



School District 72

Campbell River, B.C.

425 Pinecrest Road, Campbell River, B.C. V9W 3P2 • Tel: 250.830.2300 • Fax: 250.287.2616 • www.sd72.bc.ca

November 18, 2009

Re: Full-Day K Decision by 2010, November 11, 2009

Dear Editor:

Once again, provincial Boards of Education find themselves in a race to meet an externally-imposed deadline – a race with racetrack personnel who have fired the gun but haven't opened the gate, with steeds wearing blinders, with inadequate oats in the barn for the ponies, and local jockeys who have to ride whatever mounts they're assigned.

I refer to the mandated implementation of full-day kindergartens in all BC schools in all districts by 2011, with some programs beginning operation by September 2010. The Canwest News Service article of November 11, 2009 describes well the process so far, highlighting the problems and unanswered questions.

Although not all people agree that all-day kindergarten is a positive initiative, research shows that early-years programs with play-based curriculums result in long-term learning benefits for all children. The proposed all-day kindergarten will maintain the play-based curriculum which is currently operating in half-day programs, and which is a valued and effective preparation for the grade 1 year.

Although many parents and educators will welcome the proposal in theory, the daunting challenge for all school districts will be implementation of a plan, which in practical terms, looks to be poorly supported both financially and strategically. The September 30th Ministry of Education letter to all superintendents outlining provincial intentions states that “about half the kindergarten-age students in the province will have access to full day programming in year one (September 2010). This does not necessarily mean half of the schools or half of each district's kindergarten enrolment”.

In our November 1st *Proposal for Year One of Full Day Kindergarten Implementation* report to the ministry, SD72 stated that we “have a strong desire to offer full day kindergarten to all the families in the Campbell River District”. Based on the September 30th ministry letter, and the fact that we have virtually no local control over choosing schools in that first year, we could end up with anywhere from zero to fifteen such programs in September 2010. Needless to say, the schools that the ministry selects for us will not coincide with our own preference of making available a full program to all kindergarten students at the same time.

The problems are obvious. Not only is the touted \$44M inadequate to get all-day programs up and running across the province for half the eligible students, each school district will have

two levels of programs operating for the year 2010, with all the problems that a two-tier system will incur. In 2010, designated (by the Ministry of Education) schools will be offering only a full-day program; non-designated schools will be offering only a half-time program. In 2011, all kindergarten programs will be all day.

The bottom-line worries are twofold: with inadequate funding for a forced mandate, Boards of Education will be compelled to diminish or eliminate other programs in order to pay for this new initiative, and for at least a year, we will be offering inequitable opportunities to our students. If I were a bookie, I'd have trouble explaining the racing rules to my customers. If I were a racetrack manager, I wouldn't have to look far to determine who'll be cleaning the stables.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Moats".

Helen Moats
Chair, School District 72 Board of Education