

# Morell / Souris Family of Schools District Advisory Council

## DAC Members 2018-19

Shara Kenny (Morell Consolidated), Nathan Jay (Mt.Stewart Consolidated), VACANT (Morell Regional High), Krystal Jamieson (Souris Regional), Tara Hill Burke (PEIHSF Regional Director Souris), Johnathan Ludgate (PEISHF Regional Director, Morell). There are not any student representatives for either Morell Regional or Souris Regional.

**May 13th, 2019, Mount Stewart School**

**Guests: Dale Sabean and Harvey MacEwen, PSB Board members**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### DAC memberships

- There are several long term vacancies on this DAC.
- Morell High needs parent and student reps, as does Souris Regional.
- Members were encouraged to book the Engagement Officer to come to a Home and School meeting to present to your membership about the role and importance of the DAC in the PEI education system.
  - **UPDATE: The Engagement Officer met with Souris Regional students to inform and encourage them to sit on the DAC.**

### Inclusive Classrooms

- Questions arose about the impacts that inclusive classes could have on all students.
- Members wondered if the model has been evaluated recently, and how the Department measures success.
- Members would like more information about the inclusion model and how it is evaluated.

### Staffing Allocation Model – School Counsellors

- The membership agreed that all schools should have a FTE school counsellor, regardless of school population.
- They would like to see the Minister move away from the 400:1 FTE ratio and ensure that all students have daily access to a school counsellor.

### Student Well-being Team

- A member noted that the Student Well-being team in this District is a staff of 2.
- The other 2 positions allocated to this District were not able to be filled this year.
- The membership would like to see the other roles in the SWB team filled as soon as possible.

- **UPDATE: The school nurse position was recently filled, and the Clinician role will be filled by December.**

## Bus Monitors

- A member shared stories of ongoing behavioural issues on District busses.
- He noted that the Scotchfort Band pays for a bus monitor.
- He wondered if other jurisdictions have bus monitors, and if that could work in PEI.
- He feels there is need for a responsible adult to be on all Island school buses to allow the driver to focus on the safe delivery of children to school.
  - **UPDATE: The PSB has examined bus monitors for its 250+ routes, but the cost is a barrier.**
  - **Drivers are trained to follow policy and procedure with school Principals to address any behaviour issues.**

## Bus route times

- It was reported that there are students on buses up to 90 minutes each way to school.
- It was noted that a driver retired last year and his route was amalgamated into another, and that may be the cause of the long ride.
  - **UPDATE: This concern will be sent to the Transportation Department, and route changes were made.**
  - **GPS units were added to busses for further data examination for routes in the Fall.**

## School Food

- It is anticipated that this project will continue. Any updates to the model will be shared with all DACs.
- Some members would like to see more time allocated for students to eat.
- A member asked about sugary drinks.
- It was noted that parents can send whatever they wish with their children, but the school nutrition policy does not support the provision of sugary drinks in school food programs.

## Homework

- The Department is currently examining best practices for homework in K-6.
- Any updates or opportunities for engagement will be shared to all members.

## Report Cards

- There will be a parent survey sent out May 27-June 7th, 2019.
  - **UPDATE: This survey was shared with all DACs.**

## DAC Provincial Report

- There was a presentation on the work of all DACs this year.

## Forward Agenda

- Priorities to bookmark for the Fall to continue or begin work on at the DAC include:
  - FTE School Counsellors,
  - School Food,
  - Bussing
  - PATHS and
  - Parent Engagement

**April 5th, 2019, Mt Stewart School**

## Discussions and Outcomes

### Membership

- DAC membership is up for renewal in June for several members.
- There are also several slots that have remained vacant all year and need to be filled.
- The Engagement Officer will work with local Home & School associations and area Principals this Spring and Fall to address the gaps.
- Members transitioning off are reminded to send in their replacement information, and to pass on all DAC notes to them.

### Early Interventions

#### Hearing and Vision

- It was shared that the Charlottetown DAC identified hearing and vision assessments for K-4 as an area for advocacy and advice to the Minister.
- They feel that if students can be screened yearly in grades K-4 for vision and hearing deficits, and those deficits addressed early, it could lead to better learning outcomes for those students.
- A member noted that schools should ensure that students who receive in-class FM support have that system travel with the child and available throughout the school for guest speakers, assemblies, etc.

#### Social-Emotional Learning

- Central Queens and Parkdale Elementary ran a successful pilot of the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Learning Strategies) program this year.
- PATHS teaches children self-regulation and naming of emotions, as well as how to cope with feelings and conflict.
- The PATHS program is referenced in the PEI Poverty Reduction Strategy.

### Homework

- There was a discussion about homework in grades K-6, and possible revisions to the Department guidelines based on Best Practices.
- There was discussion about how homework builds responsibility, helps students gain confidence and mastery of skills.

