

WATERLOO REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

NOTICE OF MEETING

The regular monthly **Board Meeting** of the Waterloo Region District School Board will be held in the Boardroom, Building 2, 1st Floor, 51 Ardel Avenue, Kitchener, Ontario, on **Monday, March 25, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.**

AGENDA

Call to Order

Territorial Acknowledgement and O Canada

Approval of Agenda

Announcements/Celebrating Board Activities

2024-2025 Student Trustee Introductions

Trustees C. Johnson / M. Radlein

Communications Good News Update

H. Hughes

Delegations

Consent Agenda**

Receipt/Approval of Minutes:

Approve Minutes - Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of December 5, 2023

Approve Minutes - Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of February 14, 2024

Receive Minutes - Special Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 26, 2024

Receive Minutes - Board Meeting of February 26, 2024

Approve Minutes - Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 18, 2024

Receipt/Approval of Monthly Reports:

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Board Improvement and Equity Plan Update: Pathways and Transitions

S. Miller / C. Hill

Board Reports

Ad Hoc Bylaw Review Committee Update

Trustee M. Radlein

Board Communications

42 Renfrew County District School Board to Minister of Education

**All matters listed under the Consent Agenda are considered not to require debate by the Board of Trustees and should be approved in one motion in accordance with the recommendation contained in each report.

- 43 Waterloo Region District School Board to Prime Minister of Canada
- 44 Peterborough Victoria Northumberland & Clarington CDSB SEAC to Minister of Education
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- 49 Rainy River District School Board to Minister of Education

Other Business

Question Period (10 minutes)

Future Agenda Items (Notices of motion to be referred to Agenda Development Committee)

Adjournment



Report to Board of Trustees

March 25, 2024

**Subject: Staffing Information –
 Retirements and Resignations**

Recommendation

This report is provided for information of the Board.

Status

The employees listed in Appendix A of this report have received acknowledgement of their retirement or resignation.

Background

The board's practice is to receive information regarding staff retirements and resignations at regular monthly board meetings.

Financial implications

Expenses are within the existing approved budget.

Communications

Employees listed in this report have communicated through Human Resource Services.

Prepared by: Graham Shantz, Associate Director, in consultation with Leadership Council.

Staffing Statistics – Retirements
Current at March 25, 2024

Retirements: Elementary Teaching Staff				
First	Last	Position/Location	Retirement Date	Years of Service
Linda	Angus-Fitzpatrick	SERT, St. Jacobs PS	June 30, 2024	26
Ann	Becker	ESL Teacher, Sheppard PS	June 30, 2024	22
Shannon	Brown	Teacher, Conestogo PS	June 30, 2024	30
Christina	Ernst	Teacher, Stanley Park PS	June 30, 2024	35
Melissa	Halvorsen	Teacher, Edna Staebler PS	April 30, 2024	30
Christine	Honderich	Teacher, Forest Glen PS	June 30, 2024	30
Michele	Kleinschuck	Teacher, Forest Glen PS	June 28, 2024	24
Margret	Kuhn	ESL Teacher, Lincoln Heights PS	June 30, 2024	34
Chris	Schroeder	Teacher, Northlake Woods PS	June 30, 2024	37
Karen	Schumacher	Teacher, Sheppard PS	April 30, 2024	32
James	Tauer	Teacher, Lincoln Heights PS	June 30, 2024	34
Susane	Tomchick	Teacher, Franklin PS	June 28, 2024	13

Retirements: Secondary Teaching Staff				
First	Last	Position/Location	Retirement Date	Years of Service
Sarah	Beaton	Teacher, Laurel Heights SS	June 30, 2024	27
Connie	Collins	Teacher, Huron Heights SS	June 30, 2024	25
Jennifer	Dmytrus	Teacher, Preston HS	March 31, 2024	26
Lisa	Douglas	Library Department Head, Elmira District SS	June 30, 2024	31
Cindy	Geimer	Teacher, Preston HS	June 30, 2024	31
Robert	Irwin	Teacher, Cameron Heights CI	June 30, 2024	26
Rick	Jones	Tech Department Head, Cameron Heights CI	June 30, 2024	35
Chad	Newsome	Geography Department Head, Jacob Hespeler SS	June 30, 2024	30
Thies	Scheele	Business Department Head, Glenview Park SS	June 28, 2024	17
Robert	Taylor	Teacher, Bluevale CI	June 30, 2024	32
Lynn	Thomson	Teacher, Cameron Heights CI	June 30, 2024	29
Pat	Timms	Guidance Department Head, Cameron Heights CI	June 30, 2024	30

Retirements: Administrative & Support Staff				
First	Last	Position/Location	Retirement Date	Years of Service
Laura	Burkard	Assistant Officer Supervisor, Forest Heights CI	July 31, 2024	23
Erica	Gillespie	Principal, Moffat Creek PS	June 30, 2024	27
Tracey	Hawthorne	Educational Assistant, Blair Road PS	June 28, 2024	23
Hilda	Janzen	Supply Educational Assistant	March 1, 2024	11
Tamara	Kaufman	Principal, Forest Glen PS	June 30, 2024	31
Linda	Kersey	Educational Assistant, Sunnyside PS	April 26, 2024	19
Paula	LeBrun	Vice Principal, Elmira District SS	June 30, 2024	32
Sharon	Morgan	Principal, Chalmers Street PS	June 30, 2024	32
Lyall	Ward	Guidance Secretary, Grand River CI	May 17, 2024	43

