

ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting – February 12, 2020

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met on Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 490 Woodward Avenue, Saint John. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

Council Members:

Rob Fowler, Chair; Roger Nesbitt, Vice Chair; Lory-Ann MacAskill, Kristen Murphy, Bernie Regenbogen, Wayne Spires, Dan O'Connor, Linda Sherbo, Richard Malone, Larry Boudreau, Heather Gillis, Justin Tinker (via telephone)

Regrets: None

ASD-S Staff:

Zoë Watson, Superintendent; Paul Smith, Director of Schools, Saint John Education Centre; John MacDonald, Director of Finance & Administration; Peter Smith, Director Education Support Services, Gary Hall, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Jessica Hanlon, Director Communications, and Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order/Welcome/Regrets

Mr. Fowler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. He welcomed those in attendance and advised that this meeting was being broadcast live on Facebook.

2. Approvals

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fowler asked if there were no questions or concerns with the Agenda that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the agenda be approved. Seconded by Mr. Spires. Motion carried.

2.2 Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fowler referred to the Minutes of the January 8, 2020 meeting and asked that if there were no questions or concerns that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Regenbogen moved that the Minutes be approved. Seconded by Ms. Murphy. Motion carried.

2.3 Public Comment

Ms. Katie Harding, parent, addressed Council with regard to the Policy 409 review of Morna Heights School. She detailed her concerns with the provincial policy, the process, the information provided by the District (or lack of information provided) and commented that she felt not all questions were answered. Ms. Harding stated that she felt that there had been a lack of transparency and a lack of consideration for students, staff and families.

Mr. Fowler addressed a number of concerns that were raised and provided information on the Policy 409 process.

3. Member's Notebook

Mr. O'Connor commented on a presentation by a former student of the IDEA Centre that was given at City Council on parking for students at the two uptown high schools and suggested it might be something this Council might be interested in. It was agreed that Erin Cusack, NBCC student, be offered an opportunity to present to DEC at a future meeting. He thanked the Superintendent and Principals involved in getting Dr. Barker to present on the Coronavirus in conjunction with the It Takes a Village group. He noted that a guest speaker presented at Hampton High School on "Anxiety" with about 40 people attending. He also

advised that he saw on Facebook that the District Science Fair/STEM Expo are looking for up to 8 sponsors to donate \$25 gift cards.

Ms. Sherbo circulated a booklet she received at a recent District Health Advisory meeting which focused on positive ways to feel about things. She noted the initiative was started by the homeless in California as a fundraising effort and it is spreading across the country. She commented that she felt the recent Green Paper consultation with Minister Cardy had been positive, that he is seriously reflecting on the role of DECs and that he was listening.

Ms. Sherbo commented feedback she has received indicates that it is sometimes difficult for students to understand the wording of questions on provincial surveys (i.e. a question on the TTFM survey on advocacy) and questioned how useful the results are and the amount of instructional time they take. Mrs. Watson reviewed the surveys being conducted in ASD-S and noted that the District has talked to the Department (regarding the TTFM survey) and advised that it would be sufficient to implement it every two years. She also noted they requested the Department look at the Grade 12 Exit survey and whether or not it needs to be done every year.

Ms. Gillis advised that there will be a Mental Health Night on April 21st at Bayside Middle, with Mayor Don Darling, Pam Pasternak and a representative from ISD as guest speakers. Community partners will set up information booths (Gentle Path, YMCA, Community Police, etc). Champlain Heights are planning an information session in late April for parents on Cybersecurity and how to keep your children safe. Champlain Heights held a focus group to dig deeper into the student perception survey results because a higher percentage of children said they did not feel safe at school (for reasons such as falling on ice and vehicles not stopping for the flashing red lights).

4. Policy 409 Morna Heights School – Decision

Mr. Fowler advised that he would be reading into the record the summary document of the consultations held at Morna Heights School followed by a request for a motion. At that time, the floor would be open to Council members who had questions or wished to make a comment.

Mr. Fowler then read into the record the summary document of the meetings that were held at Morna Heights School. The summary document is attached to and forms part of these Minutes.

