

Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 7 pm
Via Google Meet

Attendance

Sudbury site:

Tricia Hatfield, Parent, Cyril Varney Public School; Angelina Kasunich, Parent, Lockerby Composite School; Bernadette Rémillard, Parent, Sudbury Secondary School; Allison Andlar, Parent, R.L. Beattie Public School; Natasha Delaney, Parent, Jean Hanson Public School; Sara Pidgen, ETFO representative; Kristina Rivard Gobbo, Principal, Espanola High School; Dan Koziar, Principal, Princess Anne Public School; Doreen Dewar, Board Chair; Judy Kosmerly, Trustee; Melanie Bertrand, Vice-Principal, Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School; Kerry-Lynn Martel, Computers in Education Consultant; Norm Blaseg, Director of Education; Judy Noble, Superintendent of Schools; Nicole Charette, Senior Advisor Corporate Communications and Strategic Planning

Espanola Site:

N/A

Manitoulin Site:

N/A

Call to Order: 7 pm

1. Welcome

Chair Allison Andler welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Self-Introductions

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Due to COVID-19, the meeting was held via Google Meet.

3. Distance Learning During the Pandemic

Computers in Education Consultant Kerry-Lynn Martel and Superintendent Judy Noble

Rainbow District School Board rolled out its teacher-led Distance Learning Plan on April 6, 2020 as schools remained closed due to COVID-19. Teachers, students and parents/guardians adjusted to a new way of living and learning. Superintendent Judy Noble indicated that the Board worked quickly to safely deliver just over 2,000 devices to students. Approximately 130 families received Internet through Eastlink or cell phones provided by the Board in order to access data via hotspot. Some students are learning through paper packages being delivered to homes and assignments being returned to teachers following Public Health guidance. A number of students have joined frontline workers to support families financially or contribute to the greater good during the

pandemic. Support continues to be provided to students and families on academics and wellness, with a strong focus on mental health. The goal of distance learning is to ensure students are well, not adversely affected by school closures, and prepared as much as possible for the next school year and postsecondary studies. Kerry-Lynn Martel reviewed the two main platforms being used by schools – Seesaw for Kindergarten to Grade 6 and Google Classroom for Grades 7 to 12 in both live synchronous learning and pre-recorded asynchronous learning. She provided examples of lessons in each platform. A guide to both platforms is posted on the board website.

4. Approval of Agenda

“That the agenda for the meeting on May 12, 2020 be approved, as amended.”

Moved by: Bernadette Rémillard, Sudbury Secondary School

Seconded by: Natasha Delaney, Jean Hanson Public School

Carried

Amendment: Report of the Provincial Meeting with PIC Chairs

5. Approval of Minutes

“That the minutes of the meeting on December 3, 2019 be approved.”

Moved by: Natasha Delaney, Jean Hanson Public School

Seconded by: Bernadette Rémillard, Sudbury Secondary School

Carried

6. Discussion based on presentation

PIC members had an opportunity to ask questions throughout the presentation.

Parents/guardians were invited to provide their feedback with distance learning. Parents were very appreciative of teachers for demonstrating tremendous care and compassion for their students during this unprecedented time.

7. Summary of PIC input – Distance Learning

PIC Chair Allison Andler participated in a provincial meeting of PIC Chairs hosted by the Ministry of Education. Approximately 100 parents from across Ontario participated in the online meeting. Chair Andler provided a summary of distance learning feedback gathered from parents in Rainbow Schools. The feedback was based on an informal request for feedback from the PIC Chair to School Councils the week of April 20, 2020.

Technology

Variability in reviews of platforms, but mostly positive

Applauded access to technology

Paper mailouts were delayed.

Parents of multiple children or who have a child in multiple classes would appreciate consistency the classroom platform.

Livestreaming helped to keep kids engaged and maintain some social interaction.

In Grades 7 to 12, online classes with live interaction received the most positive reviews.

Teaching

Parents admired the caring and effort of staff.

Teachers put their all into distance learning while managing their own life.

“The connection to her teacher has been priceless” was repeated multiple times as well as “teachers have been caring, innovative and accessible.”

Easy and consistent access to teachers was a positive predictor of satisfaction with the process.

A minority indicated that teachers were not accessible and provided minimal work/supports.

Social impacts

Some parents indicated that it was difficult for children to learn when their basic emotional and mental needs were barely being met. Some families struggle with safety, food, housing, etc.

Schools need to set reasonable expectations that we will not meet all curriculum goals at this time and with this delivery system.

Equity

Distance learning increases the divide between the haves and the have nots.

Students who are struggling fall further behind because they cannot work independently.

