

## **Upper Grand District School Board**

### **Program Committee**

#### **Minutes**

**Tuesday, October 6, 2020**

The Program Committee of Upper Grand District School Board met virtually on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, commencing at 7:00 p.m.

Trustee Topping read the protocol for virtual meetings.

The Chairperson Trustee Topping presided, and the following Trustees were present: Bailey, Campbell, Edwards, Foley, Lustgarten Evoy, MacNeil, and Ross, together with student Trustees Taran Fournier and Kimberly Tran. Also in attendance were Director of Education Rogers, Student Success Lead Zen, and Superintendents Heaslip, Lindsay, McDonald, Slater, and Van Ooteghem. Curriculum Lead Clyne, Mental Health and Addiction Lead Marino, Early Learning Coach Howal and Indigenous Summer Learning Program Course Instructor Cheyenne Vivian were also in attendance.

#### **Agenda**

Trustee Campbell moved that the agenda be approved as printed.

**The motion carried.**

#### **Declarations of Conflict of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Trustee Bailey moved that the minutes of the meeting held on June 4, 2020 be approved as printed.

**The motion carried.**

#### **Report from Student Trustees**

Student Trustee Kimberly Tran provided an overview of events for September 2020. She noted that the first virtual student senate meeting of the year was held on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. There were 14 students who represented 8 out of the 11 secondary schools. The student Trustees have since reached out to the schools who were not

represented, including the remote secondary school, with the hope of representation from each school for the next Student Senate meeting in October. The September meeting began with a Mental Health presentation from Mental Health Lead Marino who introduced the board-wide mental health initiative, the Umbrella Project. She discussed methods of coping with the uncertainty and stress of living in a pandemic. Chair of the Board, Trustee MacNeil also presented to the student senators and discussed governance and the roles and responsibilities of School Board Trustees. A major topic that was communicated is the importance of student voice and public consultation at the Upper Grand DSB. Student Trustees run the board-approved Student Senate social media platforms including Twitter and Instagram and invited everyone to follow as Upper Grand DSB initiatives such as the Umbrella Project are promoted. The next Student Senate meeting was planned for Tuesday, October 20th, starting at 5:00 p.m. and will be held virtually through Google Meet. Equity Lead Jessica Rowden will be presenting to the senators at that meeting. Kimberly expressed thanks to Superintendents and Trustees for their support during the atypical nature of this year's meetings and in their new role as Student Trustees. Thanks were also expressed to Communications Officer Loney for updating the Trustee webpage to include Student Trustees and for her assistance with the Student Senate webpage.

### **Recommendation # 1**

Trustee Bailey moved that the verbal update from Student Trustees be received, with thanks.

**The motion carried.**

### **Mental Health Update**

Mental Health and Addiction Lead Marino presented the Upper Grand DSB Mental Health Update which included supports for students, parents, staff, and the community. Through the summer, students were supported with a mental health phone line, regular mental health check-ins, and enhanced community collaboration.

All educational staff were provided with a two-hour, pre-recorded webinar to assist them with a mentally healthy return to school for students. All classrooms were asked to implement the planner "The First 10 Days and Beyond" which was created by School Mental Health Ontario. This tool provided teachers with specific lessons and activities to ensure a warm, safe and welcoming return to school for all students, remote and in person. Topics included how to create an intentional welcome, building social emotional skills such as self-identity and healthy relationships as well as activities to ensure equity

and inclusion. In addition to this direct classroom support, all students now have a Mental Health And Me button on their UGCloud landing page where they can access age appropriate materials and resources for themselves relating to mental health and wellness.

There are a variety of supports available to support parents including connections with Mental Health professionals through the summer who were supporting their child/ren; updated and relevant information on the Upper Grand DSB website and the Parent Special Education Website; parent webinars offered in both live and recorded formats on topics designed specifically for parents relating to children and youth mental health and the return to school. The Mental Health Lead also collaborated with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and the Wellington Catholic DSB (WCDSB) in the delivery of a web-panel discussion on a mentally healthy return to school.

Mental Health Lead Marino was hired by School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) to be a co-writer for some of the materials created for the "Return to School Toolkit". She continues to participate in regular meetings with communities, coordinates Mental Health supports, and participated on the Wellington CMHA Here4Hope Committee. This committee has also launched a new support; after suicide service, for those who experienced a loss from suicide. This community driven program will work in coordination with in-school supports and crisis responses.