Staffing Statistics – Resignations

Current at March 25, 2024

Permanent Staff Resignations			
First	Last	Position/Location	Resignation Date
Jessica	Aivaliotis	Custodian, Galt CI	March 6, 2024
Sarah	Carnegie	Educational Assistant, Jacob Hespeler SS	March 7, 2024
Daniel	Carranza Jimenez	In School Technician, ITS	March 20, 2024
Lauren	Contini	Early Childhood Educator, Preston PS	March 4, 2024
Emily	Derry	Secretary, Moffat Creek PS	March 15, 2024
Amy	Haertel	Child Youth Worker, Laurentian Heights SS	June 28, 2024
Andrea	Isogai	Teacher, Centennial PS (C)	March 15, 2024
Manmeet	Kaur	Educational Assistant, William G Davis PS	March 22, 2024
Caitlin	Kelly	Teacher, Tait Street PS	March 5, 2024
John	Kruzlics	Educational Assistant, Clemens Mill PS	March 8, 2024
Jacob	Lah	Custodial Maintenance Helper, Laurentian Heights SS	February 26, 2024
Hayley	MacNaughton	Ealy Childhood Educator, Hillside PS	March 5, 2024
Yvonne	Martens	Secretary, Special Education	March 8, 2024
Jessica	Rodriguez	Secretary, Westheights PS	March 8, 2024
Sarah	Vogel	Educational Assistant, St. Jacobs PS	March 22, 2024



Report to Board of Trustees

March 25, 2024

Subject: Staffing Information – Appointments

Recommendation

This report is provided for information of the Board.

Status

The staff appointments as noted on Appendix A of this report are effective the dates indicated.

Background

The board's practice has been to have appointments presented for information at regular monthly board meetings.

Financial implications

Expenses are within the existing approved budget.

Communications

Employees listed in this report have been advised of the appointments.

Prepared by: Graham Shantz, Associate Director, in consultation with Leadership Council.

Staffing Information – New Appointments

Current at March 25, 2024

New Appointments: Elementary Teaching Staff			
First	Last	Location	Effective Date
Liliane	Bahloul	Rockway PS	March 18, 2024
Jennifer	Enns Modolo	Hillside PS	March 18, 2024
Alissa	Koth	Stewart Avenue PS	February 12, 2024
Kristopher	Misner	Special Education	March 25, 2024

New Appointments: Administrative and Support Staff			
First	Last	Position / Location	Effective Date
Wendy	Eichler	Secretary, Parkway PS	March 5, 2024
Abel	Espinosa	Custodian, Lackner Woods PS	March 11, 2024
Tally	Laurin	Custodian, Glencairn PS	March 21, 2024

New Hires - due to retirements, resignations or leaves and are to replace full or part time vacancies.

Human Resources & Equity Services



Report to Board of Trustees

March 25, 2024

Subject: Student Suspension/Expulsion Report January, 2024

Recommendation

This report is provided for the Waterloo Region District School Board with information regarding monthly and year-to-date suspension/expulsion data.

Status

Comparing year to date from January 2023 and January 2024, elementary suspensions have increased by 73 and secondary suspensions have decreased by 150.

Comparing year to date from January 2023 and January 2024, school expulsions have increased by 1 and board expulsions have increased by 4.

The most recent month's suspension and expulsion data is included below. The data is accurate up to, and including, the date of collection.

Suspensions

- Total elementary school suspensions in January 2023 - 70, year to date - 411
- Total elementary school suspensions in January 2024 - 71, year to date - 484
- Total secondary school suspensions in January 2023- 137, year to date - 840
- Total secondary school suspensions in January 2024 - 106, year to date - 690

Expulsions

- Total school expulsions in January 2023 - 0, Year to Date 1
- Total school expulsions in January 2024 - 0, Year to Date 2
- Total board expulsions in January 2023 - 3, Year to Date 9
- Total board expulsions in January 2024 - 1, Year to Date 13

Violent Incidents

The term violent incident is defined as the occurrence of any of the following or the occurrence of a combination of any of the following; possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm, physical assault causing bodily harm requiring medical attention, sexual assault, robbery, using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person, extortion, hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences.

- Total elementary/secondary violent incidents in January 2023 - 13, Year to Date 42
- Total elementary/secondary violent incidents in January 2024 - 6, Year to Date 50

Background

As requested by the Board, suspension/expulsion data will be presented at the Board meeting in October, November, January, March, and May of each year.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications.

Communications

Upon request, suspension/expulsion data is communicated to the Ministry of Education for statistical purposes.

Prepared by: Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being,
B. Cathcart, System Administrator, Learning Support Services,
and in consultation with Leadership Council



Report to Board of Trustees

March 25, 2024

Subject: Student Suspension/Expulsion Report February, 2024

Recommendation

This report is provided for the Waterloo Region District School Board with information regarding monthly and year-to-date suspension/expulsion data.

