

Charlottetown Family of Schools District Advisory Council

Members for 2020-21: Shannon Bruyneel (Colonel Gray PEIHSF Regional Director), Karma McCallum (Queen Charlotte Intermediate), Karu Bate (Parkdale Elementary), Boulaye Fofana (Spring Park Elementary), Emma Fugate (West Kent Elementary), Vanessa Ford (West Royalty Elementary), Vanda Deighan (West Royalty Teacher), Tara Roche (Donagh Regional), Tracy Willoughby (Charlottetown Rural), Michael Stanley (Charlottetown Rural PEIHSF Regional Director), Andrea Richard (Glen Stewart Primary), Darla Farquharson (LM Montgomery Elementary), Katie Beck (Sherwood Elementary), Patrick Ross (Stratford Elementary), Treena Hann (Stratford Elementary Teacher), Jack Wheeler (Stonepark Intermediate), Richard MacEwan (Prince Street Elementary), Mairin Arsenault (Charlottetown Rural Student), Camryn Donnelly (Colonel Gray Student), Destiny Fraser (Colonel Gray Student)

Vacant: Colonel Gray High School, Birchwood Intermediate, St. Jean Elementary

May 12, 2021, Web Ex Meeting

Guests: Natalie Jamieson, Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning, John Cummings, Director of Educational Services

Discussion and Outcomes

DAC Recommendation Discussion

- School Sports
 - It is important to ensure that school sports are education based and teach students things like leadership, fair play, respect, and resilience.
 - Focusing exclusively on winning can lead to abuse and bullying.
 - Instituting contracts for players and coaches may help.
- School Counselors
 - The DAC would like the government to know that Charlottetown schools need more school guidance counselors.
 - Every school should have a full time counselor, but some Charlottetown schools have huge populations and counselors are unable to meet the needs of all children who require their services.
- School Growth
 - There are large numbers of students moving into the province.
 - This growth needs to be reflected in staffing for September.
 - The Department should get school numbers from the PSB.
 - The government did put additional COVID staff into schools, and the DAC hopes that these staff can stay.
- Student Well Being Teams (SWTs)
 - SWTs are overwhelmed with referrals.
 - Some parents still do not know that they can make referrals to the SWTs
 - The Department should promote awareness of the SWTs to parents.
 - SWTs should work with parents on the issues their kids are facing.

DAC Presentation to Minister

- Student Well Being Teams
 - **Response: The Minister would like to know how communication with families about SWTs could be enhanced. Suggestions given by the DAC included communication with families could start with presentations to home and school groups, and an awareness campaign through Facebook.**
 - **The Department is reviewing the SWT statistics, and sees that wait lists are growing for some families of schools. They are looking at ways to address this.**
- School Counselors
 - **Response: The PSB is confident that they will be able to fill all counselor positions for September 2021. The budget needs to pass in order to get offer letters out for these positions. The budget includes 12 additional counselor positions.**
 - **There will be more details around COVID supports for September 2021 that will be made public soon. 185 support staff were added in the 2020-21 school year.**
- School growth
 - **Response: School growth is being monitored by the PSB and the Department.**
- School sports
 - **Response: The PEI school athletic association would agree with many of the points made by the DAC. The Department will reach out and connect the DAC with Phil Bridges.**

Home and School/Student Council Updates

- Parkdale:
 - Will host a drive in bingo event at Brackley in June to raise money for a new playground.
 - Hosted a bottle drive earlier in May that raised \$2200.
 - Trying to determine a new DAC rep for the school, but the current rep will stay for now.
- Spring Park:
 - Have had challenges in hosting fundraising events due to COVID restrictions. Their normal fundraisers were unable to move forward efficiently as usually done.
- West Kent:
 - Hosted a cookbook fundraiser.
 - Parents and students submitted recipes for different categories.
 - Cookbooks were \$20 each, and they raised \$2700.
 - Some schools are also participating in the Gold Rush fundraiser, which is an online 50/50. This is available to all schools on PEI, and can be set up automatically for weekly or monthly draws.
 - <https://queenscountyschools.goldrush.causable.io>(link is external)
 - The grade 6 graduation will be taking place outside.
- Stonepark:
 - Participating in the Gold Rush fundraiser
 - Grade 9 closing ceremonies will be hosted in cohorts with outdoor pictures.
- Prince Street
 - Closing ceremonies will allow small groups with students and families.

