

**Learning Partners Advisory Council  
Discussion Summary, Meeting 10  
June 11-12, 2018, 5:30-8:00 p.m.  
Hunter River Community Centre**

**Contents:**

In Attendance

1. Welcome, Approval of Agenda, Approval of Notes of Meeting Nine
2. Gives and Gets
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6. Wrap-up and Next Steps

**Attachments to Meeting Notes:**

1. Attachment One: Agenda
2. Attachment Two: Final Approved Notes of Meeting Nine, April 11, 2018

**In Attendance, Day One and/or Day Two:**

Co-Chairs: William Whelan and Kathleen Flanagan

- Members: Amanda Brazil, Amber Jadis, Angela Arsenault, Anne Bernard-Bourgeois, Anne Miller, Donald DesRoches, Gloria Welton, Heidi Morgan, Jackie Charchuk, Jeff Brant, Kent Bruyneel, Lisa MacDougall, Lori Johnston, Mary MacPhee, Mohamed Ghandar, Rebecca Gariepy, Rocio McCallum, Ron MacDonald
- *Ex officio*: Brad Colwill, Susan Willis
- Resource: Wendy MacDonald

**Regrets:**

- Members: Bethany MacLeod, Michelle MacCallum
- *Ex officio*: Craig Dalton

**1. Welcome, Agenda and Minutes**

Co-chair Flanagan opened the meeting on June 11 with a welcome to all. She reviewed the agenda and the plan for the two-evening workshop (Attachment One). Members agreed with the approach.

Co-chair Flanagan then requested revisions or additions to the discussion summary of Meeting 9, April 11, 2018. The summary was approved as circulated (Attachment Two).

Co-chair Whelan spoke to the aim of the workshop, noting that the focus would be on what we can achieve as a group. He cited the Council's discussion paper, *Ambition, Excellence and Prosperity*, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and its ten directions and three priorities. These are a starting point, and the aim will be to identify a small number of areas – two or three – on which to focus during the coming year. The hope is to also identify the steps and how the Council will action those priorities. He noted that the Council is a permanent body; unlike a Commission which has an end point, the Council has an ongoing role to advise. The task is to decide how to carry out that advisory role.

Co-chair Whelan then introduced the facilitator for the meetings, Sara Roach-Lewis. A round of introductions followed. Sara then led a process to establish agreements on how members would work together during the workshops respectfully and productively.

## **2. Give and Get**

A Give and Get exercise followed, which revealed the diverse strengths and aspirations of the group.

During the "Gives," Council members offered a wide range of personal qualities, perspectives, partner linkages, expertise, and skills in support of the Council's work:

- Personal qualities included passion, common sense, leadership, and energy to explore learning.
- The lived experiences and personal backgrounds of the Council members contributed a wide range of perspectives, including youth and seniors, rural Islanders, parents, newcomers, front-line teachers, entrepreneurs, workplaces, finance, and linguistic and cultural diversity.
- The specialized knowledge and expertise of Council members included special needs, the early years, training and development, research findings and data, a business lens, a futuristic vision for education, interdisciplinary knowledge, knowledge of first/second/official/heritage/minority language education, and insights into decision processes and decision making in government
- Members identified their personal and professional networks as well as their various organizational roles as major assets for the Council to disseminate its findings and ideas and to promote implementation and change.
- Competencies included organizational, communications, funding and lobbying skills, and experience in identifying gaps and best practices.

Members also identified a wide range of things that they hoped to "get" from their participation in the Council:

- Contributing to a vision was important to many members. Given the Council's overarching role in learning, there was a call for a vision for how the whole system can align and integrate from the bottom up – from early childhood to post-secondary and lifelong learning, to ensure that PEI

has the best and most inclusive education system in the world. A need was seen for new ideas and innovation, but also to build on what has already taken place.

- Action was also a major theme – action that makes a difference and that results in tangible outcomes for all learners.
- Some specific areas of priority were also noted, including improvements in education for children, meeting linguistic and cultural needs, recognition of issues in early childhood education including recruitment and retention of teachers, and improvements to mental health for all Islanders.
- Importance was also placed on better processes and practices: getting the politics (big “P” and small “p”) out of education, strengthening collaboration and partnerships, and building and sharing best practices.

In addition to these benefits for learners and Islanders, members also identified some areas of personal growth, including a broader understanding of education from other people’s perspectives, inspiration, new ideas, a deeper understanding of how learning evolves, and fun, interesting dialogues. As well, it was noted that for organizations, their representation on the Council offers an opportunity to better understand and enhance their contributions to learning.

