

Morell / Souris Family of Schools District Advisory Council

Members for 2020-21: Shara Kenny (Morell Consolidated), Michaela Oliver (Morell Consolidated Teacher), Nathan Jay (Mount Stewart Consolidated), Lynn Sherren (Souris Regional Teacher Rep), Brett Hughes (Morell Regional Student Rep), Mary Kendrick (Morell PEIHSF Regional Director)

Vacant: Morell Regional High, Souris Regional, Souris PEIHSF Regional Director, Souris Regional Student Reps

May 5, 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

- Traffic safety in rural area schools
 - For many schools in the Morell and Souris families of schools, there are no sidewalks or crossing guards.
 - Souris has a crossing guard.
 - Usually the municipality pays for crossing guards. This is a challenge in rural areas where municipal budgets are small.
 - Cars are speeding through school zones.
 - There is more traffic than previous years from increased pick-ups and drop offs due to COVID.
- Extra COVID positions
 - The DAC would like these supports extended for another year.
 - The DAC would like to know how long the adjusted curriculum is going to be in place.
 - A decision is being made on May 6.
 - The DAC would also like to know whether the same curriculum adjustments were made in French Immersion.
- Student needs
 - Schools in the Morell and Souris DAC are finding that there are greater needs from students.
 - Teachers are trying to create learning plans for 5-6 learning levels in classrooms.
 - There needs to be more support for students.
- Student Well Being Team (SWT)
 - The SWT in the Morell and Souris Family of schools has never been staffed at full capacity.
 - The DAC has noted that the region covered by the SWT is very large and challenging to cover by one team even if fully staffed.
 - The DAC would like to recommend student supports based on student needs rather than numbers.
 - This would include 1 full time guidance counselor per school.
 - Class composition has a bigger impact than class size when determining student needs.

- Goals for DACs
 - The DAC would like to know more about the Minister's goal for DACs
 - The DAC would like to know how they might fit into the new elected school board structure.
 - The DAC would like to have a stronger role in decision-making and budgets.
- Online Safety
 - The DAC would like to see more efforts around teaching children how to stay safe online, and see it included in the curriculum.
- Staff shortages and retention
 - The schools in the Morell and Souris families have been facing shortages of teachers, EAs, counselors, and bus drivers
 - Some uncertified counselors and EAs are being used as substitutes.
 - The PSB is planning to provide training for uncertified substitutes
 - Schools in the Morell and Souris family are scrambling to find substitute teachers and EAs at least 3 times per week.
 - It is hard to attract substitute staff, since mileage is not covered.
- The DAC would like to see more efforts focused on training and retaining staff in rural areas in full time positions.

DAC Presentation to Minister

- The DAC provided an overview of concerns and recommendations to the Minister.
- Traffic safety
 - **Response: Traffic safety is a concern across the Island. The Department will connect with the PSB to follow up on this item.**
- Staff shortages and retention
 - **Response: Graduating B.Ed students from UPEI may help alleviate these shortages.**
 - **The PSB has been trying new things such as job fairs at additional locations across the Island, and permanent substitutes in an effort to address substitute challenges for all categories of workers. The system continues to explore creative ways to improve the substitute pool of employees.**
- Student Well Being Team (SWT) and Guidance Counselors
 - **Response: Students are facing additional stressors that are affecting their mental health. Teachers have taken on much of this burden. The Minister is hopeful that the added supports this year helped schools, and is confident that these supports will be extended.**
- Goals for DACs
 - **Response: There is an intention to meet more regularly with the DACs. The Minister would like to meet again before the next budget.**

These points were made in the following discussion:

- The Engagement Officer will send the DACs list of topics and priorities to the Minister.
- It may be helpful to have Norbert Carpenter attend a future meeting with the DAC.
- The DAC discussed the itinerant substitute teacher position in their families of schools. This position has been vacant since March, but no one has been hired and no one has seen any ads for the position, internally or externally.
- The DAC identified a number of recommendations moving forward:
 - More communication with and feedback from the school system (Minister, Department and PSB).
 - Continuity of the DAC coordinator between years when possible.

