

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

NAME: Kathi Smith **DATE SUBMITTED:** April 1
NAME OF CONFERENCE: Public Education Symposium
SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: Ontario Public School Boards Association
THEME: Trustee Orientation
CONFERENCE DATES: January 29 – 31, 2015
LOCATION: Sheraton Centre Toronto

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/PRESENTATIONS/KEYNOTE SPEECHES ATTENDED:

Thursday, January 29

1) Setting the Climate for Student Achievement & Well Being - Panel Discussion Between Board Chairs & Directors

- The relationship among trustees and with the Director is key to supporting the work of the Board
- Respect and trust is key among trustees but also between staff and trustees
- Imperative that all you do as a Board relates back to the start plan
- Need data to show how things are working
- If you don't have personal leadership – you don't have professional leadership
- How are we doing at implementing the strategic plan to ensure student achievement in our District?

2) Making Connections – Strategic Plans and Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario – Table Discussion

- Important to have clarity, leadership, excellence in governance and governance practice and accountability – all four are imperative to providing excellent education in your District
- What parts of the vision statement will direct the Board
- Need a work plan for the Board of Trustees that comes from the Strategic plan
- Need to ask yourselves
 - i. Are you doing things because you have always done them
 - ii. Doing things because they are the right thing to do

3) Aligning Resources to Priorities: What Do you Need to Know? What do you need to Ask? – Gabriel Sekaly

- It is important that you listen to what your community needs and wants
- Your school district should reflect your community (for Waterloo Region – that is Innovation & Entrepreneurship – we need to start reflecting that)
- Select activities and priorities that will get you to your goals – then go about allocating budget dollars to implement those things
- What evidence do you use to make decisions?
- It is okay, as trustees, to shake things up, to be innovative – Trustees should set direction, Trustees know the community the best
- We need great ideas that get us to our vision more frugally and more quickly – but we need to be selective in our innovation
- Trustees need to utilize the flexibility in the budget

- Make decisions that fit your Board and your vision – it may mean stopping something you have always done –but may mean better results
- GSN are released at end of March – start in the fall with a build up and plan – don't leave it until the last moments

4) First Nations Trustee Council Meeting

- Meeting of the First Nations Trustee Council welcoming new First Nations Trustees who were elected in the municipal election as well as those appointed by Band Councils
- Update on status of inclusion of First Nations history in general History curriculum

Friday, January 30

5) Mark of a Leader (series of presentations) - Doug Keely

- <http://Buckashave.com> believing in possibility
- The possibility of doing anything
- All you need is a mission and the desire to just do it
- 5 levels of leadership – Spirit Level (idea that is better than us); Right Brain (imagination); Left Brain (intellect); Heart; Hands
- Change or shape the lens through which you see the world
- Story of Diamond Shreddies – whether you think you can or you can't you are right
- Roger Banister running the 4 minute mile – used the team to break the record – not just Roger Banister's success
- What is your 4 minutes mile – what is your team's 4 minute mile?
- Nothing great was ever done alone – you have to surround yourself with great people
- Always be aware of the word you use and how they inspire or limit
- The power that we have at our disposal is the words we use

6) The Power of Why - Amanda Lang

- We are going through a period of rapid change and innovation
- But we are not getting more and more prosperous
- We have a crisis of productivity in our country
- We need, as a country, to be innovative, to do things better than anyone else
- Innovation and productivity are the flip side of one another
- 2 year olds ask why for a living, we stamp out the curiosity in schools and in kids
- Best thing to do for our education system is to “blow it up”
- You can foster an innovative culture by using processes that foster innovation
- Brainstorm with people who are irritating – we find them irritating because we don't think the same way
- Give yourself permission to make changes to how you learn, how you answer, when you laugh
- A timer on a toaster is a reminder every day about the fact that innovation is important

