

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMS STANDING COMMITTEE

NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Meeting Notes: Tuesday, June 3, 2008

Meeting Attendance:

Trustees and representatives of CUPE, NVPAC, Elementary Administrators, and Secondary Administrators attended the meeting, as did members of District Staff. This meeting was held in the Conference Room at the Leo Marshall Curriculum Centre. Approximately 50-60 interested members of the public, most of them parents of students with special needs, attended the meeting. Trustee Jane Thornthwaite opened the meeting and acted as chair.

Meeting Notes:

Panel Discussion

A six-person panel made short presentations on the *Hopes and Fears for the Practice of the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs in the Province and the School District*. Members of the panel were:

- Arleene Ewing, who spoke both as the parent of a child with autism and as a classroom teacher
- Marcia Garries who, spoke as District Facilitator of programs for students who are gifted and talented; Marcia spoke from a deep familiarity with students referred to as “twice exceptional” (that is, both being gifted and having one or more specific disabilities)
- Todd Henderson, Principal of Fromme Elementary School, who spoke of his experience as a school principal with the inclusion of students with special needs in all aspects of the life of a school
- Dr. Pat Mirenda of the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia, who spoke from a deep knowledge of inclusion, differentiated instruction, and universal design of classroom lessons suitable for a complete range of student types
- Ingrid Jeffrey, from the Mediated Learning Academy, who spoke of “dynamic assessment” and “mediated learning” and the successes achieved by programs laid out according to the principles of Dr. Reuven Feuerstein
- Julie Parker, Director of Instruction, Student Services in North Vancouver School District as of July 1, 2008, who spoke of the role of the Special Education Teaching Assistant in the classroom in support of the principles of universal design and differentiated instruction

Question and Answer

Assistant Superintendent, Larry Johnson, acted as moderator during a question and answer period of approximately 75 minutes. A speakers’ list was maintained of individuals in the audience who wished to direct questions or observations to one or more members of the panel. Many individuals were able to contribute to the discussion. Audience members’ opinions ranged from complete acceptance to complete rejection of the successes of the inclusive model. A compromise was approached through the suggestion that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and that there needs to be flexibility and responsiveness to the individual learning needs of all students, whether in the environment of the classroom, in a small group setting for distinctive educational purposes, or more likely a combination of both.