Status

Comparing year to date from February 2023 and February 2024, elementary suspensions have increased by 112 and secondary suspensions have decreased by 115 .

Comparing year to date from February 2023 and February 2024, school expulsions have increased by 1 and board expulsions have decreased by 2 .

The most recent month's suspension and expulsion data is included below. The data is accurate up to, and including, the date of collection.

Suspensions

- Total elementary school suspensions in February 2023 -108, year to date - 542
- Total elementary school suspensions in February 2024 - 166, year to date - 654
- Total secondary school suspensions in February 2023 - 119, year to date - 963
- Total secondary school suspensions in February 2024 - 156, year to date - 848

Expulsions

- Total school expulsions in February 2023 - 0, Year to Date 1
- Total school expulsions in February 2024 - 0 , Year to Date 2
- Total board expulsions in February 2023 - 5, Year to Date 16
- Total board expulsions in February 2024 - 1, Year to Date 14

Violent Incidents

The term violent incident is defined as the occurrence of any of the following or the occurrence of a combination of any of the following; possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm, physical assault causing bodily harm requiring medical attention, sexual assault, robbery, using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person, extortion, hate and/or bias-motivated occurrences.

- Total elementary/secondary violent incidents in February 2023 - 6, year to date 48
- Total elementary/secondary violent incidents in February 2024 -7 , Year to Date 57

Background

As requested by the Board, suspension/expulsion data will be presented at the Board meeting in October, November, January, March, and May of each year.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications.

Communications

Upon request, suspension/expulsion data is communicated to the Ministry of Education for statistical purposes.

Prepared by: Bill Lemon, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being,
B. Cathcart, System Administrator, Learning Support Services, and in
consultation with Leadership Council



Report to Board of Trustees

March 25, 2024

Subject: Reported Student Behaviour Incidents Quarterly Data

Q2 –2023-2024

Recommendation:

This report is provided for information purposes only.

Status:

The Board continues to monitor and respond to incidents summarized in this report. The following are strategies that have been implemented.

- The Board has recently introduced new and innovative staffing initiatives to help support the needs of our highest needs students.
- Employee absenteeism and attrition can introduce new complexities with supporting complex students when new and/or different staff interact with them.
- We continue to be proactive in utilizing our BMS team to support staff and administration in the following ways:
- Responding to student specific referrals addressing supports for safety plans, review of critical incidents, and classroom observations and audits;
- Providing site specific BMS support (i.e., practice a containment, student specific interventions etc.);
- Supporting growing system needs in BMS by continuing to train new trainers;
- Assisting in facilitating the transition of students returning to in-school learning;
- Directly supporting transition planning to ensure staff feel supported and that we are setting both students and staff up for success;
- Proactively identifying schools and students that may require direct support from BMS;
- Analyzing and actively investigating special education paraprofessional resources to better support schools;

Student Behaviour incidents are recorded under four (4) categories in order of severity from least severe to most severe:

Hazard: The worker is reporting a hazard, the worker sustained no injury during the incident or it was a near miss. The Board and Unions actively encourage employees to report workplace hazards in order to act proactively to prevent more serious incidents.

First aid: Applying minor first aid measures like cleaning minor cuts, scrapes or scratches; applying a band aid, cold compress or ice pack. First Aid is provided at the workplace.

Health care (or medical aid): Worker sustained an injury requiring medical aid from an external health care practitioner (i.e., a doctor, nurse, chiropractor or physiotherapist); services provided at a hospital and/or health facility and/or require prescription drugs. This is required to be reported to the Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

Lost Time: The worker sustains injury that requires time away from work after the day of incident and was unable to work. This is required to be reported to the Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

Previous Year Quarterly Report Comparison:

Quarterly student behaviour data as reported by WRDSB staff for the period November 16, 2023-January 31, 2024 compared to the data from the same period November 16, 2022-January 31, 2023 last school year:

- Total Elementary incidents have increased by 407 incidents from the same period last year.
- Total Secondary incidents have increased by 24 incidents from the same period last year.

2023-24 Reporting Information:

Reported Student Behaviour Incidents for the Current School Year (November 16, 2023-January 31, 2024):

- Total Elementary behaviour incidents: **(November 16, 2023-January 31, 2024): 971 Incidents**
 - Hazard – 725 incidents
 - 74.67% of all elementary incidents
 - First Aid – 231 incidents
 - 23.79% of all elementary incidents
 - Health Care –5 events
 - 0.51% of all elementary events
 - Lost Time – 10 events -
 - 1.03% of all elementary events
- Total Secondary behaviour incidents from **(November 16, 2023-January 31, 2024): 66 incidents**
 - Hazard –41 incidents
 - 62.12% of all Secondary incidents
 - First Aid – 25 incidents
 - 37.88% of all Secondary incidents
 - Health Care – 0 incidents

