

FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK



SUBMITTED TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

JANUARY 9, 2012

Framework Feedback

The British Columbia Principals' and Vice Principals' Association is pleased to provide a response to the 2012/13 - 2014/15 Ministry of Education Service Plan directions and 'framework'.

We value the initiative and intent associated with your request. It does represent an alignment with the "Open Government" priorities and reflects an understanding of the distributed leadership that is essential for meeting the educational challenges facing British Columbians. The ability to capture the richness of perspectives around the implementation process, most likely to ensure abilities to attain desired outcomes, is dependent upon an outstanding visionary framework, one that is strongly integrated with government directions.

As an Association that takes pride in its' leadership role with respect developing, supporting, facilitating and implementing educational initiatives that meet the needs of British Columbians, we hope to see this engagement process enhanced in the future. *We believe that an opportunity to receive feedback on this response would ensure a clarity of understanding and establish a solid basis for the continued evolution of meaningful partnership.*



Framework Reflections & Recommendations: General

- The feedback request advocates for the importance of alignment and integration in support of our education system and the challenges being faced. Numerous documents such as B.C.'s Education Plan and the B.C. Jobs Plan are referenced as having compatible goals or objectives. Unfortunately, the references and/or links do not extend to other integral documents such as the Service Plans for Advanced Education, Children and Family Development, *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020* and *A Transformation and Technology Strategy for the BC Public Service*. Key themes inherent within the Ministry of Education Service Plan are also not represented within other documents where one might expect strong levels of mutual interest and a desire to benefit from integrated approaches. Integration amongst key support documents is at times difficult to recognize, in particular with important liaison domains such as the K-12 system and advanced education.

Recommendation: To render a graphic or visual of the larger framework showing the connections between key departments and documents (themes). This would facilitate alignment planning and development of stronger integrated vision.

Framework Reflections & Recommendations: General continued....

- Many of the supporting documents and reference points have few educational references, especially with respect to the K-12 system. For example, in the B.C. Jobs Plan (October 26, 2011), page 12 contains a heading “Knowledge-Based Sectors” and focuses upon technology and tourism to build, attract and sustain export markets. The strategies identified focus on expediting the immigration process to bring expertise to B.C. and sets specific targets: “increase the number of international students in B.C. by 50 per cent over the next four years”. Strategies, specifics and targets associated with the K-12 system are difficult to locate. Within the actual ‘Jobs Plan’ (pages 16-19) a one line statement indicates: “... create regional workforce tables as a new platform for educators, industry, employers, local chambers of commerce, First Nations, labour and others to plan how best to align training programs to meet regional needs”. Under the title “Preparing Opportunities of Tomorrow” the only educational reference focuses on the plight of Aboriginal students and notes some improvements that are being sought. The document contains no reference or alignment with the B.C. Education Plan.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Education pursue stronger liaison with other Ministries and departments to ensure an integrated approach to meeting the needs of the province politically, socially, educationally and economically.

- Although some of the documents, including the Ministry of Ed Service Plan, identify anticipated loss of expertise from the system as a concern, there is no proactive approach towards succession planning for leadership at any level. The appropriateness of the training and support practices currently available, given the challenges that have developed, do not appear to be examined.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Education identifies the role that it will need to play in support of the developmental requirements for the necessary succession planning. We recommend the Ministry consult with the BCPVPA document entitled Dimensions of Education: Succession.

- The implementation of change over a relatively short period of time brings numerous challenges. A key challenge pertains to fiscal accountability. Indications are that there will be a need to work within the current fiscal framework and that we require “more effective ways to direct dollars toward student learning, focus resources on individual students, and trim administrative costs”.

Recommendation: Be realistic about the support and process required to successfully implement broad educational changes.

- A framework referring to the five key principles that have been identified as focal points for educational directions cannot be examined without first examining the broader spectrum facing education. This bigger picture is necessary to represent a meaningful set of goals and objectives with a true understanding of the potential for attaining such targets. Careful reflection and consideration is required.

Recommendation: Given the myriad of factors that require consideration for a comprehensive analysis of the suitability of such a ‘framework’, it would be useful to have sufficient notice to afford the time that would ensure an appropriate response.

Framework Reflections & Recommendations: The Service Plan

- An effective framework should always give due consideration for the context that is being faced. The current Ministry of Education Service Plan affords two pages toward articulation of “Strategic Context”. Twenty-three attributes are identified under three headings with varied implications.

Recommendation: Prioritize the contextual attributes, especially in terms of those providing the most significant barriers or challenges. This would facilitate resource allocation and strategic planning required in support of potential goals and subsequent implementation success.

- Context statements include: “the current collective agreement between the British Columbia Public School Employers’ Association and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation expires June 2011.” Attributes of this magnitude warrant further response to ensure that implications are fully understood and that appropriate strategies can be designed. Collaborative efforts in this area could yield “outside the box” thinking such as potential involvement of the Harvard Negotiation Project Team. Statements such as, “About 20% of B.C.’s teachers and administrators could be retiring in the next five years.” are not associated with references to the potential implications upon goals and objectives. Other relevant contextual attributes are not represented at all. This would include impacts arising from the volume and complexity associated with key leadership roles within education. A void also exists regarding the training necessary to support focus upon the development of distributed leadership. Context statements are also devoid of the identification of current legislation and the collective agreement components that serve to limit creativity, innovation and non-traditional directions in education.

Recommendation: Key challenge areas need to be addressed with a comprehensive plan, especially if we know that they have the potential for undermining successful implementation of key educational goals. The Ministry should consult with the BCPVPA document entitled Dimensions of Education: Volume & Complexity, Effectiveness & Efficiency.

- The Ministry of Education Service Plan would benefit from expanding a refined “Strategic Context” section to include a section articulating key research findings in education. This implies that decision-making is based on solid empirical data and that directions sought are appropriate. Consultation of the educational research also ensures that necessary understandings contribute to the best possible planning. Currently, there is little if any acknowledgement of the role of the principal and/or vice principal with respect to ‘change’ implementation or the attainment of high levels of student achievement. The educational research (including meta-analysis) demonstrates that the building principal is the number two factor when it comes to student achievement levels. Michael Fullan pronounces that “the role of the principal is pivotal to school change”. Vivian Robinson articulates research findings identifying significant student achievement improvements when the principal and teacher focus collaboratively on learning. Without representation of such essential understandings, the development of a successful plan is considerably weakened and such flaws become evident at all stages of the plan. For example, the goal of quality teaching and learning appears to be associated with teacher knowledge, skills and abilities. There are numerous skill sets and abilities essential for the principal and vice-principal that would yield positive impacts on our educa-

tion system. These are not recognized or identified except under the “what is happening here” headings of the B.C. Ed Plan. Essential professional development and training support requirements are not acknowledged and will need to be developed. Inherent in this process is a strong connection to the area of ‘Advanced Education’.

Recommendation: Ensure that quality educational research is informing the necessary and appropriate directions for educational change. The role of the principal and vice principal do warrant a greater understanding in the context of ensuring success for students and designing implementation directions at the school and district levels. ‘Quality Education’ will require consideration of support for leadership attributes, including, but not limited to those associated with the development of distributed leadership skills. The goals and objectives of the B.C. Ed Plan framework would benefit from a reassessment given this context.

- Cited supporting documents clearly articulate some of the internationally recognized educational challenges, needs and imperative directions. Acknowledgement of some of the many positive initiatives and accomplishments evident currently in the B.C. Education system are also provided. However, there is surprisingly little recognition of what we have previously learned, both experientially with other implementation efforts or from the body of growing educational research around successful implementation of educational change. These understandings are essential to have when developing a successful framework. Further, one of the few efforts within the framework describing an implementation strategy may be inadequate or at best misleading. The notion that “it is already happening here” represents thinking that we can merely seek to replicate this quality work on a broader basis. Such thinking reflects a flawed approach and does not align with the urgency that is being portrayed by the Ministry of Education. Nor does this thinking align with the perspectives being advocated by some of those cited under the “It’s Happening Globally” heading on the B.C. Ed Plan website. Sir Ken Robinson states that paradigm shifts in education must be ‘revolutionary’. What are the implementation design mechanisms that will ensure large scale success over a reasonably short period of time? The focus upon the “how” warrants attention at this level because of the scope of the proposed change.

Recommendation: Educational research findings on change implementation need to be thoroughly examined to ensure development of the best possible action plans.

The British Columbia Principals’ and Vice Principals’ Association does anticipate providing feedback on the B.C. Education Plan framework as has previously been discussed with Minister Abbott and Deputy Gorman. An opportunity to receive feedback on this submission would of course also be beneficial to the process that we are facilitating to generate meaningful reflection. We look forward to working and learning with you as we face the challenges of providing a meaningful and successful education program for all students.