

## **Charlottetown DAC members 2017-18**

Stephanie Knickle (Charlottetown Rural), Brent Byrnes (Glen Stewart), Melanie Belik (Lucy Maud Montgomery), Tasha Moore (Sherwood Elementary), Mike Stanley (Stonepark Intermediate), Lindy McQuillan (Stratford Elementary), Jonah Bartlett (Rural Student), Kaytlyn Bryenton (Rural Student), Denice Spenceley (Colonel Gray - outgoing), Alison MacDougall (Colonel Gray - incoming) Vinay Upreti (Prince Street), Allie Keedwell (Queen Charlotte - outgoing), Karma MacCallum (Queen Charlotte- incoming) Bourlaye Fofana (Spring Park), Kent Nicholson (West Kent - outgoing), Kirk Wiseman (West Kent - incoming), Jack Wheeler (Parkdale Elementary), Hailey Brake (Colonel Gray student), Sandy Nicholson (PEI HSF Regional Director, Colonel Gray), Angus Orford (Birchwood), Janna-Lynne Durant (St Jean), Vanessa Ford (West Royalty), Lisa Garland-Baird (Donagh Regional), Tami Lewis (PEIHSF Regional Director, Charlottetown Rural)

## **May 23rd, 2018 at West Kent School**

### **Charlottetown DAC Ministerial Meeting**

Guests: Minister Jordan Brown, Dale Sabeau (Board member), Harvey MacEwen (Board Member), Tammy Hubley-Little (Director of Leadership and Learning, EELC)

Members: Angus Orford, Alison MacDougall, Allie Keedwell, Karma MacCallum, Richard MacEwen, Bourlaye Fofana, Kirk Wiseman, Tara Roche, Stephanie Knickle, Jonah Bartlett, Kaytlyn Bryenton, Andrea Richard, Melanie Belik, Jennifer Spencer, Lindy MacQuillan, Wanda Ellsworth.

## **Discussion and Outcomes**

### **Class Composition**

- The DAC is seeking information about students requiring supports in each class, i.e. students with learning disabilities, behavioural issues, EAs, etc.
- It is felt that with this data, the DAC members could advocate for increased in school supports to students and teachers.
- The Minister acknowledged that this information is key in allocating and adding front line positions, and the Department is always looking at classroom needs, which are not always relative to school size.
- Principals have good information and allocate resources to best meet all the student needs.
- Classroom composition data is complex and would require a lot of effort to make it non-identifiable.
- It was suggested that perhaps composition data the DAC receives could focus on families of schools, and not individual schools or classes, that way no one class/child is identified.
- Minister Brown reminded the group that FOIPP legislation is clear that you can't share information that could lead back to a specific person. He did say that perhaps they could look at providing some information in some format that would not identify individuals.
- A DAC request will be made to the Public Schools Branch to provide composition data to the public.

### **Homework**

- The DAC related how there is currently a lack of consistency across PEI regarding homework – assignment, time, volume.
- Some research this DAC did this year as well as the draft policy/guidelines framework they created for K-6 were circulated.

- Teachers in one member's school are asking for guidance on this issue. Some teachers assign homework, some don't. There is no consistency across grades.
- Studies show increased achievement in grades 7-9 when students have homework in elementary.
- This DAC has not reached consensus on homework, but agreed that stakeholders should be consulted to try and achieve a solution.
- Tammy Hubley-Little spoke about the ongoing debate on the value of homework:
  - It should not be used as compliance, but for assessing whether a student is meeting the curriculum outcomes.
  - There are curriculum outcomes for habits (execution, completion) which teachers use when assigning homework.
  - The principles the Department supports for homework are: Practice, Production and Preparation. It should be meaningful and at a level students can achieve on their own at home, and not new work.
- Minister Brown said teachers may not share the same philosophies around homework, and that is why parents see inconsistencies.
- The Minister agreed that guidelines may be a better route than a policy, and that they would need to be evidence-based.
- Moving forward, a multi-stakeholder committee will be created to further discuss possible guidelines.

## Enrichment

- Tammy Hubley-Little spoke about how students with exceptionalities - whose class by age does not meet their academic needs – have an Individualized Education Plan.
- Students who move quickly through curriculum are offered support once the need is identified.
- There are Department leaders for every subject area. Teachers consult with the leaders to find additional supports they can provide to students who need enrichment.
- It is appropriate for a parent to advocate for their child to receive enrichment.
- Accelerated students work well beyond their grade level and are placed in higher grades.
- Enriched students remain with their cohort and should receive extra work and challenges. They may excel in one subject and not in another.
- The DAC recommends that there be better communication to parents and students about resources available to them for enrichment.

