

# BCeSIS News

Supporting Student Achievement

March 2010

Celebrating



Years with  
BCeSIS!

Going the  
distance

## Message from the SMC Chair



Hello Everyone,

It is hard to believe March is already upon us. I have been reminded that March 31<sup>st</sup> this year brings us to a five year milestone for the BCeSIS initiative. Almost all schools in BC are now onboard. The remaining schools have until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010 to access implementation grant funding. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight all the hard work that has gone into implementing such a large initiative. The vision for a

shared student information system in BC is now being realized. While work is already underway to change the focus to capacity building and sustainability, it is time to pause and reflect on what we have achieved over the last five years. This newsletter tries to capture the story and how we have benefited from our efforts thus far. As we plan for the future, BCeSIS provides an important foundation upon which we can build. We hope you find this issue a sort of 'spring break' from our normal content. I would like to extend a special thank you to all stakeholders and individual users who have helped the initiative to reach this stage and keep the system running on a day to day basis. Enjoy the spring break everyone!

*Ernie Mannering, SD91*

## BCeSIS Approaches Five Year Milestone

It was only five years ago when school districts across the province were using more than twenty-six different legacy student record systems. In some cases districts had up to seventeen different systems. Districts had to manage continuous training for several systems, software changes, and reconciling different data formats.

The story began in 2003 when a small group of districts came together

to search for a new student information system. After some research they decided to collectively approach the Ministry of Education with a proposal for cost sharing for a more sophisticated web-based tool with new functionality. The Ministry was receptive to the opportunity to further standardize and improve data quality and wanted to open the opportunity up to all districts on a voluntary basis. It was at this point

that the vision was born for a shared student information system for districts and schools across the province. The new system required a multi-stakeholder, collaborative, cross sector approach to managing and governing a province wide system. The change went beyond technology and required a cultural shift towards deeper collaboration within the K-12 sector. Teams of school district and ministry staff and volunteers gave months of their time to review and

## Building the Foundation



- Established a governance structure.
- Established procedures for security and privacy.
- Implementing schools and districts started with consolidation and conversion of all data.
- A large amount of testing ensured that the system remained stable and satisfied district requirements.
- Ministry reporting programs were developed to support existing Ministry systems but flexible enough to accommodate changes and unique district needs.
- Established ongoing training and support for users.

These are the corner stones that keep the system running today.

test every function in BCeSIS to bring it to an acceptable starting point. Data Manager for the Ministry of Education, Kathy Corder remembers the work that went into the first phases. *“Working with every level of school and district staff, we dissected the application every way we could and came up with a list of must haves, nice to haves and must be removed items.”* All stakeholders worked tirelessly through the growing pains of data conversion, testing, application management, network trouble shooting, implementation planning, training and technical support. One of the biggest challenges for districts in the early days of BCeSIS was the conversion of data from the existing twenty-six legacy systems. A number of districts rose to that challenge by working closely with the Ministry team to develop a set of conversion tools and then shared those tools with other districts and schools around the province that used the same software. Norm Walker says *“In my mind, this was only the beginning of what has now become a whole culture of sharing among districts in everything from business practices, add-on tools, tips, techniques, and support and training.”* Independent and First Nation schools joined together to set up their own support organizations. Users across the province offered each other support and organized an annual Users’ conference each year to provide opportunities to meet face to face.



## A Look Back

What began as a search for a software upgrade by a few districts grew into a sector-wide managed student information system. Districts and schools identified areas that would benefit from the new common approach including:

### Consolidation

Student information was typically managed in a variety of areas within the school. Consolidating information could take considerable amounts of time and contribute to inconsistent records.

### Standardization

Data within student records were not standardized across schools and districts making it difficult to combine and analyze data.

### Student Transfer

Transferring student files between schools sometimes took up to three months. Students without records would sometimes be assigned in classes they were not suited for and have to switch late in the semester.

### Course Selection & Diploma Verification

In the past, course selection and diploma verification were largely paper-based, manual activities. Only twice a year would counselors receive the transcript verification report needed to guide students towards graduation.

### Ministry Reporting

With each change to Ministry reporting including funding requirements, new course codes, graduation requirements, and other activities, districts would need to adjust their individual systems.

Many hurdles had to be overcome to build the foundation seen today. The picture in districts and schools has come a long way in five years. The benefits can be seen in how it ultimately serves students.



The road to a shared student information system

“  
...this was  
only the  
beginning of  
what has now  
become a  
whole culture  
of sharing  
among  
districts...”