- It was also recognized that homework should be able to be accomplished with success by the student without home support.
- The role of parents in supporting and encouraging learning at home is vital.
- It was noted that homework for practice is needed for some students to master skills.
- There was also discussion of how students may be placed in the next grade without mastering the skills of the current grade.
  - **UPDATE: The Department is currently reviewing Homework Best Practices.**

## Teacher Evaluation

- Teachers are evaluated by their Principal on a 3 year cycle.
- The Principal can suggest areas of instructional improvement.
- The Department offers Instructional Coaching for teachers in all core subject areas.
- Teachers can also work with their Principal to develop a Learning Plan to improve their instructional methods.
- It is self-directed with Principal support.

## Teaching Principals

- There was some discussion about the need for some Principals, especially at smaller schools, to teach as well as administrate.
- Principals request staffing allocations each year, but often have to use their own time, as well as Librarian and Guidance allocations, to meet the classroom staffing needs.
- Principals also have duties that require them to be out of their building regularly, and this can lead to a high volume of substitute days.
- One of the common threads in advice to the Minister from all DACs this year is to ensure that the PSB has enough money and resources to staff schools based not only on their populations, but on the needs of the students.
- More staffing dollars could help alleviate the need of Principals to re-allocate their staff to cover gaps in classrooms not met through the allocation process.

## School Food

- There was an update on the project.
- There were some questions about the cost of the program overall, as well as the impacts it may have on existing food programs.
- There was also discussion about the plans for scalability over time.
  - **UPDATE: These questions were passed to Morgan Palmer, School Food Project Co-ordinator, for direct answer to the membership.**

## Engage PEI

- Members are encouraged to identify community members who may be a good candidate for the PSB Board of Directors.
- There were concerns about the vetting process and who should serve.
- It was felt that Board members should have a wide and deep understanding of education systems.

## Common Assessment Report

- The review ratified the current system, with the suggestion of an additional Grade 9 or Grade 10 ELA assessment.
- Elizabeth Costa, Assessment and Accountability Leader at the Department, is interested in coming to DAC meetings to talk with members about the assessment process and data usage.

## Report Cards

- The Department is currently consulting Principals about their needs and wants in report card re-design.
- It is expected that by late May the Department will be ready to consult with DACs and get their input.
  - **UPDATE: DACs were sent the report card survey.**

## School Infrastructure Review

- The RFP for this review is open until April 18th, 2019.
- The PSB Board of Directors will need to receive this report by August, so they can make their requests to Government for the Fall Capital budget.
- There was discussion about the report that Bob Andrews generated for District schools during the school review process and if that information will be used in the current review.

## Inclusion Model

- There was some discussion about the Inclusion Model.
- A member related how in one classroom at Mt. Stewart, there is a teacher, 3 EAs and a Math helper. It makes for a busy and noisy classroom.
- He wondered if this was indeed the best learning environment for all students.

## December 5th, 2018, Mt Stewart School

**Guest: JB Crawford, Principal, Morell Regional High**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Student Well-being Teams

- A Student Well-being team was added to the District in September.
- A Student Well-being team includes a lead mental health worker, school nurses, youth workers and outreach workers.
- Team members move around the District to address health needs of students and families, either by helping to access supports or running support programming.
- Some of the needs identified for this District include:
  - student stress,
  - mental health literacy (including how to name what you are feeling, i.e. not every feeling is a crisis or needs acute intervention),
  - self-regulation and
  - coping skills.

- It was suggested the team referral process could use some refinement for ease of access and use.

## School Food

- A pilot school food program will take place in 9 schools beginning September 2019.
- These schools are in the Cornwall, Montague and Kinkora area.
- It is anticipated that the remainder of the Districts will phase into this model in the coming years.
- It was noted that previous DAC members have voiced concerns about the high rate of food insecurity in the District.
- Perhaps this DAC could ask to be included in the next phase of the program.

## Early Learning Centre

- The Early Learning Centre in Morell moved from a mobile space to inside the Consolidated School.
- This will make the transition to Kindergarten and early grades much smoother.

## Wrap Around Schools

- Schools with a “wrap around” designation receive more teacher and administrative supports, including teaching coaches and teacher mental health literacy training.
- It does not translate into more support positions in schools, i.e. EA, behaviour therapists, etc.

## In-school Student supports

- In addition to Student Well-being teams and other resources being added to the District, it would also be beneficial to have earlier interventions for students in Kindergarten – Grade 2, who are struggling to meet academic targets and necessary skills to move onto higher grades.
- There was discussion about the A+ model used in Montague for students in Grades 3-6.
- It removes struggling students from regular classrooms and works with them to get them prepared to return to their regular classroom.
- The Montague DAC will be examining whether A+ can be expanded to include all early learners, starting at Kindergarten.
- The members present said they would be interested in possibly partnering with Montague on exploring this issue.

