



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 40 (NEW WESTMINSTER)

Westminster News

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

DEC 2008

The Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) is committed to ensuring that learners become self-assured, self-sufficient, caring, wise, flexible, and able to live successfully in an ever-changing environment.

This Westminster News is published three times each school year in electronic format.

For more information about items in this issue, or to be placed on the electronic distribution list, please contact:

Betina Ali
SD40 Community Program Development Officer
Phone: 604.517.6168
Fax: 604.517.6169
E-mail: bali@sd40.ca

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Learning Services Update	2
Beekeeping at NWSS	2
City 2009 Environmental Art Contest	3
Homelessness Action	3
iWalk to Breakfast Events	3
NWPL Summer Reading Program	3
Active Communities	4
Announcements	4

Message from the Superintendent...

As you sit down to read this newsletter, it is hard to believe that the first four months of the 2008-09 School Year are nearly complete. As we rush toward the Christmas break with great anticipation and excitement, it is important for us all to take just a few moments to reflect upon our successes as well as our challenges. As always, our successes are numerous and serve as a testament to our outstanding staff and their unwavering commitment to student learning and achievement.

To illustrate, recently released data for our grade 10 provincial exam results for English, science, and mathematics for 2007-08 were well above the provincial average for all public and Independent schools for a grade of 'A' – truly an outstanding accomplishment! In addition, our six-year Aboriginal completion rate is once again in the 38 percent range, which is almost identical to last year's rate and practically double the rate over the previous four years. During this first term, the district has been working with 'Universal Design for Learning' Action Teams and 31 staff are presently involved in this initiative which focuses on optimal inclusion practices for students with the most complex learning needs. Plans have also been established to embark upon an exciting new brain-based initiative at the start of the second term called 'Fast ForWord' which aims to eliminate barriers to success in the area of literacy and learning. Finally, the district has entered into an exciting new venture with Douglas College which will enable a large number of our special education support staff to acquire specialized training toward the completion of an advanced diploma. Special thanks to CUPE 409 for their assistance and support in helping to make this exciting opportunity a reality for our staff.

As always, along with the achievements there are challenges that we face as we continue our collective pursuit of educational excellence. As you are no doubt aware, we are presently in the midst of addressing some significant short and long-term financial challenges, and this work will continue in earnest in the new year. This work will require boldness, diligence, and vision as the district involves all its partner groups in the process of achieving a highly successful and educationally optimal solution. In addition, our capital project continues to present challenges as we work through the complexities associated with historical events related to the present NWSS site, as well as identifying potential locations for the third middle school. On a positive note, the district is working closely with the City of New Westminster to achieve its ultimate goal of providing the very best educational facilities for the students, staff, and greater community of New Westminster.

In summary, as we prepare to embark upon the Christmas season with all its activity, joy, and splendour, please take a few moments to reflect on the wonderful accomplishments we have achieved as a School District during this first term, and take pride in the fact that you have been an integral part of this success. Our special ability to work together to achieve success speaks volumes about our deep and caring organization and the values of integrity, respect, and compassion that we have come to stand for. Best wishes to you and your entire family for a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable holiday season!



Dr. John Woudzia

Learning Services Update: Informational Reading

What do you read most? Adults read most for information. When we look at work demands, few people read literature as part of their career. Therefore, schools try to teach reading for information as well as fiction reading. Informational reading is often called "Reading in the Content Areas," because areas like science and social studies are called the content areas. They teach the content of those subjects.

This fall, teachers in Kindergarten to grade 8 had the opportunity to refine their teaching of reading skills for informational writing. Some of the informational reading skills are the same as those used in reading fiction, but the balance of skills is different. Teachers also prepare students to understand the different structures of language and patterns used in informational writing. Teachers met in same grade meetings to understand what informational writing requires of readers, what skills are needed, and how to help students transform their understanding and show it in different ways. Brain research tells us that when students transform their understandings from one form to another, they consolidate that learning and show how well they have understood it.

In grades 6-8, for example, teachers examined three articles on daily life in ancient Egypt. One article described how archaeologists excavated a village in which pyramid workers lived. They were able to show the workers ate beef, drank beer and had medical treatment—in other words, lived a pretty good life. A second article on the excavated village revealed a set of love poems written by both men and women, using techniques familiar to poetry written today. The third article described hieroglyphic writing. Students would study the articles, write to describe how "the pyramids helped to build Egypt," write a poem about life in Egypt and create

their own cartouche, or vertical writing, of their names. By doing multiple tasks, including thinking visually about the cartouches, students cement their understanding of daily life in ancient Egypt. In grade 3, teachers examined a lesson on the characteristics and movements of the moon in relation to our solar system. Teachers using this lesson will teach students to call up what they know about the moon, using and developing their oral language skills. The students will then read the textbook in chunks, gathering information from each portion of the text as they go. To transform their understanding, students will then use this information in a writing task, and create a poster that shows what they have learned graphically.