”

- Norm Walker

## A New Look

Benefits of a shared student information system include:

- Standardized Student record information are in one place including, demographic, transcripts, attendance, courses, cross enrollments, diploma calculations, incident reports, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and photo ID. Each record captures a student's education history whether taken in public, independent, First Nations schools, home study or distributed education.
- Students can now select their courses online. Student's ability to graduate are calculated online with up-to-date verification information helping to guide student course selection.
- When students transfer their records are consistent and made available at their new school upon arrival or before.
- School staff can use timely, concise, up-to-date student information records for decision making to guide students.
- Student marks are available for viewing after each reporting period allowing educators to plan interventions for individual needs.
- Web-based tool allows staff to log on and work from home or any location with internet access.



## A Changing World

Within the last five years BCeSIS has also seen an expansion into Strong Start Centers for early learners. This essentially amalgamates a student's record from pre-kindergarten to graduation. Students have one record that will follow them making registration throughout schools simpler as most students are already in the system.

The complete accessible student record will provide educators and school staff with valuable information at their fingertips with which to assist individual student needs. BCeSIS includes a *Student Services* module that manages the information of students with special needs. The ability to place special alerts on a student's file further keeps all staff informed of individual student needs including medical, personal, and other notes.

With the increase in students accessing distributed and e-learning options in the province, the benefits of having one record system and one student record are already being felt in districts and schools. Automation of student record transfer means a reduction in the time, resources, manual activity and paper files associated with gaining access to complete and accurate information. It ultimately translates to a positive impact on students. *“A shared student information system fosters and facilitates student flexibility and choice in BC”* says Andrew Macauley, Director of the Common Business Initiatives branch at the Ministry of Education. The vision of a shared student information system in BC is now a reality. What's next? There is still vast potential within the system that has yet to be tapped. Efforts to realize its opportunities are ongoing.

**"A shared student information system fosters and facilitates flexibility and choice for students in BC."**

**Andrew Macauley,  
Ministry of Education**

### **What's happening now in BCeSIS**

▶ **23, 000 active user accounts**

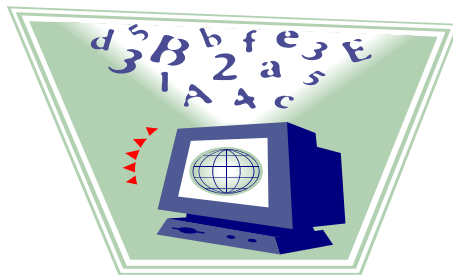
▶ **1931 total schools and Strong Start BC Centers**

▶ **571, 660 active student records**

▶ **915,000 logins in one month**

▶ **380,000 reports in one month**

▶ **9,700 extracts in one month**

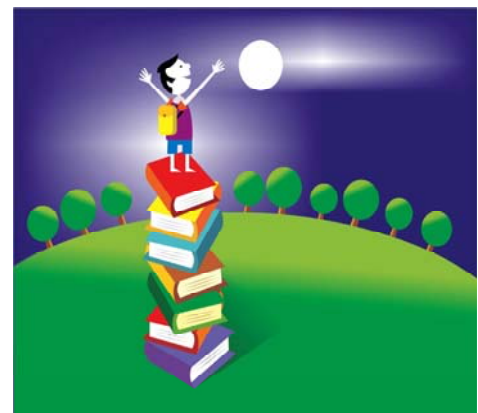


Changing technology and fiscal constraints present both new challenges and opportunities. Finding the best ways to build on what has been learned will be the priority. Districts and schools are eager to get the most out of the system to assist on a variety of fronts.

*"Collaboration will be the key to moving forward. Our vision is to be able to provide an operational reporting solution to districts and schools as well as looking at ways to incorporate sharing information and collaborating with parents and teachers. Our focus remains on student achievement, one student record at a time"* Ernie Mannering, SD 91.

A tremendous amount of effort has gone into this initiative. A lot of expertise has been built within the user community across the province and will only grow with each year. It is important to recognize the effort, but ultimately the impact it has on the students will be the true measure of success.

A special thank you to all districts and schools and stakeholders for your commitment, patient endurance and hard work put in to make the vision of a shared student information system in BC a reality. 🙌



### **Share your story**

**Are you using BCeSIS to support student achievement? Save time? Have expertise to share? Please share your news with your SMC rep or email [Stephanie Campbell at Stephanie.Campbell@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Stephanie.Campbell@gov.bc.ca)**

