

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Joanne Weston

Date Submitted: February 5, 2023

Name of Conference: Public Education Symposium

Sponsoring Organization: OPSBA

Theme (if any): Opportunities and Optimism

Conference Dates: January 26-28, 2023

Location: Toronto, ON

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

Agenda: <https://web.cvent.com/event/5c7fdcc5-4faf-49bc-82f6-f475141315fb/websitePage:645d57e4-75eb-4769-b2c0-f201a0bfc6ce>

Re-Setting the Curriculum Through the Prism of the Right to Read **Patricia DeGuire, Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission**

Patricia DeGuire discussed the connection between human rights and education, with a focus on the OHRC Right to Read inquiry and the role trustees can play in implementing recommendations. Reading is a human right and the education sector has a duty to remove barriers to reading for all students. The recommendations will help students with reading disabilities as well as other disabilities, MLL students, Black and Indigenous students and students from low income households. The lack of data collection, analysis and reporting is a barrier to implementing the recommendations. Data collection will help to understand which students are underserved. The data needs to move beyond the minimum race based data required by the Ministry of Education. Early screening and sustainable funding are required to implement the recommendations. Chief Commissioner DeGuire also spoke about the pandemic of hate in society and in schools. She recommended responding quickly to hate related issues and reminded trustees that their meetings can set the tone for boards - lead by example.

Open Ceremonies

Cathy Abraham, OPSBA President

Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education

Cathy Abraham opened the conference. The conference has the theme “opportunity and optimism”.

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Minister Lecce listed new developments implemented by the MOE. Trustees expressed concerns about funding, specifically transportation and capital priorities.

Moving Forward from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nicholas A. Christakis, Sterling Professor of Social & Natural Science, Yale University & Author of Apollo's Arrow

Dr. Christakis examined the aftershocks of the pandemic for students and society, including mental health issues, learning loss and labour market changes. He noted that the pandemic prompted a search for meaning - what kind of society do we want. He also highlighted the importance of clean indoor air in school buildings.

Best Practices to Ensure Productive Trustee Meetings and When Trustee emails are Subject to MFIPPA

Sheila MacKinnon, Partner, Shibley Righton LLP

Sheila MacKinnon highlighted the importance of having good bylaws for good meetings. She reminded trustees that they oversee governance, not operational issues. She also reminded trustees that they cannot hold a meeting over email. She recommended that questions should be asked respectfully (remember children are watching and we should be setting an example) and that speaking time per question be limited to two minutes (effective and concise arguments). She reminded trustees that meetings should always maintain a focus on the multi-year strategic plan, mission and vision.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Word Salad with a Slice of Privilege Pie on the Side

Ken Jeffers, Associate Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, OPSBA

Ken Jeffers provided an introduction to explore a range of terms from 'ableism to xenophobia' and improve understanding of many key terms, usage, context and concepts related to equity, diversity, anti-racism, accessibility and inclusion, and to provide a unified frame of reference. He highlighted that words are power and that when we are willing, we see the system behind oppression and the actions for change.

Communications Workshop - For Experienced Trustees & Chairs

The speaker provided best practices for crisis communication and crisis management, including speed, framing the story, accuracy, monitoring, measuring and adjusting.

Central West Regional Council Meeting

Boards provided input into OPSBA's priorities for the upcoming year and provided highlights of what is happening at each Board.

Moving Forward - Hot Topics and Issues in Education

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Stephanie Donaldson, Executive Director, OPSBA

Isabelle Girard, Executive Director, ACÉPO

Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education

Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education, Durham DSB

Panelists discussed current and future challenges in education.

1. Recruiting and retaining FSL teachers across the province and country - recognize the qualifications of recent immigrants.
2. Violence in the classroom due to many factors and the need for support from all levels of government and community organizations.
3. Support for mental health issues, including building the capacity of community organizations, mental health literacy in the curriculum, and support from paraprofessional staff.
4. Equity, diversity and inclusion - the same tropes, behaviours, language and vilifications that have happened to some groups of people in the past are currently happening to different groups of people and we need to ask ourselves how we will react. Boards can lean on the Human Rights Code and policies to draw a line in the education system so history is not repeated. When we think about public confidence, we must think about the most vulnerable in our schools and how safe they are - if they do not have confidence in the system, they are not being supported. Deputy Minister Naylor acknowledged that education is on the front line of changes in society and we are moving towards greater equity by looking at who needs support to graduate. Race and identity based data can help inform where resources are needed.
5. Emerging issues - AI, how to use the summer for learning, funding, school year calendar/194 days (additional PD days to invest in educators as they are asked to do/learn more) and modernization (look at systems and structures so we are not addressing issues with obsolete policies).