Discussion followed of some of the points raised. With regard to “getting the politics out of education,” “politics” was seen as not only partisan “Big-P” politics, but also including internal “small-p” politics within and among the various learning subsystems. A need was seen for stability and a sustained approach to learning, based on a framework, vision and long-term plan that was supported by all political parties and that should continue independent of external changes. It was noted that the Council can contribute to that goal and help to transcend politics by focusing on giving the best possible advice.

Communication of that advice was then discussed. To date, the audience has been broadly defined to include stakeholders and the public, and vehicles have been largely informal or indirect. Examples include the discussion paper *Ambition, Excellence and Prosperity*; the participation of *ex officio* members, the Premier and various organizations on the Council; initiatives such as #LearnDay and the Learn Grants; the availability of Council material on the website; and various news releases, speaking engagements, and media coverage. Impacts included the creation of the Experiential Learning Network following the Council’s previous meeting in April.

Some members expressed a need for a more formal, specific reporting role and communications vehicle(s) going forward. This will require communications resources. It was noted that communications expertise and help from *ex officio* members would be welcomed, but to ensure the independent voice of the Council, it must be understood that communications staff of those departments would need to be mandated to work on behalf of the Council.

### **3. One Year Out: Group Exercise**

Sara then facilitated an exercise to define the Council’s goals for its work one year out, working in four groups of Council members. Each group created a “magazine cover”, headlines of articles, quotes, and observations for coverage of the Council’s work published June 11, 2019. Taking this work together, some clear themes arose.

“Cover” overarching outcomes included the unveiling of a learner-focused, innovative vision and action plan for learning; celebrating implementation of the Council’s recommendations; and sparking new directions in learning in PEI.

Several outcomes were identified:

- Meeting the needs of learners
- Improving learner health and wellness
- Successful learner transitions
- Building 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills and competencies, including the “4 C’s” – creativity, collaboration, communications, and critical thinking
- Celebrating diversity
- Access and inclusion – e.g. affordable university for all, universal school food programs, affordable wifi for all, libraries.

Numerous ideas were advanced on how to make progress. The majority were transformative in tone, involving a shift away from current practices such as textbooks, grades, and subject areas to innovative and non-traditional approaches. There was strong emphasis on a move to experiential learning and project-based learning, based on partnerships with communities and businesses, as well as intergenerational teaching and learning, and play-based learning. A second cluster of input was more cautious and open-ended, calling for the use of advanced pedagogy strategies and proven strategies for learning, for changes to be data-driven, and for research and exploration.

To move towards these outcomes, suggestions included a five-year strategy; a strong emphasis on partnerships and collaboration across government and with external partners; and funding and resources from various sources including the federal and provincial governments, and business.

The quotes suggested a wide range of audiences for LPAC’s work, and included:

- Affirmation of better outcomes by learners
- Engagement, approval and support by teachers
- Praise from employers of graduates
- Satisfaction with LPAC’s work by government leaders
- External affirmation – gains in national rankings, praise by United Nations.

#### 4. The Way Forward: Possibilities

Members reconvened on Tuesday evening, June 12 2018. Some members were not able to attend the second evening, while others were new to the discussion. To orient the latter group, some time was devoted at the onset to recapping the highlights and outcomes of the previous evening.

Discussion opened with the different paths suggested by the “cover stories” of the previous evening. Should LPAC develop a vision? Or should LPAC develop a framework within which others would create a vision? Some members asked if there was an audience and an appetite for a vision, and questioned whether the vision would be implemented and result in the kind of impacts identified the previous evening. It was also questioned how the vision would be created; a need was seen for a participative approach but there was reluctance to embark on a lengthy process.

Pursuing the framework concept further, support was expressed for the concept of an accountability framework. The directions and priorities in the discussion paper were seen as the starting point for such a framework. Some members noted additional items as possible priorities for the Council (see below).

It was noted that the advisory council model spanned a wide range of roles. At the ends of the continuum, two PEI examples were cited: the Acadian and Francophone Community Advisory Committee, which conveys the community’s priorities and points of view to the Minister, and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, which carries out a high-profile biannual Report Card process assessing government’s progress on issues relevant to women’s wellbeing and social justice. The Report Card is also a means to advocate for measures and innovations that support the Council’s priorities, such as the use of Gender Based Analysis in government policy work. The latter approach was seen as more suited to LPAC.

