

WRAPSC Meeting Minutes - April 6th, 2021

Welcome

- Heidi welcomes members of WRAPSC to the meeting.
- Territorial acknowledgement
- Approval of February Minutes and Aprils agenda, motioned by: Lindsay Glass, Seconded by: Megan Ricketts. Motion carried.

33 Participants and 3 guest speakers

Ron Deboer (Superintendent) and Joe Bell (system administrator) with Waterloo District School Board on Co-op and specialist programs that the Board offers

- Joe has led a Pilot Co-op class program in the summer of 2020, which had a positive experience. It was a fully virtual co-op classroom, which carried into fall semesters. This will be offered for summer of 2021.
- There have been many challenges during the Covid pandemic, which has had an impact on in person placements.
- Joe is currently working with a small team right now, coming up with ideas for an online automotive class. At the end of the day, it still has many limitations.
- Joe works with Colleges in a dual credit program. These colleges are having the same struggles for hands-on apprenticeship placements.
- In quad 1 and 2, Joe's team has focused on enhanced health and safety procedures, and how to do them virtually. They are able to create and redo their health and safety measures heading into quad 3, which includes knowing the workplaces covid health and safety measures.
- Some schools are currently offering students Co-op in person placements, as well as virtual co-op placements.
- Specialist high skills major (SHSM) - part of earning SHSM accreditation requires students to do 2 credits of Co-op education. The Ministry of Education recognized last year that this would be difficult and created an opportunity for those at the board level to work with schools to grant students substitutions for those co-op credits.
- Last year, students who were not able to do co-op placements due the early closure of schools, as well as this year with many schools not offering co-op placements, are able to have substitutions to earn their SHSM accreditation.
- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) - targeted towards grade 11 and 12 students, looking at getting some on the job experience through co-op placements and school programming.
- In February, schools were already prepared for the Working at Heights program, which is a specialized training course, that students will use in their co-op placements. This is all able to happen while following the covid health and safety guidelines.
- The board has many health and safety protocols in effect, and this is transferred to the co-op placements. With an assessment being done at the student's placement, it increases the awareness of what students will be facing while heading into their respective career, and what their safety guidelines would consist of in the working world.

- This assessment allows more consistency across the board for safety standards, with over 1000 students in a co-op placement on any given year and gives the teachers direction in assessing these placements.
- Schools are using the D2L Brightspace platform, with new courses that all co-op students must complete. This includes Covid 19 awareness training, reworked worker health and safety, and for the first time students are to complete the workplace violence and harassment course, and any more.
- Workplaces will also do their own health and safety orientation with co-op students at their worksites.
- All students in Co-op placements have access to PPE needed to complete their placements.
- Below are to advertisement videos for OYAP and SHSM:
- OYAP video - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWbaTc_HsvM&t=76s
- SHSM video - designated only for WRDSB students
https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/154OPZ31PG-FCzig_2kubXehl6wTIKtMG
- Currently have 43 programs for SHSM in the school board, which works well with co-op education, as well as other components including experiential learning.
- Questions :
Q: Does the student have to contact the guidance counsellor to make sure that substitution is done, or will it automatically be done?
A: Students do not have to do anything on their end. Currently the board is working with guidance counsellors to flag any graduating students missing their co-op education credits on their transcripts.
Q: Will students be notified ahead of time if they are unable to do a Co-op placement so they can enroll in other courses? Will Co-op be offered in certain terms when covid risks expect to be lowered?
A: The principles are collecting all the course selection data and making decisions as to what courses will be offered next year. Last year in person co-op placements were delayed until the second semester.

Theresa Pastore (Parents Engaged in Education) on Parent Engagement and School Councils

- In the past parent councils mainly looked at fundraising. During this time community outreach is of high priority. Reaching out to those families in need, or those who aren't connecting. It could even be on an individual, family by family basis.
- Parents Engaged in Education created 2000 learn at home kits were created and distributed to families in the GTA area.
- Seeing the need that students have food banks to feed their bodies, they also need help to feed their mind and spirits. A family service center was built with the very first education bank. Students who are in need of free supplies, activities, mental health resources, self-care amenities and a lunch bag full of goodies.
- Theresa has encouraged councils to look at how they can help families during this time and put fundraising on hold for the time being.
- Councils are encouraged to ask themselves What can we do that will best serve our community? The needs of every council will look different, but this is the most important question during this time.
- If you only make a difference for one family, that is still making a big difference.

