

Curriculum Corner



by Sarah Tutty, Curriculum Committee Chair and Marc Breaugh, Curriculum Committee member

On February 28 the curriculum committee gathered to discuss curriculum-related issues in Nova Scotia public schools. In attendance for the meeting were Sarah Tutty, Darlene Baretta, Jason Ralph, Kathy Fougere, Sophie

Pedneault, Steve Trussoni, Marc Breaugh, our provincial executive liaison Pat Hillier and staff liaison Debbie McIssac. This was the second of three meetings for members in the 2013-2014 school year.

The morning's conversation was inspired by a visit from Jim Rice, former Director of Evaluating Services. Rice was recently reassigned from this portfolio in assessment to oversee data collection and culmination for the Educational Review Panel from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The purpose of his visit was to update us on what is happening on the large-scale assessments front. However, members of the curriculum committee had many questions regarding the educational review process; and so we begin there. Rice explained that the role of the review panel was to sift through all of the recommendations submitted and find trends in these. This information would then be analyzed in the next phase of the review process, at which point the Partner's Advisory Committee, of which the NSTU is a member, would then be consulted.

Here is an overview of the four phases of the process set forth for the Educational Review Panel:

- 1) From April to June the Review Panel gathers general input.
- 2) From June to October the Panel organizes the input. During this phase the NSTU, as a member of the Partner's Advisory Committee, will have the opportunity to review the results of the information gathered by the Education Review Panel.
- 3) From October to January/February the report is to be finalized and recommendations are being made to Minister Casey.
- 4) In February or April is the release of the action plan by the Minister.

Rice then gave an overview of the current large-scale assessments taking place: Grade 3 English Reading and Writing demands 90 minutes over two days and is given a two-week window of completion. Grade 4 Math follows the same schedule as Grade 3 English and will be aligned to both new WNCP-influenced and current curriculum. The Reading, Writing, and Mathematics assessment in Grade 6 follows 90 minutes over four days, conducted also over a two-week span. Grade 8 Reading, Writing and Mathematics takes 90 minutes over four days; these days may also be split over a two-week time period. The Nova Scotia examinations take place in English 10, Mathematics at Work 10, are taken over two dates (which are predetermined by the Department) Mathematics 10, and Mathématiques 10 are administered over one day.

In the afternoon, we met with Ann Blackwood and Sharon McCready to discuss the ongoing changes to our Math Curriculum. Sharon reviewed the rationale for adopting the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP). The main points Sharon made were that the WNCP is driven by evidence-based research. It offers a fix to some of the concerns in the current program. Basic facts are being covered and automaticity is also practiced. There is less content but the rigor is still there and the program has been changed to reflect what worked best in other provinces.

The Report Review Committee, which includes students, parents, teachers, principals, school board staff, and NSTU staff met on February 10 to review the current provincial report card template which has been in use province-wide for the past two years. The mandate of the committee is to:

- review current research on effective approaches to reporting on student learning and engaging parents and students in the process of assessment, evaluation and reporting;
- share their experience and expertise related to what is working and what needs improvement;
- examine data collected through online surveys of students, parents, teachers, and administrators to identify what is working and what can be improved

The on-line survey was released on March 21 and will be open until April 11. The next meeting of the Review Committee is tentatively set for April 25 to study the results of the surveys and make recommendations for improvements in a report to Minister Casey by April 30, 2014. Fill out the survey to share your perspective on the Provincial Report Card. <http://www.ednet.ns.ca/reportcardreview>

The mandate of the curriculum committee was also reviewed with NSTU staff and discussion as to how the committee could contribute to policy of the NSTU through the mandate. Our last meeting of the school year is scheduled for April 11. If you have questions or concerns, please contact any one of the members of curriculum committee.

[From The Teacher, April 2014, Volume 52 Number 6, page 17 © NSTU 2014]