- 0.00% of all Secondary incidents
 - Lost Time – 0 incidents
 - 0.00% of all Secondary incidents
- Total behaviour incidents for hazards, first aid, health care, and lost time per employee group from **November 16, 2023-January 31, 2024 – 1037 Incidents**
 - Custodian and Maintenance – 1
 - 0.10% of total incidents
 - Early Child Educator (ECE) – 131
 - 12.63% of total incidents
 - Educational Assistant (EA) / Child and Youth Worker (CYW) – 492
 - 47.44% of total incidents
 - Elementary Teacher – 302
 - 29.12% of total incidents
 - Elementary Occasional Teacher – 76
 - 7.33% of total incidents
 - Education Support Staff – 4
 - 0.39% of total incidents
 - Non-Union – 2
 - 0.19% of total incidents
 - Professional Support Staff - 1
 - 0.10% of total incidents
 - Secondary School Teacher – 10
 - 0.96% of total incidents
 - Supervision Monitor – 1
 - 0.10% of total incidents
 - Administrators – 17
 - 1.64% of total incidents

2022-23 Reporting Information:

Reported Student Behaviour Incidents for The Current School Year (November 16, 2022 – January 31, 2023):

- Total Elementary behaviour incidents: (**November 16, 2022-January 31, 2023**): **564 Incidents**
 - Hazard – 395 incidents
 - 70.04% of all elementary incidents
 - First Aid – 156 incidents
 - 27.66% of all elementary incidents
 - Health Care – 5 events

- 0.89% of all elementary events
 - Lost Time – 8 events -
 - 1.42% of all elementary events
- Total Secondary behaviour incidents from (**November 16, 2022-January 31, 2023**): **42 incidents**
 - Hazard –18 incidents
 - 42.86% of all Secondary incidents
 - First Aid – 21 incidents
 - 50.00 % of all Secondary incidents
 - Health Care – 1 incident
 - 2.38% of all Secondary incidents
 - Lost Time – 2 incidents
 - 4.76 % of all Secondary incidents
- Total behaviour incidents for hazards, first aid, health care, and lost time per employee group from **November 16, 2022-January 31, 2023 - 606 Incidents**
 - Administrators – 16
 - 2.64% of total incidents
 - Custodian and Maintenance (CAMA) – 1
 - 0.17% of total incidents
 - Early Child Educator (ECE) – 45
 - 7.43% of total incidents
 - Educational Assistant (EA) / Child and Youth Worker (CYW) – 399
 - 65.84% of total incidents
 - Elementary Occasional Teacher –21
 - 3.47% of total incidents
 - Elementary Teacher – 104
 - 17.16% of total incidents
 - MGMT/Other – 2
 - 0.34% of total incidents
 - Secondary Teacher/Occasional Teacher – 18
 - 2.97% of total incidents

Background:

As requested by the Board, student behaviour data is to be provided on a quarterly basis.

Financial implications:

The financial impacts are covered within existing Board approved budget lines.

Communications:

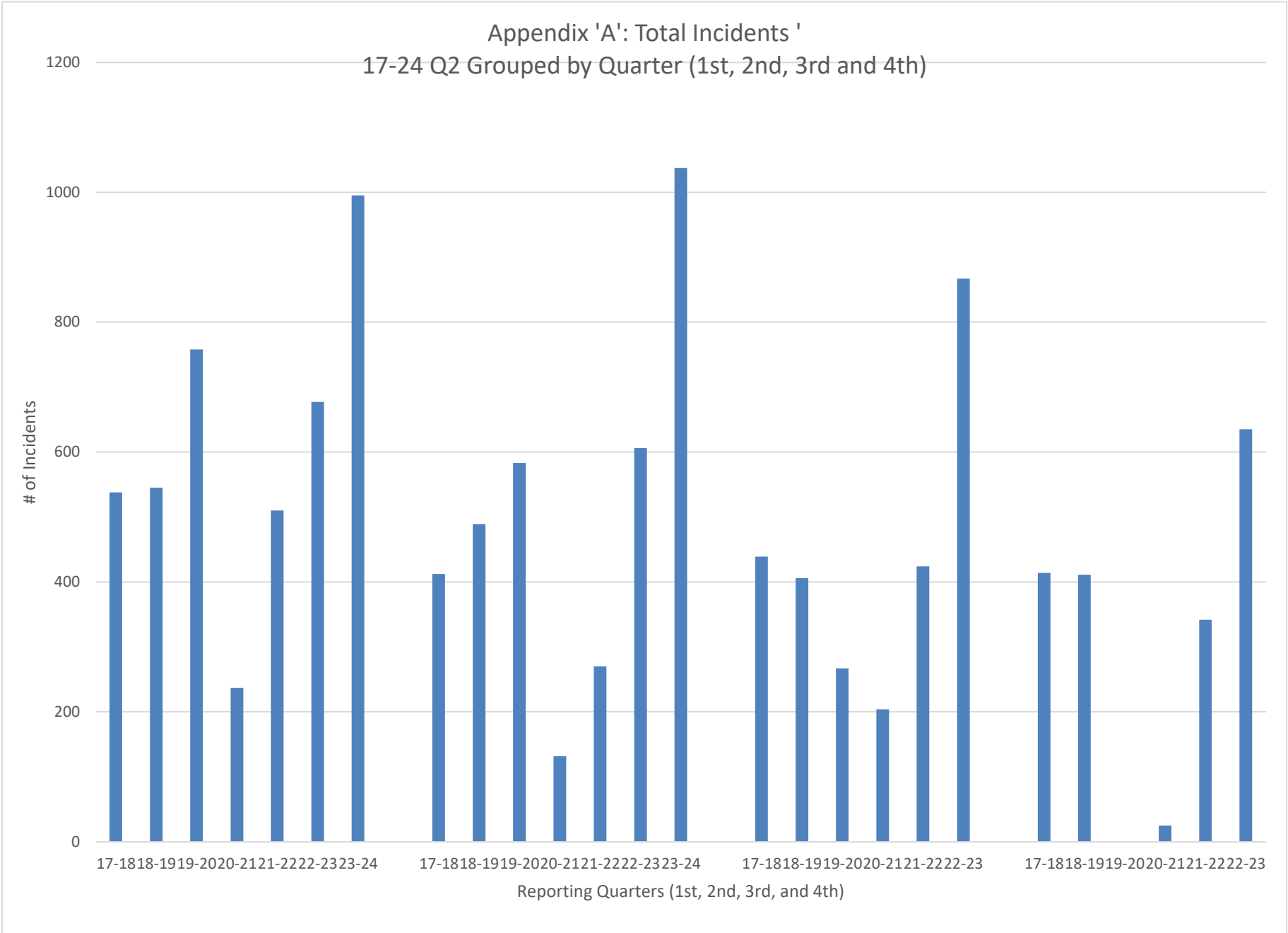
A report of all workplace incidences, including student behaviour is provided every two weeks to the Board's Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC).

