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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
2008EDU0062-000799  
May 21, 2008

Ministry of Education

### **COWICHAN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT MUST FOCUS ON STUDENTS**

VICTORIA – A special adviser's report to Education Minister Shirley Bond recommends that the Cowichan Valley Board of Education make its primary focus the improvement of student achievement.

Dr. Lee Southern was appointed by Bond after the Cowichan Valley Board of Education requested the assistance of a special adviser. Southern's report has now been delivered to the board of education and the expectation is that the recommendations will be implemented by the district.

The recommendations are designed to help the board improve in the areas of student achievement, long-term budget planning, management capacity, school closures, and the board's relationship with the community.

The recommendations include:

- Focusing on improving student achievement and beginning with a detailed analysis of the state of student achievement.
- Reconsidering its original plan for school closures.
- Working with the Cowichan Tribes on a three-year plan to improve the results of Aboriginal students.
- Hiring a reputable demographer to develop an accurate picture of the shifting demographics across the school district to better inform board decision-making.
- Continuing to work with the ministry on its facilities management agenda.

Bond has assigned a superintendent of achievement to the Cowichan Valley school district to work with the superintendent of schools and district staff to:

- Develop an inclusive consultation process that engages educators and the public in planning for improvement of student learning.
- Develop and implement strategies and structures that focus on the improvement of Aboriginal achievement levels.
- Complete a district strategic plan that addresses the recommendations of the special adviser's report.
- Conduct a facilities audit and create a long-term plan for capital development.
- Develop strategies that connect and align planning documents and resulting actions – the strategic plan, the budget plan and the achievement contract.

The superintendent of achievement will monitor progress and assist the district through weekly contact with the superintendent. The superintendent of achievement will provide regular reports back to the minister on the progress of implementing the recommendations.

Under the School Act, special advisers can be appointed at the direction of the minister or at the request of a board of education. The Cowichan Valley school district includes Duncan, Lake Cowichan, Youbou and other communities.

To view the special adviser's report, visit [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubsall.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubsall.htm)

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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## BACKGROUND

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### **SPECIAL ADVISER REPORT ON COWICHAN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Dr. Lee Southern was appointed special adviser to the Cowichan Valley school district on April 5, 2008. Southern's report has now been provided to the Cowichan Valley Board of Education for the implementation of the following recommendations:

- **SCHOOL CLOSURES:** That the board reconsider its original plan for school closures "with a view to keeping open Koksilah, Mill Bay and Tansor [and] accommodating Somenos students at neighboring schools." Also, that the board "consider keeping the Somenos school building open and available to the community at cost."
- **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:** That the board make its primary focus the improvement of student achievement. This should be based on the premises that, given time and instruction, all students can succeed in learning and that classroom instruction can be improved through professional collaboration by teachers and principals.
- **ACHIEVEMENT ANALYSIS:** That the district begin a detailed analysis of the state of student achievement across the district for the purpose of developing and implementing strategies to close the gap in student performance.
- **ABORIGINAL STUDENT PLAN:** That the superintendent work with the Cowichan Tribes to begin the development of a three-year plan to "continuously improve the results of Aboriginal students." And that the board invite the Chief and Council of Cowichan Tribes to meet at the earliest opportunity "for the purpose of developing a process of working together to resolve issues around the education of Cowichan Tribes students."
- **FRENCH IMMERSION:** That the board, in consultation with interested parents, pursue the planning, development and implementation of a comprehensive K-12 French Immersion program.
- **SUPERINTENDENT OF ACHIEVEMENT:** That a ministry superintendent of achievement work with the superintendent to help develop professional collaboration with and among all schools.
- **DEMOGRAPHER:** That the board consider commissioning a reputable demographer to develop an accurate picture of the shifting demographic across the school district to better inform board decision-making. "Shifting demographic trends which are different in various parts of the school district warrant a specialized study." Reliable comprehensive demographic information is required as a basis for planning future education services.
- **GRADE CONFIGURATION:** That the board consider reviewing and revising the school district's grade configuration "with a view to balancing the educational, demographic, facilities and funding requirements of the school district."

- **MINISTRY ASSISTANCE:** That the board seek “continued ministry assistance and advice” to help with its facilities management agenda.
- **COMMITTEES:** That the board consider reviewing its committee structures, beginning with a consultation with the school community.
- **CONSULTATION:** That the board announce its intention to consult with the public on various issues beginning with the development of a comprehensive French Immersion program plan.
- **PERFORMANCE REVIEWS:** That the board put a performance planning and review process in place for the district superintendent and secretary-treasurer.

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