7) How Do We Keep School Boards Relevant – Panel discussion

- The strategic plan is the key base upon which to build your Board – it is imperative that it reflect your community
- The value added from trustees is what you bring to the board from the community
- We need to embrace innovation
- Make sure you answer the question
- If you can't explain it simply – you don't understand it well enough
- Make sure that you are more bottom up than top down
- Employ evidence based decision making
- Create team work among trustees and with staff and trustees

- Foster risk taking
- What is your moral compass? What are your values?
- Never compromise your values or personal beliefs – but be sure you know what they are

8) School Boards Collective Bargaining Act – Panel Discussion

- Last time we were together was to discuss bill 122
- Government had put together something to include all parties
- Result is SCBCBA
- Main purpose is to enhance student achievement and well being

9) Changing Role of Trustees – Panel Discussion

- Diminishing management rights
- Directors now have two masters to whom they report
- Trustees are about leadership, relationships and the art of the possible
- Must have a relationship of trust and candor
- Remember to listen more, speak less (2 ears, one mouth)
- Changing only one trustee has a significant change to a Board – more new trustees, more change – need to work together to build relationships
- Be sure that you have clear job descriptions for trustees, directors and for the Chair within your Board

10) The Whole Child and Student Well Being - Panel Discussion

- School mental health assist
- Accepting schools, system transformation
- Equity, well being, confidence
- If we don't measure, we can't show that kids have not only achieved but are also successful and healthy
- For first nations, we want teachers to be trained to understand the culture and, where possible, be first nations teachers
- Each board has had the opportunity to receive more funds to provide better educational opportunities to First Nations students attending their schools
- For many schools on reserve, there are not iprc, which must be changed
- Utilize student voice activities

Saturday, January 31

11) School Board Governance – Setting the Conditions for Effective Management – Michael Hines

- In schools, P/VP play the role of HR managers
- When a new administrator arrives at a school – they have to learn the labour, relationship culture of that school
- In some cases, the federation rep has more experience in the school and more influence than the P/VP
- Supervisory officers are rarely, if ever on site
- Collective agreements are managed by the P/VP – imperative that be part of their leadership training
- You must have consistency; empowerment; engagement and ownership & control for a P/VP to meet with success in their school
- Over time, Principals and Vice Principals have been treated like well behaved children with little support from the senior official of the board – important that they be given as much (if not more) attention than the teachers have received from school boards

12) Canada & Canadians in a Changing World - Peter Mansbridge

- Peter Mansbridge shared several delightful stories about how travel helps you to understand how Canadians are perceived in the world
- He suggested that you get out of Toronto (or wherever you live) to gain a better perspective on the world
- He started his career at 19 as a baggage handler and being in the right place at the right time got him a job on CBC in Churchill Manitoba after a CBC executive heard him announce a flight

Take-aways

- Important to develop relationships between trustees – respect & trust is key
- Also develop respect and trust between staff and trustees
- Changing one Trustee on a Board makes a significant change to operations (we have three new trustees)
- Media training session should be provided to all trustees
- Strategic Plan should drive direction of the Board (not BIPSA) – important that Strategic Plan reflect the needs of the community
- Innovation is imperative in the education of all
- Budget planning should start with trustees in September – should have discussions over dinner with senior staff and trustees to get to know priorities – discuss community needs
- What lens are you using when you are wearing your trustee hat?
- What is my 4 minute mile in education? What is our team's 4 minute mile?

Actions for our Board (in my opinion upon reflection)

- 1) Work on developing trust and respect among Trustees and with staff – we have 3 new Trustees who we need to help to feel part of a team**
- 2) Provide media training by Trained Professional for all Trustees (perhaps OPSBA's Jeff Sprang)**
- 3) Strategic Plan must be updated ASAP and provide a better strategic direction for the Board as a whole.**
- 4) Innovation and entrepreneurship need to be incorporated into our Board Vision so that we better reflect the community in which we provide education.**
- 5) Budget planning should be a year round process with far more integration into the strategic direction that comes from the revised Strategic Plan.**

Full notes are available upon request. Kathi_smith@wrdsb.on.ca