BCCPAC Representation Report

1.4.5

February 2010

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Name of Event: Neighbourhood Learning Centres (NLC) Stakeholder Forum – Page 1 of 3

Date of Event: January 27, 2010

Location of Event: CAYA OFFICE, VANCOUVER, BC

This was an opportunity to learn and to build on the good work that has already been done in schools and districts across the Province. The NLC initiative is a "work in progress" with meetings such as this forum providing input to what the initiative will look like. All of the discussions need to consider the current context of limited resources.

Neighbourhood Learning Centres context and overview was presented

Learning from experience

Four presentations provided an opportunity to learn from the extensive experience of the participants.

Burnaby SD and Surrey SD each provided an overview of their school district's program for community schools/education. They highlighted what they had learned from their many years of experience and, in particular, the strong network of partnerships which had been developed.

Revelstoke SD discussed the work to date on a new NLC under development in their school district, highlighting their process for engaging the larger community and other partners.

Kim Schonert- Reichl of UBC concluded the presentations by summarizing the research in this area and the contributions that community schools and community involvement can make to student success.

All presenters provided power point presentations that will be made available to participants.

Recap: key learnings

The Learning from Experience presentations identified the importance of:

strong leadership
clarity of purpose
building relationships
excellent communications
strong, collaborative partnerships, with shared perspectives
community engagement and community development
responding to unique needs of each community (i.e. one size does not fit all)
recognizing the continuum of community school and other NLC-like models in BC
reaching out to those "hard to reach" members of the school and community

approaching NLCs and community schools as a concept or strategy—not as a set of programs
using a strength-based philosophy
sustainability and continuous improvement at NLC level
recognizing positive impact that NLCs can have on learning and development
all ministries and agencies of government supporting the NLC concept
providing appropriate support and resources to support NLCs

Identification of challenges and issues

The afternoon focused on identifying the challenges and issues that need to be addressed to expand the number of NLCs and to support their success.

The participants opted to identify challenges and issues in small groups and then report back to the plenary. The small groups summarized their discussions on flip charts that were collected by the Ministry after this session.

The most commonly occurring challenges and issues were:

- Collective agreement and liability issues
  - supporting volunteers within these constraints
- Communication
  - clear advice/direction is needed on how to move from concept to reality
  - materials are needed to build understanding of the concept in and amongst communities and senior decision makers
- Funding
  - some funding will be necessary to plan and develop NLCs
  - sources could include government, school districts or other partners, or a reallocation of existing resources.

- How to:
  - change the culture in schools and communities to view schools as community assets, and to move from a student focus to a student, family and community focus
  - build the capacity and skill sets of staff to work effectively in this environment.
  - develop and sustain leadership and identify champions in the system.
  - implement new initiatives when workloads are high and resources in short supply.
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• Leasing issues
o need to address how to facilitate so that leasing space is attractive and viable for other partners.
• Policy issues
o framework that describes the overall direction of the initiative and the relationship to community schools, School Community Connections, etc., is needed
• Zoning issues

Summary and next steps

Participants agreed that the forum provided a very valuable opportunity for dialogue, and expressed a desire for continued engagement. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education take a more active role in promoting NLCs—perhaps through a website, newsletters or additional meetings.

The Ministry will continue to engage stakeholders through further forums, small work groups, advisory bodies, or by other methods.

Participants endorsed the Ministry of Education's efforts to engage other ministries in NLCs, and its role as a broker of information, tools and better practices for schools, districts and communities. Participants expressed support for the Ministry to foster networking and provide for a continuum of models in its vision.