Appendices:

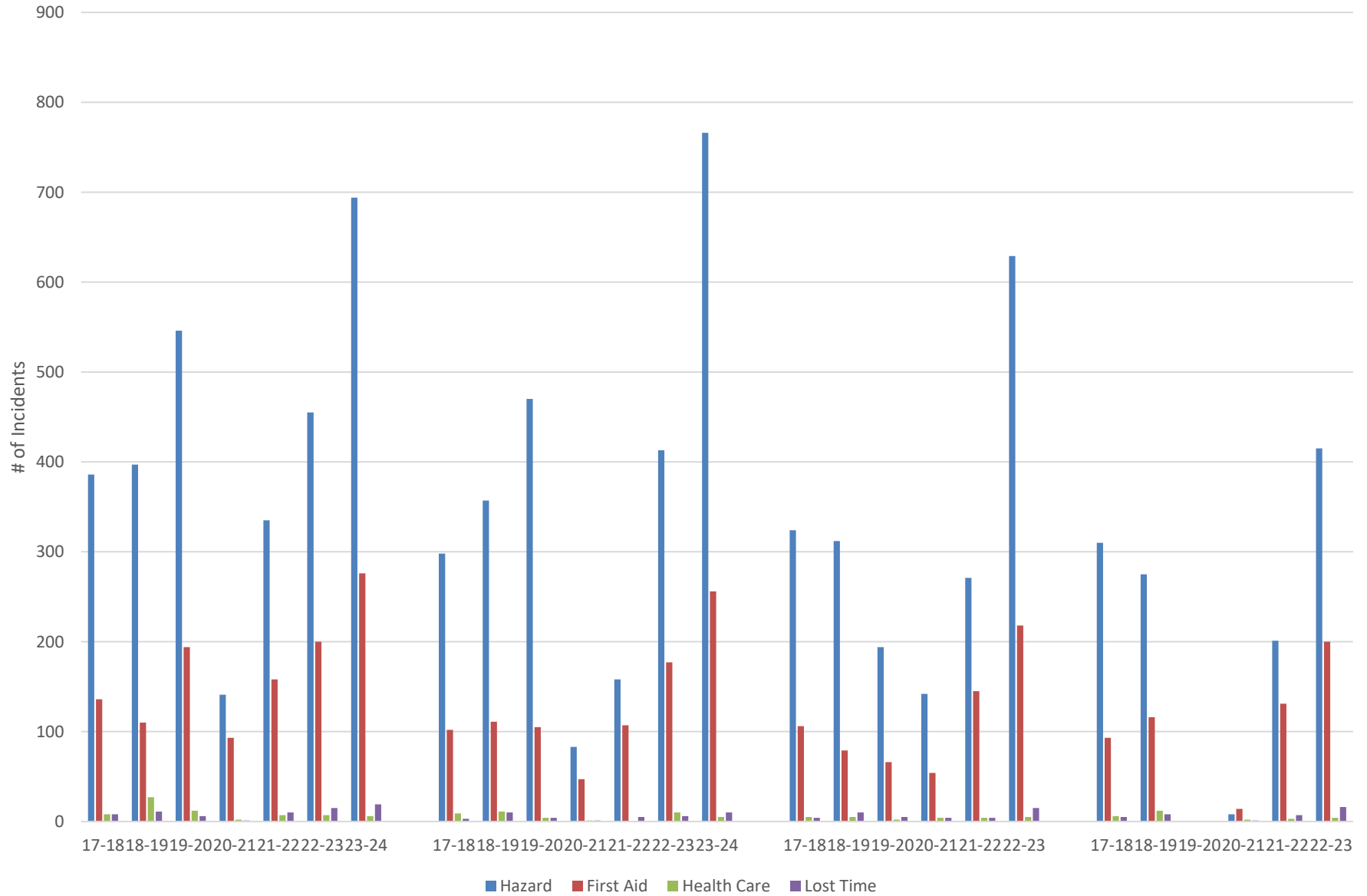
Appendix 'A' – Total Incidents: 2017-2024 Q2