Effort and output varied across schools.

Parents expressed a desire for more standardized delivery to ensure all students get what they need for success.

Workload

Most parents were satisfied, but some found the workload inadequate.

Schools need to be aware of the volume of at home learning and consider leaving weekends without assignments/homework.

Parents preferred smaller/broken up tasks over large involved projects.

Messaging

Attendance reporting may have required some explanation prior to implementation.

Many parents took the attendance reporting as contradictory to previous messaging to work when you can, when it works for your family - when it was actually implemented as more of a safety and equity measure.

Sustainability

There was a divide on the desire to go back to in school learning as soon as possible and safely and those in no rush to return to classrooms.

Input reflected that while distance learning is a valiant effort in a time of crisis, it is not equitable or sustainable, and despite best efforts from teachers and administrators, needs are not being met consistently.

Online learning is not built for those who learn differently, have stressors, challenges, existing inequities.

The added stress on families to take on distance learning during a time of crisis was repeated often by parents.

Grade 7 to 12 students are in a better position to manage in the short term.

For K to 6, it was largely perceived as ineffective, exhausting and unsustainable.

Miscellaneous

Parents expressed frustration with lack of access to schools to pick up belongings.

Parents recommended wider/more frequent and more formal surveying of families to quickly assess needs, strengths, etc.

Parents expressed appreciation for schools who continued with Facebook postings, newsletters, school councils/student councils as a means to keep students and families engaged in the school community during this period of relative isolation.

8. Brainstorming for 2020-2021

Tuesday, October 20, 2020*

Annual General Meeting

Topic: Education in an Era of COVID-19

* The AGM was originally scheduled to take place on Wednesday, October 7, 2020 to coincide with the presentation on Safe Schools and Violence Threat Risk Assessment with guest speaker Kevin J. Cameron. The presentation was subsequently rescheduled to Wednesday, April 14, 2021 due to the pandemic.

Topics:

Physical Literacy and Outdoor Activities

Financial Literacy

Specialist High Skills Major – Red Seal

Mental Health and Mindfulness:

Recovery and Resilience (or Bouncing Back After a Pandemic)

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Tuesday, January 5, 2021

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Tuesday, April 13, 2021*

*This date was later changed to Wednesday, April 14, 2021 with a special presentation from 6 pm to 8 pm on Safe Schools and Violence Threat Risk Assessment with guest speaker Kevin J. Cameron in the Lockerby Composite School Auditorium.

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Brainstorming for 2021-2022

9. Communications Report

Nicole Charette, Senior Advisor of Corporate Communications and Strategic Planning, reviewed the information and resources on the board website for learning together while safely apart. The website featured sections on Distance Learning K to 12, Learning at Home, and COVID-19.

Distance Learning K to 12 provides an overview of the Rainbow District School Board's plan to provide continuity of education while schools remain closed to limit the spread of COVID-19, including expectations, planning for student success at home, administrative procedures related to technology and privacy, expectations for students when using a digital tool, online safety, student/teacher/parent/guardian responsibilities during distance learning, Guides for Parents on Google Classroom and Seesaw, distance learning recommendations by grades, assessment, reporting and evaluation, teaching and learning platforms, information for graduating students, communications, support for English language learners, support for students with special needs, and mental health supports and responding to urgent student needs.

Learn at Home provides access to the Ministry of Education's resources. Bilingual materials on Learn at Home continue to be added on a regular basis to provide new and compelling content throughout the period of school closures.

Mental Health provides phone numbers to access the Board's mental health team, the crisis line at Health Sciences North, mental health and wellness tips for families,

information on how to access child and youth mental health services through Compass, and links to resources including Kids Help Phone, Bell Let's Talk, School Mental Health Ontario and more. Rainbow District School Board recognizes that these are stressful times for students and families. Educators and support staff remain focused on supporting physical well-being, mental health and overall wellness.

COVID-19 features the letters to parents/guardians from the Director of Education, Minister of Education, Sudbury & District Medical Officer of Health and Ontario Medical Officer of Health. It also has links to Public Health Sudbury & District and the Ministry of Health where students and families can access the most current information on COVID-19, the status of cases locally and provincially, and public health guidance from physical distancing to hand washing.

10. School Announcements

PIC members shared announcements on mental health resources, fundraising, virtual talent shows and other school events, innovative ways schools are engaging students and connecting with families, school Facebook pages, and graduation photos.

11. Adjournment

"That the meeting be adjourned."

Moved by: Angelina Kasunich, Lockerby Composite School

Carried

Next meeting:

Tuesday, October 20, 2020

Annual General Meeting

Topic: Education in an Era of COVID-19