



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

SCOTTISH BORDERS EIS ADVICE ON RESPONDING TO TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S SERVICES SEPTEMBER 2008

The Executive Committee of the Borders Branch of the EIS have been gathering the views of colleagues from across the Region. Our members have attended the meetings that have been held so far in the consultation process of SBC. We have invited comments and questions from all areas that will be affected by the sweeping changes proposed by the Project Board of TCS. There is a lot of information presented on the SBC website and it is not all easily accessible. What we feel is lacking is evidence that the proposals will deliver the claimed improvements in Children's Services along with the savings that are required in the budget. In this and other leaflets we try to spell out the consequences of the changes for classroom practitioners and the young people in their classrooms. The following points have been made to us by our members and by parents at the consultation meetings. You can make your own judgements from your own professional experience as to their validity.

Principal Teachers in the Secondary Sector

- The model in the plan is untried, untested and is just a leap in the dark; there is absolutely no guarantee that it will bring about improvements.
- The system saves insignificant amounts of money in the long term and in the short term will have a huge financial impact by forcing all secondary schools to go through a disruptive selection process.
- The project planners say they want the new structures in place for 2009/2010. Even if the decision is taken by the Councillors in November the time scale is ludicrously short given that schools have to have their timetables in place well before the end of the summer term. This will cause chaos for the following year as SMTs will not know their staffing in time.
- Where is the research that justifies this move? The teaching unions have been seeking for over two years to participate in a joint study by management and teachers of similar systems elsewhere. SBC have delayed this and cancelled meetings of the working group at short (and no) notice – for reasons best known to themselves.
- In some authorities in Scotland, the move towards faculty PTs or Curriculum Leaders is being rolled back, as it has been found to be ineffective. Evidence within Scottish Borders where faculties have been introduced in 2 High Schools has not supported the system. Examination of the STACS data indicates that in one school attainment has gone down and in the other there has been no significant change.
- The subject groupings chosen for this model are very arbitrary and do not reflect adequately the needs of schools. They are linked to the themes of A curriculum for Excellence but that should not be the only factor taken into account: schools are complex organisations and ACE is only one part of that complexity.
- There will be serious implications of adopting this management structure for the recruitment of teachers to Scottish Borders in the future. The prospects of promotion for

teachers will be severely limited and anyway the increased workload of the new style PTs may well discourage good, well qualified teachers from applying.

- The ability of our secondary schools to contribute to the training of the next generation of teachers through the mentoring process of NQTs will be affected. There will not necessarily be a PT in the department qualified to University Degree standard in the subject relevant for the NQT.
- By encouraging early retirement of our most experienced and skilled practitioners, SBC will lose a huge section of its most valuable asset. The teachers involved still have a lot to offer in our schools and were, after all, selected for their posts as PTs because they had the expertise and subject knowledge to lead their colleagues and oversee curriculum developments. That knowledge and expertise will be lost to the Borders overnight.
- The packages offered to those who do not remain as 'Leaders of Learning' will cost a lot of money which could be better used supporting our schools.
- The selection procedure which must take place in order to reduce the numbers of PTs so drastically will cause a great deal of distraction and disruption in schools – as well as frustration to the PTs involved and their senior managers.
- Those who are unsuccessful in their attempts to remain as PTs are very likely to feel bitter and under-valued by their managers and by SBC.

The pattern of one PT post per subject in secondary schools allows for learners and teachers to be afforded a range of support in terms of the management the curriculum, assessment (including certification), staff development and review and resourcing.

While the EIS recognises that many Principal teachers currently have responsibility for several related subjects, any extension of this pattern can only be justified in the following circumstances: the new structure is the result of educationally informed discussion and debate; there is agreed curricular and educational benefit to the school; the introduction of the new structure is the result of negotiation; there is no artificial linkage of disparate subject areas; there is no detriment to existing post holders; the new structure is coherent. Such a move cannot be justified as a cost saving device. Any such development should be fully agreed within the LNCT.

The EIS recognises that the implementation of ACE will have implications for promoted post structures especially at the level of principal teacher. Any changes in promoted post structures should follow educational development within the context of this document rather than be utilised as a means of imposing change. In general the increasing demands on the management of the curriculum are most unlikely to be able to be carried out by reducing the number of principal teachers, whatever the details of their remits.

(From policy documents, EIS)

Please consider these points when responding to the Consultation on TCS. You do not have to use the official response form. We have been assured that all responses will be taken into account and will be available to elected members before they vote on these proposals in November.

Kay Miller
Secretary
EIS, Scottish Borders