Appendix 'B' – Types of Incidents by Quarter: 2017-2024 Q2

Prepared by: Graham Shantz, Associate Director
 Justin Brown, Senior Manager, Human Resources Services,
 Shannon-Melissa Dunlop, Manager, Health, Safety & Security and in
 consultation with Leadership Council



Appendix 'B': Types of Incidents by Quarter
'17-24 Q2 Grouped by Quarter (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th)



Via Email: ministerofeducation@ontario.ca

February 28, 2024

Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce,

At the February 27, 2024 Board Meeting of the Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB), the Board of Trustees gave direction to write to you to share additional viewpoints regarding Bill 98 for our rural District.

Renfrew County, Ontario's largest county, stretches along the Ottawa River from Deep River to Arnprior and Barry's Bay. We are a rural area known for farming, forestry, and outdoor adventure - covering almost 8,000 square kilometers. Renfrew County, historically Algonquin Anishinaabe territory, includes the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. RCDSB educates almost 10,000 students in 28 schools, fostering an environment valuing imagination and innovation.

We appreciate the potential impact of Bill 98 on enhancing public education in our province. Your commitment to inclusivity aligns with our organizational values, however we would like to highlight the unique challenges faced by small, rural school boards such as the RCDSB.

In boards where students are experiencing low levels of achievement, adopting urban-centric initiatives may hinder their progress. We prioritize fostering connections with families, however conventional engagement methods may prove impractical and/or ineffective due to demanding work schedules and socio-economic challenges which are prevalent in our District.

Our primary concern is addressing the diverse needs of RCDSB students and families.

To maximize the efficacy of Bill 98, we respectfully urge you to consider the following:

- Integrate perspectives from small, rural boards to address challenges and possibilities;
- Ensure initiatives are flexible and can be customized for diverse Districts, with provisions for rural communities to address the needs of every student;
- Provide extra leadership and resources to accommodate the unique needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.

We collectively agree that considering these factors will lead to better outcomes for all students.

On behalf of the RCDSB, I appreciate your consideration and welcome any follow-up in sharing the Ontario government's efforts on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Susan Humphries
Chair of the Board
Renfrew County District School Board


Waterloo Region District School Board

51 Ardelet Avenue
 Kitchener, ON N2C 2R5
 T: 519-570-0003
 F: 519-742-1364
 wrdsb.ca

March 1, 2024

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
 Prime Minister of Canada
 80 Wellington Street
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
 justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

At its meeting on January 29, 2024, the Board of Trustees for the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB), agreed to write to you to express support for the Bluewater District School Board letter dated January 16, 2024 regarding gambling advertisements.

The letter shared a number of concerns regarding gambling:

- The proliferation of gambling advertising, particularly during sports telecasts, has resulted in an alarming number of children and young adults becoming addicted to gambling;
- Gambling can lead to significant harm, including runaway debt, stress to families, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and even suicide;
- Statistics Canada has estimated that 1.6% of adult gamblers, more than 300,000 Canadians, are at moderate to high risk of gambling disorders; and much information on the insidious result of these advertisements can be found at BanAdsForGambling.ca;

The WRDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan has a focus on support for student well-being, as such, the WRDSB supports a legislative ban on advertisements for gambling in Canada in all media and respectfully requests the federal government consider this recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joanne Weston".

Joanne Weston
 Chairperson of the Board of Trustees
 Waterloo Region District School Board

cc: WRDSB Trustees and Student Trustees
 Ontario Public School Boards' Association Member Board Chairs
 Local Members of Parliament



Creating a culture of
faith, hope and love
to ensure equity
and well-being.

January 15, 2024

Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
15th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K8

delivered by email: Minister.edu@ontario.ca

RE: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

Dear Minister Lecce,

The special education budgets in many school boards across the province are overspent year after year, yet the needs of students are not always being fully met. This is not because school-based personnel fail to recognize the needs of these students. It is because there is insufficient staff in the schools to implement programming effectively. This leads to growing gaps and frustration for the students as they try to deal with individualized challenges without the support they need. Increased levels of support would most certainly decrease acute behavioural and mental health struggles. Moreover, consistent levels of support for our students early in their schooling would potentially avert later, more significant struggles.

