

December 2009

Happy
Holidays
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- Norm Walker, BCeSIS Team

Message from the SMC Chair



Happy Holidays everyone!

As we speed along toward the holidays, a lot of work has been going on behind the scenes to move forward on our shared priorities. A common information system of this size will require increased coordination both within and between districts. Capacities and organizational structures will differ between districts but we all need a sustainable model to work with. In this issue, we will look at three different aspects of

sustainability: internal district planning and capacity building with Norm Walker, the important role of the Service Management Council, and a story from SD20 on innovation and sharing resources. We hope you find this issue informative and insightful. Building capacity and ensuring that we receive the most value from our investments in BCeSIS will continue to be a focus into the coming year. These were identified as top priorities by the SMC during its planning session last spring.

Thanks to everyone who has provided input to our newsletters. We appreciate all your feedback, as sharing insights and knowledge from users in the field is also key to sustainability. I wish everyone a restful holiday season and we will see you in the New Year!

Ernie Mannering, SD91

Norm Walker Develops Framework for Building Capacity within School Districts

Teacher of 32 years and current Technology coordinator for SD73, *Norm Walker*, has experienced success both as a trainer and a coordinator for BCeSIS within his district and in his previous district. He learned most of his lessons with SD 58 where he implemented 3 secondary schools and 7 elementary schools in 2 years. He has since been working with SD73 to implement BCeSIS in 12



Norm Walker from SD73 joins the BCeSIS Team

schools spanning across 5 communities and remains passionate about schools using BCeSIS as a data management system. Most recently he has been seconded to join the

Ministry of Education and the BCeSIS team to assist with developing a framework for building capacity within schools and districts.

As a first step, Norm has been busy visiting and speaking with districts across the province to hear their issues and provide support. Norm shares some of his insights and current thinking on the topic here in a brief interview.

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- Norm Walker,
BCeSIS Team

As a former teacher and school district technology coordinator, what do you feel you bring to the secondment position at the Ministry?

My experiences as a classroom teacher, technology coordinator and variety of other district level responsibilities have given me insights into the functionality of BCeSIS from the end-users perspective. I bring to this perspective to the BCeSIS team and often participate in conversations by describing how the end-user at the school level deals with tasks and business practices. Add to this my experience as an implementation manager for two districts- developing resources and training end users provided opportunities to learn 'on the ground' processes that work and need to be integrated into BCeSIS processes and problem-solving strategies.

What are key components of sustainability and capacity building strategies that districts should keep in mind?

There are five key components for developing sustainability and building internal district capacity that need to be addressed. I list these in the framework as:

- ✓ **Management of BCeSIS** – establishing a District Team to manage BCeSIS decisions in both the short term and long term.
- ✓ **Maintain the technology infrastructure** to ensure a stable environment. This includes networks, hardware, software and technical support for end users.
- ✓ **Develop and maintain resources to support district staff end users.** This includes paper resources as well as electronic options. These can be created locally or adapted from other districts and users.
- ✓ **Training new staff** will continue to be required and districts will need to develop a plan to ensure these staff members get the training and support they need. District trainers and training resource options should be part of any sustainability plan.
- ✓ **Report Management and Data Verification** is needed in to ensure that district planning and management decisions can be based on accurate data and reports are developed that will facilitate meaningful dialogue and education decisions.

BCeSIS is a big change for many schools and districts. What would you say to those districts that may not be ready for this kind of change and find this period challenging?

Change is always a challenge and the cost benefits have to be considered before the process is started. Setting up a shared student information system has huge benefits but those benefits do have a cost associated with them. Mistakes can be frustrating but are part of the learning process. If I look at those situations as opportunities to learn then the frustration is reduced, but never eliminated. I know some districts have decided to wait until all the kinks are worked out by other districts and to them I say... good luck with that. You will likely find issues that are unique to your district and waiting causes delays but does not remove the need to address them eventually. Once you get started down this road you learn that you have an entire province of co-workers to provide support and ideas.

What strides are you seeing being made in BCeSIS supporting student achievement?

The idea of creating a single education record for a student to support their educational plan is becoming obtainable as we begin sharing student records between schools and districts. When a student moves between districts, their academic records are available immediately at the new school. This provides them with valuable information for supporting the student at the school. Sharing electronic IEPs for students has been beneficial. In addition to the regular types of data in a student information system we are looking at a process to provide districts the ability to store performance testing results in BCeSIS so this information can also be used to create a more complete academic record. With the development of more reporting tools we will see districts using more of the functionality available in BCeSIS to better support student achievement.

Norm will be working with the Ministry until June 2010. He can be reached by email at Norm.Walker@gov.bc.ca.

BCeSIS Quick Facts

BCeSIS has been implemented in 1368 of the province's 1622 public schools and in 88 of the 130 independent schools that signed agreements to participate. In addition BCeSIS has been deployed by the Francophone Education Authority, ten First Nations Schools, schools in the Yukon and over 250 Strong Start BC Centres.

BCeSIS is being used for collecting attendance data for all early learners in StrongStart BC Centres. Using BCeSIS, which is already available in most districts, made it possible to avoid the additional cost of developing and deploying a new data collection system.