- Have a look of <https://www.parentsendineducation.ca/parent-engagement-resources> for information on how to encourage activity with councils, reducing online stress, and how to create a Zoom friendly meeting. Increasing social media involvement can be an active way to help connect to families. Board members and regional nurses as speakers are great ways to help out communities as well.
- Mental health and stress are huge right now. Attempted suicide rates in teens is at 4 million this year, instead of the 1 million in previous years. Parents are encouraged to participate in helping where they can, but not at the risk of their families.
- Remember that everyone is experiencing things differently, and we may not know what's going on behind closed doors. Some members are burning out at a different rate than the next person. Check in with members, including your chair.
- Now that it's April, think of 1 thing you would like to complete before June, and stick with that one thing.
- Parent engagement is a marathon, it is a sprint. It takes time to get the community involved, and even if you are able to only involve only one family in parent engagement, it is a reason to celebrate.
- Involvement can depend on how well you know them, how well you can assist with their needs, and dependent on your school community.
- Now that it is April, maybe a survey would be a great idea to understand community needs. What would you like more information about right now? What does your family need in terms of support to have a successful school career? This can lead to much work for the next few months to a year. Making it an anonymous survey can lead to more information being shared, which would mean parent councils could help more families out, as some might be too shy to share their struggles otherwise.
- Parents Engaged in Education is not aligned to any school board, remember - they are here to help.
- You can look at Parents Engaged in Education online at <https://www.parentsendineducation.ca>, where you can check out their blogs, tips and ideas,

Q: How do you recommend getting the survey out to reach the most families? We have school day, email and hand out in class (which they are not allowed to do right now). I am thinking of those who have English as a second language or limited access to computers/internet.

A: Google translate for language translation. While it may not be 100%, but it's an attempt to communicate in a language your school community needs.

You can post the survey on a school FB page, or Instagram, the principal can also send it out electronically, etc. Send it out with as many languages that are in the school, as to allow all families to be able to participate. The principle from each school should be able to help advise which languages are in the school and how many students as well.

Q: There is mixed messaging from WRDSB and individual schools as to what equipment is allowed. I find this odd as there is one public health unit for all schools, Catholic and Publics. How do we help schools when things differ from school to school?

A: Look into things that can be sent home permanently, so they are not shared. More clarification from the board level is needed.

Q: Does the Board allow the use of Facebook for school councils, or any other social media platform?

A: This would be a board policy. It is highly important to keep families active in council., it is twice as hard to bring families back once they have walked away. Social media platforms are principle driven, with many recommendations.

Q: Can you please tell us ways to diversify school council members, both in terms of socio-economic, and ethnic factors? This is a parental question.

A: Parents engaged in Education have a blog on their site called “building a multicultural school council” In previous years, it's always been that if that parent does come out to every event, or help at all events, then they are not engaged, therefore they don't have a place on council. It comes back to understanding that family's experience and trying to encourage them. Don't look at what they are not able to do but look at why they are not able to come. This could lead to a strategy to help involve and encourage more parents. For those who speak English as a second language, talk to your board about having a translator at the meetings, and ensure all texts are in multiple languages to be more inclusive.

- The PIC Immigrant Engagement subcommittee is working on a pilot project with the WRDSB, about bringing engagement to our immigrant and newcomer families. This program might be shared in May and will be coming to WRASPC to share their thoughts and experiences.

Q: Do you have any tips on creating communication with our admin partners?

A: Set a meeting and explain that we are partners and the councils focus is on the schools community. Councils need partnership to help to make a happier and more in involved community.

Q: We find this year next to impossible to meet. Our principle is so busy with public health and their other duties, and our teachers are beyond busy due to covid. Do you find many councils are like this?

A: Almost all of them. We need to have patience and forgiveness, as their main focus is on the safe and wellbeing of our students and staff members. Plan shorter meetings and send the principle all the information before the meeting, to make it easier. Legally, only 4 meetings need to take place in a school year. In May sit down with your principle and try to set down a plan for September.

Ideas for upcoming meetings.

- Ideas for upcoming meetings, including our May 4th, 2021.
- Mathew Gerrard will be coming to talk about French Immersion meeting update on May 4th, 2021. Any questions should be forwarded to wrapsc@gmail.com before the next meeting.
- John Bryant will be attending in May as well, so we can give him well wishes for his upcoming retirement in June.
- Trustees will be attending virtually, and members will be able to go into a breakout room with your allotted trustee for a few Q&A.
- Pro Grant updates
- Strategies for engaging the parent community outside of school day.

Closing

- Check your emails, WRAPSC is looking for parents for the French Immersion committees.
- Next meeting is May 4th, 2021 at 7pm.
- Meeting ended at 8:37 pm