As per our mandate, the PVNC Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee is actively making recommendations on matters impacting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services - specifically focusing on providing recommendations to update the funding formula that would help serve our students with special education needs. We would ask you to explore three recommendations specifically tied to financial resources in order to update the funding formula to better serve these students. In addition, we have provided 2 other recommendations for review, that the SEAC committee believes, if adopted, would benefit students with special education needs. Please review and consider the following recommendations:

Many students with special education needs are not able to access a school bus in the same way most children do. This could be because of self-regulation issues, anxiety, physical disabilities, etc. This is an equity issue. They deserve the same access to transportation that the students who are able to take the regular school bus have. The current funding for this issue is tied to students taking smaller buses. For boards with a large geographical area and rural components, such as ours, these small buses are



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unavailable; we must rely on taxis and vans to transport these students. The 196 students in our Board with special transportation needs generates \$98,000 of funding while costing our school board \$1,256,000 - a gap of well over a million dollars.

Supervision of elementary students during lunch and recesses is largely the work of educational assistants in many school boards. In PVNC Catholic, elementary teachers complete 80 minutes of supervision per week, as well as working with students, contacting parents, preparing lessons, extracurricular activities, etc., during these scheduled student break times. This results in the bulk of the supervision completed by educational assistants. Our school board currently receives \$300,000 per year to cover all elementary supervision for the year. We encourage you to review the actual cost to school boards in this area, including the cost of covering lunch and breaks, and fund at a more realistic amount.

A portion of funding for special education is often linked to the SIP process and formal testing and diagnosis of students. This means that only students with severely unsafe behaviour or clear medical diagnoses would qualify for enhanced funding. Formal testing of students who are clearly struggling academically, behaviourally, or socially but are not a significant safety risk often takes a significant period of time to occur. There are long waiting lists in school boards for psychometric testing. This results in students with clear needs not being tested, and hence funded, until at least the junior years of elementary school. As a result, we encourage you to continue additional funding for assessments and enhance the allocation of targeted funds through SIP.

Furthermore, this lack of funding is especially apparent for children entering kindergarten. We see students arriving to ELKP with communication, toileting, behavioural and cognitive lags with little or minimal community support in place. It often takes months to work with parents/guardians to begin exploring the child's needs and development through medical and community-based professionals. With no enhanced funding for these students, personnel has to be pieced together to assist these students. This lag in funding results in insufficient personnel to meet the needs of these students during their first five to seven years of schooling. Without the appropriate level of funding for the help they require, these students often fall further behind academically and socially. We encourage you to examine this funding in order to help all students reach their potential. Though early identification of language and math issues is a step forward, it is unrealistic to believe that remediation and intervention can happen without the additional personnel to implement these programmes.

Currently, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health often operate within their own silos, with communication and collaboration of services being extremely difficult if not impossible in some cases. Increased collaboration and communication, including fostering the involvement of



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community professionals with specific expertise to support students from their respective discipline should be a priority in our system. Seamless coordination and communication between each respective Ministry would allow a more timely, comprehensive, and effective delivery model.

Students with caregivers who struggle with transportation, booking/ keeping appointments, mental health impediments, etc. would have those barriers removed. Priority care to students and families would more effectively be delivered with enhanced coordination and communication by all.

Another area where the lack of integration between ministries negatively impacts our students with special education needs is when they prepare to transition from secondary school into the workforce. Targeted funding for these students, beyond traditional school co-op placements, could lead to greater connections and training through the involvement of community organizations. Additionally, if employers were incentivized to invest in these students and retain them as employees following the completion of placements or volunteer hours, this could lead to an increase in opportunities for employment for these individuals as they transition into adulthood.

Our committee believes that updating funding and addressing gaps in coordination and communication to deal with the challenges mentioned above is crucial to the success of our students and the balancing of the special education budget. We encourage you to work to address these needs in order to allow each of our students to benefit fully from their experience in Ontario's school system.

Sincerely,

Kevin MacKenzie
Board Chairperson

Shawna Belcourt
Special Education Advisory Committee Chairperson, Peterborough Victoria
Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board

cc. Chairs of Ontario School Boards' Special Education Advisory Committees

**Waterloo Region District School Board**

51 Ardelet Avenue
Kitchener, ON N2C 2R5
T: 519-570-0003
F: 519-742-1364
wrdsb.ca

March 7, 2024

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 15th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2K8
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Lecce:

Re: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the Waterloo Region District School Board's (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), in support of the letter from the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington CDSB dated January 15, 2024 regarding supporting students with special education needs. We share the concerns identified by the PVNC Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee.

The special education budgets in many school boards across the province are overspent year after year, yet the needs of students are not always being fully met. This is not because school-based personnel fail to recognize the needs of these students. As we work to close learning gaps and support behavioural and mental health needs we need to increase the staff available to support students and the educators who serve them. Increased levels of support would most certainly decrease acute behavioural and mental health struggles and help to close learning gaps. Moreover, consistent levels of support for our students early in their schooling would potentially avert later, more significant struggles.

The WRDSB Special Education Advisory Committee is committed to advocating in support of special education programs and services - specifically focusing on providing recommendations to update the funding formula that would help serve our students with special education needs. Like PVNC, we would ask you to explore some recommendations specifically tied to financial resources in order to update the funding formula to better serve these students.

