

ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting – April 13, 2022

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met in-person and virtually on Wednesday, April 13, 2022. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

Council Members:

Roger Nesbitt, Chair; Jane Logan, Wayne Spires, David Connell, Amanda Hamm (Virtually), Beth McQuinn Nixon, Shelly Merrill-MacKillop, Jonathan Barry and Richard Malone.

ASD-S Staff:

Zoë Watson, Superintendent; Jessica Hanlon, Director of Communications (Virtually); Ryan Price, Director of Curriculum & Instruction (Virtually); Allan Davis, Director of Schools, Hampton Education Centre; Derek O'Brien, Director of Schools, St. Stephen Education Centre; Peter Smith, Director of Education – Support Services; John MacDonald, Director, Finance & Administration, Susan Cunningham, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order/Welcome/Regrets

Mr. Nesbitt, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm. He advised that Heather Gillis and Amanda Henderson-Matthews were unable to attend tonight's meeting.

Mr. Nesbitt began the meeting respectfully acknowledging the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We strive for respectful relationships with all the peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.

2. Approvals

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Nesbitt referred to the Agenda for the meeting and asked that if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Spires moved that the Agenda be approved as presented with the addition of Public Comment. Seconded by Mr. Malone. Motion carried.

2.2 Approval of Minutes

Mr. Nesbitt referred to the Minutes of the March 16, 2022 meeting and asked if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. There being no questions or concerns, Ms. Hamm moved that the Minutes be approved as presented. Seconded by Ms. McQuinn Nixon. Motion carried.

2.3 Public Comment

No public were present.

3. Superintendent's Report & Update

Mrs. Watson advised that her report had been posted last week for Council to review.

Mrs. Watson received some very sad news on Monday, March 21st, with the unexpected death of a grade 9 student at St. Stephen High School, Dionne Ademolu. Our thoughts were with the EA's, teachers and other staff who supported her. A moment of silence took place to remember Dionne.

She received a letter of appreciation from the Terry Fox Foundation with the list of 45 schools raising money for cancer research this school year – the total is \$30 924. We had Vincent Massey raising \$2114. 50, Sir

James Dunn Academy \$1458.65, Sussex Middle \$5644.00, Harry Miller \$1050.00, Island View \$2170.35. All donations were appreciated by the Foundation.

She mentioned that the district received a generous donation of a “Brushalot Tooth Fairy Kit,” which comes complete with a hardcover book, a stuffed toy horse and a nightlight. The kit was created to help children learn about their teeth in a fun and interactive way. It was developed by Ian Wilms who is also the author of the book. With April being National Oral Health Month, every Grade 1 child in ASD-S is receiving this Kit. We thank Mr. Wilms for this very generous donation.

Mrs. Watson spoke about the three virtual program information evenings which took place at each Education Centre. Approximately 135 people joined the Saint John meeting and 35 in St. Stephen to learn more about Early and Late French Immersion, Intensive French, and the new Language Learning Opportunities initiative as well as FLORA (Language Learning Opportunities in Rural Areas).

Mrs. Watson mentioned that Peter Smith and Jennifer Grant were re-certified as VTRA (Violent Threat Risk Assessment) trainers. The District hosted a two-day VTRA training in March which was attended by members of the Saint John Police, Social Development, our Child and Youth Teams and a few education staff. Due to the supply teacher situation, it prevented us from having a higher number of educators attend.

Mrs. Watson offered congratulations to two girls from Hampton High School on their Mental Health Mondays. This is a student driven initiative which was featured on CBC Information Morning as both girls were interviewed. The interview link was shared with the DEC.

She commented about the Anti-racism Committee who are looking to have the high schools complete a Systemic Racism Survey. The survey was to be completed in April but given the pandemic the administration of it has been challenging.

Mrs. Watson mentioned the report cards were distributed on Monday, April 11th and parent teacher conferences were to be a combination of in-person and virtual the evening of Wednesday, April 13th and half the day on Thursday, April 14th.

She commented about the fact there are nine Principal positions and one Vice Principal position advertised. This is a much higher number than in previous years.

Mrs. Watson spoke about the newcomers and international students in the district. As of March 23, 2022 there are 1574 newcomers and international students. There was some discussion about this information which led to the possibilities of Ukrainian families that may be coming to our district.

4. Presentation

4.1 ENDS #1: Provide a safe, healthy, and welcoming educational environment for learners, staff, families, and partners (Zoë Watson and Jessica Hanlon)

The focus of Ends 1 is to ensure all learners benefit from a positive learning and working environment that promotes health and safety. The first strategy is to support schools to ensure that current health and safety practices limit the potential spread of COVID-19. Beginning in August 2021 EECD Health and Safe Schools Document was updated and introduced to principals, students/families and staff. Communication was critical to ensure staff, students, parents and families were aware of all the criteria which would be in place for the upcoming year. Masking on busses and common areas, limited visitors, staggered entry for students, proof of vaccination, providing rapid tests for staff, and pop up vaccination clinics at some high schools were just some of the items communicated. When an outbreak occurred in the schools, the custodians were contacted and they ensured the rooms impacted were sprayed with a disinfectant.