March 9, 2021, Web Ex Meeting

Guests: Emily Freeze, Clinical Team Lead, Student Well Being Team, Colonel Grey Family of Schools, Katrina Anderson, Mental Health Team Lead, Charlottetown Rural Family of Schools

Discussion and Outcomes

Student Well Being Team Presentation

- Emily Freeze and Katrina Anderson gave a presentation about the SWTs' work in the Colonel Gray and Charlottetown Rural families of schools.
- They talked about how early intervention provides better outcomes for kids and teenagers.
- There are multidisciplinary SWTs in all 7 families of schools.
 - Phase 1 2017: Westisle and Montague Family of Schools pilot.
 - Phase 2 2018: Colonel Gray, Souris, Morell, and Bluefield Family of Schools.
 - Phase 3 2019: Charlottetown Rural, Kinkora and Kensington, and Three Oaks Family of Schools.
- SWTs consist of registered nurses, social workers, outreach workers, occupational therapists, and provincial supervisors in health, education, justice, and occupational therapy.
- SWTs collaborate with a number of partners.
- The vision of SWTs is: "Supporting Island children and their families to be the best they can be."
- Guiding principles for SWTs are child centeredness, easy access to services, early intervention, and collaboration.
- SWTs hold formal one on one meetings, group interventions, brief interventions, and educational opportunities.
- Referrals received
 - 2018-2019 – 573 referrals
 - 2019-2020 – 914 referrals
 - 2020-21 (Sept-Dec) - 426 referrals
 - These numbers do not include parent or school group sessions or presentations/health promotion activities
- Parent/student required to sign a consent form upon initiation of the service to enable information sharing between the 3 departments when appropriate and in the best interest of the student/parent.
- Referral process: Referral created -> forwarded to team lead and school counselor -> team lead gathers intake information -> triage and assignment -> consent for services obtained.
- Anyone can make a referral using the online system.
 - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/service/make-student-well-being-tea...>
- SWTs connect with students in schools, at home, in the community, and at after-school programs.
- Changes with regards to the pandemic:
 - The impacts of the pandemic depend on vulnerability factors such as pre-existing mental health conditions and educational status.
 - There has been an increase in school refusal and anxiety.
- What can parents do
 - Talk with students about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives and assess its potential relationship to their current mental health.
 - Complete a referral for their children if they have any concerns about their children's mental health.
 - Early intervention may prevent long-term mental health consequences from this COVID-19 pandemic.

These points were made in the following discussion:

- The SWT will send a copy of their presentation to the Engagement Officer to share with the DAC.
- School counselors tend to refer students that need more support to the SWT. They work with the SWTs and discuss the best approach for the student and resources available.
- Although there is no breakdown available for number of referrals per school, both SWTs have seen an increase in referrals at the junior and senior high levels this school year.
 - Generally speaking, junior high schools have the highest number of referrals, followed by senior high schools and elementary schools.
- There has been no change in number of referrals directly related to legalization of marijuana. Addictions workers do provide services to students who require it.
- There is an SWT Facebook and Instagram account that shares tips on how to support students.
 - Occupational Therapy has done videos on topics such as emotional regulation.
 - SWTs sometimes send information through school newsletter, including information about Triple P parenting classes.
- Referrals take up a lot of the SWTs' time.
 - However SWTs still provide brief interventions that support students in the moment (i.e. when they are experiencing anxiety)
 - SWTs also host presentations and topic focused groups aimed at early prevention.
- Youth workers have helped many students with school refusal issues.
 - They do things like texting with parents, checking in with students during the school day, picking students up, or walking into school with them.
 - They also host topic related groups related to emotional literacy.
 - They also host groups related to parenting children with high-risk behaviours.
- SWTs offer supports for students experiencing anxiety and they often use the Kids Have Stress Too programming.
- There are 8 outreach positions in the Charlottetown area, 4 in each family of schools.
- SWTs tend to deal primarily with guidance counselors.
 - Usually teachers identify students who need services, they contact the school counselor, and the counselor contacts the SWT.
 - However, teachers can refer students directly to the SWT.
 - Members of SWTs come to schools when there are referrals for services.
- Teachers are on the front lines when dealing with student anxiety related to assessments and exams. They will involve the school guidance counselor if needed.
- SWTs connect with the Newcomers Association to address cultural issues and help new students adjust to school. They also assist with translation services.
- SWTs communicate with a student's family so that they can support the student.
 - There are also some parenting groups offered by SWTs.
 - SWTs were offering Triple P Parenting courses before COVID.
 - Online version of Triple P are being offered now.
 - SWTs can also give information and resources to parents.
 - A youth worker has been trained in a new resource called Triple P Fearless that focuses on supporting students with anxiety.
- There have been success stories of students who have had anxiety and depressive symptoms alleviate as a result of the support from SWTs. There have also been instances of students returning to school and having less conflict with administration.
- The SWT program is collecting statistics on progress, but it can be hard to quantify a student's success in their mental health, as success can look very different for each student.
 - The SWT program is tracking things like number of presentations, number of groups, time students are involved with SWTs.
 - The program also tracks when students no longer need a service and why.

- The program is still relatively new and the process for tracking progress is still being developed.
- SWTs also work with students with a lack of school engagement and motivation. They work to address the underlying reason behind the student's behaviour.
- The DAC would like to see continued support for SWTs as they are a valuable resource to schools.
- It was noted that if every teacher made a referral that SWTs could become overwhelmed.
 - It was affirmed that the SWTs would manage if this were to happen.
- The SWTs believe strongly in early intervention so that students in elementary school learn the coping skills needed for junior high and senior high.
- The SWT encouraged members of the DAC to reach out to them any time.

Round Table Sharing of Home and School Updates

- Home and school meetings at many schools were delayed due to weather or COVID.
- Parkdale Home and School is fundraising for playground equipment.
 - Hoping to host a drive-in bingo in the spring.
 - Working on a COVID-safe bottle drive.
- West Kent Home and School is also working on fundraising initiatives.
 - Partnered with All-Star Cresting for a school clothing sale (i.e. toques, masks, sweaters).
 - Sold pink shirts with the proceeds going to school guidance counselors to support mental health and anti-bullying.
 - Working on a cook book fundraiser (with recipes from families).
 - They are looking for sponsors to post ads to put in the cook book.

Elected School Boards Consultation Updates

- Three members of the DAC attended the school board consultation in February.
 - The group talked about representation based on regions in PEI, how representation is a greater concern outside of urban areas, the importance of representing different demographics across PEI, qualifications for representatives, and what a hybrid structure could look like.

School Sports and Coaching

- Concerns were raised about how some coaches in school athletics treat the students.
- Some of these concerns include:
 - Language used by some coaches.
 - Abuse of students by some coaches (bullying, belittling).
 - The number of required practices and games and how this may impact the academics of some students.
 - The pressure to attend all practices and games despite impacts on student mental health.
 - School sports do not seem to be monitored in schools.
- School sports fall under the school curriculum. The purpose of sports is not just to win but to learn life skills and teamwork. It is not just about winning at all costs.
- The Changing the Game project in US is a group that focuses on this issue.
- Every team should have a teacher representative to monitor and make sure that coaching and conduct is appropriate for the school.
- The DAC would like to make this topic into a recommendation for the Minister.

