

# Curriculum Corner

by Grant Frost



On Friday, January 11, the members of the curriculum committee gathered at the NSTU building for what was to be a full slate of discussion topics. On hand were Sarah Tutty, Joyce Lively, Cathy Doucet, Tanya Sampson, Sophie

Pedneault, Steve Trussoni, Grant Frost (Chair), Debbie McIsaac (NSTU staff liaison) and Pat Hillier (provincial executive liaison).

The morning's conversation centred mostly around the Department of Education's Visioning Committee, of which the NSTU is a member, struck to look at ways of meeting modern educational challenges. Key to the discussion were issues of changing the EGLs to reflect more modern educational climate. Concern was expressed about changing the EGLs at this juncture when so many teachers have just changed their teaching and assessment practices to align with the SIS. Opinion was aired that if new EGLs are necessary, they be written with current curriculum in mind.

The afternoon session saw the arrival of Shannon Delbridge, the current Acting Senior Executive Director Public Schools, and it was not long before the conversation turned, again, to educational change. The committee asked some very pointed questions around the new Math curriculum, PLCs, the new Tienet system and, of course CSI. The committee was a bit concerned to discover that much of the responsibility for in servicing teachers in the impending changes that are coming has been passed down to the various school boards. This method of delivery proved problematic for some boards during the recent roll-out of the SIS, and there is hope these problems will be addressed before they are repeated.

The last part of the day focussed specifically around PLCs and how they could be effectively utilized. All parties recognize that some of the best PD occurs when teachers collaborate, but implementing PLCs remains a challenge. The majority of issues seem to stem from an inherent lack of time for implementation, and the restricting of teacher vision in such areas as reporting and goal setting. Although PLCs are the engine that drives CSI, flexibility remains the benchmark of a true PLC. The committee feels that for PLCs to be effective, teachers must have time for implementation and some autonomy of purpose. Although there is recognition of the importance of PLCs and the role they can play in supporting growth, the committee feels that a common message needs to be developed around PLCs and what they look like "on the ground."

Beyond PLCs, there were questions asked around problems with combined classes, if French curricula would keep pace with English and if the DOE was implementing any changes to Primary curriculum to modify for four year olds.

It was again, another fascinating day of discussion and debate. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 12.

**Grant Frost is the chair of NSTU's Curriculum Committee. He also writes regularly about public education issues in his blog at: <http://frostededucation.com/>.**

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