

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Wednesday, January 20, 2016 at 18:00 hours.

Members present:

Rick Williams, Chair
Stan Cameron
Robert Crocker
Sue Lawton
Kathy McDonald
Janet McDougald
Suzanne Nurse

Trustee also present:

Harkirat Singh

Administration:

Poleen Grewal, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
(Executive Member)
Wendy Dowling, Superintendent of Education, Early Years (Executive Member Back-up)
Patrika Daws, Superintendent of Education
Jeff deFreitas, Coordinating Superintendent
Hazel Mason, Superintendent of Education
Scott Moreash, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services

Marina Amin, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

IP-01, moved by Stan Cameron, that the agenda be approved.

..... carried

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, November 18, 2015

IP-02, moved by Janet McDougald, that the Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, held November 18, 2015, be approved.

..... carried

4. Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder – January 2016 and February 2016

IP-03, moved by Harkirat Singh, that the reports re Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder – January 2016 and February 2016, be received.

..... carried

5. Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guidelines

Copies of the draft Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guidelines were circulated. Associate Director of Instructional Support Services, Scott Moreash, reported that the guidelines will serve to ensure all students in Peel schools feel safe, and engaged in the learning process.

Jewel Amoah, Manager of Workplace Equity, Jim Van Buskirk, Chief Social Worker, and Lawrence De Maeyer, School Services Officer, reviewed the guidelines, including background information, the various terms used to understand gender identity and gender expression, confidentiality and privacy, procedural requirements and legal obligations for accommodating individual requests for gender identity support. It was noted that the guidelines are consistent with the Human Rights Code, Board policies and expectations, and the work already in progress around core values of nurturing a climate of equity, inclusion, safety, and respect. They will support inclusion, ensure appropriate accommodation, and promote awareness of transgender identities. It was reported that children experiencing gender transition often go through depression and suicidal states of mind, anxiety, and isolation. However, with affirmation and parental support, suicidal rates have decreased by approximately 93%. The presenters highlighted the uniqueness of each case, and indicated that these guidelines will serve as a starting point for an ongoing conversation on how best to support the needs of transgender individuals. Future plans will include discussions with various focus groups comprising students and parents, Make Peel Proud Spectrum Steering Committee, and the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee. Subsequently, the guidelines will be piloted at schools over the spring and feedback will be requested. Training and ongoing support will also be provided. It was noted that school support officers will be the contact point for students and administrators who are collaborating to establish a plan for transgender students. In view of the complexity of this subject, there is need for understanding, and an ongoing conversation, when an individual requests gender identity support.

Trustees asked questions regarding: protocol to accommodate transgender students in team sports vis-à-vis the strict rules around membership based on physical gender identity; confidentiality and counselling services for students; support for minor students; parent involvement in discussions with minor children. It was suggested that student trustees and Peel Student Presidents' Council be approached for their input.

IP-04, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the report re Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guidelines, be received.

..... carried

6. Systemic Supports and Practices to Facilitate Student Engagement and Success for Black Students

A revised copy of the report was circulated.

Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Poleen Grewal, reported that, following the release of the FACES (Facilitation Access, Change and Equity in Systems) of Peel Collaborative report, and the Voices report of Spring 2015, members of the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee recommended that a sub-committee be struck to consider the recommendations contained in these reports within the context of equity and inclusion initiatives in Peel schools. Associate Director Moreash stated that release of the two reports initiated a close review of supports being provided to black students, particularly males, with a view to understand what strategies will improve engagement and success in school. He noted that these strategies will also benefit students from all backgrounds, and support the work on student success. Scott Moreash thanked Superintendents of Education, Patrika Daws and Hazel Mason, Manager of Workplace Equity, Jewel Amoah, and Chief Research Officer, Paul Favaro, for their continued work in this area.

Superintendent Daws reviewed information regarding racial segregation from Voices of Ontario Black Educators and Fighting an Uphill Battle. Reviewing PowerPoint slides, Paul Favaro highlighted statistical data by municipality, regarding ethnicity, economic status, and age, noting that Peel has a black population of approximately 116,265 compared to 500,000 in the Greater Toronto Area. It was noted that the data is based on the 2011 census, and it is possible that the numbers are underestimated. Resulting from their discussions with focus groups of black youth from Lincoln M. Alexander and Turner Fenton Secondary Schools, Patrika Daws and Hazel Mason highlighted the challenges faced by African-Canadian male students, the need for confidence building, and hope in a future that includes higher learning. They commented on the negative effect of racism on children and their beliefs. Future plans will include bringing the two focus groups together to review feedback and suggest practical and appropriate supports that will enhance student success and inclusion. Superintendent Grewal stated that, in order to obtain a complete picture of black youth in Peel, it would be necessary to survey other black students who are engaged in learning, and to explore strategies they use that work effectively in the system. Associate Director Moreash highlighted the importance of student involvement in the discussion and review process, and he stated that the Action Plan created through student voice will be piloted for validation in other schools in Peel before it is adopted by all Peel schools.

