

Montague Family of Schools District Advisory Council

May 3, 2016 Meeting Topics

21st Century Skills: Learning and Innovation

- Online teaching classrooms via Skype to accommodate rural schools
- Online community for parents to collaborate
- More options for students to take courses on line as an alternative

21st Century Skills: Digital Literacy Skills (info savvy, media fluent, tech tuned)

- Ongoing PD for teachers on new technology
- Older students and teachers mentoring the younger students on technology
- Technology has a place but does not need to replace everything
- Teaching kids to find a balance between fundamentals and technology
- Online course in high school to teach accountability for when they go to university

21st Century Skills: Career and Life Skills

- problem solving skill development
- increased project based learning
- classes on taxes and budgeting money to learn skills in real life situations

Engagement: How can we engage parents and communities in schools? Who would benefit from this support?

- Need of a parent survey (needs assessment for parents' interests and strengths)
- Need for more learning nights for parents in subject areas, Triple P parenting
- Provide virtual Home and School forum
- Make schools more welcoming for parents e.g. school tours, open house for parents, less formal parent teacher interviews, have students explain course offerings programs. Parents may learn better from the students.
- More communication with parents e.g. good news, welcome, feel valued
- How do we get parents into the school that would benefit greatly from the support available at the school?

Mental Wellness: challenges of struggling students due to behavior, mental health and lack of supports

- Recommend an interagency model support for the great needs both in our schools and community e.g. Social workers, health professionals, OT, Physio, Public Health, Speech – bring expertise from the community into the schools
- Primary Health Care Model: social worker in school to redefine the role of guidance counsellor; OT and RN services (come to the school for these services); shared between multiple schools; reorganization of mandates;
- Concerns about wait times for Psych assessments and resources to support students after assessment
- Our communities need pro-active and preventative support systems
- A+ Program re-instated for lower grades. We need more alternative programs to deal with class composition issues.

Reorganization of school communities to maximize necessary resources

- Parents want input in the reorganization process
- Reorganization could be creative by looking at the big picture – like building a new school so that all students and schools have the resources they need
- All schools should have the same resources and the same opportunities
- Concerns of declining enrolments but still want to preserve small schools
- More flexibility in school choice for parents so that they can send their child to the school they feel best
- Understand how reorganization can affect students. A plan needs to be in place to help students adjust to changes.
- Factors besides class size determine success: e.g. student effort, discipline, motivation

French Immersion: Discussion around Late French Immersion

- The opportunity to grow school communities by offering Late Immersion—have Belfast, Cardigan, Vernon River feed in to Grade 7 Late Immersion at Montague Intermediate
- Parents need more information to inform them about options and the benefits of French Immersion e.g. How many Immersion students drop out from K-12? How do they fair on English assessments? What numbers are required to offer Late Immersion? Identify who is interested in French Immersion in each school.
- Can technology make French Immersion more available – Distance Ed for F.I.?

February 25, 2016 First Meeting Key Themes

- Engagement: how can we engage parents and communities in schools who would benefit from the support.
- Mental wellness: challenges of struggling learners due to behavior, mental health and lack of supports. Concerns about wait time for psych assessments and resources to support students after assessment
- Small schools: concerns of declining enrolments in smaller schools.

- French immersion: discussion around option of Late French Immersion in this Family Of Schools
- Interagency supports: desire and need for interagency support in for Occupational Therapy, nurse and family support

Learning environments

- Home life challenges affect students academically and in other ways
- Desire for an interagency support system that includes OT support, SLP and health nurse
- Programming for student differences
- Teachers need support in programming for student differences (autism, learning disabilities, etc.)
- Interest in IB / AP programs and flexibility in independent study courses for students who are excelling
- Discussion was held around realigning and organizing differently. Create A Plus programs or programs of choice into schools with declining enrolments, like charter school concepts

Curriculum

- Late immersion is not offered in Montague Family of Schools. If it were, this would help keep students in feeder schools longer in community elementary schools.
- More choice for high school students in French Immersion and Sciences.

Parent wellness and engagement

- Desire to find more ways to get parents involved and to help them feel comfortable coming to the school.
- Programs needed to support parents like Triple P, Families First which support families and children in school.

Student wellness and engagement

- There are challenges getting students involved in school activities.
- More activities desired like “Breaking Down the Walls” where much success was experienced.
- Do students not want to be engaged because they are not academically satisfied?
- There is interest in learning more life skills like financial literacy practical financial information to prepare for life outside of school.

Technology in Learning

- Positives of technology – everyone is connected.
- Google classroom is a great support.
- Suggestions that new class arrangements and organizations using technology could help class composition issues.