In both science and history, students need to understand 'cause and effect' writing—a way of structuring the information to explain cause and effect, so both these lessons explained to students how the information is structured to show them causes and their effects. In the history lesson, students would be asked to see themselves as those ancient Egyptians. In the science lessons, students would be asked to think like scientists, understanding what was important to remember and what was not so important. They would begin to learn how each word has a specific and precise meaning in scientific writing.

Each lesson has both content and skill objectives. Students learn about things (information or content) and they learn how to read and write (skills). By collaborating with other teachers in the same grades, teachers hone their lessons to provide the best possible education to all students.

Contributed by: Sandra Pace, Director of Instruction Learning Services

Beekeeping at New Westminster Secondary School



*Above: Opening the Hives
Right: The Bees and their Honey*

Photos courtesy of: Jason Leane



New Westminster Secondary School is known for many things, but beekeeping has never been one of them. That is until **IB teacher Axel Krause**, a beekeeper himself, went before the School Board last spring to request, and receive, permission to put four beehives on the school roof! Shortly after, the maintenance department built an enclosure for the hives and the bees moved in. They spent the summer doing what bees do best, and gardeners throughout the City have definitely reaped the benefits.

Axel has, unfortunately, just reported that all four hives are now infected with the same Varroa mites that are plaguing hives throughout North America. These mites carry other bacterial and viral diseases which are causing hive losses of 30% to 70% each winter. He was quick to point out, that this is a serious issue since the majority of our food products rely on bees for pollination. Fruits, veggies, nuts and berries, even oil crops like canola, sunflowers, and olives all need bees. The loss of these bees each winter is going to be huge in terms of food production. He is keeping his fingers crossed that the school bees will survive the winter.

WESTMINSTER NEWS

Axel is doing a Beekeeping Workshop at the **District Pro-d Day** in the new year for those of you who might be interested in learning more.

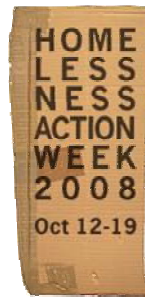


2009 City Environmental Art Contest

Last year, the District worked in partnership with **Jennifer Lukianchuk, the Environmental Coordinator** for the **City of New Westminster**, to hold the first Environmental Art Contest in the City.

92 students in grades 6 and 7 participated in the **"Recycling and Composting in our Community"** themed contest. The winner received a framed copy of their art work, a worm composter for their class, a workshop courtesy of the **Fraser River Discovery Centre**, and their art work was also featured on City garbage trucks. Last year's contest winner, former **John Robson** grade 7 student **Darian Kelly**, is pictured above with **Mayor Wayne Wright** and her family in front of a New Westminster garbage truck sporting her artwork!

The 2009 contest will start on March 23, 2009 and end on **Earth Day, April 22, 2009**. This year's theme is **"Energy: Save Today for Tomorrow"**. This year, the contest will be open to students in grades five and six, and teachers will once again be provided with resources to use with their students. Stay tuned for more information.

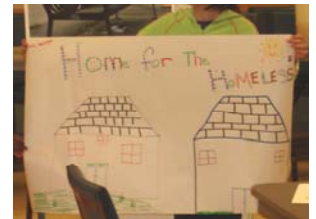


Each year, communities throughout Canada take a week in October to raise awareness around the issue of homelessness. In New Westminster this year the **New Westminster Homelessness Coalition** worked in partnership with the District and **Century House** to host a poster art project during **Homelessness Action Week (HAW)**.

Shannon Russell's grade 5 class at **Lord Kelvin** and twelve seniors/adults participated in the project. The program was planned using the HAW teachers guide produced by the **BCTF** in 2007, and updated for 2008. The group was provided with an introduction to homelessness that focused on affordable housing, adequate income and support services, and then worked in groups with a facilitator to discuss questions like: "What does homelessness mean to you?", "How does Homelessness affect you?", and "What if you don't have a home?". The group then produced a series of posters that have been laminated, and will be used at future **Homelessness Action Week** events.



Photos: The group at work and one of the posters.



iWalk to Breakfast events in the District

The **Breakfast for Learning BC Advisory Council** along with the **Directorate of Agencies for School Health (DASH BC)** held its first province-wide **iWalk to Breakfast Day** on October 8th this year. The date coincided with **International Walk to School Day**. The purpose of the day was to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition and physical activity, raise awareness of the importance of breakfast programs and to celebrate schools that have created health promoting environments for their students. This year two District schools, **John Robson** and **Connaught Heights**, held **iWalk to Breakfast** events.

At **John Robson**, students, staff, families and local politicians met at the school and then **principal Marlene Jack** led them on a walking tour of the neighbourhood. Upon their return to the school, everyone was provided with a nutritious breakfast.



Photo: Connaught Heights students helping themselves to pancakes.



Photo: Caitlyn, Paige and Matthew Martell enjoying breakfast after the iWalk event at John Robson.