Please review and consider the following recommendations:

Many students with special education needs are not able to access a school bus in the same way most children do. This could be because of self-regulation issues, anxiety, physical disabilities, etc. They deserve the same access to transportation that the students who are able to take the regular school bus have. The 1108 students in our Board with special transportation needs generates \$554,000 of funding while the projected cost of this special education transportation for our school board is \$9,642,671.

A portion of funding for special education is often linked to the SIP process and formal testing and diagnosis of students. This means that only students with severely unsafe behaviour or clear medical diagnoses would qualify for enhanced funding. Formal testing of students who are clearly struggling academically, behaviourally, or socially but are not a significant safety risk often takes a significant period of time to occur. There are long waiting lists in school boards for psychometric testing. This results in students with clear needs not being tested, and hence funded, until at least the junior years of elementary school. As a result, we encourage you to continue additional funding for assessments and enhance the allocation of targeted funds through SIP.

Furthermore, the lack of funding is especially apparent for children entering kindergarten. We see students arriving at the WRDSB with communication, personal care, behavioural and cognitive lags. We are grateful for our partnerships with families and community based supports but many of the community based services have long wait lists as well. Enhanced funding for our students in their first five to seven years of schooling would be a great support. Without the appropriate level of funding for the help they require, these students often fall further behind academically and socially. We encourage you to examine this funding in order to help all students reach their potential. Though early identification of language and math issues is a step forward, it is unrealistic to believe that remediation and intervention can happen without the additional personnel to implement these programs.

Sincerely,

Shannon Taylor
SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees



Rainy River

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

March 7, 2024

The Honorable Stephen Lecce
 Minister of Education
VIA EMAIL

EDUCATION CENTRE

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Dear Minister Lecce,

I am writing on behalf of the Rainy River District School Board of Trustees in light of the recent announcement by the Ontario government to support post-secondary institutions, with a dedicated \$10 million through the Small, Northern and Rural Grant for colleges and Northern Ontario Grant for Universities. We wish to share our appreciation for this investment in northern education, especially as the likelihood of graduates remaining in the North to work is thus increased.

The Rainy River District School Board is united with many of the northern boards in its desire to see all students achieve academic success and well-being. We appreciate the attention to the significant needs of our communities and students through grants such as the Rural and Northern Education Fund to help close the growing gap in student achievement. However, ongoing challenges experienced by regional school boards with respect to teacher shortages present significant risks in achieving our goals of increasing reading, writing, and math achievement, as well as improving graduation rates.

Northern school boards are experiencing critical teacher shortages. Over the last two years, we have seen 25 to 50% of daily absences go unfilled by an occasional teacher. When there are teacher shortages, school administrators are left to fill in, covering classes and adding supervision to their already busy day, instead of helping to lead the implementation of new curriculum and updated pedagogies.

We know that a caring adult and the relationships that students have with staff are foundational for feeling safe, included, and supported in their learning. In many boards, we are even seeing permanent teaching positions go unfilled. Students in these classrooms experience an ongoing revolving door of adults within their classrooms. As such, they are unable to form those foundational relationships, which further contributes to increased student absenteeism.

Special Education Resource Teachers are often reassigned to cover short-term teacher absences, as their schedules provide the most flexibility when there is no available occasional teacher. This reassignment, coupled with ongoing support Education Assistant shortages, is affecting our most vulnerable students.

Our efforts to move forward with respect to implementing new elementary Language curriculum, best practices in math instruction, destreaming, and other important initiatives, along with the ability to support new teachers in the role through the New Teacher Induction Program, are hindered due to the lack of occasional teachers. Overall,

TOGETHER, WE EMPOWER ALL STUDENTS TO BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES, TO ACHIEVE, AND TO DREAM.

WEB SITE:

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DIRECTOR

Heather Campbell

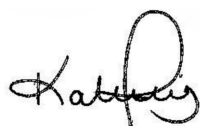
these challenges to teacher supply and demand negatively impact the continuity of learning for students and their overall achievement and well-being.

The teacher supply and demand issue is at a critical point for northern boards. We respectfully request that the Ontario government add Teacher Education to the priority programs listed in the Ontario Learn and Stay Grant for communities within Northern Ontario. This proactive step will assist northern school boards in addressing the teacher labour shortage within this region.

We also look to a similar investment by the Ontario government to help bridge the gap for K-12 students in the North. During the pandemic, our systems and communities saw lengthy school closures with inadequate infrastructure at the time to support online learning. A recent study shows that with each week of closure during the pandemic, student learning levels declined by 1% of a standard deviation. Interruptions to the continuity of learning due to teacher shortages are now further impeding our efforts to engage students, increase attendance, and enhance overall student achievement and well-being. Strong education funding to support math and literacy interventions for students, student success initiatives, and smaller class sizes will help to address the significant student needs being seen across our region.

We thank you in advance for considering these requests and look forward to your continued commitment to strong education funding to support our students in the North.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Pierroz, Chair,
Rainy River District School Board

- c. The Honorable Greg Rickford, Minister of Northern Development and Mines,
MPP Kenora-Rainy River
The Honorable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities
The Honorable Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance
The Rainy River District School Board of Trustees
Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister of Education
Heather Campbell, Director of Education, Rainy River District School Board
Northern School Boards
Ontario Public School Boards' Association