

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Kathleen Woodcock Date Submitted: February 21, 2019

Name of Conference: PES, Public Education Symposium

Sponsoring Organization: Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA)

Theme (If any): Stronger Together

Conference Dates: January 24 – 26, 2019

Location: Sheraton Hotel, Toronto

**Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:
(Include a brief Summary)**

“Educating in a World Where Education is Everything”, Don Drummond, Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies, Queen’s University

Consensus is building that education is the answer to many of society’s goals including stronger economic growth, less poverty and better health outcomes. |These aspirations will be on a collision course with constrained public resources.

- Presenter suggested that it is difficult to sell that idea that investing a \$1 in the education of a vulnerable 4 year old will change things in 2030
- It is difficult for people to realize long term results especially when seemingly more urgent needs are in the present, i.e., health care costs, facilities, programs, etc.
- Education will be in the “battle of our life” over fiscal resources and that battle will be against health care; health care is going to be the PAC man that eats up all the resources
- All governments, regardless of political party, think about what will get them re-elected and that is often how they set their priorities/programs
- Overall, the world is “settling in” to the slower economic growth we see emerging
- We are in a fiscal battle plus ideological battle, e.g., suspension of health & physical education curriculum; limiting special needs programs, all in the name of fiscal restraint
- EQAO standardized testing - What is the objective of the program? What results are you trying to achieve? Are you being successful? What do you track? - need to target, measure success, adjust to more success; Need to focus on indigenous students, new immigrants - who often are at the bottom of the scores and do something about that
- We are going to be under incredible pressure from a fiscal perspective
- Time frame of objectives is a difficult thing to wrestle with - how do you change the framework that doing something for a 4 or 5 year old is actually an investment in the future?
- I enjoyed this presentation as he was able to describe ‘economics’ in layperson’s terms which made it easier to comprehend; thought provoking session.

“Managing Polarization in Public Consultation”, Eric Bergman, ABC, APR, MC, FCPRS, Media Training Consultant

This session provides insights and tools to effectively manage polarization that sometimes threatens to derail public consultation processes. Introduction to The Polarization Model and discussion of trust as an

important catalyst to manage issues effectively. Outlines the value – and the difficulty – of answering questions effectively to enhance communication and transparency.

- The Polarization Model - developed 30 years ago by him; he wants us to take it away and apply it
- Bridging the gap between truth and transparency - managing polarization requires transparency
- Description of the model is here: <http://www.presentwithease.com/Media/files/public-consultation.html>
- Skill of answering questions effectively, more questions per unit of time, improving Q-Ratio
- Need to use a line of logic to take a specific action, i.e., closing a school, or the polarization model won't work
- In the model, you want to help people go from openly hostile to openly supportive, i.e., emotional - logical - logical - emotional
- Neutralize a negative opinion
- Rationalize a supporting opinion
- Logical, reasonable, supportable, defensible - decision makers need to have policies/actions that are all these things
- In public consultation, you want to move people from the emotional (oftentimes negative) state to the logical state
- Hints on answering questions effectively –
 - Keep answers short, concise
 - 10 push up rule - get 10 words to answer that question - if they go over 10 words, they do 10 push ups for each word over the 10
 - Technique - pause, answer the question, stop talking
 - Keep your answers succinct
 - Cut the bureaucratic language and be honest in answering the question
- Possible responses: 1) Yes, I have the answer and here it is; 2) No, I can't provide it and I will get it for you; 3) Yes, I do have the answer but I can't provide it because of certain circumstances i.e., legislated confidential information
- How to balance working on behalf of your constituents and working on behalf of the Board - person closest to the issue, should be the one answering the question; prior to a decision being made by the Board of trustees, responses could be different; once the Board of trustees has made a decision, everyone gets behind it
- People don't come to information sessions unless there's an issue

“Parliamentary Procedures”, Lori Lukinuk, CP-T, PRP Certified Parliamentarian, Professional Registered Parliamentarian

I really enjoyed this reminder on parliamentary procedures. The presenter made the information easy to understand and presented it in a 'fun' way – which isn't always possible. Some highlights include:

- Abstention - some bylaws may have that you can't abstain, i.e., that you have to vote; abstention should mean a non-vote; an abstention really means that the person really doesn't know which way to vote; if you abstain, you are giving the board the right to make the decision
- The chair should vote if it will make a difference
- You don't lose quorum for conflict of interest declaration
- A motion doesn't belong to the board until the chair reads the motion for the vote. Before a motion is seconded, the motion belongs to the mover of the motion.
- Amending a motion – 1) To insert or to add 2) To strike out or 3) a combination of 1 and 2 i.e., a) to strike out and insert and b) to substitute
- Parliamentary inquiry - When a member is unsure about the rules or procedures applying to a certain situation in a meeting, the member can ask the chairperson a **parliamentary inquiry**. The primary purpose is to enable members to obtain the chair's guidance so they can take the appropriate action.
- Debate is not argument nor rebuttal!!!

- Slides displayed during the presentation:
http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_ParliamentaryProcedures_SettingTheStage.pdf
- This presentation accompanied a more in depth presentation by Ms. Lukinuk in another workshop
http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_ParliamentaryProcedures_BeyondTheBasics.pdf

“Trust with Respectful Oversight: What Does an Effective Relationship Look Like Between the Board of Trustees and Administration”, panel discussion

Panel Members: Sheila MacKinnon, Partner, Shibley Righton LLP; Michael Barrett, Chair, Durham District School Board; Louise Sirisko, Director of Education, York Region District School Board

Some of the highlights of the discussion:

- Referred to the *Good Governance Guide* and the *OESC* modules for more information
- Relevant clauses in Education Act 169.2, 170 and 171
- Legislation, bylaws, policies, procedures
- Multi-year strategic planning (can obtain good information on the Ministry of Education web site)
 - Analyzing strengths of current board and where are the gaps
 - Stakeholder consultation is critical for the creation of the multi-year strategic plan
 - Communications staff can put stuff on the website that celebrates the achievements related to the strategic plan
- Number one job of board of trustees - hire, fire, direct, encourage, respect the director; concerns may be there about superintendents, principals, but it is not trustees' place to discipline; discipline can happen only through the director of education, not directly from trustees; monitor, support, and inspire that one employee!!
- Individual trustee role
 - once you join the board, there are no rights as an individual; individual trustees have no power/authority
 - as a group of trustees we can change the world!
 - sometimes the same programs can't be used in different communities - we need to use data to drive decisions
- Responding to complaints -
 - There's always more to the story than is being presented
 - Suggestions - first point of contact is school's principal
- Upholding any resolution that the Board approves -
 - Through parliamentary procedures, individual trustees need to uphold any decision of the board
 - The place for debate is at the board table
- Don't risk the relationship and trust between the director/staff and yourself by critiquing work of staff; talk to the director when you have an issue
- School Visits - there's a difference between being directional with principals in schools; instead we are supposed to be inspirational, to be excited, etc.
- Trustees must follow the municipal conflict of interest act/policy (new legislation effective March 1, 2019)
- Ineffective boards are not acting in the best interests of their students
- Trustees are not the leader of the opposition, don't play "Gotcha"!!!
- Michael Barrett quoted Steven Covey, "You can't talk your way out of something that you behaved your way into!"
- Louise Sirisko spoke a lot about relationships, building trust, having no surprises, critique your meetings and check in on how things went (restorative process); the public pick up on the lack of trust with respectful oversight; and so do the staff. The ones hurt the most are the kids!

- Role of the chair - the chair is a mirror because they reflect the board; chair has to look forward, not back; leading is not about directing when you are the chair, it is about direction, i.e., going forward; chair has to have the ability to give trustees 'crap' if they have stepped out of bounds; as chair, need to know how something is going to affect each trustee, i.e., is it their special interest?; strong leadership skills and know how to work in the boardroom to make sure every voice of each trustee is heard and the conversation flows fairly
- Chair and director works as a bridge between the Board and staff
- Strong conflict resolution; able to relate the discussion to the work of the strategic plan

“The Importance of Teamwork”, Michael “Pinball” Clemens

- The presenter provided his usual enthusiasm to the subject of teamwork using examples from his personal life and experiences
- Always an uplifting speaker; great ‘shot in the arm’ for veteran trustees and energizing for newly elected trustees who have not heard him previously

“An Introduction to First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) Education in Ontario”, Sean Monteith, Staff Advisor, OPSBA Indigenous Trustees Council (ITC) and Director of Education, Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

An introduction for new trustees, as well as a refresher and update for incumbents, included the influence of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations on education, how FNMI education is being implemented, the role of Indigenous trustees and much more.