Mr. Fowler then called for a motion. Motion was made by Mr. Nesbitt that Council direct the Superintendent to inform Minister Cardy that we recommend the closure of Morna Heights School. Seconded by Ms. Murphy. The floor was then open for discussion.

Ms. Gillis commented that she appreciated the passion from the community and thanked Mr. O'Connor for bringing forth questions which arose during the community meetings. She also thanked Ms. Hanlon for responding to the questions received on the school review email.

Mrs. Sherbo expressed her support for the comments made by Ms. Gillis. She commented that she takes the fiscal responsibility of the Province seriously and that we are not sustainable the way we are now. How do we balance the inequities? We have to start somewhere in order to provide the best education for all students throughout the District.

Mr. O'Connor commented that he had reviewed all the information received during the Policy 409 process and that he was struggling with the effect a closure would have on the community versus the Province's need to cut costs.

Ms. Murphy advised that she had spent a considerable amount of time going back and forth reviewing all the information. She addressed the criteria in s.6.5 of Policy 409 and commented on the declining enrolment, the school being at 48% capacity, there being no issues with the structure, air quality levels are not a threat, the school has been using potable water for years, the school offers exceptional programming/services, transportation – not a lot of kms, emphasis was placed on finances - the fiscal reality of the Province – it is our job to ensure smooth operations – but the financial impact of Morna is less than 1% of overall District budget, the primary savings is in maintenance, etc., we struggle with funding line items due to underfunding from EECD (i.e. EA shortages), there is no real indication of the effect on economic development in the Morna area, the community has come out guns blazing, there are no threshold issues that would impact other schools.

Mr. Boudreau commented that he would not be voting to close Morna, as he has done every other time a closure has been on the table. He stated that he understands the fiscal reality, but this represents only 1% of the District budget – it is not big enough to be impactful and we should not be playing with students' education. He commented that Policy 409s need to be done as a proper plan – for example, we don't need four high schools in Saint John, and a review of the whole education system is needed.

Mr. Spires commented that DEC members represent their own subdistrict; however, they are required to look at the District as a whole, the District is underfunded and the government is not providing the necessary funding. We have to consider the whole District – closing Morna won't save the District but we have to start somewhere. Our job is to recommend a course of action to the Minister, he will make the final decision.

Mr. Regenbogen commented that he was struggling with this decision. We would like to keep all schools but the fiscal reality is important.

Mr. Nesbitt commented that he will vote in favour of the motion after considering the 8 factors in their totality as it is in the best interest of all concerned.

Mr. O'Connor then asked if Council had been granted permission to delay the third meeting/vote on this sustainability study. Mr. Fowler confirmed that we did receive permission from the Minister.

Mr. Tinker commented that the cost of operating Morna Heights versus others is minimal; however, the cost per child is higher than average. He noted the systemic funding issues, and the fact that we need to make the best decisions for the District as a whole, including the unpleasant ones. It is our economic reality.

There being no further comments or questions, motion carried. Mr. Boudreau and Ms. Murphy voted against the motion.

The Superintendent will advise the Minister of this recommendation and he will then have 30-60 days to make a final decision. Mr. Fowler thanked all for their participation in this difficult process.

5. Presentations

5.1 ENDS # 4 – Mental Health/Mental Fitness

Peter Smith, Director of Education Support Services, Monica Vautour and Heather Whittaker, provided Council with an overview and updates on the strategies under ENDS #4 - To provide opportunities for staff to learn about mental health issues in children and youth and to promote school and District wide initiatives that promote mental fitness. The monitoring report was posted with Council's meeting materials for their review and forms part of these Minutes.

Mr. Smith provided an overview of the main strategies which focused on providing professional learning for guidance staff to meet recommendations of EECD (2 days of PD in November and February as well as

Mental Health First Aid, Violent Threat Risk Assessment and ASIST), training of counselling leads to provide clinical supervision to new guidance counsellors and teachers, expanding mental health first aid training to school based staff with a target of 150 annually, expanding District sponsored initiatives both nationally recognized and District developed and promoting positive education strategies/Celebrate. He noted that these initiatives are on target. Mr. Smith also reviewed outcomes from the grades 6-12 NB Student Wellness Survey and compared ASD-S results with the corresponding provincial results.

Ms. Vautour spoke on the training of counselling leads to provide clinical supervision. She explained that two school counselling leads provide coaching and supervision to school counsellors and that all new counsellors and all guidance teachers receive coaching and supervision from these leads.

Heather Whittaker addressed the expansion of District sponsored initiatives using resources both nationally recognized and District developed. She reported that this year nationally recognized programs used at the K-8 schools were reviewed and note that the most commonly used programs at the elementary level include: Zones of Regulation (37/42 schools); WITS (21/42 schools); Mind Up (15/42 schools) and Rainbows, Roots of Empathy, & Superflex (11/42). She provided Council with additional materials which further explained the Zones of Regulation program.

Mr. Smith detailed the Mental Health Forum from December 2019 with 45 students representing all high schools. He explained that each school then developed an initiative to take back to their schools – i.e. Grand Manan – a dedicated week of mindfulness activities; Harbour View High – a Youth in Action Mental Health Group; Simonds High School – creating a wellness room; Harbour View High School – having a resiliency speaker series. It is key for schools to develop local projects.

Questions followed the presentation and all were addressed by Mr. Smith and the Leads.

Following the presentation, Mr. Malone moved that the monitoring report for ENDS #4 be accepted as presented. Seconded by Ms. Gillis. Motion carried.

Mr. Fowler thanked Mr. Smith and his team for their informative presentation.

6. Business Arising from Minutes

There were no items for discussion.

7. New Business

7.1 Executive Limitations 3, 4 & 3.1

Mr. Fowler suggested that due to the late hour, this item be moved to the March agenda. All were in agreement.

7.2 Schools not visited by DEC (from Policy 4.6)

Mr. Fowler suggested that due to the late hour, this item be moved to the March agenda. All were in agreement.

7.3 Quispamsis Easement

Mr. MacDonald reviewed a Briefing Note which had been posted with Council's meeting materials for their review and forms part of these Minutes.

The request was from Origins Natural Learning Childcare to obtain an 8-metre wide easement across land under the control of Anglophone South School District in order to connect a sanitary line from their new daycare into the Town's sanitary infrastructure.

Following the review, Mr. MacDonald advised that the District is fine with granting the easement. There being no questions or concerns, Mr. Spires moved that the request for an easement be granted as presented. Seconded by Ms. Sherbo. Motion carried.

8. Information Items

8.1 Superintendent's Report

Ms. Watson advised Council that her report was posted with Council's meeting materials for their review for tonight's meeting and forms part of these Minutes.

Ms. Watson shared with Council a request from Kevin Simpson to name the gym at Island View School in memory of Robert MacMurray, a teacher of 13 years – 10 in Physical Education. She circulated an image of the sign that would be displayed in the gym. There will also be a scholarship in his memory.

Ms. Watson advised Council that this week was Staff Appreciation week and she wanted to publicly thank the 3,000+ staff of ASD-S for their hard work and dedication to students and families across the District.

She noted that ASD-S had spent a morning with seven office staff at Portage in Cassidy Lake so they could view first hand the programs offered. District Office has in the past provided support to Portage and used Casual Day funds at Christmas time to purchase gifts for students who would not have a safe place to go during the holidays. This year ASD-S provided a Christmas tree.

She noted the artwork that had been painted by a student which was on display in the meeting room. It was commissioned for ASD-S and depicts the stages one goes through while in the program. She advised that she will send Council a picture of a Remembrance Day painting by the same artist.

Ms. Watson noted that during the recent Dairy Town Classic basketball tournament students and staff unveiled the name of the gym after Peter MacAllenan, a retired Sussex Regional High School teacher and coach. It was certainly a surprise for the coach who had no idea it was going to happen.

8.2 Chair's Report and Update

Mr. Fowler had nothing new to report at this time.

8.3 Correspondence

None. All correspondence was posted for Council's review.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Fowler thanked all who attended this evening's Council meeting and reminded Council the next meeting will be held at 490 Woodward Avenue, Saint John on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Fowler, Chair

Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary