



GOVERNORS WALES
North Wales Regional Conference
Venue Cymru, Llandudno
23rd October, 2008

Almost 100 school governors from across North Wales, Ceredigion and Powys attended the Governors Wales' Regional Conference in Llandudno 'In Search of Excellence'.

Hugh Patrick MBE, Chair of Governors Wales, introduced three speakers: John Griffiths AM, Deputy Minister for Skills, Sheila Drury CBE, co-author of the Webb Review and Dr. Cheryl Morgan, Head of School and LEA Effectiveness, DCELLS.

Summary notes of John Griffiths' speech

The Skills Agenda

John Griffiths began by expressing the Assembly Government's appreciation of governors and the vital role they play in school improvement and leading change. "Schools are a powerful resource for change Maximising the achievement of every child."

"Change is not optional. Change around the margins is not acceptable."

There needs to be collaboration between schools, the Local Authorities and WAG to make the most of the new School Effectiveness Framework (SEF).

Regulations have been introduced to make it easier for schools to collaborate and work more effectively and efficiently.

The 14-19 Learning Pathways agenda will bring wider choice and the "tailoring of education packages" for young people. The proposed Learning and Skills Measure is aiming to bring greater consistency and equality of opportunity for the learner.

Post 16 is delivered by a number of providers and the planning is not always harmonious, with the net result that learning opportunities are restricted.

6th Forms – all the evidence, e.g. Estyn, suggests size is important. Small 6th Forms do not necessarily provide the best opportunities and learning environment.

The 'Transforming Education and Training in Wales' and 'Skills That Work For Wales' publications were referenced and the importance of developing and improving young people's skills stressed, particularly in the current climate.

Quoted Leitch: "What has been achieved in the past is not the benchmark for the future,"

Final points:

- Work with the Local Authorities and WAG to make change happen
- Keep up the good work
- Keep focused on learner outcomes

Mr. Griffiths took questions to explain DCELLS position on a variety of subjects.

Following on from Mr. Griffiths, and continuing a theme of 'How to encourage employers to become more involved with schools?', one of the representatives from Magnox, a sponsor

of the Conference, outlined how they are working with schools and invited governors to make contact with them.

Summary Notes from Sheila Drury's speech

The Governors Lot

The governors' job can be onerous. The amount of data and information thrown at them can be daunting. Sheila used several slides to illustrate the role of governor and the important part governors play in improving standards and results.

She outlined the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results from 2006 and commented that it was unacceptable for Wales to be only 'average' amongst the 57 OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) that took part, and to be behind the other UK countries in Reading and Maths.

Sheila also quoted Leitch and said she found the idea of Wales not being able to compete with the developed and developing economies "terrifying".

Funding is an issue that needs to be addressed – 'equality and fairness' in our education system rely on fairness and proper allocation and distribution of funding. Based on work undertaken previously, she found that the distribution of funding between the LEAs was variable.

Co-operation and collaboration between schools, between schools and FE Colleges and others has been impeded by the funding mechanisms, and yet for our learners to be best served we have to find a way through this – the future for education in Wales has to be based on collaboration and collective working. This is the challenge for governors.

Summary Notes Dr. Cheryl Morgan

Improving outcomes for all learners remains a key priority for the Welsh Assembly Government, and the School Effectiveness Framework: is WAG's vehicle for taking forward this commitment. The *School Effectiveness Framework: Building effective learning communities together* (SEF) is about enabling schools to move from being 'good to great' as well as helping those who need support to meet their moral purpose of educating all children and young people in Wales. The SEF was developed by the Welsh Assembly Government, in collaboration with key stakeholders, out of the work carried out after the PISA results were published in 2006. These results confirmed that while Wales has made progress across the board in children and young people's achievement there continues to be differences in outcomes. The overarching purpose of School Effectiveness is to reduce the difference in learner outcomes and well-being within and between schools.

Cheryl outlined the School Effectiveness Pilot work currently being carried out across Wales and explained how 'Tri-Level' working could be best implemented on a National scale. There are about 100 schools in total in the pilot, 25 of those are in North Wales. A group of School Effectiveness Associates have been drawn from Headteachers and LEA school improvement officers to support Heads of schools who are piloting the SEF. Governors need to review their School Development Plan to see how it marries up to the five SEF core themes (systems thinking, bilingualism, high performance culture, equality and supportive and independent) and six elements (leadership, working with others, networks of professional practice, intervention and support, improvement and accountability and curriculum and teaching).

The afternoon session was broken up into four one-hour workshops that were repeated so that Governors had the chance to attend two:

School Effectiveness Framework	Cheryl Morgan, Anwen Williams, Sue Edgar and Peter Maddox
Estyn – role of the Governor	Mike Maguire, HMI/AEM
Pupil Participation	Jane Harries, PP Project Leader, WAG
The Making Of an Excellent Governing Body	Ray Wells, Development Officer, Governors Wales

Slide sets from the day are available on the website.

The Conference was sponsored by Magnox Wylfa, Shotton Paper, Cadburys, Corus and Deeside College.