- Work to ensure topics carry forward to the next year if uncompleted or questions are outstanding.
- The DAC coordinator should meet directly with the Minister and Deputy Minister to provide updates on the progress of the groups.
- Increased participation on DACs needs to be promoted.
- DACs are duplicative. The Home and School Federation already does this work.

Home and School Federation presentation

- PEI Home and School Federation president, Heather Mullen, gave an update about the upcoming AGM:
 - The meeting is taking place on Monday, May 10. It is open for anyone to attend.
- Workshop topics include:
 - Student well being
 - Healthy school food program
 - Communications/PowerSchool
 - Curriculum, assessments, and report cards.
- The PEIHSF will be voting on three resolutions:
 - K-12 E-Learning in Prince Edward Island
 - Request for committee to review funding of replacing expired or unsafe playground equipment
 - Weekly upstream mental health and outdoor curriculum
- The Healthy School Food program will become a new non-profit organization at the end of June.
 - It will be funded by government.
 - A main focus will be on improvement of food quality.
 - The group is working to ensure that all food insecure children are reached by the program.
- PEIHSF parent engagement grant applications will be released in the fall.
- The PEIHSF will continue to advocate for a principal for every school regardless of size.

February 2, 2021, Web Ex Meeting

Guests: Jennifer Robertson, Mental Health Clinician/Team Lead Student Wellbeing Team Morell/ Souris

Discussion and Outcomes

Student Well Being Team (SWT) Presentation

- Jennifer Robertson gave a presentation about the SWT's work in the Morell and Souris family of schools.
- She 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.
 - There is no outreach worker yet in Morell/Souris. A new person will be starting permanently in April.
 - An occupational therapist just joined the team.
- 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 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:
 - Anxiety was high in kids from taking in too much information about COVID in the spring/summer.
 - Many kids have settled back into school routine.
 - Increase in separation anxiety and increased need for parental support.
 - Increase in separation anxiety with the students.
 - Don't see older students modelling behaviour due to cohorts.
 - Changes in one on one sessions and group sessions:
 - Zoom sessions.
 - Outdoor sessions with students started in May/June.
 - Home visits over the summer.
- What can be done
 - 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:

- It is hoped that SWT will continue to develop and strengthen its role within PEI schools over coming years.
- The SWTs are being evaluated and statistics are being collected on number of kids using the service, number of sessions, issues SWTs are seeing, etc.

Elected School Boards Consultation

- The DAC would like to make sure they have representation from Morell at the upcoming consultation.
- There has not been a lot of feedback from staff or parents.
- Concerns about previous school boards include:
 - Meetings were closed, meaning that visitors at meetings weren't allow to speak or ask questions.
 - Many parents don't know what a school board does.
 - If people knew this, they would be more likely to put their name forward.
 - Some felt the appointed members were not representing the interest of families on PEI, and mostly focused on PSB/Department priorities.
 - The appointed members did not go out of their way to hear about issues from families.
 - School boards should be elected. They should represent families and not be as influenced by government power.
 - How could a system be set up to ensure this?
 - The school representative in the Morell/Souris area spoke to principals, and no one else. There was no action based on the discussions and no follow up.
 - The representative also had little awareness about dynamics within rural schools.
- People would like a description of what a school board does or what they should do.
 - How much power will the boards have?
 - What will the process be for remuneration?

Student Investigation and Search Policy Consultation

- The PSB would like any feedback on this policy to be submitted by Friday, February 26, 2021.
- The schools are currently reviewing Respectful Workplaces Policy and the PEITF Code of Ethics with their staff.
- The schools will ask for feedback on the Student Investigation and Search Policy at a staff meeting before February 26, 2021.

