

WRAPSC Meeting Minutes - October 6th, 2020

I. Introduction

- Angelica Welcomes members of WRAPSC, starting our meeting off with the territorial land acknowledgement.
- Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 5th, 2020, Motioned by Nicole , Motion Carried.
- Hiedi advises meetings are being recorded.
- Angelica sets out guidelines for group meeting (ie. not to slander or accuse the board or teachers, it is more for ideas and suggestions to pass along, and share experiences happening in the schools.)
- Eian - Online council meetings - got together with Graham Shauntz, and his team
 - have created a Presentation on google meets for online council, including rules for voting, etc. Principles have googlemeet on their platform, and can forward them on to councils. By laws, handbooks, etc links are available.
- Hiedi Sets up breakout groups, and explains the process on how things are going to work over the course of the breakout group.

II. We thank everyone for recording the minutes of their breakout groups. We have attached those minutes below.

Elementary School Breakout Group Discussion

- What is the first date we can start having meetings? Late October
- What sources are councils getting revenue from? One school was using bingo's and grants.
- What are we raising funds for? Total school needs, playground ongoing funds. 3D-printer
- Online home reading - Could the board help with the licensing in a larger batch to get licensing for all schools?
 - A school bought masks and helped pay for phyed-bags with different needs, frisbee and balls for each student. Also created a boo hoo kit for JK-Sk parents. Packages quarantined before giving to the parents.
- What is the guideline for quarantine items that are being sent home by the board, 72 hours or 7 days?
- How many meetings are Councils planning for this school year? Planning monthly meetings for the School Council.
- A council paid for tarmac to be painted with steps and fun play ideas during the summer for the kids to start the school year.
- Is there a board recommendation for how much time kids should be outside. Should there be. All schools are doing different outside time, why isn't there more consistency?
- Can we try to have as much outside time as possible in Elementary schools, And have a board policy for minimum time outside for Elementary schools? Recommending as much as possible.
- Is there a board policy or directive for having extra clothes at the school? Younger kids. The clothes could go through a quarantine process or stay in their backpack.
- Why are some grades able to go out for learning, and others are not?
- Could councils be asking teachers and admin what could we buy to help outdoor learning?
- Councils should be clear about the agenda of their meetings to make sure the time isn't used for complaints.
- Communication from class teachers? Some are struggling to get emails from their child's teachers.
- How can we monitor classes that don't have supervision during breaks.
- How are School Councils advertising meetings? School-day and Facebook accounts

Middle School Breakout Group Discussion

Group included representation from the following schools: Centennial, St Andrew's, MacGregor, Margaret. Conestoga PS (K-8 came in later in the meeting from another group).

How are schools and families coping?

Overall positive feedback in terms of schools and families coping.

It is more challenging to keep track of the learning and communication when families have children in more than one school - communication is key.

Communication from the school administrator has been informative and helpful to families leading up to the start and the first week of the school year. Administrators are on top of things and making sure students have everything they need. Some schools have continued with a general weekly communication and some have not. Instagram is a tool used in one school to provide daily snippets of what goes on in the school/classroom. There seems to be less communication coming directly from the students' teacher. Although we know that in 'normal' years this is more usual for Middle School, given the pandemic year parents would appreciate more communication from the classroom. Weekly communication would be great. The introduction phone call from teachers before school started was well received.

Parents taking a day by day approach. Supportive of the safety measures as schools have been strict with the mask wearing and social distancing protocols. There is a difference amongst the schools with mask wearing outdoors - one school the students wear masks when they are outdoors, another they can take off if they are keeping their distance. One school offers less outdoor time - students stay in their classroom/desk during nutrition breaks and phys ed is their outdoor time. All schools have measures for students to stay within their smaller pods/cohorts and that is appreciated. Google hangout is a great option for kids to connect with their friends in other classrooms during breaks.

Challenge/concern - there seems to be a shortage of chrome books and also some issues with charging the ones that are in the classroom. This leads to an unproductive day for some students in the class as the classroom instruction now relies on this technology. Sometimes this can mean more homework to do at home (when chromebook not charged properly at school).

Two of the schools are having to run spirit wear fundraisers to help raise funds to purchase more chrome books. They have been able to do this through online ordering and payment.

A question was put forth about chrome books - was there not any funding from the Ministry for the purchase of chrome books so that there would be a 1:1 ratio for the schools?

Advantage to being set up on chrome books and google classroom - parents can help support their children at home with their homework and helpful to support the transition to distant learning, if that is necessary as we move through the school year.

Consensus that parents and students are happy to be back at school to support their children's emotional and mental state of mind.

What can we do as school councils to support student success?

Other than a reach out to administrators to offer help to support the students/school, school council reps have been giving the administrator and staff their space to get sorted and organized.

No one has had a school council meeting yet and so have not received any feedback from the school community in terms of what the student population needs are at this time, to support their success. Meetings are expected to start back up towards the end of this month. Perhaps a follow up to this question at another WRAPSC meeting when there is more school council engagement.

A suggestion was to ask the administrator to video a walk through of the school to share a visual of what the school/classrooms look like now, to be shared at a school council meeting.

A weekly newsletter sent to parents through school day would also be appreciated by parents to ensure they are informed and not relying on their children to share updates.

School council to offer to fund an outdoor education tent for the school - take the learning outdoors.

Virtual clubs - since clubs and sports are such a big part of the middle school experience and students are missing out on that aspect this year, if clubs can be offered virtually they can be more engaged and meet other students too. Virtual club examples - photography, chess, trivia, games, yearbook.

Yearbook - school council to offer to support the staff/students with the yearbook project to ensure they have a memory of this year. Some yearbooks were not completed last year and would be a shame to miss another year. Online version for the yearbook is also an idea.

Be supportive - this is a time when parent engagement may drop and it is important to show support by offering to help the school administrator however they may need it and to encourage continuing with the school council meetings

Questions

- how will the meet the teacher and/or parent interviews (following progress report) be handled to support student achievement?
- where will the wet coats and boots be stored on those wintery days without the use of lockers?

Highschool Breakout Session Notes

-Schools have not placed some siblings in the same cohort. This is really hard on parents as at least one child ends up at home all of the time. This also makes working from home much more challenging for parents who are supervising children during two cohorts instead of just one cohort.

-The in class portion of school goes from 8:15-12:45 with a 45 minute break at 10:15. Students do not need to eat lunch at 10:15. The students, especially ones in small classes, sit for 45 minutes, unable to leave, often without friends in their class (especially in the small classes) with no one to talk to. A parent wondered why they couldn't eliminate the 45 minute break and send the classes home earlier. Another parent said that the break was for teachers to have a break and to facilitate bussing so this may not be possible.

-Spares are a problem. One parent managed to move a child into another course so that they did not have a spare. Can another solution be found for spares?

-Classes are not balanced in the cohorts. For example, in the first quadmester having both math and English creates a heavy workload especially in the limited time of a quadmester.

-Questions about why the in class learners could not take four classes at once (four in a semester)?

-Question about why the distance learners could not take four courses in a semester versus a two course quadmester? A parent pointed out that if the student opted for conventional e-learning, they could have taken four e learning courses in a semester providing that there was room and capacity for the e-learning classes. Distance learning was only offered in a quadmester format.

-A parent recommended reading an open letter from 20 different healthcare professionals, doctors and scientists on the importance of not shutting schools down again. The parent read a portion of the letter to the group: "A huge concern is the implication of closure of schools, and the ongoing reluctance we have seen in the large urban centres of sending children back to the classroom due to safety concerns. Global data clearly now show that children have an extremely low risk of serious illness, but they are disproportionately harmed by precautions. Children's rights to societal care, mental health support and education must be protected. This cannot be achieved with ongoing or rotating lockdown." The parent expressed that the Covid restrictions and lockdowns are doing more harm to children than getting Covid. (The parent requested that the article be submitted to WRAPSC for possible posting on the WRAPSC Facebook page. The group leader commented that she was not sure if that was possible and did not know the criteria for posting items on the WRAPSC Facebook page). Please see link below:

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/ontario-doctors-use-a-localized-approach-in-covid-fight-not-sweeping-new-lockdowns>

-Parents questioned why the students were working with a 5 days at school/ 5 days at home schedule for at school students? The parents pointed out that this is very hard for the students to keep up with the pace and the workload.

-A parent asked if the feedback from the breakout groups could be presented at the WRDSB's meeting?

-A parent questioned why there wasn't more of a focus on protecting older and more vulnerable people and a focus on giving the students, who are less vulnerable from getting severely ill from Covid, a normal and typical highschool experience. Concern was expressed by a parent that the Covid restrictions at school were more harmful than the students getting Covid.

-Did the WRDSB get input from scientists in developing the plan for reopening WRDSB schools?

-Parents are concerned at how children who suffer from anxiety are basically prisoners in their own classroom, unable to go see or be with their friends during their break. The students with anxiety are becoming more anxious due to the Covid protocols.

-A parent expressed how hard it is for students to be restricted to their desks, without their friends and no one to talk to. The parent described the expression on their faces (above their masks) as "heartbreaking."

-The social isolation is especially heightened in some of the extremely small highschool classes with seven students.

-Parents were concerned that suicide rates, according to one parent, have increased 5 times when compared to their preCovid level.

-Parents are concerned that lockdown was too mentally taxing on children. Parents were concerned that children with stable family lives were struggling, what about children in the WRDSB who do not come from stable families? (Editor's addition: What about the students who live in poverty, Newcomers, families with limited English language skills, families without adequate support systems, those who are experiencing family challenges, health problems, mental health struggles or congested living arrangements?) How are these students fairing?

-Some parents expressed that they wanted school to go back to normal.

-Parents questioned why the students need to wear masks in class when they are congregating outside with students outside of their class (outside of school) without masks anyway?

-A parent asked why students could not visit their friends in other classes during lunch?

-A parent said that the students should be able to be asymptomatic, wearing a mask to talk to their friends in different classes. The parent is struggling to understand why the students cannot interact with their peers?

-Another parent asked why they could not interact with each other when they were hand sanitizing and taking all of these safety precautions?

-The question was raised that once winter sets in, the students typically hang out at McDonalds. Would they be able to go to McDonalds?

-How would they see each other when it was cold making outside meetings challenging?

-Parents expressed concerns that lockdowns were harming children.

-One parent suggested that we should adopt the Sweden solution where no mitigation for Covid was done in schools and Covid was allowed to circulate freely in our community creating herd immunity starting with children. The parent stated that Covid does not harm children and it would be better to expose them to Covid in order to create herd immunity. Another parent commented that the Sweden model was not ultimately successful as Sweden experienced much higher mortality rates compared to other neighbouring countries with similar health care systems. This parent also commented that herd immunity was not ultimately achieved in Sweden, the model was not considered successful and a low percentage of people were immune to Covid. The parent could not remember the exact percentage. (Editor's note: 6-8

percent of Swedish citizens had antibodies to Covid by June 2020.) This parent also mentioned that there is some scientific evidence that people are not necessarily permanently immune from Covid, once they have had Covid.

- Quadmester is extremely challenging because of four months of work being crammed into eight weeks makes the classes and workload much more challenging for students.

- Concern was raised that the Quadmester system could put students' math courses over a year apart which would make learning the next year's curriculum even more challenging.

- A parent suggested putting four classes in a semester with two in class and two at home instead of the current quadmester system.

- Question was asked if a 2 classes in school and 2 classes at home would put teachers at further risk of exposure to Covid?

- Parents did not understand why the distance learners were only taking two classes in a quadmester instead of taking four classes in a semester through distance learning?

- There is concern that the Ministry of Education will use the distance learning classes to justify creating more mandatory E Learning courses for each student. The parents in our group clearly do not want more mandatory e learning.

- Concern was expressed for distance learning and at home learning being equitable and inclusive. Parents were worried that students may not have equal access to technology and high speed internet. Learning on paper did not seem like a reasonable or equal substitute for distance learning or in class learning.

- Parents raised concern about some congregated Special Education classes like the Life Skills class being accommodated during the pandemic. There is concern for the parents of these congregated students if the students were learning at home that a parent may lack time resources to teach their child at home.

- Concern was raised for parents of children with developmental or behavioural differences like ASD, who may struggle with trying to teach and supervise their children at home creating stress on the family unit.

- Concern was raised about how students will complete their coop courses during the 2020-2021 school year?

- Concern was raised over how the Specialist High Skills Major program students would complete their work placement portion of their program during the 2020-2021 school year?

- Will students in apprenticeship programs be able to complete the apprenticeship portion of their diploma?

- How are grade 12 students receiving information about their post secondary pathway options?

- How are grade 12 students learning about post secondary education school programs during the pandemic?

- How are students learning about apprenticeships and other job training programs in skilled trades during the pandemic?

- How will graduating students get the necessary information in time to apply for post secondary programs in January?

- There is concern about how much access will the students have to their guidance counsellors during the pandemic for help sorting out what to do after they graduate?

- How will students be notified about virtual information events at post secondary institutions designed for high school students?

- Parents would really appreciate some School Day notices or emailed notices that are positive and not pandemic related.
- Parents are concerned about what is being done in highschools to boost morale of the students, staff, administrators and teachers.
- Parents were grateful to teachers for shifting the focus away from the pandemic and the safety measures by focusing on the school work and therefore reducing the stress and anxiety of students.
- Concern was expressed about teachers buying their own PPE. We think that the teachers should be supplied with PPE by the school board. There was a discussion about the importance of keeping the teachers safe and making sure that they have appropriate PPE.
- Parents would like to know what is being done to help hearing impaired students who may be dependent on lip reading that they cannot see through masks? How will hearing impaired students be able to hear their teachers whose voices will be muffled by masks and face shields?
- Concern was expressed that the Ministry of Education has not given the WRDSB enough financial resources to help students with learning disabilities, hearing impairment, mental health problems, anxiety that has escalated due to the lockdown and stress from the pandemic, special education classes like the Fast Forward Class, and general financial resources to pay for PPE, safety measures and other extra expenses incurred during the pandemic.

Distance Education Breakout Group discussion

Attendees: Erin Nespoli (King Edward PS), Chantel Franklin (Wellesley Public School)

Strengths

- Very impressed with how the teachers have adapted
- Appreciate the flexibility and understanding given to students as they learn how to use the platform

Suggestions for improvements

- Could the board explain how distance learning classes were grouped to help us understand why children in the same grades from the same school are split across many different classes. Having them together could help build community for when we return to in-person schooling.
- When possible, communicate curriculum/activities in advance to parents/guardians to help them be prepared with appropriate supplies (e.g., need dice for activity, etc.)

EQUITY & INCLUSION Breakout Group Discussion

I. Introduction

There are events taking place in schools that unintentionally exclude or denigrate groups of children: Examples include:

a. Crazy Hair Day: a pejorative term for children who have naturally crazy hair according to “white” standards.

b. History project that assumes the dominant cultural narrative.—that we are a nation of immigrants and that our ancestors at some point along the line left a faraway homeland in search of a better life and found it here. But that narrative completely erases the experience of Indigenous people whose ancestors have lived here for thousands of years, and are scarred by residential school. The experiences of the descendants of enslaved Africans also does not fit that narrative either. This assignment was designed only with non-Black and non-Native students in mind.

c. School Names: We have SJAM, Winston Churchill, Mackenzie King, and possibly King Edward or Lester B. Pearson as schools that were named after people with notable racist sins. Should we campaign to have names changed or should the person’s life be commemorated because of the good things they did? What does this tell children about what we value?

II. School Board responses

The WRDSB does have a Equity & Inclusion resource person, namely Deepa Ahluwalia. The Trustees are looking to form 2 committees to deal with issues in this area. These committees would include:

1. Police in the Schools

2. School Names

WRAPSC members present in this discussion, thought it was important to have WRAPSC & PIC members on these committees. Also, to hold the Board accountable.

III. What is the real issue? Discussion

One member explained that equity requires us to understand larger issues, such as racial, socio-economic, family type, and religious differences. **We talked about the Coronavirus offering a reset for School Councils, so we realize it is not all about fundraising.**

King Edward and Franklin members offered examples of how they attract a diverse group of parents to their council meetings and events. They noted it takes time, and the need to reach families when their children start kindergarten. Do fewer activities and do them over a shorter time period.

-School council members wear lanyards to make them identifiable at events or school pick-up

- Offer childcare for school council meetings and events
- Get information from school council translated
- Use google surveys and google forms after events to get feedback.
- Monthly newsletter, info nights on topics.
- Special events such as a school grounds decoration, bike rodeo, bubble day
- KPL came in with information.

Other suggestions/points:

- Cedarbrae & McGregor principals meet parents in the park, to explain the Coronavirus restrictions. (with help from Adventure4Change)
- less emphasis on fundraising, parents may avoid coming because they can't afford to fundraise or give money.
- composition of school council matters, the more diverse the council the more you can reach marginalized groups.

IV. Charts