A new initiative "The Umbrella Project" which started this year, has monthly themes for all staff, students and families relating to well-being, and is linked to Board social media and community partners. Some of the monthly well-being themes of the umbrella project include gratitude, empathy, self-compassion, healthy lifestyle, mindfulness, autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and mastery.

Trustees expressed thanks for all the work done in Mental Health.

### **Recommendation # 2**

Trustee Foley moved that the verbal update on Mental Health be received, with thanks.

**The motion carried.**

## **Summer Learning Program – Camp Discovery and Indigenous Program**

### Camp Discovery

Superintendent of Education Heaslip reported that this was the sixth year that the Upper Grand DSB has offered a summer learning program through a CODE initiative, with each year looking a little bit different than the last. In addition to providing a literacy and numeracy program, Superintendent of Education Van Ooteghem was able to secure funds through an “extended learning opportunity proposal” to support the addition of an Indigenous program. In previous years, the literacy and numeracy program was referred to as ‘Camp Liffort’, supporting children who were ready to start grade 1 or grade 2. This year, the focus was on children who were heading into either grade 2 or grade 3 and the name was changed to Camp Discovery. Due to the closure of schools as a result of COVID-19, the program was moved online this year.

Camp Discovery, a half day program, ran from July 6<sup>th</sup> to July 24<sup>th</sup>. Students who would benefit from additional literacy and numeracy instruction who may also be experiencing some socio-economic challenges within their family, were referred by their teacher or principal. Students from 19 elementary schools across the system benefited from this program. Curriculum Leader Mitchell and Early Learning Coach Howald were responsible for coordinating and leading the literacy and numeracy program this year.

Curriculum Leader Mitchell noted that they were happy that they were able to provide this learning experience for children despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the requirement to offer the program online, it provided a good perspective of how structured online learning can work effectively. Parent involvement was a critical component to the success of the program, and parents were sent an individualized report card at the end of camp. A number of professional development opportunities were provided to teachers.

Early Learning Coach Howald noted that each child received a knapsack full of materials to use not only for camp, but for the entire summer. Teachers were provided with common instructional resources including 3 stories for read-aloud lessons. These books were springboards for asynchronous learning around art, math and literacy. The child’s home teacher provided the students’ reading level and the students were re-assessed at the end of the camp. Even where a child may not have increased a full level, staff observed that they demonstrated an increase in specific reading skills that were needed to move ahead. For example: decoding words, increasing sight word knowledge, fluency, and confidence. Early Learning Coach Howald reported that, in reading, 18% of students increased 3 or more levels, 16% of students increased 2

levels and 29% increased one level. In literacy, 35 children met their goals and 10 children partially met their goals. For math, 38 children met their goals and 6 children partially met their goals. Staff also benefited from the program and learned a lot about how to successfully teach online, skills that can be taken back to the classroom. Parent feedback was also very positive. Students were engaged and felt that the camp was a great success.

### Indigenous Summer Learning Program

For the first time, an Indigenous Summer Learning Program was offered. Curriculum Lead Secondary Clyne facilitated the programming for Indigenous Youth, and Course Instructor Cheyenne Vivian delivered the literacy and numeracy program to students. Fifteen students from 13 families; 8 First Nations, 7 Métis, in grades 6, 7, and 8, from 9 different schools; 3 Wellington County, 6 Dufferin County, enrolled in the program. The summer program focused on weekly group discussions, professional learning, online learning assistance, guest speakers, and resulted in reinforced community connection. Both students and parents were impressed with the program. Trustees expressed thanks for the terrific report and all the work done to provide additional supports for students.

### **Recommendation # 3**

Trustee Lustgarten Evoy moved that the verbal update on Summer Learning Program, Camp Discovery and Indigenous Program be received.

**The motion carried.**

### **Summer and Fall Mental Health and High-Risk Transition Supports**

Supervisor, Psychology and Social Work Dr. Woodford, together with Assistant to the Superintendent, Program Services Donaldson, and Mental Health Lead Marino, provided an update on summer Mental Health and High-Risk Transition Supports. Dr. Woodford advised that there was extra funding this summer for high-risk students.

