

**PEITF
SCHOOL
COUNSELLORS
ASSOCIATION**

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MAY 2006 - 2008

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**PEICA Position Paper
Approved at the PEICA AGM, May 2006**

**Response to the Prince Edward Island
Excellence in Education - A Challenge for
Prince Edward Island:
Final Report of the
Task Force on Student Achievement
Richard Kurial, December 2005**

An Ad Hoc Committee of the PEI Counselling Association - School Counsellors Chapter met to review the recommendation of the Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement. This document summarizes the counsellors' dialogue around each recommendation. Suggestions to facilitate school counsellors' involvement in meeting each recommendation are highlighted.

Respectfully Submitted, November 2006, by:

Ad Hoc Committee members:

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Responses to Each Recommendations

1. Curriculum:

- Counsellors support the concept presented in this recommendation.
- We encourage boards and schools to identify outcomes linked to student's social/motional development; career pathways or other relevant issues that come under the purview of the counsellors.

2. Student Assessment:

- School Counsellors are concerned that the impact of these common assessments will negatively impact the education plans for a certain number of students. Concerns were expressed that this could reduce the rates of inclusion. School counsellors can offer expertise on common assessments tools that should consider:
 - student learning styles
 - confidentiality
 - remediation and/or enrichment activities required as a result of assessments
 - students on modified programs
 - linkages to APEF and Pan Canadian outcomes

3. Early Childhood Intervention:

- School counsellors suggest that the third statement in this recommendation be amended to read as follows: "The provincial government lead the way in identifying the learning challenges of all students."
- School counsellors strongly supported the last bullet in this recommendation. We would like to see services/interventions such as parent education programs, speech therapy, and occupational therapy extended into the school system.
- Integration of kindergarten into the public school system would streamline counselling and other school based services.
- School Counsellors can help in both early identification of learning challenges and in developing a system to do so.

4. Learning to Read by Grade 3

- School counsellors shared concerns regarding the implications of this recommendation for students not meeting identified criteria. School Counsellors can play a key role in the coordination of education plans for students.
- School counsellors can play a significant role in ensuring that students are ready to learn to read. Prior to children displaying a readiness to learn to read children must have their basic needs met - a sense of safety, security and belonging.
- School Counsellors can assist in formal individual assessments with meaningful educational recommendations.

- School counsellors can help as part of an inter-disciplinary team to identify developmental issues that may prevent or delay reading by Grade 3.
- School counsellors can determine the most appropriate specialist and refer as required.
- Students with academic learning difficulties often present challenging behaviours in the school environment. School counsellors' specialized training in dealing with these issues is invaluable.
- School counsellors could offer invaluable input as representatives on committees dealing with issues around learning challenges/disabilities.

5. Student Engagement:

- We support the idea of adopting a more effective scheduling model that supports developmental needs and time management.
- School counsellors suggested encouraging gender equity in student leadership activities.
- School counsellors are in a key position to develop strategies for mentoring relationships.
- A part of student engagement deals with appropriate programming for student needs (individualized programs where necessary).
- In considering the role of the education system in the development of the whole child, we recommend that students have the opportunity to have a balanced curriculum.
- Options to allow school counsellors to better facilitate educating parents and students with regard to post secondary options needs to be examined. School Counsellors, with graduate training in career counselling could offer invaluable input as representatives on committees dealing with these issues. For example, empowering parents as career educators.
- Class size should be addressed in order to increase student engagement.
- Student counsel reps could be considered to challenge for course credit.
- We support innovative strategies that will consider course credit for exceptional student work outside of regular school programming. An example would be the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- A multi agency strategy funding and programming approach to alternate education.
- School Counsellors can be an invaluable resource with respect to student engagement at all levels. At High School we have a unique perspective in terms of what our graduates do after high school and during their future planning process; we have broader insights on how the emotional and developmental differences between the various levels affect student engagement and subsequently student achievement.

6. Parental Engagement:

- School counsellors support these recommendations but acknowledge that families in crisis will have difficulty engaging. School Counsellors can support these families and foster programs and presentations that engage parents.

7. Sustainable Schools:

- School counsellors can be most effective when they can be an integral part of the school. Effectiveness and efficiency of itinerant counsellors is compromised. Teaching loads also interfere with counsellor's efficiency. Small schools increase the frequency of these assignments.

8. Use of Instructional Time:

- School counselling services need to be recognized as an integral part of the pedagogical activities both within and outside the classroom. School counsellors help in creating a school environment where children can be challenged and where everyone is working to their greatest potential.
- School counsellors recognize that schools are mandated to deal with non-academic issues and maintain collegial contact with outside agencies.

9. Integrated Services for Children and Youth:

- Changes to **Child and Family Legislation** and the **Youth Justice Act** have had a high impact on schools. The MAST model works well and might be extended to the WSB
- When promoting Mental Health in Island Schools for Island students it is imperative that protocols be developed and that agencies work together.
- Addiction counsellors and public health nurses should be in the schools on a regular basis to provide support in a variety of ways. Thank you to these agencies and the work they are currently doing in our schools.
- School counsellors could offer invaluable input as representatives on committees dealing with these legislative changes and how they impact student achievement in the public school system.

10. Teachers as Life Long Learners:

- The breadth of our role....Because of the changing needs of society, school counsellors needs to have on-going training in areas such as: cutting, suicide, cyber bullying, anxiety, grief, assessment, etc.
- School counsellors could offer invaluable in-service to fellow teachers.

11. Leadership:

- School counsellors have a leadership role in the school with respect to school climate building and issue relating to interpersonal relationships, mental health, family...etc. for support and counselling service.

12. Staffing Model:

- Ministers directive #MINISTER'S DIRECTIVE NO. MD 2005-02 (Part I.3.9) be followed at the school level.
- We strongly endorse this directive. Currently there is considerable variation in the student to school counsellor ratios. This ratio is influenced by board office personnel. We strongly recommend that this issue be reviewed taking into considerations:
 - number of schools the school counsellor services
 - assessment service within the school counsellor's scope of practice
 - teaching assignment
 - education level of the schools.

13. **The Role of the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) in Training Teachers:**

- That UPEI provide specific training in counselling education so that all teachers can become aware of issues in education.
- We appreciate and thank the University for having provided courses relevant to school counsellors for their own professional development.

14. **Community Engagement:**

- We support this recommendation.

15. **Trades Strategy:**

- School counsellors should be a part of any committee that develops curriculum or programs related to career development.

16. **Aboriginal Education:**

- That the task force look at the option of developing a language credit in Mi'kmaq through out Intermediate and High school.
- School counsellors can help educate teachers of the need to be sensitive to students who come from this culture.

17. **Immigration:**

- School counsellors be included in curriculum development in this area..
- School counsellors can help facilitate diversity sensitivity training in their school(s).

18. **Educating the Whole Child:**

- A scan of current alternate education programmes could be helpful.
- Long term planning must be made in terms of identifying teachers who are interested in participating in counsellor education.

19. **The Role Of Technology:**

- School counsellors need access to high quality computers with current soft ware in a private space that ensures confidentiality.
- School counsellors need training in how to *electronically* record, store and communicate in a manner that maintains client confidentiality.