Graduation Requirements Forum Summary Report Vancouver Island Region
Submitted by Greg Johnson

Introduction:

Five graduation dialogue forums were held in the Vancouver Island Region and involved participants from school districts 61,62,63,64,68,69,70,71,72,79,84,85 and 47. Over 435 participants representing all partner groups participated in these forums or provided input at a district level. This feedback has been included in this summary report collated by reoccurring themes that appeared in feedback to each question.

<u>**Question #1:**</u>

What do you think are the core or essential things all students should know, understand and be able to do by the time they leave secondary school?

Most respondents felt students need to:

- Be taught the necessary skills to understand themselves as learners and develop the attributes (habits) necessary to be successful:
  - Curiosity
  - Perseverance and resilience
  - Self-respect
  - Self-advocacy
  - Empathy
  - Problem solving
  - Self-knowledge and awareness

- Moral and ethical purpose
- Goal setting
- Adaptability
- Independence (risk-taking)
- Creativity
- Physical and mental wellness

- Be provided with a curriculum in which they develop core literacies:
    - Language literacy: (Oral, Reading, Written)
    - Technological literacy
    - Numeric and Financial literacy
    - Physical/health literacy
    - Arts literacy-Fine Arts; performing arts and traditional indigenous art
- Be given the opportunities and taught the skills necessary to develop healthy, collaborative relationships with peers, team members, their community and world around them.
- Understand and learn about the heritage, history, cultures and peoples-particularly Canada's indigenous peoples- they interact with in their schools, community, country and world
- Understand democratic values and participate actively as responsible citizens
- Apply their learning from school to real life projects and settings
- Become leaders
- Learn and ethically use technology
- Be provided with a sense of belonging and understand their place in the world through knowledge and stewardship of those who have come before, those who are here and those who will come after
- Develop their strengths, further explore and participate in their passions and future life and career goals.

Question #2:

Beyond the core, how could pathways for choice or exploration be provided?

How and where could students pursue their career and life goals?

Respondents felt that:

- greater flexibility needs to be provided to students through:
  - Adjusting instructional hours, timetables, calendars and years to allow greater student participation/opportunities in the community – work experience, volunteerism, leadership; cultural experiences
  - Recognizing and giving credit for learning occurring outside the system
- self-paced continuous student learning based on competency attainment needs to be provided as opposed to learning being bound by age/grade level designations
- students need to have greater choice in determining their learning, and independence in how to proceed with it (independent studies, locally developed programs)
- More community partnerships with businesses, non-profit, post-secondary, and Aboriginal organizations need to be created which would provide more opportunities for students to participate in, and reflect upon a greater variety of service learning and work experiences (volunteerism; careers in community – not just trades - arts too)
- More community and global mentors need to be in schools and accessed through technology (Skype, etc.)
- In-depth blended project-based learning opportunities for students need to be created (class, on-line; in-community) that enable core curriculum/competencies to be taught through application of student learning, interests and passions.

- The number of apprenticeship, co-op, exchange and alternate programs need to be expanded, as well as the number of opportunities for students to achieve dual credits and access post-secondary institutions earlier
- A continuum of opportunities for inquiry, project based learning needs to be developed throughout the system (elementary, middle, secondary) to build student capacity and skills in self-directed learning
- Indigenous knowledge and cultural learning must be respected and included for all students
- more frequent exposure to life/career opportunities must be provided at an earlier level to students and parents so they are educated in, and aware of the many possibilities
- Integrated interdisciplinary studies around a variety of pathways (i.e.; Liberal Arts and Humanities; Tourism and Hospitality; Applied Sciences) must be created.

Question #3:

Research is underway with a focus on the following five-cross-curricular competencies*

   a) **Communication**

   b) **Critical Thinking**

   c) **Creative Thinking and Innovation**

   d) **Personal Responsibility and Well Being**

   e) **Social Responsibility**

How do you think students could demonstrate these competencies?

