

Bluefield Family of Schools District Advisory Council

April 19, 2016 Meeting Topics

21st Century Skills: What do our schools have to do to develop skills?

- Change the method of instruction so that students stay engaged, move around and work together.
- Incorporate project based learning in everyday activities in the school on a regular and consistent basis
- Consider a Montessori model
- Encourage STEAM approach to learning: Science Technology Engineering Arts Math
- Classroom environments need to be a new configuration. Larger work spaces for students to be comfortable and furniture conducive to group work
- Increase partnerships with the private sector
- Schools become a learner center where the skill sets of people in the community are utilized – social and community hub
- Youth Guarantee Initiative from Finland (tax incentive for businesses) The business community projections are used to determine the number and kinds of skills that are needed in, for example, 5 years. School offerings are aligned according to these projections.

Student Engagement and Wellness

- Students would like a greater understanding of curriculum outcomes and be a part of the learning process. Teacher more a facilitator rather than a lecturer
- Accessibility to outside agencies in a timely manner. Interagency models need to be available in each family of schools
- Education community planner/life-skills coach to support families in school communities who are disengaged and marginalized.
- Counsellors are seeing a rise in mental illness – integrate coping strategies into the classroom, healthy lifestyles, prevention, support, etc. Be proactive and preventative.
- Basic income guarantee so children don't live in poverty
- The quality of cafeteria food needs to be assessed and improved.
- Healthy lifestyles including good nutrition, daily physical activity and mindfulness is critical

School Day: Timetabling, scheduling, and flexibility

- More flexibility in busing-- afterschool late bus runs
- Stagger start times for intermediate and high schools using the same buses

- Potential for more time in the school schedule to explore innovative community partnerships and flexibility by empowering school leaders
- Look at creative reorganization of the school day to meet the needs of individual communities
- Reorganization of schools to include equitable distribution of resources

Curriculum Concerns

- The curriculum has too many outcomes
 - More focus on literacy and numeracy is needed
 - There is a lack of time for reflection and critical thinking in the learning process
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February 16, 2016 Meeting Themes

21st Century Skills

We need to change the method of presentation to students, so students can stand, move around and talk among themselves, to keep them more engaged

Engaging students

Students would like to have greater understanding and knowledge of the curriculum outcomes and be more a part of the learning process. Students would like to be provided with an outline at the beginning of the course so students know what they are to cover and their outcomes – look at what they have done and review

School Day

Desire for more flexible timetabling. New class time length? Class length is long. Let's look at creative reorganization of the school day. If there was more flexibility with bussing, schools could look differently in schedules and time tables.

Curriculum

Concern about amount of curriculum to be covered – what are the priorities in order to fit literacy and numeracy in? No time for reflection or time to learn deeply for critical thinking and practical application

Learning environments

- Some felt long class times in high schools are a benefit, others felt it was too long.
- Transition problem identified –students in high school are not prepared for homework expectations so this is needed in junior high.

- Intermediate school has not prepared students for the homework in high school There is too big of a leap from intermediate to high school.

Programming for student differences

- Progress monitoring puts the focus back on the student, but engagement from student is a challenge and support is needed for teachers to help students
- Not all teachers are buying into progress monitoring because of the way it was rolled out
- Students diagnosed with LD not getting the supports required

Assessments

- Students who do not like assessments are asking “what do we get out of this?”
- Value of provincial assessments, are they helping students learn how to learn? More focus on Progress Monitoring. The focus should be helping students who need help not getting a higher mark on an assessment. Can we move resources away from assessments and put it into librarians, coaches, etc.
- Teachers feel they don’t get information on individual students. Some feel teachers should be the ones to assess the students and give feedback – help them to reach goals and outcomes

Curriculum

- Curriculum is too big – between storm days and PD days often not enough time to cover material
- CEO (Career Explorations & Opportunities) could be an 8 week course rather than a whole semester
- A Montessori progress monitoring style of teaching should be implemented
- Professional learning is critical to continue developing skills and practice of our teachers on a day to day basis.

Leadership

- Principal’s role – small schools are challenged as Principals must teach and lead their schools. Managers vs. Leaders. Administrators are forced to make decisions about staffing – have a large class or cut other programs, like library. Principals should have support in determining class size
- Media hasn’t helped people value of education in system
- Libraries are underfunded – students require access to books and library resources – very few schools operate a full/part-time library
- Should there be a cap on class size? What are the optimum numbers? Would rezoning reduce class size or is it the class composition?
- Student numbers in a class should be large enough for collaboration (not too few or not too many). Others felt that smaller class size allow time to try different learning styles and provides more time with students and time to get more information to students

Student wellness and engagement

- Student led conferences encourage students to work harder and become more involved and self-initiated in programs.
- Students want to be engaged and have discussions and be collaborative with teachers in their learning.
- Students need to be constantly engaged in different ways that encourages collaboration and discussion
- Students have difficulty discussing bullying with school staff, and students would benefit from coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety
- More professionals (psychologists, health nurses, police) to help students

Parent wellness and engagement

- Schools are supported within their own community – schools with a high student population have more support than schools with low student population
- Principals need to engage to parents and community leaders. Welcoming these extra resources into the school even if it's out of their comfort zone.
- Parents need to help support learning: how do we help them? How do we engage the community to work together to strive for a culture of excellence?
- Getting 'help' for parents who need it the most (who are least likely to attend typical help situations). Issues at home (single parent family, financial hardship, etc.) impact a student's performance at school