## Engaging Parents at home and school

- While not an issue isolated to this District, it is a trend that is seen here – less parental involvement in children’s education both at home and at school.
- Factors discussed that influence this, included low level of parent literacy, poverty, increased screen time, more parents working, and parent incarceration.
- There are high expectations put on schools to take on the entire education and social needs of children.
- Parents need to be encouraged to engage with their child’s early home education (reading and numeracy) and create healthy patterns and habits at home.

## **Jun 11, 2018 at Georgetown School**

### **Montague and Morell-Souris DAC Ministerial Meeting**

Present: Marcella Ryan, Patti MacKenzie, Debra Matheson, Melvin Ford, Ashley Higganbotham, Deb Sioen, Hailey Zavo, Shara Kenny, Leanne Feehan, Johnathan Ludgate.

Guests: Minister Jordan Brown, DM Susan Willis, Dale Sabeen and Harvey MacEwen, Board Directors.

## **Discussion and Outcomes**

### **School Review**

- DAC members want the review process to be re-examined and the DAC's role in it to be defined.
- Direct conversations with the Board were very helpful, but the final public meeting was difficult.
- Meetings of each school and the Board would allow schools to be seen through an individual lens.
- Community members want to participate in the design of the process.
- Having a neutral third party facilitate meetings may be helpful.
- One Board member noted that the PSB is required to follow their policy which may need to be revised.
- Reviews need to start at the school level in a non-confrontational way, using a process plan that is agreed to and used by all.
- The Minister suggested that rural schools and DACs work with their Regional Economic Councils on options to keep a rural school open.
- Community use of schools including libraries and the gym, can tie the community to the school for more than just the school day.
- Creating early years centres at schools can help bolster the use of schools in rural areas.

### **Resource Allocation and Class Composition**

- This DAC feels the ratio formulas in the Minister's Directive do not reflect the needs of a class or school.
- Teachers and in-class resources should be allocated based on needs, not numbers.
- The Minister stated that in the last year, 161 new front line positions were created.
- The Minister noted that in the coming years, we may face a shortage of qualified EAs, and this is an area that will need some attention over the next 3 years.
- One member suggested that the EA certification process should be reviewed.
- It was advised that the current 1:400 model for school counsellors needs to be re-examined and amended to reflect school needs, not just the population.

### **Student Well-being Teams**

- As the teams rollout, the service model for mental health in schools will be different.
- The teams work to identify needs early and address an issue before it becomes a problem.
- The Deputy Minister acknowledged that the makeup of the teams could change as they evolve.
- One member shared his story of how the SWB teams intervened and credits them with saving his son's life. He asked that the rollout move as fast as possible to all families of schools.

- One member asked for more communication to parents about services the teams offer, and a parent engagement piece for those parents who are not engaged already.
- She noted that some parents may not want to go through the school to ask for assistance.
- Members were asked to send their input directly to the project team lead.
- The Minister spoke about 30 teachers who have been trained to teach other teachers about mental health literacy, how to identify signs that a student may be in crisis, and how to direct them to services.
- There is a new mental health curriculum piece in health and phys ed courses.

## School Food

- A member spoke about the wide differences in socio-economic capacity in her school and its correlation with access to healthy food and food insecurity.
- They want to find a better way to feed kids healthy, local food.
- The Minister said Morgan Palmer has been extended to research school food models and school food policy
- He also noted how potential programs could meet the needs of all students through community based food programs.

**May 31, 2018 at Mt. Stewart School**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Student Well-Being Teams

- Geoff MacDonald, Project Lead, presented to the DAC members about the role, makeup and philosophy of the SWB teams. This District will receive a SWB team in Sept 2018.
- Geoff spoke about social capitalization – the number of people able to reach (capitalize) on their potential.
- Social capitalization measures the success of a society, not just its GDP.
- The goal of the SWB teams is to support children and youth to reach their full potential.
- The Social Determinants of Health have a huge impact on the success of children. If you can engage early with resilience building, there is less need for interventions in later years.
- The SWB teams are:
  - Child centred – always keeping the student at the centre
  - Early Access – don't need a doctor's referral
  - Early Intervention – one school has a K-3 coping group
  - Collaboration – multi- agency approach
- The teams work with the existing school student services teams.
- Last year there were 30 teachers trained in Mental Health Literacy. They were given skills to help identify when students may be facing a mental health crisis and how to intervene and direct them to help.
- Some unique things about this District:
  - Students living with other family members (grandparents, aunts)
  - Drugs at home
  - Seasonal Family income
  - Food insecurity
  - Poverty
  - Lack of parent engagement in school life/student life



- Geoff encouraged all DAC members to reach out anytime with any additional information that may impact the work of the SWB team.