Districts do not pay fees to use BCeSIS for StrongStart BC Centres. 🌸

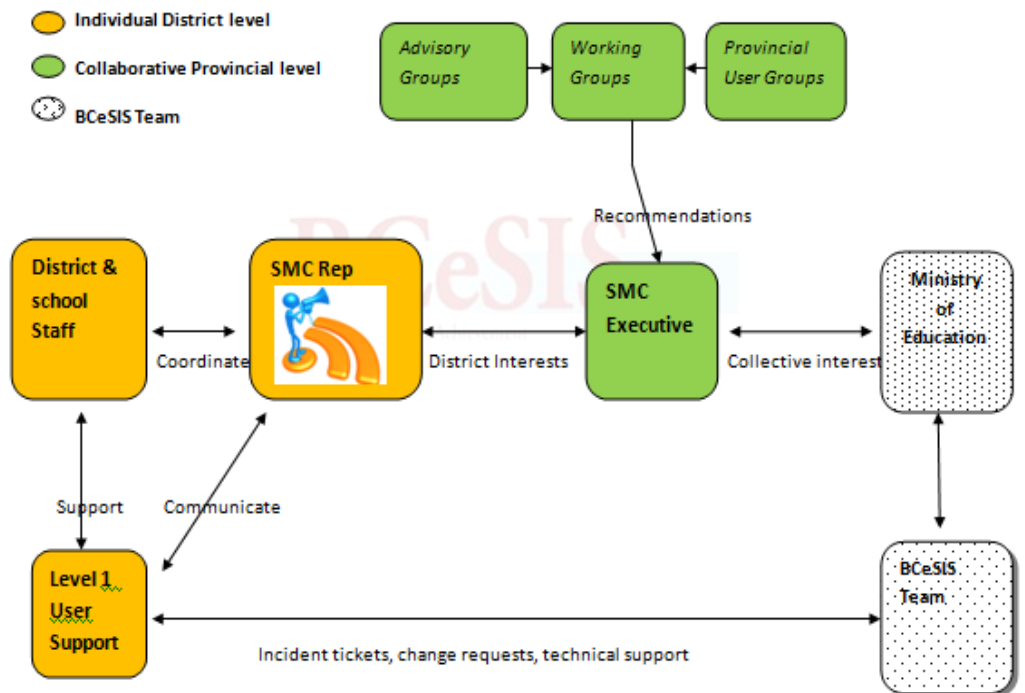
The Role of the Service Management Council in Building School District Capacity

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has established the SMC as its official governing body for BCeSIS. The role of the Service Management Council is becoming increasingly important to the sustainability of BCeSIS within schools and districts. The SMC is unique in that it acts collectively and while fulfilling a key role within the districts. There are key areas that SMC reps are engaged with: governance, coordination and management, and communications. The role of the SMC rep within districts includes:

- Developing plans for BCeSIS use in the district and providing operational oversight.
- Recommending and requesting personnel and technology resources in the district budgets.

- Staying current on the BCeSIS functionality and the impact on business practices.
- Ensuring that security policies are in place and adhered to by BCeSIS end-users.
- Monitoring BCeSIS operations in the district and identifying issues.
- Assisting with and understanding data management plans and reporting strategies within the district.
- Identifying opportunities and strategies for sharing information and collaborating with other districts.

For more information on the Service Management Council please contact Ernie Mannering at emannering@sd91.bc.ca



Customization: Something in Common

BCeSIS Stats

The following stats are for the week of

Current # of BCeSIS schools & Strong Start BC Centers:

1822

Current # of active students & early learners:

510, 637

Max.# of concurrent user connections:

6167

Max# of users logging on in a day:

15,843

Number of distinct log-ins for the week:

78 124

Number of reports run for the week:

105, 006

While BCeSIS provides a common core functionality that continues to be improved upon, some districts and schools have developed a variety of tools to leverage the data in the system. Customized solutions appearing around the province are good examples of how schools and districts are building upon the investments that they have already made in eSIS.

Adam Sanders from School District 20 has developed several customized solutions/tools that may be useful to users in other districts. He says that it's about adding value, augmenting the capabilities of BCeSIS and providing choice. For example, the Honour Roll function within BCeSIS is very flexible and provides many ways to calculate GPAs and Honour rolls, but it is not possible to address all of the local variations used by schools in the province.

Adam has created a customizable solution that takes data from BCeSIS and uses it to address those special needs. He has made a collection of tools available to other districts for free. The tool kit is downloadable, doesn't violate copyright or FOIPPA regulations, and can be installed on a district's servers. Fourteen districts have signed up on his tool site showing a good overall response. Other districts are building and sharing solutions for reporting on student achievement.

For more information please contact Adam Sander at asander@sd20.bc.ca For free web based tools for schools and districts to use as they see fit visit:

http://bcesistools.sd20.bc.ca/BCeSIS_Toolbox/Welcome.html

Adam says that before taking this approach, decision makers at the district or school level need to determine exactly what their business practices are going to be. Once the process is defined, districts must ensure that they have made provision for maintenance costs and effort, as well as the availability of resources and expertise. Once a need has been defined and they have a handle on their capacity, they can select the strategy that is best for their district or school:

1. *Continue to do things manually and wait for a new product;*
2. *Use the functionality already available in BCeSIS;*
3. *Identify a shared tool available from another district and adapt it; or*
4. *Use district resources to create new tools (and where possible, make them available to other districts).*

Adam sees great benefit in districts working together to share solutions. It is cost effective and it gives small districts the ability to move away from manual processes while large districts can save money and redirect those resources to other areas of need. It also provides an opportunity to build up a community of users. Districts can achieve good value by balancing commonality and customization. 🍷