December 3, 2020, WebEx Meeting

Guests: Sterling Carruthers, School Health Specialist, Katelyn MacLean, School Food Project Manager, Pam Van Horn (Parkdale Elementary)

Meeting chair: Katie Beck

Discussion and Outcomes

Healthy School Food Program Presentation

- The team gave a history of the Healthy School Food Program, including the pilot program from Feb-June 2020 and COVID-19 Food Security Program that took place while schools were closed.
- They outlined the goals of the program
 - Making healthy and affordable meal options available for all students
 - Providing support to ensure equitable access for all students
 - Providing food literacy opportunities for all students
- The pilot program has continued for the 2020-21 school year.
- The interim program started in September 2020. There are three models underway:
 - In-house food service
 - Food service by an external vendor using the Healthy School Food Program menu
 - Food service by and internal/external vendor using their own menu
- About 115,000 meals were ordered in the first six meal periods.
- The Healthy School Food Program will transition to a non-profit organization in September 2021.
- This organization will continue to receive funding and support from the provincial government, but will rely on food sales and donations to operate.
- Successes include overall acceptance of the program, healthy and affordable meal options are available for all students, using local foods, ensuring equitable access, and supporting local vendors and the economy.
- Challenges include the short time line from program start to implementation, working with different vendors, and having the same menu across all communities.
- The team is developing a new menu for January.
- The team has received lots of feedback over the past months. They are hoping to incorporate this feedback into the new menu.

These points were made in the following discussion

- The team has the information about how many students are using the program on a weekly basis, but this information is not publicly available yet. A data analyst is helping to compile the information. Schools receive reports on participation. The team will explore sending reports to Home and School groups and DACs in the future.
- There have been some issues within the DAC schools with food waste and consistency.
 - The program provides standard recipes to the vendors. The team is working with the vendors on ensuring consistency.
 - The team would love to see different menus and portion sizes for different grade levels, but the logistics are challenging for the vendors.
- The DAC would like to see higher quality food and more locally sourced food.

- The team is hoping in the future to engage the Department of Agriculture and Land to help link suppliers and producers to the program. They also consider seasonality and ingredients that can be purchased locally when developing menu items.
- The ordering system has a reminder that the food is valued at \$5. This may make people feel guilty if they are unable to pay the full amount.
- There is a plan for the provincial government to provide an operational grant to the new non-profit to support the organization until it can be supported by its own donations and revenue.
- There has been less revenue than hoped from the program so far. The pandemic may be causing financial stress for families.
- The provincial government has a strong commitment to the program. Even if the revenues are lower than expected, there are some good economic spin-offs for local vendors.
- The new menu to start in January will be the final menu for the school year. The non-profit may change or keep the menu starting in September 2021.
 - Menu development involves collection of feedback, commercial kitchen testing and scaling up recipes, and analysis to ensure that recipes are cost-effective while meeting requirements. It can be challenging to design a menu that works for all regions and is adaptable for food allergies or preferences.
 - The new menu will be more familiar to students, to build trust and buy in for the program. 60-75% of the food items will be different from the fall menu. The new menu items will be shared publicly this month.
- The two-week ordering window will remain in place. The team is willing to explore changing this in the future.
- All menus and ingredients are listed on the government web page
 - <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/education-and-lifelong-...>
 - There is always a risk of cross-contamination, so the program can't guarantee that the food is allergen free.
- There is a Healthy School Food Program email address and phone line to help parents and walk them through the process.
 - Phone: 902-438-4895
 - Email: peischoolfood@edu.pe.ca(link sends e-mail)

Updates on previous topics

- To date, the wait list for Psych Ed Assessments has been reduced from 3.5 to 1.75 years. The Psychologists are currently working on assessing students that were assigned up to January-March, 2019 with some still active from Fall, 2018.
 - The DAC would like to know whether these numbers are from the board list or the school list.
 - The DAC would also like to know whether there are any plans to increase the numbers for referrals.
- Extending the kindergarten glasses program to other grades.
 - The DAC would like to know whether there is any way to extend this program to continue to other grades.
 - The DAC would also like information about how the Dental Pathways program was started, and would like to explore whether this model could work for extending the glasses program to other grades.
 - The DAC would also like to explore how to communicate to parents that audiology assessments are free and that they can get a referral.
- Homework policy
 - The homework policy work was postponed due to COVID-19. The department will resume this committee work once they are able to reconvene.
 - The DAC would like to know who is on the homework committee.