- The speaker’s school board covers 2 time zones, 3 treaty areas, 3 provincial ridings
- His office is in Kenora which is a 6 hour drive to the nearest school at Pickle Lake
- His mother is Indigenous and he identifies as Indigenous
- Spoke about his involvement as a school principal with ‘shadow kids’, i.e., kids that people wouldn’t see in the halls; all the kids (6 in all) he referred to are now passed away, by their own hand
- Indigenous Education “Ontario 2019”
 - Voluntary self-identification rate is 60%
 - Elders in residence/aboriginal advisors
 - Honorariums for Elders and guests
- There are differences between treaties, e.g., Treaty 3 is Christian based and Treaty 9 is not
- First Nations view themselves as nations; treaties were signed with nations
- Concept of treaty means the most to indigenous peoples; treaties matter!!
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNA)
- Resident Pupils of the Board - they are included in the GSNs so don’t believe people when they say “we don’t get funding for those students”
- *Jordan’s Principle* is a child first and needs-based principle used in Canada to ensure that First Nations children living on and off reserve have equitable access to all government funded services. It holds that children should not be denied a health benefit while governments fight over who should pay. In order to ensure substantive equity, this can also include services that are not ordinarily available.
- I found this presentation extremely enlightening but it is just a beginning; much more reading and experience is required by me before I can even begin to understand the issues faced by Indigenous students in schools in Ontario

“Collective Agreements are Expiring: What’s Next?”, Penny Mustin, Director of Labour Relations, OPSBA and Janet Edwards, Associate Director of Labour Relations, OPSBA

- This workshop, designed for trustees, particularly those who are newly elected, focused on the role of trustees in the collective bargaining process at both the local and provincial levels.
- Presenters explained the collective bargaining model and highlighted some topics that are likely to come up for discussion
- Various topics are definitely both student achievement issues as well as fiscal issues/pressures

“How OPSBA Supports Trustees”, Jennifer McIntyre, Director of Policy, OPSBA; May Moore, Director of Communications, OPSBA; Judith Nyman, Director of Program Policy, OPSBA

- OPSBA staff provided background information about the structure of OPSBA, advocacy roles and what they do to support trustees
- Helpful for newly elected trustees to get acquainted with OPSBA and the role of school boards in the province; good reminder for veteran trustees
- http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_HowOPSBA_SupportsTrusteesAndSchoolBoards.pdf

“Regional Meetings”, Donna Danielli, Vice-President, Central West Region; Jennifer McIntyre, Director of Policy, OPSBA

- Elections held for various positions on the OPSBA work teams:
 - Amy Collard, Halton District School Board elected member of the Education Program Work Team
 - Kathy McDonald, Peel District School Board elected alternate member of the Education Program Work Team
 - Kate Baggot, District School Board of Niagara elected alternate member of the Policy Development Work Team

Other presentations I was unable to attend:

Everything a Trustee Needs to Know About Best Practices for Board Meetings

http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_FOIAAndRunningEffectiveMeetings.pdf

Student Trustees Session

http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_SupportingStudentLeaders.pdf

Trustees and their Boards – The Legal Framework

http://www.opsba.org/EVENTS%20AND%20PUBLICATIONS/Documents/2019PES_TrusteesAndTheirBoards.pdf

This Public Education Symposium, coming on the heels of a municipal election, was planned for newly elected trustees primarily (40% of trustees across the province are new) while at the same time providing insights and timely reminders for veteran trustees. Throughout the symposium, there were numerous networking opportunities for all.

Materials Taken Away:

General Distribution

Trustee Distribution

Staff Distribution: Name of Staff Member: _____