At **Connaught Heights**, the grade 7 students prepared a pancake breakfast for anyone that walked to school. Those who were not able to walk could participate by walking around the school yard. **Principal, Chris Evans** stated that "they had a fabulous turnout serving well over a hundred people including many parents and members of the community who took the opportunity to share some breakfast time." He also told everyone to "keep their eyes open for a similar event in the spring."

Record number of District students complete the summer reading program at the Public Library!



1250 children and 80 teens participated in the **New Westminster Public Library Summer Reading Program** this past summer. 570 of these children received completion medals for reading everyday of the summer. This is the highest rate of completion the summer reading program has ever had! Congratulations to all those students who participated and to the teachers and family members who supported them!

Active Communities Update...

New Westminister is committed to the provincial challenge to increase physical activity participation levels by 20% by 2010 and the Parks and Recreation Department has been busy developing opportunities for residents of all ages.

Grade 5 Get Active Program: The Grade 5 **Get Active** Program is an Active Communities program that was initiated in February 2008 with City Council approval. The program provides all Grade 5 students that reside in the City of New Westminister free access to all drop-in recreation programs offered by the New Westminister Parks and Recreation Department. The objective of the **Get Active** program has been to encourage youth to participate in physical activity pursuits in the community and to hopefully create a physical recreational pattern for life. Applications are distributed through the schools and all Grade 5 students are encouraged to apply for their card. For those students attending schools outside of New Westminister, private schools, or who are home schooled, please contact Sandy Earle, Active Communities Programmer at 604-777-5103 or searle@newwestcity.ca to receive an application form.

New West Walks Program: The **New West Walks** program continues to inspire walkers in our community! Over 1100 residents, employees and students have joined the program that uses web-based technology to track steps, activities and distances. A \$15.00 registration fee gives participants access to the tracking web site, a pedometer, a log book and walking information. All users earn a **New West Walks** t-shirt at the one million step mark and motivation is built into the program with monthly draw prizes from local sponsors. This year participants are walking to Mexico! To register, please visit Centennial Community Centre or call 604-777-5100 for more information.

Hume Park School Pedometer Project: The students and staff at Hume Park Community School participated in a pilot project with the New Westminister Parks and Recreation Department. From February 2008 until June 2008, all students and staff used pedometers to log their steps, tracking their progress through the **New West Walks** website. Each class tracked their steps on a challenge route from St. John's to New Westminister, following in Terry Fox's footsteps. When all the classes reached Thunder Bay, a celebration in honor of Terry Fox took place. They continued to track their steps adding in their activities as well after Spring Break. The school reached the end of the challenge in May 2008 and a wind-up celebration was held to honour student achievement, perseverance, and dedication to the goal. Mayor Wright was the honoured guest which was also attended by the Director and Assistance Director of the Parks and Recreation Department.



Photo courtesy of NWPR.

Mt. Logan Challenge: In May and June of 2008, three schools: Hume Park, Howay, and Robson (Grade 5's) participated in the Mt. Logan Challenge. Students in these schools tracked their activities to virtually climb the distance to the top of Canada, Mt. Logan along with the climbing team lead by James Coleridge. Students at Howay and Hume Park had the privilege of meeting James in person before and after his dangerous trek. They participated in web-blogs and satellite phone calls from the mountain during the 35 day climb. Coleridge carried the flag from the City of New Westminister to the top of Mt. Logan for the students of this District and upon his return he presented it back to the City at a memorable presentation at City Council.



Food and Beverage Guidelines Resources Available

Last year the District created a *Food and Beverage Guidelines Implementation Support Handbook* that was distributed to all schools and PAC's. This handbook is being constantly updated as more information becomes available, and it is now available electronically on the District website at <http://sd40.bc.ca> in the *Reports and Resources* section under *District Information*.

Support New Westminister Literacy Now's Family Book Share Program

Since the **Family Book Share Program** was started a year ago, over 2000 books have been distributed to local community service agencies for their Family Book Share bins. Families have been able to access a wide variety of wonderful children's books that they may not normally have been able to afford. The program is currently looking for new and gently used books for children and youth for the community bins. If you would like to donate books, please contact: Lori at 778-840-5875

Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC): Spuds in Tubs Program for K to grade 6

The **Spuds in Tubs Program** is designed to teach students the importance of access to fresh food and to connect kids to the food that they eat as part of science, social studies and healthy living. With four or five students sharing one tub, each student gets to plant their own seed potato. Students are given a chance to observe the seed potatoes as they begin to sprout. Planting is completed mid-March in order for a successful harvest before classes are dismissed for summer holidays in June. The tubs are kept indoors until early in April when it is warm enough to move them outside. Resources have been developed that connect the program to the k-6 curriculum. AITC provides this program for **FREE** to k to grade 6 classes! See the AITC website at www.aitc.ca/bc/programs/puds-in-tubs for more information.

Toque Tuesday

Every year the **New Westminister Homelessness Coalition** sells toques on the first Tuesday of February, this year February 3, to raise awareness around homelessness and support community service providers who work directly with the homeless. If you or your class would like to help sell toques, or would like to purchase one, please contact: Dave Brown at daveb@lookoutsociety.bc.ca