

Upper Grand District School Board

Program Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

The Program Committee of Upper Grand District School Board met on Tuesday, February 2, 2021, virtually and in the Board Room commencing at 7:11 p.m.

Trustee Topping read the protocol for virtual meetings.

The Chairperson Trustee Topping presided, and the following Trustees were present: Bailey, Busuttil, Campbell, Edwards, Foley, Lustgarten Evoy, MacNeil, and Ross, together with student Trustees Kim Tran and Taran Fournier. Also in attendance were Director of Education Rogers, Student Success Lead Zen, and Superintendents Heaslip, Lindsay, McDonald, Morrell, Regier, Slater, and Van Ooteghem.

Agenda

Trustee Foley 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 Foley moved that the minutes of the meeting held on January 5, 2021 be approved as printed.

The motion carried.

Report from Student Trustees

Kimberly Tran reported that, on January 19th, the first student senate meeting was held since the transition to remote learning due to the stay at home order. Jenny Marino, Martha MacNeil, Frances Norlen and Doug Morell were also in attendance. Together with student senator Alexandra Elmslie, Jenny Marino did a presentation on "What is Self-Compassion" which was the theme for January. Some of the key points of that presentation included:

- 75% of people treat others kinder than they treat themselves
- self-criticism actually reduces our self-confidence and perceived abilities
- recognize that life is imperfect and so are we
- mistakes are natural and part of life
- when you treat yourself badly after making a mistake your brain will do everything in its power to blame someone else instead of taking responsibility

Youth Talk's new series called Wellness Works was shared, and is a project supported by both local school boards and Waterloo-Wellington Canadian Mental Health Association. This is another example of content that is developed and presented by youth, for youth.

Trustee Martha MacNeil commented on the importance of student voice and public consultation. In order to include student voices in the selection of a new Director of Education, two survey questions were provided.

1. What should Upper Grand DSB priorities be in the future?
2. What qualities should a good leader for Upper Grand DSB have?

Student senators shared a variety of updates from their schools and personal learning experiences including the prevalence of anxiety in regards to Google Meet. Students also received information about the upcoming election for the positions of student trustees for the 2021/2022 school year. Four students have expressed interest in this role, and it was noted that nominations will close in mid-February. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 19, starting at 5:00 p.m. and will be held on Google meet. At this meeting, student trustee candidates will speak in support of their nominations, followed by the election of student trustees for the 2021-2022 school year.

Thanks were expressed to Trustees, Director of Education Rogers, and Superintendents for the many hours and challenges faced due to COVID-19 restrictions, and for putting student well-being first.

Recommendation # 1

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

The motion carried.

Mental Health Update

Mental Health and Addiction Lead Jenny Marino provided a Mental Health Update. She noted that healthy lifestyles, food, nutrition, sleep, water, and exercise, are a privilege, and not accessible to everyone and that staff had great conversations and strong collaboration with equity partners over this issue. The Ministry of Education

forwarded student action kits which included materials to enhance student mental health and wellbeing during extended closures/lockdown. She proudly noted that much of the content that was provided was already distributed at Upper Grand DSB schools over the past year. A simple, accessible, useful parent website is in the works. In order to support students, a survey on google form was created and shared with parents to obtain feedback on students' interests, anxiety, social development, and isolation. This survey was a tool for parents to identify when to worry about the mental health of their child. Mental Health Moments that contained information pieces for teachers were video taped as a resource for teachers. Mrs. Marino closed noting that great things are happening today in mental health.

Recommendation # 2

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

The motion carried.

Teaching Reading in the Upper Grand DSB

Superintendent of Program Lindsay noted that over the last few years a variety of presentations have been brought to the Program Committee regarding the many plans, initiatives, and projects designed for student success and well being. Mathematics has been a focus both at the Ministry and Board levels over the past two years. She noted that for tonight, the focus was on literacy. We have over the years, come to Program with different presentations on different aspects of literacy and literacy support. The presentation planned for this meeting is very long, comprehensive, detailed, and shows how we teach and how students from JK-grade 12 learn to read. This is important information in order to identify which students struggle, understand why, and identify how we as a school board intervene. The Ontario Human Rights Council is presently conducting the Right to Read Inquiry, specifically looking at students with Learning Disabilities. While Upper Grand DSB was not one of the 8 boards chosen as part of the inquiry, it did cause us to look at our own practices. We decided to start by putting together a compilation of the work we do. The presentation showed what teachers are teaching, instructional practices and interventions being used, what students are learning, and how they experience language and literacy skills. This compiled information will help us as we continue to examine our own practices in regards to differentiated instruction, early screening, reading instruction and intervention programs, accommodations and psycho educational assessments. This presentation was the result of a lot of people putting together a continuum of the best practices that are occurring in our schools. It is remarkable to see the labour of all of our teachers and

support staff. This is really about understanding how children learn to read and why some encounter difficulties along the way. It is about understanding how we collectively ensure rich literacy opportunities and break down barriers for students throughout their reading journey. We have, on a yearly basis, brought EQAO data to share and in that context, we have provided information about next steps and programming to address our EQAO scores. We have not had that data for the past few years, and due to PPM 155, we are unable to collect consistent reliable diagnosis data other than from EQAO and report cards on student reading. As such, we were relying on teacher's professional judgement, and the support of the school and school board teams to ensure we are doing all we can. This presentation will be used as professional development for principals, teachers and support staff moving forward, both as a reminder and for those who are new to ensure that everyone understands how and when to use instructional practices and interventions. Every student has the right to read. Staff can come back with follow up inquiries or share more specific information in any identified area. It was hoped that Trustees gain a better understanding of what learning to read looks like and what the staff at Upper Grand DSB are doing to teach reading to our students. Principal of Program Jonathan Walker, together with his team; Wendy Donaldson, MaryAnn Schouten, Lynn Woodford, Jessica Rowden, Carrie Conrad, and Sandy Kritzer, presented an in-depth presentation on teaching reading in the Upper Grand DSB, as well as supports available to students from kindergarten through to grade 12.

Trustees expressed sincere thanks and much appreciation for the excellent presentation and all the work that continues to go into initiatives and support for students. Kudos to the team of experts and the delivery of literacy to Upper Grand DSB students.

Recommendation # 3

Trustee Busuttil moved that the Teaching Reading in the Upper Grand DSB presentation be received.

The motion carried.

OPSBA Report

Trustee Busuttil reported that the OPSBA Public Education Symposium took place virtually on Thursday, January 28th and offered some excellent speakers and smaller breakout sessions. The next OPSBA PD event is the Labour Relations Symposium and was scheduled for April 29th and 30th. An update will be sent to Trustees closer to the date.

The OPSBA Media Report sent out today included an invitation to a zoom event; Sick Kids Panel: COVID-19 And Kids -- The Sequel, which is scheduled for Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. The Sick Kids Hospital panelists, Dr. Ronald Cohn, President and CEO, Dr. Jeremy Friedman, Paediatrician-in-Chief, and Dr. Michelle Science, Infectious Disease Consultant will share their thoughts on COVID-19 and keeping our children safe during the second wave. Zoom details will be provided closer to the event. The session will be recorded. All are welcome!

A tentative virtual Central West Regional Meeting has been set for Saturday, February 20th from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Details will be sent to Trustees.

Recommendation # 4

Trustee Edwards moved that the verbal OPSBA update be received.

The motion carried.

Other Business – nil report

Adjournment

Trustee Foley moved that this Committee adjourn at 9:22 p.m. to report to the Board.

The motion carried.

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.