

Charlottetown Rural Family of Schools District Advisory Council

Second Meeting Topics

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

- Students must learn to communicate effectively.
- Students working with each other and enhancing each other's strengths – teacher acting more as a facilitator to guide the learning
- An integrated, comprehensive, school health approach to achieve child/learner success – population and health outcomes which require collaboration and innovation between Education, Health, Justice, Communities, Transportation, etc.
- Supports for teachers are needed in school communities to help students with basic needs such as food, clothing, etc. so teachers are able to focus on teaching and learning
- Professional development for teachers to keep current with the use of technology, both in instructional techniques and with as much or more understanding as the students on day-to-day technology use
- Forward thinking – the need for students to learn how to learn with technology while educating them on safe practices, appropriate usage (plagiarism), being critical of the information they find and the implications of that information

Distribution of students: Some parents want changes. Others are hesitant.

- Bravery and courage to make the changes.
- Recommended school size – elementary: no more than 400 students; junior high school: 500-600 students; high schools: 1000-1100 students
- It may require a one size does not fit all approach – look at each family of schools.
- Transparency for the criteria used in decisions for reorganization: enrolment numbers, empty buildings, full buildings, bus routes, etc. critical.

Inter-agency model

- Need for a pilot program study to realign resources and services from Health, Justice, Communities, etc. for a comprehensive and integrated approach in schools to achieve optimal student/learner outcomes for learning and social development:
 - accessible child and youth psychologist
 - occupational and physical therapist
 - full time counsellor
 - nurse
 - food program—dietician/nutritionist
 - child and family representative
 - behavioural expert

- police presence
- leadership/life/career officer
- teachers who teach/coaches who coach

Consistency: Parents would like to know more about what their child is learning and when, so they can help them at home.

- Consistency in programming from school to school – standards must be clear.
- Clear outline of curriculum and objectives in parent-friendly language e.g. curriculum handbooks for students and parents.
- Accountability for consistency in programming within schools and between schools. Who is responsible for this?
- Use data from Provincial Assessments and Progress Monitoring to create goals and action plans for schools.

Class sizes and Composition: Student achievement is the primary goal/concern.

- Composition makes the difference in classes.
- Class size is an issue.
- A large class with minimal needs may be more manageable than a small class with high needs.

First Meeting Themes: February 24

- 21st Century Skills: Students need to be able to communicate more effectively.
- Rezoning issue – some parents want changes, others hesitant. There are some buildings that are empty while others are overflowing. With rezoning, many of the transportation issues might be addressed. Some students would be willing to have a longer bus ride if there was more classroom parity in numbers from school to school.
- Consistency: parents expressed inconsistencies in knowing what their child is learning. They would appreciate knowing what the standards are what curriculum expectations are. They recommended sessions where the parent is taught course work so they can help their child.
- Information: representatives expressed appreciation for the level of engagement and wanted research and evidence and best practices to support the discussion topics and ideas
- Class sizes and composition: student achievement is the primary goal/concern. There is a delicate balance between class size and class composition to ensure and provide for an environment that will foster student achievement.

Learning environments

- Homework can be more of a divide between strong and weak students. Are some home environments increasing that divide? High School students have 2-3 hours of homework per night.
- With larger class sizes there is not as much opportunity for students to get support they need. Classes for early years in elementary cannot be at 27 as it is too difficult for the teacher to meet all the needs in the class.
- School size needs to be addressed. What is the optimal number for a school at each level?

Programming for student differences

- There was a suggestion that EA support for classrooms would be helpful for those students with academic challenges – not just disabilities.
- It is challenging and disheartening to see the number of children with undiagnosed learning disabilities who struggle in their classroom.
- The average regular student needs more ongoing support. Much time, resources and personnel are spent on students on modified programs. How many psychologists are available to do assessments?
- The model of inclusion must be revisited. What is the impact on classrooms and learning for all?

Assessments

- There are too many students not meeting expectations. Supports are needed for those struggling academically.
- Progress monitoring is helping with the identification of foundational outcomes and many felt it needs to be continued and to increase the offering of evidence based interventions. Others felt progress monitoring is causing stress levels within the teaching community. However, as with anything new, there is always a level of confusion/push back/anxiety.
- How are assessments being used? It is important to measure and monitor student's achievement between the results and changes implemented to improve student learning, but assessments need to be purposeful, authentic and useful in terms of their results.
- Concerns were discussed about the EYE kindergarten assessment. How relevant is it and how or is it used?

Curriculum

- If teachers have the same curriculum guideline of standards – why is there such a difference over the Island in what students are being taught? There are so many different teaching styles – homework, no homework, blogs, no blogs.
- Curriculum often is covered with a little of everything rather than a deeper focus on certain topics.

Leadership

- There is a desire for more interagency support in schools. Public health, mental health, nutrition, law enforcement.
- There was some question on the level of accountability for teachers.
- Concern that so much has been invested in putting wifi in schools rather than putting dollars to reduce class size and provide more direct support for students.
- Criminal Record Checks with Vulnerable Sector was discussed as essential in ensuring child safety in schools. All staff needs to have this renewed in this area on a regular basis.

Student wellness and engagement

- Students would like more outlines of their courses. Learning goals to be more evident. Going to class with information to be covered then class time reviewing information and asking questions. More mini testing and assignments is desirable.
- There was much discussion around homework – what is the evidence that it benefits children? What is good? What works? What resources are available?
- Students are often overwhelmed at exam time – mental issues emerge, and then are not prepared or able to sit and write a test.
- Standards need to be known to students so they can reach their full potential.

Parent wellness and engagement

- Inconsistencies in knowing what their child is learning
- Homework can be a gauge on how children are doing but need sessions where the parent is taught course work so they can help their child. Homework teaches good study habits
- Teachers have a responsibility to provide outline and expectations of curriculum to parents to help them know what is expected or what the standards are