

WRAPSC Minutes – November 6th, 2018

Meeting start time : 7:01 pm.

Motion to approve October 2, 2018 Minutes.

Motioned by Beth Robson, seconded by Nicole Huskins. Motion Passed.

Attendance: 38 People, 2 Guests; representing 28 Schools.

Welcome

- Angelica welcomed all members of WRAPSC.
- Steering Committee Members were introduced, and include: Garth Yule, Heidi Holmes, Nicole Huskins, Amber Doey, Beth Robson, Melissa Jenkins, Mandi Bond and Angelica Allen.

Volunteer Action Centre

- Sydney Atwood from Youth Engagement, along with Dianne Boston-Nyp from Community Engagement presented on the Volunteer Action Centre.
- The Volunteer Action Centre has over 200 centres across Canada, with Cambridge, Waterloo and Kitchener joining as one centre.
- The Volunteer Action Centre helps to join organizations seeking volunteers, with youth volunteers.
- Members work with youth to see volunteering in a new light, not focusing on the mandated 40 hours.
 - Volunteer opportunities can be tied to future careers, with training, experience, and preparation that would be great assets to have on their resumes.
- www.volunteerwr.ca has a large range of volunteer opportunities, with a section for youth to help individualize each experience.
- This is a nonprofit/charitable organization. There is a membership fee of \$200.00, which includes services such as recruitment and referral, professional development, networks, consultation and expertise.
- A newsletter highlighting the top 6 opportunities is available weekly, with an email sign up on their website.
- Volunteers can start volunteering as young as 12-13 years old, with some children volunteering with their parents as young as 9-10 years old.

Board Updates and Committees

Beth Robson attended October's board meeting with speaker Alana Russell, Chief Communications Officer for the WRDSB.

- Talks of in-house communication app is underway. With the idea of allowing a better, more secure communication, with easier access to notify parents of occurrences within a school. These occurrences could include lock down situations, or secure and holds.
- Both non-technology and technology based communication are currently available to parents.
- School Day is a communication tool that is more individualized to each school, so broadcasts are for parents of children that attend that school.

School boundary Changes

- School boundaries have changed for the subdivision on NewDundee, with students attending Forest Heights.
- To find out what the school boundaries are, visit <https://bpweb.stswr.ca/> .

Year Round Schooling Committee

- Angelica shared her research and opinion on year round schooling committee, attached below.

Year Round Schooling

Definition: A year-round calendar takes the usual 175-180 instruction days and redistributes them, replacing the usual schedule – ten months on, two months off -- with a more “balanced” schedule of short instruction periods alternating with shorter breaks across all four seasons of the year. There are several year-round calendars in use; the most popular alternate 9 or 12-week instruction periods with 3- or 4-week breaks. Year-round calendars include a summer break that is longer than other breaks during the year, but still shorter than the summer break on a traditional ten-month calendar. It can also mean a school with an extended calendar, that has instruction/activities during the “breaks”.

1. Evidence is not conclusive either way. For example some studies show increased absenteeism in YRS, others show less. The Congressional Research Report put it this way “The research on the extent to which year-round schools affect student achievement has generally been found to be inconclusive and lacking in methodological rigor.”
2. It is difficult to determine what is meant by Year Round Schooling. In some areas it involves multi-tracks. The calendars vary widely, with some schools still having a 2 month break, and others having one four week break.
3. It is estimated that year round calendars account for 4.1 percent of public schools in the U.S. Ontario has under 10 YRS at the moment.
4. Often there is remedial and enrichment instruction offered during “intercessions”, which means that students attend more than 187 days of school. Studies based on these schools are in effect measuring the affect of an increase in instructional time on academic achievement.

PROS

- Low income, lower socioeconomic groups benefit the most academically.
- Intercession sessions provide childcare during breaks
- Students and staff refreshed after regular breaks
- Teaching during intercessions can offer mid course corrections before learning problems become achievement gaps.
- Over time these groups can fall behind by 2 grade levels in verbal skills, 1.5 years in math
 - The use of a balanced calendar could help to prevent staff burnout by providing more frequent breaks for staff. In addition, teachers could choose to substitute teach during breaks to earn additional money while providing students with a teacher with greater knowledge of the curriculum than a substitute teacher that did not regularly work at the school.

CONS

- Higher cost: teachers paid extra to teach in “intercessions”, air-conditioning needs to be added; less down time for building maintenance. Transportation costs more.
 - Learning loss occurs in as little as two weeks (ex: Christmas vacation) is adding extra breaks increasing learning loss?
 - Different schedules for different family members problematic (kids on different calendars, or teacher/parent on a different calendar)
 - What happens when children switch between schools on different tracks?
 - How do inter school sports work when schools are on different tracks?
 - When do teachers take extra courses?
 - Child care on an intermittent basis is difficult to find.
 - Affects Summer activities (I.e. summer camps, sports and full-time jobs for high school students.)
 - Affects other areas of community such as factories, transportation, summer resorts (I.e. Bingemans).
- Many states have passed laws curtailing August start dates for schools.
- Summer is when family and friends form their most enduring bonds.

Provincial Government Changes and WRAPSC response

There have been numerous changes made that are or will impact our children's education. It is WRAPSC's intent after consulting with Councils to develop a "tool kit" that will contain information about the changes, and their impacts, so that school councils can contact politicians as individuals or as a group to lobby for our schools. The tool kit will provide an information sheet, as well as, names and contact information for our local politicians. In addition, templates for: emails and letters will be included. Thank you to our members helping to put this together. If anyone else would like to help, please email wrapsc@gmail.com.

Four Areas of Focus

- **School Repairs** - The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund was eliminated with the scrapping of the province's cap-and-trade system. This resulted in a \$100 million dollar fund earmarked for school repairs this year to be cancelled. This might have been an unintended consequence, but one that has huge implications. It comes at a time when the province has an approximate \$15 billion dollar repair backlog at its 4900 publicly funded schools.
- **Health and Physical Education curriculum** – The provincial government has repealed the revised 2015 curriculum for grades 1-8. They have asked teachers to return to teaching the 1998 Health and Physical Education curriculum, that was taught up until 2014.
- **Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grant funding** – The \$1000 school council grants, and the \$30000 regional/provincial project grants have now been "paused" for the 2018/2019 school year. The concern is that many councils and Parent Involvement Committees (PIC's) have already made plans or commitments for this year. These grants have been offered since 2006, and have been used by many schools to identify and overcome barriers to parental engagement. Parent engagement has been proven an important component to a student's wellbeing and success, as well as, creating a school community.
- **Math curriculum** – Is being changed back without consultation to curriculum that was taught 20 years ago. It was the last conservative government that did the research that the newly replaced curriculum was based on. As well as, a complete switch in direction, funding for teachers to receive additional education has been cut.

Town-hall by telephone (Government Public Consultation Opportunity)

- There are 6 guided questions that the community is able to give their feedback on.
- Go to <https://www.ontario.ca/form/register-telephone-town-halls-about-education-in-ontario> to register for an upcoming town-hall meeting. Make sure to have your say.
- **Link open until November 30th, 2018.**

WRAPSC Member Questions and Answers (The Black Box)

- 1) RE: Government – How involved do we want to be? As involved as possible, but how? Who do we contact? School? Government? If we knew, it would be easier.
 - a. Please see above under **Provincial Government Changes and WRAPSC response** section.
- 2) I wonder about the possibility/logistics of changing the meeting times to 6:30-8:30 or even 6:45-8:45?
 - a. This was discussed and it was felt that members had a hard enough time making it for 7pm. It is our intent to put out a survey to explore the barriers members face in coming to a meeting.

- 3) There are currently no board bylaws regarding vaping, only cigarette smoking. What are other schools doing to control where vaping occurs? (I.e. What actions can be taken if vaping is discovered on school property or inside the school? Is anything being done to make other students feel safe? Some are uncomfortable having to go through a crowd of smokers (both cigarette and vaping in order to get into the school. Are other schools preparing for the new marijuana law and how?
 - a. The Ministry has just updated their policies, and the WRDSB now has the related policies set for review. However, each topic is considered to be represented in existing policies and procedures. The WRDSB considers vaping the same as smoking. Which means it is prohibited on school property. Most schools encourage designated areas off school grounds, however, they cannot control what occurs off their property. The WRDSB considers marijuana the same as alcohol. As such, no student will be at school while under the influence. Each school will have these rules, as well as, disciplinary consequences laid out in their student code of conduct. Most intermediate and high schools have their codes of conduct searchable online. Please reach out to your school if you are unable to find a copy.
- 4) Collaborate and discuss how to have all councils uniform-it seems like every school runs their council differently.
 - a. WRAPSC and PIC are both asking the WRDSB to encourage their principals to promote school councils, and their true purpose. Councils need to be considered a part of their school community. All councils are governed by The Education Act: Ontario Regulation 612.00 and revision 613.00. These documents set out bylaws that govern all school councils in the province of Ontario. WRAPSC is strongly encouraging councils to create their own bylaws that expand on the provincial bylaws, and allow a council to tailor themselves to suit the needs of their community.
- 5) What is appropriate to say to a person transitioning. How to talk about transgender/transitioning persons.
 - a. WRAPSC has reached out and is awaiting an answer from a few agencies, as well as, the Board to help answer this question.
- 6) Topic for discussion/action – Student safety and well-being. How do we push for more funding and resources for kids with behavioural issues to stop classroom interruptions and violence.
 - a. Will be discussed at the next steering committee meeting.

Round Table Discussions

- Four small groups broke out to discuss 3 questions in regards to fundraising found below.
 - o *22 schools (both elementary and intermediate) were represented in the groups.*
 - o *School populations ranged in size from 200-800 students.*
 - o *There were schools that had just opened, as well as, schools that had well established fundraising routines.*
 - o *Groups spent a lot of time sharing best practices and asking each other questions.*
- One group of secondary school representatives met to discuss relevant issues/concerns.

Fundraising Questions/Information Share

1) Does your School Council, along with your school, make a fundraising plan based on your goals at the end of the current year?

- Approximately 70% said their school council make a plan (May/June, finalize Sept/Oct), and have a goal.
- Others did not make a plan, if someone wanted to run a fundraiser they were welcome to.
- One Council based their decision yearly on a parent survey.
- One Council chose not to fundraise.
- Some intermediate councils found there wasn't interest from administration to do any fundraising.
- Some Councils have been starting to explore corporate sponsorships.
- Other Councils use avenues besides their own school community to generate funds (I.e. Community bingo gaming proceeds).

2) When you plan a fundraiser, do you consider ways to make it inclusive?

Yes

- Allow for options not to participate
- Avoid prizes for top sellers
- Randomly choosing participants to receive a prize
- Use multiple methods (I.e. Paper, School Day) to collect, so students do not know others totals
- Allowing students to return sealed envelopes with what they can afford, even if just the envelope.

No

- Had never considered about inclusivity (Used competition to drive fundraising efforts).

3) Are you aware of the WRDSB Policy 4017 named "Fundraising", which contains the section below?

"4. Equitable opportunities

4.1 Not all schools have the same capacity to conduct fundraising activities; therefore some schools may have resources which exceed those available to students at other schools.

4.2 Schools are encouraged to consider assisting other schools whenever possible and as deemed appropriate by the school community.

4.3 Funds raised may be forwarded directly to a targeted school or contributed to a central fund through the Waterloo Education Foundation Inc. (WEFI) to be distributed as determined by the fundraising school."

Majority of Councils said they were not familiar with this policy.

Three councils had heard of it.

- One Council has given a planned amount to another Council.
- One Council has made a beginning plan to partner with another school if there is an excess amount remaining.
- One Council has received an anonymous donation with no stipulations through their principal from another school council.

Topics – Elementary discussion

- PRO Grant → What do Councils do now, considering events/speakers are already planned/booked?
- Umbrella Project
- HERO GEM schools
- Play Structures / Outdoor Grounds
- Parking/Drop Off Zones at/around schools for parents
- Over capacity schools – Just built or newly built additions, and already require numerous portables.

Secondary school discussion

- High Schools are already over capacity – newer schools have portables already, Huron Heights has gone to 6 periods, some students forced to take online courses because there are not enough physical spots for them to take course in person. Do not close any Cambridge schools, area growing rapidly.
- Communication – parents were unanimous in agreeing that the Board website is terrible, especially the search function. It can take a long time to find the correct information. Concepts like “how to report an absence” are not immediately clear. Students are not reliable in terms of passing on information, so we really need to get information to parents. Huron Heights and KCI have a calendar app for parents, but most other schools do not. Should be consistent.
- Parent Engagement – better communication would improve parent engagement.
- Drug use near schools – parents reported that this is a problem, that there are areas that the students have been told not to go near. Especially concerned about accidental use of Fentanyl and other drugs.
- Elementary School start times – should be earlier

Councils are being asked to send in any questions they would like considered for an answer, by the Director of Education, John Bryant, who will join us at the next WRAPSC meeting on Tuesday, January 8, 2018 at 7pm in the Forest Heights library.

Time concluded 9:05pm.