With initial openness emerging on the elements of an accountability framework role and a Report Card approach, discussion then turned to how best to focus on some specific priorities, drawing on the group discussions of the previous evening. Several possible approaches were identified:

- An ‘ages and stages’ approach that combined age cohorts and learning sub-systems, e.g. early childhood, K-12, post-secondary, adult and lifelong learning. Sub-themes included a strategy for lifelong learning.
- Cross-cutting priorities, such as the three pillars identified in the discussion paper – transitions, partnerships, and learner well-being. Subthemes included further work on the transition planning tools being developed through the “My Plan, My Blueprint” initiative, and a focus on mental health.
- Themes that reflect broad goals, such as innovation, entrepreneurship, access, inclusion and acceptance of diversity
- Advocacy of specific innovations, such as a shift to experiential and project-based learning.

## 5. The Way Forward: Action

Following a short break, the group reconvened to tackle its work plan, building on the foregoing discussion.

There was continued support for the approach of an accountability framework expressed and measured via a Report Card. Members agreed that this work should include learners of all ages rather than focusing on a particular subset. It was noted that creating the framework would require establishing priorities, and creating the Report Card would require establishing criteria and standards and identifying appropriate metrics. It was suggested that this framework could take the form of a matrix, of priorities by learner age/stage. Others suggested that the work should focus on a single priority or a very small number of priorities.

The communication of the report card would stimulate change by challenging partners to raise the bar. It would be a vehicle for public education and awareness, and for networking. The findings of the initial report card would provide an information base for the Council to develop its future priorities and work plan.

Some members felt this concept should be further developed to go beyond the Council's assessment of progress, to also provide tools for self-evaluation to organizations, community groups, businesses, etc. Peter Senge's *Five Disciplines* for learning organizations was noted as a possible model for such a tool.

There was considerable although not unanimous interest in carrying out asset mapping to identify what we have. It was suggested that LPAC could partner with the District Advisory Councils to do this work. Such work was seen as generating a body of evidence and facts, and highlighting gaps and associations that might help the Council to formulate recommendations. It was cautioned that we must bear in mind that not everything we have is an asset, in that it may not be effective or helpful. As with the Report Card, there is a need to decide how broad or targeted the asset map will be. To minimize pressure on the limited time of Council members and the limited resources available, there is also a need to build on what has already been done in other processes. (E.g. the Poverty Reduction Strategy has carried out an asset mapping exercise which identified some 350 supports and measures, and work is currently underway to explore a 211 line for the province which would help people access social and community supports.)

The number of priorities was discussed. While some favored a focus on a single priority, the majority of members favored two or three priorities. It was noted that the large size of the Council enabled it to establish working groups that would make the best use of members' time and allow them to self-select to the priorities that most drew them.

It was noted that a number of Council members had not been able to attend the second evening, and it was felt that they needed to be informed of the discussion and to have input on the directions. The group agreed to have the Co-Chairs do this on their behalf.

## 6. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Co-chair Whelan summed up as follows:

- The task for the Co-Chairs is to develop and present to members, a framework for the working groups.
- The meetings of the full LPAC would then become the reports back from the working groups.
- Three Working Group roles that have been identified are:
  - Asset mapping
  - An accountability framework and benchmarking
  - Report Card
- The working groups would be able to further define and refine their mandates.
- Wendy would carry out research on the above approaches to identify transferable learnings.

To identify the content priorities for the above work, it was agreed that:

- The Co-chairs will develop a list of priorities and poll the Council on those, using a nominal process such as top three.
- The priorities will be drawn from the discussion paper and the Council's other work, and may be merged or integrated to come up with a manageable number, and to express them in terms such that they are measurable.

Some members offered to assist the Co-chairs with this work. The offer was welcomed. Members should contact the Co-chairs directly.

The following timeframes were noted:

- Pull together the development group, and develop and carry out the poll by early July;
- Communicate the results to the Council;
- Create the working groups and their draft terms of reference. It was envisaged that each working group would carry out benchmarking, asset mapping and analysis in their area of priority, ultimately feeding into a Report Card;
- Recruit members to the working groups (it was noted that there is no obligation to sit on a working group);
- Define and pursue the resources needed to support the working groups;
- Aim to have the working groups underway by September.

In closing, the Co-Chairs thanked members for their commitment and participation, and expressed appreciation to facilitator Sara Roach-Lewis for her work in support of the Council.