Comments and questions from trustees included: selection criteria for focus groups; preference for an external interviewer; timeframe of the initiative and whether it will include membership of other agencies; consider follow-up interviews with the same students in subsequent grade classes to determine progress; whether questions were subjective in nature; need to embed black history into the curriculum.

IP-05, moved by Sue Lawton, that the report re Systemic Supports and Practices to Facilitate Student Engagement and Success for Black Students, be received.

..... carried

7. 21st Century Teaching and Learning Strategy

A graphic outlining the various components that support 21st Century Teaching and Learning was circulated.

School Support Officer, Lawrence De Maeyer, and Instructional Coordinator, Patrick McQuade, provided an overview of the work being done to promote and integrate innovative pedagogical approaches and technology into 21st Century Teaching and Learning. It was noted that re-visioning will include discussion with focus groups consisting of students and parents to facilitate an understanding of this learning initiative, and that a Committee is working to determine funding allocations and support options. Ministry of Education events to encourage technology-based learning, and networking between school boards will continue, as will professional development for teachers. Learning spaces will be reviewed and redesigned to support 21st Century methods of teaching and learning. Lawrence De Maeyer reported that the Tech Conference will be held this spring, and a new component entitled "Peel Spark" has been added. Video content management is an important aspect of this initiative, as videos play a major role in the teaching and learning process. Patrick McQuade advised members that staff have created in-house applications for use in Peel classrooms, and he clarified that the Board has a contract with Apple Inc. which enables schools to buy the products they need.

.....

IP-06, moved by Robert Crocker, that the meeting continue beyond 20:30 hours.

..... carried

.....

Patrick McQuade clarified that game-based learning is supported in many classrooms in Peel, and he noted that gamification is an interesting way for teachers to get familiar with new products, support students, and make curriculum links. Patrick McQuade stated that the Ministry of Education has a bank of resources available to teachers and students, which also includes embedded videos.

IP-07, moved by Suzanne Nurse, that the report re 21st Century Teaching and Learning Strategy, be received.

..... carried

8. Deferral of Agenda Item

Chair Williams stated that, due to time constraints, Item 10.4, Health and Physical Education Curriculum Implementation – Community Sessions, is deferred to a future agenda.

9. Question Period

There were no questions.

10. Public Question Period

Stan Taylor referred to Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Poleen Grewal's response of January 5, 2016, and he also commented on discussion during the current meeting about surveying students at different stages of their learning to assess educational growth. He stated that, since his request to do something similar was not considered, he took the opportunity to survey students before they graduated from the system. Stan Taylor indicated that the results of his survey were presented to Trustees Crocker, McDonald and Singh, and that he had asked for feedback. He noted, however, that Trustee Crocker had advised him to forward his research findings to Superintendent Grewal. Stan Taylor stated that Trustee Crocker subsequently forwarded the research findings to Superintendent Grewal, and he asked if a response had been provided to Trustee Crocker or the other trustees named in the letter. Stan Taylor queried statements made in the letter about the methodology and ethics of the research conducted. He indicated that the survey was not conducted on Peel school property, and reiterated that he had not acted unethically in speaking with Peel students outside school property and on their free time. He commented that the statement about ethics is defamatory and has impugned his character, and he asked that the statement be reconstructed. Stan Taylor stated that, although the Board has refused to engage with him regarding suggestions made earlier, he attempted to seek the support of the new trustees on the subject. He commented that the Board has accused him of repeatedly pursuing the same topic, and clarified that, although his goal remains the same, he has pursued it from a different angle. He indicated that while surveying the students he was at all times respectful. Stan Taylor remarked on what he felt were concerns expressed about the Nyman-Waterman Report, and the Cathexis Study. He stated that he has always tried to stay on topic and incrementally move the discussion forward, but the Board's refusal to engage with him on the subject is an infringement of his rights. Board Chair McDougald, Superintendent Grewal, and trustees responded to comments and questions raised.

11. Adjournment

IP-08, moved by Janet McDougald, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary