Grad Requirements Dialogue

Northern Region – Summary Report

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14 Northern districts were contacted and I spoke with each district about the process. I also walked them through the materials provided and made some suggestions as to content and structure. Each district decided how many meetings to hold in order to get a broad group of people involved in the conversation.

I estimate that there were over 500 people that contributed to the conversations in the north and they came from a broad range of community members. The meetings were led by local district staff members that I had spoken to. I led the staff and community sessions within my district and co-lead a BCCPAC session in Prince George. From both my personal perspective and from what I heard from around the region communities were very engaged in the dialogue and it was a valuable exercise.

Methodology

Feedback and responses were sent in from 11 districts and all of their information has been recorded and reviewed. While the raw feedback from each district will be provided in a separate template, I will identify some commonalities to the responses in this report. I have grouped the similar or consistent responses into themes which I would equate to recommendations. Numbers of attendees and the breakdown of meetings held in each district will be included in the raw data package sent to the Ministry.

Responses to Questions

There were many responses that identified the need to make sure students maintain a focus on the core educational functions and high standards.

> i.e. literacy, numeracy and communication.

There was also a heavy emphasis on social responsibility, very much in line with the Educated Citizen. These included:

> Critical thinking, Healthy living, Self regulation, Creativity, Democratic/ Canadian values, Functioning in a diverse society, Ethics, Self motivation, Citizenship

In addition, there were some essential and core pieces that people felt should be part of what every graduate needs. Many responses were centered on individual values and skills:

> Social skills, Public speaking/presenting, Time management, Risk taking-Growth mindset, Problem solving, Teamwork and Collaboration skills, Empathy and compassion, Interpersonal skills, Organizational skills, Resilience, Work ethic, Being responsible for their own education

There were many comments about financial literacy and real world experiences.

> i.e. Entrepreneurship, Consumer education, Life skills in financial planning

Other categories that came up frequently:

> Fluency using technology and computer skills
> Career and Trades exploration
> Environmental stewardship
> Increasing the amount students plan for life through Planning 10-12 and expanded grad transitions
> * Authentic Community volunteerism and service learning (this came up in a variety of categories)

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

One overarching response was finding ways to increase students' ability to explore what they are interested in. Some specific ideas included:

Exploration courses at gr.9/10 – or even start at gr.6 to 9
One day a week exploration- pods based on interest
Aid in student exploration of interests, passions and competencies
Fieldtrips and offsite learning – funded
Guest speakers/ career fairs
Grad coaching

There was also an emphasis on real world experience.

Trades stream but flexible to move to different streams
Internships/job shadowing, Work experience
Mentoring programs
Co-op programs for HS- credited
Credit for paid work experience
Volunteer work
Experienced based learning
Incentive for business/ industry to participate

Providing flexible and different delivery modes was also a common theme. Some of the specific ideas were:

More BAA courses outside of timetable
Self paced, self directed
Flexible scheduling, Web based learning
Pathways for accelerated learning and early admission
Standardize provincial calendar and timetable to provide distance ed – video conferencing between schools.
Ability to do smaller chunks- reduced hours/ credits
Outward bound type experience
Leadership programs and activities
Innovation/ creative pathway stream
Different paths to grad
Online portfolios
Use technology to link with world
"We day" type activities that target whole schools

3. How do you think students could demonstrate these competencies?

Common responses were centered on three big themes. I have also indicated some of the specifics that were suggested.

Presentations:

Be able to tell a story- articulate
Presented in some way – to a meaningful audience
Showcase evening
Presentations of learning in front of a panel
Debates

Larger project work:

Doing an innovating project
Team/group work
Cross curricular Interactive projects
Projects in the community- authentic problem solving and service

Progressive assessment practice:

Peer/self assessment
Exams need to change/ do away with
Peer mentoring
Flexible assessments- students choose how to demonstrate
Teach others
360 evaluations
Problem solving
Portfolio
Action research
Framework established for student-teacher-parent assessment
Teaching teachers to facilitate discussions
Technology- Journaling, blogging, video projects as presentation, ePortfolio

4. How could student learning be communicated to a) students, b) parents c) post secondary institutions/ employers

There were not as many responses to this question but I believe there was recognition that current reporting needs to change. There was a consistent emphasis in the responses for more personal and ongoing contact with parents rather than written report cards.

Some of their suggestions are:

a / b) Students and parents

Demonstration of learning to parents
Student led conferences
Regular email from teacher to parents
Post assessments and reports where parents can view anytime they want- like an online gradebook for parents
Class blog, digital portfolio accessible by parents
More meaningful comments and connections – what have they learned, where can they improve, relevant feedback on skills
More emphasis on effort and hard work
More regular and meaningful reporting
Reporting language need to be concise, clear and commonly understood
Project rubric using the five competencies
Formal reports which have project based competency based checklist
Portfolios

c) Post Secondary

Written report from teacher to university
Essay personal profile- for post secondary

The overarching theme to the responses was a suggestion to move away from a grades based program when awarding scholarships. One comment made the point, "Awards are incongruent with true personalized learning".

Some of the suggestions included:

> Panel including teachers and community people to evaluate projects, portfolios
> Criteria other than grades- citizenship, athletics, interview, competency scoring, work ethic, volunteerism
> Recognize the five competencies
> Exit interview with each student to celebrate success
> Schools should have more control to disperse the money
> More variety, less competition (grades based)
> Students nominated based on competency
> Ensure that each pathway gets recognition- vocational
> The passport model has some other factors other than grades- but where redeemed should be broad based
> District scholarships and awards- more personalized- add more of them
> Reward improvement
> Track the whole year not just final grade/test
> Recognizing achievement towards personal goals
> Should be moving towards intrinsic rewards

Additional Feedback

Concerns mentioned

Public perception about streaming
How are going to communicate and educate parents/ general public about changes?
What about the students who don't like Project Based Learning?
Need the standards and content in place to ensure quality
May change how teachers work with students- professional growth?

Other Recommendations...

As districts submitted their responses, I had the chance to speak to many of the presenters. Almost all of them commented on how valuable the Grad conversations were. Many districts plan to use the Grad consultations as a starting off point (or a continuation of other discussions) to engage their communities in an ongoing way about change in education. The larger community dialogue about education was appreciated and there was a recognition that more of it needed to be occurring in our districts.

I believe that the larger message is also about communicating as widely as possible when large changes are proposed. Finding ways to inform (and involve) the general public- not just educators about why education is changing is one of the keys as we go forward.