Summer Mental Health supports included:

- Ministry of Education funding for summer Mental Health Supports for students
- Social Workers, Psychology Staff and Child and Youth Counsellors (CYC) provided support to students
- New referrals could come from the students, caregivers and principals through summer school and the mental health support line

- Students who were already connected with the Boards' Mental Health staff could connect directly with staff
- Students received virtual wellness check ins, ongoing mental health therapy and support with connection to community services
- Students were seen weekly, or bi-weekly or as needed

Number of students supported included:

- 141 students were supported by social work and psychology in July and August
- 143 students were supported by social work and psychology during high-risk transitions
- 42 students were supported collaboratively with community Mental Health partners by social work and psychology staff
- 9 students were connected to supports through the summer Mental Health Line
- Child and Youth Counsellors supported 109 students (not including high-risk transition two-week period) in July and the beginning of August
- 4 students were referred to the Upper Grand DSB mental health line
- 5 students were supported in collaboration with a community mental health worker

Areas of support provided to students included:

- Anxiety
- Family stress, parent mental health and addictions
- Coping with COVID-19
- Return to school
- Connection to community supports
- Financial and food insecurity
- Relationships
- Self-harm and suicidal ideation
- Addictions

High-Risk Transition Supports included:

The Ministry of Education provided funds to support students with complex mental health and/or special education needs. This funding was to pay for staff to come into the school in August to meet with families and students to support return to school. School teams had the opportunity to support students in either individual or small group transition processes. This funding was provided to schools to allow them to be responsive to the needs of their students.

Working with multi-disciplinary teams to support the unique needs of individual students with complex special education/mental health needs related to transitioning back to school activities included:

- School visits to enable students to build understanding of fall routines
- Meetings with new staff to provide opportunities for practicing routines where necessary
- Opportunities to actively practice highly coordinated student plans with students/staff involved
- Support alignment of student strategies used for students in their home, with the community and by the school staff
- Monitor and adjust team-based plans based on face-to-face student activities to better ensure student and staff safety for the fall return to school
- Students and staff had the opportunity to implement and adjust COVID-19 based protocols in relation to students with high special education needs as appropriate to ensure students and staff knew what this will look like and feel comfortable with the systems in place

### Early Years Supports

The Ministry of Education provided funding this year for increased supports for kindergarten to grade 3. The Board hired a full-time Specialized Mental Health Interventionist who is a Social Worker and a full-time Special Education Consultant to work along with a one day a week CYC to provide individual, classroom and capacity building support for students who are struggling.

### Remote Learning Supports

In the elementary remote learning school, the curriculum team continued to support teachers with their curriculum needs, help problem solve their technology concerns, and engage students. Enrollment allowed for the development of specialized class placements. Special Education Resource Teachers (SERT) were assigned to remote schools, as well as a Board Special Education Consultant to support the development of school-based practices. An Itinerant Mental Health Clinician and CYC were assigned to support mental health and behavioural needs. Consultant Support Team (Psychology, Speech and Language and Special Education) and Elementary Social Workers from brick and mortar schools also consulted with remote schools and continue to support students on caseload and can take new referrals.

In the secondary remote learning school, the curriculum team supported teachers with lesson planning, course development, engagement through digital tools, and

experiential learning in the virtual context. Secondary Special Education Heads provided support with remote student IEPs. Students needing support are brought to the In-School Team and Consultant Support Team meetings of the brick and mortar schools.

Board staff continue to work together to ensure supports for students and staff are in place in a timely way. Program Leaders meet weekly to monitor referrals and urgent needs requests. Multidisciplinary teams are assigned to support the programming for students as needed to ensure the right supports are in place to support the varied needs of students. This work will continue into the fall.

#### **Recommendation # 4**

Trustee Bailey moved that the verbal report on the Summer and Fall Mental Health and High-Risk Transition Supports be received, with thanks.

**The motion carried.**

#### **Motion of Deferral from September 29, 2020 Board Meeting**

At the September 29, 2020 Board meeting, Trustee Campbell placed the following motion which was deferred by Trustee Topping to the October 6, 2020 Program Committee meeting. The motion read: "That, on the Board Agenda, under the title Prayer/Reading, the word Prayer be removed."

Trustee Campbell noted that her motion was very clear and simple, and wanted the word prayer removed.

In Trustee Busuttil's absence, Trustee Lustgarten Evoy read Trustee Busuttil's comments as follows.

Trustee Busuttil did not support the motion. She pointed out that almost a year ago, in her role as Chair, she surveyed all of the Trustees, and prepared a Report leading to the following motion (among others) that was brought forward and passed at the November 26, 2019 Board Meeting (page 13):

2. Effective January 2020 the Board Agenda invite the Trustee scheduled to bring an Opening Prayer, Reading or Silent Reflection.

