

# Westisle Family of Schools District Advisory Council

## Meeting Topics

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

- More experiences hands-on
- More work groups for collaboration and problem solving
- Task related learning jobs
- Problem solving/communication
- Proper training/support for teachers on technology
- Internet usage (proper safety)
- Parent comes in to school to engage with their child about internet safety
- Accountability – bring back deadlines; make them accountable for the real world
- Attendance – more meaningful input on policy of attendance i.e. a 5 day letter home suggests a meeting with parent and child
- Social – youth council to get kids involved in planning activities in the community and the school
- Social responsibility – teachers and parents modelling

### Transportation

Need regional reports on weather and road conditions. Concerns about time spent on buses, with lack of access to extracurricular and field trips

- The budget for transportation needs to be increased for rural schools. E.g. a greater cost to attend cultural events than urban schools
- The transportation department needs to be regionalized, not centralized
- A new busing model needs to be implemented
- Retired bus drivers need to be replaced – not consolidate routes
- There is a great need for late buses to accommodate students in extracurricular activities in rural areas

### Integrated/inter-agency services: health and education need to provide services within the schools

- Health and education need to provide services within the school
- There must be enough counsellors to meet the need of increasing mental health and anxiety issues
- Other professional services are needed like Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Workers, Speech Pathologists, Health Services, Psychologists — to deal with the regional disparity.

- Professional services should be able to work together to provide supports for teachers, students and parents in the school community
- Supports are needed for learning disabled students for assessments and programming recommendations

### **Assessments: differing opinions**

- Many feel assessments are the cause of stress for students
- There are concerns over the Grade 11 Math assessment being worth too much in final grades
- Assessments can be purposeful if they are used to provide feedback for learning to students and professional development for teachers. A variety of assessments are needed to meet the various learning styles
- Assessments are costly and time consuming. Assessments limit creativity and count too much toward the final mark

### **High school course configurations: options for ALL students**

- More creativity in scheduling, year-long courses, different school day, more terms as semesters
- CEO may not need to be a full semester course
- Consider 5 blocks for scheduling and a combination of 45 minute and 75 minute classes. This may open up more options for students.
- Ensure there is a maximum student cap or ratio to teachers in a classroom

### **Other:**

- Westisle needs a facelift
- Is it optimal to have 3 DAC meetings in a year? In order to make change within our school system, perhaps more discussion needs to take place
- Learning vs. schooling: How does education transform from being the responsibility of the school to a joint responsibility with families?

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## **First Meeting: February 25, 2016, Westisle - Key themes**

- Transportation issues in West Prince: need regional reports on weather and road conditions. Concerns about the amount of time students spend on buses, along with the ability to do extracurricular and access field trips
- Integrated services: health and education need to provide services within the schools. There are concerns there are not enough counsellors to meet the need of increasing mental health and anxiety issues, along with needs for occupational therapy and physical therapy.

- Assessments: many felt assessments are a cause of stress for students, and concerns over Grade 11 Math assessment being worth too much in final grades
- High school course choices: there are limited choice for FI electives in high school due to the number of mandatory courses – shorter classes and a 5th Block added would be helpful

## **Assessments**

- Assessments – What facts do we really take away from those that are actually used?
- Suggestion that Grade 11 Math Assessment should not be used as a final exam
- Students feel they are not prepared for the provincial assessments in general
- Report card comments are generic – standard comments for the average student is not helpful.

## **Leadership**

- A new staffing model is needed and parent and student feedback is important and needs to be considered by decision makers. What is the staffing allocation based on? Are staffing allocations based on student needs?
- Schools are adopting new programs (Progress Monitoring Schools) and continuing with the ‘old’ way as well, which is a drain on resources
- The education system is very top heavy
- Lack of role clarity in advisory council model - some felt principals are representing teachers in the Principals Council.
- Need to throttle negativity and foster innovation: is it time to look at solutions?
- Confidence in education can only exist when professionalism is prioritized and all partners are held to the high standard expected in every academic profession.

## **Student wellness and engagement**

- What is the maximum time a student should be on the bus?
- Many students refer to school being their ‘safe place’
- Guidance counsellors should not be classroom teachers, as they need to focus on counseling
- Concern that students with mental health issues that are not getting the accurate testing/diagnoses

## **Parent wellness and engagement**

- Rural areas, because of the smaller populations, have fewer community support systems. Engagement takes effort. Families of with other challenges do not have time or energy to be fully engaged.
- Engagement requires time, communication, trust and respect. Inviting conversation is a necessary step but trust and respect are built over time and require repeated acknowledgement.

- School day length, PD days, etc. need to be considered as to how they affect the community and family

### **Technology in Learning**

- Teachers need support and resources to work with technology.