, locating

work information, and selecting high school courses. In addition, the curriculum could have student learning outcomes that would place an emphasis on communication skills, work information, work trends, self-assessment, matching personal skills to occupations, stereotyping and discrimination in the workplace, and work-search tools.

The career development curriculum could be divided into five themes: Personal Management, Career Exploration, Learning and Planning, Job Seeking and Job Maintenance, and Career and Community Experiences. The Grade 10 curriculum would place an emphasis on personal introspection and career exploration while Grade 11 and Grade 12 career-related curricula would focus more on community experiences and transition planning.

Mandate Task III

Tasks of the committee will include:

examining various scheduling models to accommodate the above two items

The committee supports flexible scheduling within and around the four-block, two-semester system.

The current four-block, two-semester system provides some schools with the ability to work with other schools to provide opportunities to students. Currently, for example, students in two Island schools have the opportunity to access programming that does not exist in their home schools in another school.

Within the current four-block, two-semester system, a number of shorter ½ credit courses could be made available. Shorter, ½ credit or 55-60 hour courses provide students with the opportunity to explore and engage with subjects and topics that might be of particular interest. These

courses, particularly at the grade 10 and 11 levels could provide some students with the information and experience they would require to make more informed choices in the rest of their senior high career and after high school.

Some examples of ½ courses that could be considered include:

½ credit Career Education course

½ credit Literacy course (reading and writing strategies)

½ credit Technology Education (Agricultural Technology, Forestry Technology, Fisheries Technology)

½ credit CIT

In addition, some current full credit courses could be examined to determine if they could be made into two half credit courses.

In order to expand community-based learning opportunities for students, it is imperative that learning opportunities be considered and made available outside of the traditional school day. With this increased flexibility, more partnerships with community organizations, institutions, and the work world could be established from which students could benefit. There would need to be an openness to explore how community-based learning teachers can support students in a flexible schedule. Community-based learning teachers would need to be supported to help them in their work with students in a variety of community-based learning opportunities.

Mandate Task IV

Tasks of the committee will include:

examining strategies to enhance student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships at the high school level

Career Academies, and other similar structures, provide opportunities for student/teacher contact and mentoring relationships at the high school level.

There are two specific proposals by the committee that would lead to enhanced student/teacher contact and mentoring for students. For students who become part of a career academy, there would be opportunities to work with a smaller group of teachers with whom closer ties could be made. The teachers associated with the academy could follow the progress of the students more closely and provide advice and encouragement to students within the career academy. In addition, because of the extra-curricular and community-based learning opportunities that are inherently part of any career academy, students would have the opportunity to be supported and encouraged by other adults associated with the career academy in the same way.

All students who take advantage of community-based learning courses would have the opportunity to benefit from positive learning and working relationships with interested and supportive adult mentors. Community-based learning teachers would have the chance to follow the directed and individualized learning plan of a student and have the ability to support and engage the student as s(he) explores a particular career or interest area.

Mandate Task V

Tasks of the committee will include:

recommending changes to minimum graduation requirements if necessarily caused by previous recommendations.

The committee proposes that the Department of Education establish a compulsory ½ credit course in Career Education/Development at the grade 10 level.

Conclusion

Student engagement was determined by the Prince Edward Island Task Force on Student Achievement to be an important factor contributing to student achievement. As a result, the Senior High Model Committee was established and tasked with exploring and addressing student engagement at the senior high level.

The Senior High Model Committee has had the opportunity to explore, debate, and reflect upon the various mandate tasks assigned to the committee. Based on the work accomplished by the committee, a number of proposals related to the committee's mandate have been formulated and presented to the public school system with the hope of gathering feedback related to the proposals.

The Senior High Model Committee looks forward to reviewing any feedback it receives with regards to the proposals it has presented. The feedback will be considered and the committee will produce a final report based on the original mandate and present the report to the Department of Education.

Endnotes

- 1 Krystina A. Finlay, “Research Report National Center for School Engagement”, National Center for School Engagement, December, 2006, 2-3.
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- 2 Mike Schmoker, “Reading, Writing, and Thinking for All”, Educational Leadership, Apr 2007, Vol. 64 Issue 7, p63-66.
- 3 Kylene Beers, “When Kids Can't Read—What Teachers Can Do A Guide for Teachers 6-12”, Heinemann, 1-7.
- 4 “Cross-curricular Reading Tools” (revised 2007), Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), 2006, 1-4.
- 5 Lynn Arthur Steen, executive editor, “MATHEMATICS and DEMOCRACY The Case for Quantitative Literacy”, The National Council on Education and the Disciplines, <http://www.maa.org/ql/mathanddemocracy.html>
- 6 Robert Schoenfeld, “Service Learning: Bringing Together Students, Parents and Community to Create a Better World”, New Horizons for Learning
http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/service_learning/schoenfeld.htm
- 7 Stacy K. Dymond, Adelle, Renzaglia, and Euljung Chun, “Elements of Effective High School Service Learning Programs That Include Students With and Without Disabilities”, Remedial and Special Education, Volume 28, Number 4, July/August, 232-235.
- 8 The Career Academy Support Network, <http://casn.berkeley.edu/>
- 9 Blueprint for Life/Work Designs, <http://www.blueprint4life.ca/blueprint/home.cfm/lang/1>