TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Natalie Waddell          Date Submitted: February 2, 2015

Name of Conference: Public Education Symposium 2015

Sponsoring Organization: OBSBA

Theme (If any):

Conference Dates: January 28, 2015 to January 31, 2015

Location: Toronto, Ontario

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

Thursday, January 29 - New Trustee Orientation Session / Opening Ceremonies

I attended a full day session on “New Trustee Orientation” which was put on by the Ministry of Education. This orientation session ran from 8:45 am through to 3:30 pm. The Opening Ceremonies ran from 7 pm until 9 pm.

Throughout the course of the day I had opportunity to listen to Minster Liz Sandals, Deputy Minister George Zegarac, Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Grieves (Early Years Division), as well as many other individuals, including Directors of Education from various school boards and trustees and chairs from around the province.

Much of the conversation of the day was centered around the Ontario government’s recent publication, “Achieving Excellence – A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario” and the province’s goals for education (i.e., achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, and enhancing public confidence). Conversations of the day lead to my reflection on which of these goals the WRDSB are doing well, and which goals need more concentrated efforts in the coming year. Trustees need to work together to ensure that the board is delivering the best quality education system that it can, that our decisions are always based in supporting our strategic plan, and that we are setting the right climate for student achievement and well-being.

Friday January 30 – Main Symposium

I attended the full day; from 9 am until 5 pm. Throughout the day there was opportunity to listen to Amanda Lang, Doug Keeley, various directors of school boards, trustees, chairs, and government officials (including Jim Grieve).
The keynote speaker of the day was Amanda Lang (among other things, author of the book “The Power of Why”). My main take-away from this session was the fact that we need to take a step back and identify where things are working and where things are failing. We should challenge ourselves by asking ourselves “why” and “why not”, and in order to avoid falling into a situation that is simply status quo. By applying this philosophy at the boardroom table (along with other strategies covered in her session), I believe I will be able to make better decisions, as well as offer up more innovative ideas that can promote forward thinking and lead to continuous improvements through collaboration.

The remainder of the day was spent in panel discussions, which included the following topics:

- Good Governance / Ethical Leadership
- The Collective Bargaining Act
- The Changing Role of Trustee
- The Whole Child and Student Well-Being

Each of these sessions provided insights from a variety of people from throughout the province and who play differing roles in the public education system (i.e., chairs, trustees, directors, government officials, etc.). This provided me with well-rounded exposure to various topics and furthered my understanding of things that are critical to my role as a trustee and will aid me in making decisions that support the WRDSB strategic plan.