

# **Kensington / Kinkora Family of Schools District Advisory Council**

## **May 5, 2016 Meeting Topics**

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

**What school experiences do our students have to have to develop these skills? What do classrooms have to look like?**

- Discover your learning style. Adapt your studying habits to suit your style.
- Hands-on experiences and real-life experiences/field trips (see more than inside the classroom, volunteering, community service, good habits for life).
- Coping skills, work ethic and problem solving.
- Increase opportunity for leadership
- Group children according to development and work on a continuum for learning
- Improve technology skills for teachers
- Help students be able to identify reliable sources of information

### **Zoning**

#### **Concerns about rezoning, reconfigurations and loss of small schools**

- Enable electronic collaboration between grade level teachers (don't have to be in the same building to connect and collaborate)
- Use school buildings for more than just education – open it up for community use
- Sharing of resources between schools (buses, teachers/staff should share expertise between schools)
- Be sensitive to the value of small schools and their impact on communities, and ensure there is public engagement in decision-making affecting school changes.

#### **Curriculum Issues: Adequate time is required to get curriculum covered. Timetable questions**

- Teacher communication between schools to ensure all students are learning similarly.
- Less is more. Focus on the most important elements and ensure they are covered in the time allowed (three Rs, grade appropriate).
- Curriculum and exams/classroom tests timeline available to students and parents
- More advanced courses should be offered

### **Assessments**

## **Challenges of preparing for assessments**

- more consistent program delivery across Province
- every student needs opportunity to do well
- Standardization between teachers who are teaching the same course. Check-in to make sure the same stuff is being covered across the Island.
- Focus on learning, no testing
- Better examples and practice questions to prepare for assessments

## **Mental wellness and Anxiety: Early signs in kindergarten/High school students juggling too much.**

- Awareness for students and teachers about mental illness and its prominence.
- Support teachers with resources to help students with anxiety/wellness – Teachers can't do it all.
- Parents should be encouraged to access private mental health support. Examples: Outside school, if parents have coverage (Reduce strain on school system); Principals, resource teachers and counsellors can inform parents about outside resources and empower them to do so.

## **School Calendar: What could it look like? Best PD dates?**

- Collaboration of all divisions to help plan the year (bussing, home and school, teachers, and parents)
- Consideration of school trips/extracurricular when planning PD days.
- Structure PD in a way that's effective for teachers and students (new model, maybe first week of school is PD, last two days before Christmas).

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## **March 3, 2016 - First Meeting**

- Zoning: concerns about rezoning, i.e. configurations and loss of small schools
- Curriculum: curriculum should be reviewed to ensure there is adequate time during the school year to study all the material
- Assessments: challenge of covering all the curriculum leads to challenge in successfully doing the assessment, especially in Grade 11 math
- Mental wellness: more challenges, starting as early as kindergarten. At the high school level, students are juggling a lot of demands and challenges

## **Learning environments**

- Does the board/department look at the research on advantages of small schools?

- What are the benefits/disadvantages of split classes?
- What are the benefits and challenges of school re-configuration?
- Should the school board allow students to go to a school outside their zone? Students requesting schools outside of their zone due to course options in their area
- Before re-zoning can occur, the school board needs to fully understand where the students' lives versus where they go to school. Should the Kinkora/Kensington DAC do their own re-zoning assessment?

## **Assessment**

- Standardized testing, what does that mean? Assessments are a good “check and balance” for students, teachers and administrative staff. They can help encourage everyone to do better. Should teachers/administration staff be held accountable if their class/school does not pass assessment for multiple years in a row?
- Math assessment counts for a large percent of your final mark (25%-30%) but if the assessment does not affect student grades, students do not put in an effort
- The Grade 11 assessment: Not enough time to complete the exam. The online examples were much easier than the actual assessment – not a realistic examples. Some of the online examples had typos and wrong answers. The exam was worded/presented in a very different way that it was taught.

## **Curriculum**

- Teachers can choose a number of ways to teach a unit, but perhaps it should be more standardized across classes and schools, for consistency. During class time, units were rushed due to time constraints, but those units were a large part of the assessment.
- Could course outcomes be more available to students (online/classroom)?
- Academic students who attend post-secondary are not prepared compared to the other students from other provinces. Some of these students lack basic reading and writing skills. Standardization could help better prepare students for post-secondary

## **Leadership**

- More information to the teachers regarding the process on how the calendar is organized
- Could PD days occur all at once, perhaps the first week of September, and then bring the students back to school? Some initiatives are rolled out during PD sessions are too late in the school year to be implemented with current students
- More awareness with parents and the general public as to what happens on professional development (PD) days

## **Student wellness and engagement**

- More mental health issues, such as anxiety, is developing as early as kindergarten. There is not enough counsellors in the schools. Could teachers also help as counsellors?
- For senior high, there are mental health issues developing at this time (i.e. school, school work, sports, band, part time jobs, exams, all while trying to enjoy being a teenager).

Teachers could use a master calendar to schedule exams so there adequate time to study each exam (not unusual to have multiple exams in the same week)

- More suggestions and support from teachers when they are approached by their students regarding school work/exams anxiety.