## School Food

- Morgan Palmer was unable to attend the meeting due to a death in her family.
- A brief update on her work was given.
- She has been extended until March 2019 to continue her research into a school food model for PEI.

## Early Learning Centre

- The tender has been awarded and construction is slated to begin in the summer.

## Wrap-Around Schools

- Schools with this designation (like Mt Stewart) are offered extra resources for teachers to access.
- It does not translate into more human resources in the school, but it does aim to offer more direct supports to teachers who may be facing complex classrooms.

## Parent Engagement

- This continues to be a puzzle for this DAC (and most schools across PEI).
- Some schools have excellent models of engagement.
- It was suggested that we reach out to a school who has been successful in engaging new and diverse parents to see how they did it.
- Student reps from Morell and Souris are needed for next Fall. It would be ideal to have diverse student viewpoints.

## Ministerial Meeting

- The topics chosen for the meeting are:
  - School Food
  - In-School Student Supports (EAs, Resource, Counsellors)

**Wednesday, March 21, 2018 at Mount Stewart School**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Early Learning Centre

- The tender has not yet been awarded, but it is anticipated to happen soon and for the work to take place over the summer of 2018.

### Student and Teacher Well-Being

- Student and Teacher well-being remains a top priority. Geoff MacDonald, Student Well-Being Team Lead will be asked to attend the next DAC meeting and provide some updates and context for that program, coming to this District in September, and how it may help in addressing and supporting some mental health needs in this District.

### Additional Guidance Supports

- There is felt to be a need for more Guidance Counsellors for this District, especially at Mount Stewart a designated “wrap-around school” with high needs. This designation means the staff receive additional supports, but it does not translate into more human resources at the school.
- The current staffing model for Guidance is 400 students: 1 FTE Guidance Counsellor. DAC members feel that it should be needs based, not ratio based. There is a new form this year for schools to submit to the Public Schools Branch HR Department that makes requests for staffing based on school classroom composition and need.

### School Food and Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity remains a daily issue in this District. Teachers supplement student needs. There is need for a provincial universal school food program that could be a piece of the puzzle to address food insecurity.

### French Immersion

- French Immersion programming is not available in this District. Many parents choose to send their children to the French language schools in Souris or Charlottetown.
- The current catchment and student population for this District does not support the implementation of French Immersion. DAC members would like to explore if changing the catchment would allow for French Immersion to be offered.

### DAC Engagement

- There have been several requests for DAC engagement from the PSB and the Department, including report card review, French Immersion Policy and Digital Stewardship. There will be additional requests made as needed, as the input received thus far has been very valuable.
- DAC members are encouraged to reach out to school principals to ask for their School Goals and Our School surveys. Both of these reports can be very helpful for DAC members to see school administration goals and students behaviours. In turn, this information can be used to guide educational priorities for Districts.

### Parent Engagement

- There was a long discussion about the lack of parental involvement in this District. Very few parents turn out for school based evening activities. It is discouraging to host events and have the same people show up. DAC members would like some support in how to motivate unengaged parents to participate in school life and the overall educational life of their child.

### Educational Assistants

- There was discussion around school supports and consistency in relationships between students and their support workers. One member felt that EA contracts should be multi-year, to encourage them to remain in one school and develop and maintain consistent relationships with the students to whom they are assigned.

**Thursday Jan. 18, 2018 at Mount Stewart School**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Role of the DAC

- The role of the District Advisory Councils, including the mandate and responsibilities, as well as the term appointments and process for the appointments was discussed, with information sheets to support the discussion.

### Early Learning Centre

- Funding of 200K was announced for the Morell Early Learning Centre, and DAC members would like to have an update on the progress of this initiative, including the plans for infrastructure.

### Student and Teacher Wellbeing

- Student wellbeing and mental health continues to be a priority for this DAC.
- The Student Wellbeing team rollout in the fall of 2018 will include this District. They would appreciate any pre-rollout participation with the team that is available.
- Teacher well-being is also a concern, as added classroom and societal pressures are adding to the burdens on teachers.

### Guidance

- FTE guidance counsellors are needed at each school in the District.
- Mt. Stewart has a Guidance Counsellor 2 days a week. They would like that increased to 5.

### School Food and Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity is an issue in this District, with many students coming to school underfed and with no lunch.
- Mt Stewart has both a breakfast and lunch program.
- Teachers use their own money to have snacks and food on hand for those students who regularly have no food throughout the school day.
- The DAC would like to see some solutions around the lack of food security in their District, as well as the demands put on schools to feed children who may well be food secure but choosing to rely on the school for food instead.

### French Immersion

- This District has no French Immersion programs at any of its schools. Some parents choose to bus their kids to Charlottetown to attend French school.
- They would like to examine possible solutions to be able to provide French Immersion to their students.