- **UPDATE: The PSB needs to reestablish the membership as several have either changed positions or retired. These new appointments will likely be made by the end of January. While this work is important to the PSB, preparations for remote learning have been the main priority and much of their previous work has been delayed.**
- Class composition versus class size
 - DACs can access Our School Survey data (which is shared with Home and Schools) including enrollment and class size data.
 - Data on class composition is school based and protected by privacy
 - Family of schools class composition data would be challenging to gather as it is individualized to each classroom.
 - The DAC determined that this information about students and their needs is difficult to access and would be hard to move forward on.
- Absenteeism
 - The PSB had begun to review the current policy and procedure, to determine if changes are needed to better support students, families and schools with absenteeism.
 - The PSB was monitoring data and analyzing it to determine if there were trends or patterns that could be mitigated.
 - The PSB had begun planning a communication strategy with the public around the importance of student attendance and its impacts on academic achievement and social/emotional growth.
 - Currently, the PSB is monitoring attendance closely, in particular the illness reasons that are reported. They have added an attendance code to track any reported "COVID-like symptoms". They have been regularly reviewing the system data to determine if any patterns or trends exist.
 - The PSB has discussed the attendance policy/procedures with school principals several times this year, and how COVID is impacting absenteeism. They plan to continue with the work reviewing the policy once they are able.
 - The DAC would like to know if policies on absenteeism or number of missed days have been adjusted due to COVID.
 - **UPDATE: The policy has not been adjusted officially, however the PSB has opted not to send the 10, 15, 20 day letters unless they have concerns that the absences are not COVID related.**

These points were made in the following discussion:

- The DAC would like to know whether it is possible to have a meeting this year with all of the DACs.
 - It may be possible to have a meeting with 1-2 reps per DAC to stay within COVID gathering limits.
- The DAC would also like to look into having junior high reps on the DAC for next year.

Working groups for the year

- Mental health, school operational plans and the healthy school lunch program are three key topics shared among several DACs
- The Home and School Federation is discussing issues around availability of substitutes and EAs. It was suggested that this could be a working group topic for the Charlottetown DAC as well.
- Mental health is a key topic for the Charlottetown DAC

- The Engagement Officer will look into having the two Student Well-Being Teams present at the next DAC meeting on mental health.
- The Engagement Officer facilitated a group discussion to answer the following questions:
 - What are the challenges or barriers associated with mental health in schools?
 - What are the potential solutions?
 - What are some next steps that could be made towards these solutions as a DAC?

September 28, 2020, WebEx Meeting

Guest: John Cummings, Executive Director, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning

Discussion and Outcomes

Working together

- The Engagement Officer will continue to develop the meeting agenda and organize DAC meetings, bring forward concerns raised by other DACs, and help elevate concerns to create a coordinated response.
- The DAC will use the chat feature to establish order of speaking in virtual meetings. The person wanting to speak next will add a question mark to the group chat, and the engagement officer will invite individuals to speak in that order.
- A member from the DAC will act as the meeting chair on a rotating basis.
 - Members who are interested in being a meeting chair for one meeting will email the Engagement Officer.
- The DAC will form topic-specific working groups that will have separate meetings and report on their work at the main DAC meetings.
- The Charlottetown DAC will work with other DACs on topics of shared interest.
- The DAC also agreed to the following ways of working together:
 - Ways of working together can be changed at any time.
 - Everyone has a role in enforcing the ground rules.
 - Speak up if you tend to be more quiet, speak less to give others a chance to share if you tend to speak more.
 - Listen when others speak, and don't interrupt.
 - Seek first to understand before jumping to conclusions.
 - When uncertain about someone's intent, ask questions to try and understand where they are coming from.
 - Treat each other with kindness and tolerance.
- Questions raised by members at DAC meetings will be addressed during the meeting or following the meeting and directed to the appropriate individual or group (i.e. Department, PSB, Minister).