In the new year, students continued with online/ at home learning until the end of January for K-8 and February 2 for 9-12. Families were asked to notify the school if a student tested positive. Data was shared with the District and to EECD. An ASD-S dashboard was created on our website and updated Mon-Fri at 5:00pm.

Schools with no central ventilation systems were given portable hepa-filter units for each room. A total of 16 schools required units, and five additional schools required units in part of the school.

On March 14, 2022 restrictions were lifted with masking a personal choice, sanitizing, hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette continued. Staff and students were asked to stay home when sick.

The second strategy is to provide families, learners, and staff relevant, timely information regarding the Healthy and Safe Schools Guidelines, COVID-19, and Outbreak Management. We responded to approximately 100 Covid related media requests. Regular updates with live CBC Information Morning interviews when requested, daily Covid dashboard, 100+ Covid notifications updates, many family letters and responses to countless emails to the ASD-S website and calls from families.

Another part of the second strategy was to explore new ways to re-engage families and partners. This would be through parent teacher conferences, planning in-person Kindergarten orientation, year-end activities and having guest speakers/presenters back in our schools. Discussions are happening within schools on re-engaging families.

Mr. Nesbitt asked if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Malone moved to approve the Ends#1 Monitoring Report as presented. Seconded by Mr. Spires. Motion Carried.

5. Business Arising from Minutes

5.1 First Nation DEC Representative – Teresa Sewel

Unfortunately, Ms. Sewell was not able to attend the meeting.

5.2 Minister's Excellence Awards Committee

Mr. Nesbitt reported that the closing for the nominees was April 11, 2022 and the names received will go forward to the EECD. Due to the number of nominations received there were no tasks to perform by the committee.

6. New Business

6.1 EL 3.2 Monitoring Report – Human Resources

The Superintendent stated her monitoring report for this policy was posted as part of the meeting materials.

Mr. Nesbitt asked if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. Ms. McQuinn Nixon moved to approve the monitoring report as presented. Seconded by Ms. Merrill-MacKillop. Motion carried.

7. Information Items

7.1 Member's Notebook

Mr. Spires commented on how in the past the students at St. Stephen Elementary collected 500 boxes of cereal as a community support project. This time they are collecting dog food for the local SPCA.

Ms. Logan shared about the "It Takes A Village" session which will take place during the evening on May 4th at Simonds High School. The information being shared is "Coming out of Covid – Helping Your Teen Cope."

Mr. Connell mentioned about the lock down which occurred at Simonds High School recently with a student being in the school with an imitation gun.

Ms. Hamm mentioned since the last DEC meeting she had the opportunity to attend the Westfield School PSSC in late March. The PSSC team discussed several challenges that have been observed since the return to in person learning: Attendance continues to be an ongoing struggle with both staff and students. There has been a number of socialization challenges and increased anxiety observed in students. An increased focus is being made on SEL (Social Emotional Learning) to help enhance mental fitness with all students. The staff are currently focusing on bridging the learning gaps that have developed over the pandemic and are defining how the school improvement plan can be leveraged in this process.

During this session, they also discussed education governance reform. The parent committee expressed concerns over the lack of representation on the draft Regional Council model for individual schools.

She also attended the HVHS PSSC meeting and is pleased to share the “It Takes a Village” event will take place May 4th from 6:30pm-8:00pm at Simonds High School - “Coming out of COVID – Helping your Teen Cope”. During the PSSC session, governance reform was also discussed. Several positives were highlighted as well as gaps. The PSSC noted that the current model sees more parent participation at the school level.

A number of families have contacted Ms. Hamm to advocate the return to school masking policies. By removing masks it has removed students from school, removed teachers and support staff from their classrooms, and removed health care professionals from hospitals she stated that 19 pediatric physicians recently released an open letter requesting a return for masks in schools - to help provide more time to slow down the rapid spread of the virus that removing mask mandates has caused. This is all despite the extraordinary effort district leaders have put into strategic planning and mitigation actions to deal with high staff absenteeism rates. The ASD-S leadership team has done an amazing job in this area.

All other Atlantic Provinces (NS, PEI, and NF) have masking requirements in school and they all advocate the important role masks play in reducing the transmission of COVID-19.

Ms. McQuinn Nixon supports masking returning to the schools.

7.2 Chair’s Report and Update

Meetings

March 18-19, 2022 – Minister’s Forum which really turned out to be a meeting regarding the Governance Review that is currently underway.

March 21, 2022 – Teams meeting with Zoe Watson and John MacDonald.

March 23, 2022 – In person PSSC at Lakefield Elementary.

March 28, 2022 – In person PSSC at Quispamsis Middle.

April 4, 2022 – Appeal hearing at District Office.

April 5, 2022 – In person meeting at District Office with Ashley Counsel, George Daley and Craig Caldwell regarding Governance Review.

April 6, 2022 – Zoom meeting with DEC Chairs and Vice Chairs.

7.3 Correspondence

Posted for this meeting.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Nesbitt thanked all who attended this evening's Council meeting and reminded Council the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 11, 2022.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:41p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Roger Nesbitt, Chair

Susan Cunningham, Recording Secretary