December 7, 2020, WebEx Meeting

Guests: Sterling Carruthers, School Health Specialist, Katelyn MacLean, School Food Project Manager, Steven Wilson, Project Coordinator

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 vendor gets \$5 per meal, plus a delivery charge of \$5 per school per day, and 10 cents per meal, no matter what parents pay for the meal.
- Morell Consolidated and Mount Stewart have been having a very good experience with their vendor for the program.
- There has been a high participation rate (as high as 40% in one school) from the Morell and Souris Family of Schools.
- Spaghetti, shepherds pie and burgers have been popular menu items. The autumn salad and greek salad are not.
 - Gluten free options will continue to be offered.
- The program is working to ensure that, when possible, compostable containers will be used for meals.
 - Containers being used are recyclable, but the recycler on PEI does not have a market for #5 black plastic.
 - The company producing the containers is now making white containers that can be recycled. They will be on the Island in the new year.
 - The program has been promoting a bring your own cutlery program with more promotion starting in the new year.
 - People are re-using the containers at home.
- PEI School Food program Inc. is a brand new non-profit that will be applying for charity status. Four board members have been selected.

Home and School/Student Council Meeting Key Topic Review

- The DAC would like to highlight that poor rural internet service could lead to inequity in learning if students need to switch to online learning due to COVID.
 - Students in the high school can take school Chromebooks home.
 - Students can use the school internet from the school parking lot, however this is not a solution that would work for all students or families if students needed to switch to online learning.
- The Student Well-Being Team hosted sessions about how families can support students through COVID.

- It is unfortunate that more parents do not come out to these type of presentations.
- **UPDATE: These events were advertised by the schools on their websites. Presentations took place at Mount Stewart Consolidated on September 2, and at Morell Consolidated on September 3. The event at Souris Regional was canceled because it was not posted by the school in time, and could not be rescheduled due to COVID 19 protocols.**
- The Student Well-Being Teams have also presented to the schools.
- The Student Well-Being Team for Morell and Souris is not operating at fully capacity. They are hoping to hire another position in December.
- A member of the RCMP recently made a presentation at Mount Stewart Consolidated School to students about child exploitation on the internet.
 - It would be great if the DAC could host something to build awareness and help parents learn the importance of monitoring their children's online presence.

October 7, 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 chair and organize DAC meetings.
- The DAC would like to have more direction from the Public School Branch and Department of Education and Lifelong Learning on what their role is.
 - Are there specific topics that the DAC should focus on, or should the DAC focus on specific school and community needs?
- The DAC would like to meet four times a year.
- The DAC would like to have a mix of online and in-person meetings.
- The DAC would like the Minister to attend at least one meeting this year.
- The DAC would like the Department to consider per diems to members for their participation.

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.

School Operational Plans

- The school operational plans are working well at the schools. Students are adapting quickly, wearing their masks and sanitizing computers and desks.
- The busses are crowded and it is hard to maintain physical distancing as a result.
- Managing a classroom while maintaining physical distancing is not feasible in classrooms.
- Teachers' schedules have been adjusted to require extra time in the morning and afternoon to accommodate operational plans in some instances.
- Will rules around masks be relaxed at some point (outside of busses, and during sports)?
 - **UPDATE: Masks are likely to be required well into the future.**

Topics for Discussion

- Remote learning
 - It would be good to improve remote learning in case things shut down again due to COVID. Expectations will be higher now than they were in the spring.
 - Topic include devices in homes, internet access, access to high-speed, virtual classrooms and meetings with teachers.
 - Important to consider the impact on parents and families (i.e. work, mental health).
 - How teachers can help support parents and students with remote learning.
- School preparedness.
 - Kindergarten students coming into the school system are not prepared (this includes academic as well as fine and gross motor skills)
 - Pre-Kindergarten could be a part of the solution. A program for the next school year is being developed by the department.
 - Community education sessions could support parents and families.
- Parent involvement
 - There are few parents involved in the school community.
 - Need to improve communication with parents so they are aware of supports available.
 - Public health could be involved in this as a partnership.
 - Identify the community's greatest need, and find some programming to address that need.
 - Offer non-judgmental programs that everyone can benefit from.