BCCPAC Representation Report

Submitted by: **Terry Berting, Director**
Name of Event: Education Partners' Healthy Schools Committee
Date of Event: June 9, 2011
Location of Event: BCPVPA Office, Vancouver

The Healthy Schools Committee has been meeting regularly since 2008 and is co-chaired by the MoE (Scott Bedall) and BCSTA (Anna Hunt-Binkley SD23). Most "major players" were at this particular meeting because it was to include an important discussion about how the Ministry of Health could work together with the education partner groups to promote Healthy Schools. About 20 people were in attendance.

The morning consisted of a review of recent activity relevant to the committee.

Daily Physical Activity: The DPA policy has been tweaked for grade 8-9 students; schools now have 2 options: keep 30min DPA or go to 150min DPA (as required by grades 10-12). See e-mail from Sherri Mohoruk, MoE dated May 31, 2011.
Discussion generally acknowledged that the DPA initiative has failed at the secondary school level, and is not taken seriously by those involved. What can we learn from this? Perhaps more prior consultation with those who have to implement the system would have helped, but the program is continuing for now, however. Thank you Cathy Jewett for your May 26, 2011 Report (it was helpful).

DASH Directorate of Agencies for School Health update:
- International Walk to School Week Oct.3-7
- Healthy Schools Portal www.healthyschoolsportal.ca "one-stop shop" for info on H.S.
- Food & Beverage Guidelines revision work: need to make Guidelines easier to use.
- Student Engagement: plan to get students involved in decision-making process.
- Promoting Positive Mental Health; a very popular topic these days.

Discussion (afternoon):
How can the Ministry of Health work with the Education Partners to promote Healthy Schools? Reps from the Ministry of Health were there to discuss building a framework for working together with the Education sector. It is an "upper level" initiative that has been in the works for several years and stems from a Ministry review that began in 2004. Working with other ministries is something relatively new for many, but co-governance is the way of the future.

The MoH is extremely concerned about child health, especially with regards to obesity and diabetes etc. Recent statistics are very disturbing and there is a genuine desire to do something about it. The MoH has just started a Healthy Families initiative and several other programs, but wants to work with the education sector figure out how the two sectors can work together to improve the health of our children.

A facilitator then led some workshop-like discussion on how Educ. and Health might work together. Meeting participants had been asked some questions several days in advance:

- What are the possibilities of the interaction between health and education?
- What would be the bold steps to success?
- What would it take to create change?
- What are the dilemmas for Health & Education to work together?

Our responses were briefly reviewed but there was not much follow up discussion. Instead we worked through some basic notions such as "what makes a good partnership" and "what makes a good leader" etc. Fortunately, the group did squeeze in some relevant discussion near the end of the meeting. When asked to reflect on the day, there were hints from some that it was somewhat of a missed opportunity, and that then next meeting would be better.

While everyone seems to agree in theory that Healthy Schools are a good thing, there are issues to address. One senior partner got the ball rolling with the comment that at the end of the day teachers are only judged by Final Exams, FSA results and Graduation rates, and that involvement in (anything else) is a distraction. Another partner then commented that teachers are very concerned about adding any extra work to their already full load, and although everyone agrees that health is important, it may not be the number one priority, as it is with the Ministry of Health. Another partner expressed concerns about the cost of Healthy Schools; where would the money come from? If from Health, fine; if from the District, not so fine.

But how could the Ministry of Health's recent staggering statistics about child health, especially obesity and diabetes be addressed? From their point of view prevention of these conditions in children is now a government priority.

In spite of the slightly tense ending to this meeting, I was impressed with the professionalism of all the partners at the table. By and large everyone was respectful of each others' opinions (although it took a while before their real opinions were expressed) and I am confident that some good work can be done here. However, we'll see how things go at the next meeting on June 21st. It should be interesting.

TB