

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Kathleen Woodcock Date Submitted: March 20, 2016

Name of Conference: Public Education Symposium 2016

Sponsoring Organization: OPSBA

Theme (If any): _____

Conference Dates: January 28, 2016 to January 30, 2016

Location: Sheraton Centre Toronto, ON

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

(Include a brief Summary)

Opening Remarks – Minister of Education, Liz Sandals

- Acknowledged the labour relations model was long and challenging for all. Mathematics will be a focus for achieving excellence. Looking at ways to expand experiential learning opportunities, community connections, improving graduation rates, First Nations education and curriculum, relationships with municipal partners, Syrian refugee student integration into schools. In response to a question, the Minister indicated the government will not be looking at changing to one public system.

Moving Forward with our Shared Vision for the Early Years in Ontario - Nancy Matthews, Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Years Division, Ministry of Education

- Indicated 750,000 kids enrolled in FDK
- Next steps include service system management and funding, licensing standards and clarity, enforcement, before and after school programs for ages 6 to 12
- Acknowledged difficulty for school boards to work with municipalities due to the individual mandates of each organization taking priority

Leadership Of and For Learning: Developing Evidence-Informed Educational Improvement – Carol Campbell, Associate Professor, OISE/University of Toronto

- Provided some tips on how leaders can continue to improve public confidence in public education by focusing on students, education, strategic plan, positive communication, HERO traits and continuing in a collaborative way to develop partnerships with the community and parents. Interesting resources at www.KNAER-RECREATE.ca.

Labour Relations Update - Penny Mustin, OPSBA and Debra McFadden, Halton DSB

- Focused on feedback on the inaugural central bargaining process in preparation for the government process that is mandatory under the Act. Sought feedback on the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, Communications (internal and external), and OPSBA processes.

The Board's Leadership Role in Director of Education Selection Process – Panel Discussion (Jim Grieve, Director of Education (retired), Jennnifer Sarlo, Chair, Algoma DSB, Jeff McMillan, Chair, Upper Canada DSB)

- Panel participants provided their perspective on 'must have's' when a school board is selecting a Director of Education. Primary advice was to ensure the Board has developed a candidate profile based on the Board's strategic plan and aligned budget prior to embarking on the actual selection process. Relationship building in the system and community and communication with stakeholders were also important factors in the selection process.

Why We Explore – Natalie Panek, Scientist

- Provided inspiring stories related to her goal of becoming an astronaut; currently working on Next Generation Robotics for sustainable exploration
- We all have the right stuff to succeed in whatever we choose
- Qualities required to succeed - perseverance, embracing failure, working outside comfort zone, multidisciplinary collaboration, patience, mentorship
- Learning the technical part of science is good but we always need the human component of science to tell the whole story

Mind, Brain and Education – Daniel Ansari, Professor, UWO

- Interest in relationship between neuroscience and education is increasing world wide but not in Canada
- Teachers are interested in this field and how it can inform their practice
- Neuroscience can be a powerful source of proving efficacy of educational interventions
- Neuromyths – we only use 10% of our brain at any given time → this is untrue, there will never be a 30 second brain test for anything; learning styles (e.g., visual vs audio) are not different and shouldn't overly influence teaching methods
- Re: brain training hype – you get better at the game but not better at much else
- Need for everyone to think critically about neuroscience and the impact it can have on educational practices

The New Role of the Ombudsman – Barbara Finlay, Acting Ombudsman of Ontario

- An independent body to review citizens' complaints about government
- Four pillars – independence, impartiality, confidential, credible investigative process
- Ombudsman office is the office of last resort; not intended to replace local resolution mechanisms
- Most complaints don't proceed to formal investigation
- Case triage: early resolutions, investigations, special ombudsman response team
- To date, 292 complaints about school board (includes all 4 public boards) including issues about special education, school staff, employee complaints, transportation, student safety and security

The 3 P's of Reducing the Impact of Poverty - Shelley White, United Way of Peel Region

- The 3 Ps are pupils, parents, public policy
- Any solutions need to be focused on long term reduction of poverty
- Impact of poverty – hunger, homelessness, stress and mental illness, lack of confidence, poor academic performance, social exclusion, crime
- Require prevention and early learning (pupil), community based solutions (parents) and multi-sectorial collaboration (public policy)

From Typewriter to Twitter – How the News Media are Utterly Changed, and Exactly the Same – Sean Mallen, Communications Consultant

- Lamented the demise of print news, e.g., The Guelph Mercury
- Provided stories about producing news shows for radio and TV
- Provided tips re: communication – be aware of the impact of social media (it can ruin someone's life in a mere moment); a social media strategy is crucial to any crisis plan; if you don't have a crisis communication plan, get one; tell your story before someone else tells it for you; never speculate

Central West Meeting – Donna Danielli, Chair

- Topics discussed included strategic planning, accommodation reviews at various Boards, program viability for French and English language, senior management hiring, Syrian refugee, transportation, pilot 'uniform' policy for secondary school

A Cornucopia of Legal Issues – Sheila MacKinnon, Partner, Shibley Righton and Jennifer McIntyre, OPSBA

- Discussion about the impact of the ombudsman office having oversight of school boards including they can look at any decision that trustees make just to be sure we have a policy and did we follow it; complaints can be anonymous and suggestion to check policy/procedures about third party inquiries
- Discussion about MFIPPA and FOI including clarification that records of a trustee include email, texts, Twitter, video; once a request is made you can't change the information or alter the documents
- Discussion about Municipal Elections Act including necessity for a campaign finances policy about cell phones; possible shortening of time between nomination day and Election Day; court of appeal re: pecuniary interest definition; open meetings required whenever you are advancing the business of the board/not making any decisions

The Governance Structure Established by the Education Act - Michael Hines, Hicks Morley

- Boards and trustees are statutory entities
- "Trustee" replaced by "Member of the Board"
- Develop rules of engagement ahead of time
- No reference in the Education Act to constituents
- Bring concerns of parents, students, supporters of the board to the attention of the board
- Relationship between trustees and board, trustee as individuals and trustees as board members

- Trustees don't direct staff; there is no 'I' in board
- The trustees comprise the Board; the Board is comprised of the trustees.

Managing Change with Humour – Bill Carr

- Think about: We have to open ourselves to question whether the ways we have always dealt with things are good enough." - Billy Lewis, Miqmaq elder
- Your actions determine your destiny
- "I don't know" is an ok response sometimes
- "Don't think about things, that thinking about can't change", Evagruis
- Breathe – taking a deep breath and pausing tells your brain that you are safe
- Mirror neurons – interesting research about emotional and physical change
- Toxic people are countered by 'tonic' people in times of change
- 'Evenly hovering attention' contributes to all positive physical and emotional change in people; "I think I didn't mean what you thought you heard me say."