DAC Overview

Anne Rooban, Engagement Officer for the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, gave an overview presentation on the role of the DACs.

- Mandate of the DACs is to help shape an education system that is focused on and meets the needs of learners. The role of DACs is:
 - to advise the Minister of Education on educational priorities for the District;
 - to engage school communities in discussions;

- to foster collaboration among school councils, home and school associations and the community.
- Responsibilities of membership:
 - Report concerns of your local Home and School to the DAC;
 - Provide leadership in identifying priorities to focus on;
 - Work collaboratively with members;
 - Report back to your local Home and School the discussions and outcomes of DAC meetings.

These points were made in the following discussion:

- Actions brought forward from the last Charlottetown DAC meeting in 2019 include:
 - Psych Ed assessments - schools were funding eye checks and hearing tests to reduce wait times.
 - Extending the kindergarten glasses program to other grades.
 - Dental Pathways – the DAC requested more information on this program.
 - Web policy and homework policy.
 - Class composition versus class size.
- Some of these priorities may shift now with a greater focus now on COVID related issues.
- The Department encourages DACs to focus on cross-school topics.
 - The Engagement Officer will note any issues specific to schools in the minutes and they will be addressed outside of the DAC meeting.
 - These issues may be forwarded to the Department or PSB, depending on the topic.

School operational plans

- Students in the elementary grades are doing well with wearing masks.
- There is a lack of opportunities for students to be outdoors while at school for junior and senior high students. There is very little outdoor education happening, and many physical education classes are not holding classes outdoors.
- The DAC would like the PSB to know about these concerns with outdoor education and emphasize the value of being outside.
 - **UPDATE: The PSB will continue to work at the branch level to encourage schools to embrace outdoor learning opportunities.**
- Parents are concerned about physical distancing at the junior and senior high levels. When students leave school grounds at lunchtime, they do not stay in their cohorts or practice physical distancing.
- The DAC would like to highlight these concerns, and to ask the PSB to explore how the school operational plans can align better with the plans in place for public health.
- There have been some issues with the registration process for the Healthy School Lunch Program.
- Parent drop offs and pick-ups at Glen Stewart Elementary are not aligning well with the operational plan. There are also screens on windows that are missing, making airflow in the school challenging.
- Access to water in some schools is an issue. Sometimes cohorts can't access the filling station in another part of the school. One school is unable to install filling stations purchased by the home and school because the plumbers are busy with other school repairs and projects.

Topics for discussion

- Mental health
 - More support for students and teachers.
- Front loading education
 - Is this working for teachers, students and parents?
- School operational plans
 - What are the policies and are they being implemented consistently?
 - Issues include cohorts, access to water, lunchtime/access to food, absenteeism, processes related to COVID symptoms, transportation, reporting systems or procedures for non-compliance
- Shortages of substitute teachers, bus drivers, and EAs
 - Students with special needs may need to be sent home due to absences not being filled.
- Healthy School Lunch Program
 - Issues including allergies, vegan options, nutritional labels, feedback for menu options.
- Outdoor Education
 - How to increase opportunities for outdoor education at the junior and senior high levels.
- Remote Learning
 - Issues include assessment of student work, use of technology and online tools, readiness, how to better support students (including students with additional needs and their mental health), extending special needs supports remotely.
- Healthier schools
 - Issues include water filling stations, screens in windows, air quality, school maintenance.