**May 10, 2018 at West Royalty Elementary**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Student Well-Being Teams

- Geoff MacDonald, Student Well-Being Project Lead, presented a PowerPoint (and its associated handouts) about the Student Well-Being Teams to the group.
- Highlights included:
  - Employing a multi-agency approach, and better co-ordination of services. Health, Education, Family and Human Services and Justice all fund and play a role in the SWB team.

- Early intervention using a tiered approach and the social determinants of health. Investing at the earlier years means less support needed in the higher grades.
  - Working upstream to build strength and resilience.
- The SWB teams focus is:
  - Child centered;
  - Easy access (any door is the right door);
  - Early intervention;
  - Collaboration.
- The teams are made up of:
  - Mental health therapist (who holds a Masters in Social Work in Mental Health);
  - School Outreach Worker (Child and Youth Care graduate);
  - School Health Nurse (RN);
  - Branch-based Counselling Consultant.
- Colonel Gray Family of Schools will see the SWB teams introduced in September 2018 (hubbed out of St Jean School) and the Charlottetown Rural Family of Schools will receive them in September 2019.
- Some unique things about Charlottetown District schools were discussed, including:
  - Large numbers of newcomers creating needs around cultural sensitivity, class composition, language barriers and trauma these students carry;
  - Student transitions – to new schools, uncertainly over school closures, small school to larger schools;
  - Students in urban schools being approached by adults in on school property, and older students off-campus activities and influences;
  - Bored students are distracting others. The under- and over- achievers have little support to keep them engaged;
  - Lack of exercise and time to eat healthy food;
  - School is too structured around learning instead of knowledge;
  - Students using drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism for stress. High rates of binge drinking and marijuana use. It is widely seen and accepted by peers as a regular thing;
  - Student performance anxiety. Wanting that high mark – but have they actually retained knowledge? Or just remembered for a test? Parent and self-pressure to high achieve;
  - 1st generation Canadians feel the pressure to succeed;
  - Teachers seeing students who may not have a strong parental influence, or positive adult influence. Come to school hungry, dirty and may not see an adult all day.
- Geoff was thanked for his presentation. Members had the opportunity to provide additional feedback about the needs of the District. Members are encouraged to reach out to Geoff at any time.

## Homework

- A DAC member outlined the research she assembled since the last meeting re: homework in other jurisdictions. Her information had been shared previous to the meeting, and was again available to members at the meeting.
  - Her research indicated the stronger evidence for homework from Grade 7 onward, but that from K-6 there was less evidence of its value. She based a proposed K-6 policy on those from Nova Scotia Ontario, Alberta and some American states.
  - Her proposed home study guidelines are based her experiences in the elementary schools in PEI, as well as what worked in her family – giving then flexibility and less stress.

- One member is against homework, but ensures he talks with his children every day about school and learning.
- There was discussion how there may be less need for a policy, and more for guidelines and parent supporting modelling and skill development.
- Several DAC members indicated they would like to work with other stakeholders – PSB, EELC, parents, students, teachers, etc. – to engage in a discussion about homework about why homework is needed K-6, and the amounts assigned per grade. They would like to see consistency across grades, schools and teachers. One member suggested a survey to parents and teachers about the current volume and frequency of homework, to get a baseline.
- A member offered to draft a letter to be sent to the PSB. It will ask for the PSB to start the process of engaging to outline homework guidelines and/or policy.

## Zoning

- A DAC member presented a backgrounder on the recent history of zoning in the District. She had presented over the winter to her Home & School and to the PSB Board about the data she extrapolated which indicated there is an over-capacity issue at the District high schools.
- Her research indicated that there would be 400 more students than capacity in 4 years. She met with Minister Brown and DM Willis to discuss the PSB plan moving forward, and an update on the review process. It was recently announced that there is a Category 1 school review happening in the Charlottetown District to address the functional capacity of the schools there. The RFP has been issued and will close mid-May. It is expected the tender will be assigned late May with work commencing in June and completed by end of August.

## Class Size and Composition Data

- A member had requested data on class composition last August. The DAC members are looking for a snapshot of Island schools, and what the numbers are for each school in terms of number of students needing educational supports overall as well as grade by grade. What are classes looking like? What are the compositional factors that teachers are facing? Another DAC member agreed to reach out to the PSB for that data again. It was recognized that the data would have to be non-identifying.