*in development

Most respondents felt:

- students must be able to self-assess in addition to receiving feedback from educators, peers, community members (mentors), post-secondary institutions and family

- students need to demonstrate their application of the learning of these competencies in interdisciplinary studies (not subjects) independently and with others in the school and larger community,

- students are involved in the design, application and demonstration/performance of their learning

- students must be explicitly taught the competencies as well as ways to demonstrate their learning early in their education to develop their skill and capacity in this area

- A developmental continuum of the competencies needs to be created (such as performance standards) so that students and others can assess their learning and determine and set further learning goals

- Post-secondary institutions must evolve to value demonstrations and other evidence of learning, beyond solely marks and percentages

- Student learning should be assessed through engagement in "real-world" project based learning and demonstrated through portfolios (on-line); work and volunteerism in communities

- Learning can be demonstrated through a variety of means-Celebrations of learning; performances (dance, drama, art, etc.); technology (media) mentoring; leadership

- parents/guardians need to be more involved in the process to increase their understanding and participation in creating and assessing their student's demonstration of learning

- Aboriginal participants in the forums suggested a 6th competency that all educators, parents and students in the system need to demonstrate – that being a First Peoples Competency: which would include a clear understanding of Canadian history pre and post contact; potlatch ban; Indian act and colonization; local territories and aboriginal peoples and ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal content in all curricular disciplines

Question #4:

How could student learning be communicated to:
   a) **Students**
   b) **Parents/Guardians**
   c) **Post-secondary Institutions/Employers**

Most respondents felt:

- Communication of learning to students and parents must be regular, in plain language, on-going and evidence based in relation to a student's progress in obtaining core competencies and outcomes
- A variety of methods of demonstrating learning such as digital portfolios "showcases of learning"; interviews should be incorporated
- Students must have a more active role in assessment; through establishing criteria; self and peer assessment; conferencing with educators and parents; establishing further learning
- Feedback to students and parents must be more detailed and accessible (this could be achieved through technological methods such as wikis, blogs, social networks, and school websites)
- Students, parents and others need to be provided support and education in assessment practices which use performance standards, rubrics, etc., to communicate student progress
- Performance standards must have/use consistent language throughout the province and be tied to the core competencies, not letter grades
- Post-secondary institutions need to move to a system where the competencies that are needed for their programs are specified and not so much based on Grade Point Average (GPA)
- More descriptive feedback will highlight and give employers and post-secondary institutions a more holistic picture of a student including attributes as a learner (methods might include reference letters, portfolios)

Question #5:

How would you design an awards program to recognize student success in a personalized learning environment?

Many respondents felt that an awards program does not fit in a personalized learning environment. In a true personalized learning environment students will become intrinsically motivated.

Suggestions for a different approach to recognizing student success included:

- Having recognition ceremonies or assemblies at school throughout the year highlighting progress made or goals met so that each student will be recognized for their individual strengths and accomplishments
- Public displays, showcase and celebrations of learning; student should have opportunities to share their learning with others; what the demonstration looks like is personalized
- A number of respondents felt that the Ministry of Education should not put money into awards or scholarships and passports - suggestions for better use of these dollars included:
  - Provide more supports into schools/intervention programs to prevent failures
  - Provide free first and/or second year tuition for students entering university and other post graduate learning institutions.

  Should an awards program develop, respondents strongly felt:

  - that the awards program be expanded beyond the academics to include fine arts, trade, community contributions, leadership, etc. and cross curricular competencies

- That there should be equitable access to awards and this would necessitate an increase in awareness of what's available and support in the application process
- That participation on the "local committee" who determines who gets the awards be increased to include community members and businesses
- That awards be achievement based not competitive based
- That clearly articulated criteria co-created with students, parents, and community members is used to determine recognition.
- That students are able to start earlier in receiving "credit" towards scholarships – i.e. passport to education
- That the use of award money be expanded to include books and material such as work boots, hard hats, vest, first aid certificate etc. for those entering the trades etc.
- provide the funding currently in place to those in financial need.