It was noted that the intent was to be inclusive, to welcome, open up and not create



additional barriers. During her years attending Board Meetings she heard Prayers, thanks, praise, stories, poems, ballads, silent reflections, song lyrics and other expressions reflecting and connecting educational leaders to the seasons, current affairs, and inspiring others. It was noted that Prayer is not the exclusive voice of Christianity, and in excluding Prayer, thanks, giving, praise, she believed that this practice silenced other non-Christian voices as well as the opportunity to mutually learn from one another. She commented that the work of Trustees has already been done in moving forward on this topic.

Trustee Lustgarten Evoy noted that a great deal of people felt very strongly about this issue, and that Prayer included more than Christianity. Throughout our system, prayer is welcome, allowed, and practiced by many, and accommodations are made to provide prayer rooms in support of those requiring a space to pray. At the Organizational meetings of the Board, Pastor Jim Gordon, Pastor of Elora Road Christian Fellowship Church delivers an Inaugural Prayer, which last year included unity of heart and mind and mutual respect. Last year, Imam Mabeem Butt, of the Muslim Society of Guelph also delivered an Inaugural prayer. His prayer included the spread of love, inclusivity, gratitude, and Prayer for equal education. Together, they prayed for encouragement and blessings for a successful year ahead.

Trustee Bailey noted that he would not support the motion, and agreed with Trustees Busuttill and Lustgarten Evoy. He felt that inclusivity does not mean removing and sterilizing, if we remove prayer, it is another step in sterilizing our culture.

Trustee Campbell moved that, on the Board Agenda, under the title Prayer/Reading, the word Prayer be removed.”

**The motion was lost.**

## **Other Business**

### **OPSBA Update**

This information was forwarded to Trustees from Trustee Busuttill prior to the meeting as she was unable to attend, and she requested that it be included in the minutes.

### Item #1 - Saturday, September 26, 2020 - OPSBA Annual General Meeting

Cathy Abraham from Kawartha Pineridge DSB was re-elected as President, Michael Barrett from Halton DSB was elected as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President and Kathleen Woodcock from Waterloo DSB was elected as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President.

During the annual general meeting (AGM), policy resolutions are brought forward by member boards and are concerned with the work of OPSBA. These resolutions are reviewed by the OPSBA Executive and Board of Directors prior to the AGM.

One resolution on School Trip Guidelines was referred to the Policy Work Team, another was referred to the Student Trustee Liaison Committee and the Resolution to advocate for stronger Code of Conduct language and consequences in the Education Act failed.

The resolution from the York Region DSB passed unanimously. This was for OPSBA to advocate with the Ministry of Education to support the work of school boards with regard to anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism and that this be a priority. That funding, shared resources, best practices and the collection of identity-based data and educational outcomes be collected.

#### Central West Regional Meeting - Elections

Donna Danielli, Halton DSB was re-elected as Regional Chair with Alex Johnston, Hamilton DSB as Vice-Chair. Central West representatives on the Program Work Team are Carol Ann Sloat, Grand Erie DSB and Joanna Oliver, Halton DSB, with Kate Baggot as alternate from Niagara DSB. Policy Work Team Central West representatives are Scott Piatowski, Waterloo DSB and Linda Busuttil, Upper Grand DSB with Don Werden as alternate from Grand Erie DSB.

Item #2 - Next Regional Meeting is on November 7<sup>th</sup> - information to follow

Item #3 – Board Meetings – this is a NEW item

Amendment to Regulation 463/97 “Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance” has expired and there is an expectation that Boards return to face to face meetings. The Minister suggested in a call that Public Health will decide what Boards will do. OPSBA’s position is that determining governance is not the role of Public Health and that operations is a Board decision, within the parameters of Public Health. OPSBA has requested that the Minister extend the Amendment to Regulation 463/97 and allow non-in-person attendance for the 2020-2021 school year.

In response to a concern raised by Trustee Lustgarten Evoy, Trustee MacNeil advised that the Upper Grand DSB has returned to in-person meetings, with the Chair, Director and one other person present, and that an extension of this exemption may be required beyond November 30, 2020. She also noted that, medical exemptions could be accommodated if required.

## **Adjournment**

Trustee MacNeil moved that this Committee adjourn at 9:12 p. m. to report to the Board.

**The motion carried.**

**This document is available in alternate formats upon request.**