## Wellbeing Subcommittee Update

- Committee members updated the group on the discussions and outcomes of the meeting they had in March (notes had been send to all members in March). Some of the concerns they raised were:
  - Lack of enrichment for advanced students;
  - Lack of free time at school;
  - Combating student test anxiety;
  - Wait times for assessments.

It was suggested that the committee meet with the SWB team to further discuss these issues. The legalization of marijuana was discussed and added to a forward agenda.

Ministerial Meeting May 23rd, 2018 at West Kent School

- Items for discussion were chosen. They are:

- Data on Class Composition
- Homework
- Enrichment

**February 7th, 2018 at Charlottetown Rural High**

## Discussion and Outcomes

### Student Wellness

- There was an update given on the rollout of the Student Well-being teams in the Westisle and Montague Districts.
- Colonel Gray Family of Schools will be getting their Wellbeing team in September 2018, and Charlottetown Rural Family of Schools in September 2019.
- There was a lengthy discussion about supports in place and needed for students in the Charlottetown District.
- A subcommittee was struck to focus on priorities in student wellness at all grade levels. This committee has DAC members from elementary to senior high, including two senior high students.

### Homework Policy

- DAC members shared differing opinions on the value and need for homework.
- They did come to agreement that there should be a policy in place to ensure that students at the same grade level have the same amount of homework.
- A letter will be drafted and sent to the Public Schools Branch and Dept. of Education, Early Learning and Culture on behalf of the DAC regarding the need for a provincial homework policy.

### Zoning

- Students in this District will attend the high school associated with their elementary school. This will remain the case for the next two years.
- A DAC member will present to the PSB Board of Directors at the Feb 21st meeting in an effort to collaborate regarding the student population needs for this District now and in the future.

**Dec 7th, 2017 at Stratford Elementary**

## 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.

## Review of Colonel Gray DAC priorities

### Student Mental Health

- There was some questions about when the Student Well-Being Teams will be in place for this District. The dates for the specific Family of Schools will be confirmed and shared.
- Members were curious about how the Wellness Demonstration is rolling out. How is it working so far from the student, parent and teacher perspective? The DAC members would like some information shared. A presentation will be arranged.

### Homework

- There was discussion around homework across and among grade levels. Members wish to consider developing homework guidelines for grade levels, and to develop a policy about the aim of homework, and the variables depending on the student's needs.

### Student Buy-in for programming

- Student consultation and participation in developing new course offerings will ensure they will/ do meet the needs of students.
- We need to engage students and parents to identify the needs and then deliver based on those needs. Both students and parents need to be participatory and engaged.

### Quality of Teaching

- DAC members are concerned with professional evaluation for teachers. How does PD address this? How do we bring up the lowest 10% to the middle?
- How do we create a culture of excellence? Can/do students and parents have the opportunity to offer feedback to the teacher? And then what would happen?
- Should the principals be reviewing each teacher every year to make sure that they are striving for excellence?
- Anyone who has a stake in the outcome of the evaluations should not participate in the evaluations, that is should be an independent body who evaluates teachers, similar to the French school system which has inspectors.

### High School Zoning

- Parents are unsure where their child is zoned for in the District as they transition to Senior High.
- They would like more communication from the Public Schools branch about zoning transitions.

## Review of Charlottetown Rural DAC priorities

## Overcrowding

- There needs to be long-term solutions for ensuring schools are not overcrowded. There are still issues that need to be addressed.
- It was noted that even with 14 classrooms added to SES, the schools are still full. There is no room for the extras. Students will have to share a gym, there will be inadequate space for music. There is no break out space for conferencing or working one-on-one. With the additional space at Stratford, it still means that students will have to share a gym. There is no extra space - math classes are happening in the library on top of the librarian and EAL teaching. There is programming/services/ extras that simply cannot happen because of the high population in Stratford schools.
- It was suggested to bring in the Bluefield FOS as well to develop a comprehensive zoning and needs plan for the Charlottetown District.

## Class Size

- DAC members would like to see FTE positions reflective of classroom teachers only - not including music, gym, VP, Guidance and Principals.

## Composition

- Composition is also important, as is having a better understanding of the challenges teachers face.
- Each school decides how to compose class sizes and choose how to group students.
- A DAC member suggested mandatory class caps similar to the kindergarten model.
- Good supports are key to a successful classrooms. Having access to a student teacher or an EA can allow for breakouts into smaller groups targeting different abilities and levels.