

Upper Grand District School Board

Program Committee

Minutes

Tuesday, Oct 5, 2021

The Program Committee of Upper Grand District School Board met on Tuesday, October 5, 2021, virtually and in the Board Room commencing at 7:00 p.m.

The Chairperson Trustee Topping presided, and the following Trustees were present: Bailey, Busutil, Campbell, Edwards, Foley, Lustgarten Evoy, and MacNeil, together with student Trustees Vikasni Kuganesan and Emilie Hill. Also in attendance were Director of Education Sovran, Executive Superintendent McDonald, Superintendents Heaslip, Lindsay, McCutcheon, Regier, Van Ooteghem, and Executive Officer of Human Resources Pyke.

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 1, 2021 be approved as printed.

The motion carried.

Report from Student Trustees

Student Trustees Vikasni Kuganesan and Emilie Hill provided an overview of events for September 2021. Student Trustee Emilie Hill noted that the first virtual student senate meeting of the year was held on September 28th and there were 11 student senators who represented 6 schools from across the board. The September meeting began with the introduction of the new Director of Education Peter Sovran, and the student trustees expressed thanks for speaking with them about the importance of student voice. Mental Health Lead Jenny Marino was a guest speaker who spoke on the concept of wellness

and the importance of mental health. Two topics that were widely discussed were the many activities linked to Truth and Reconciliation as well as concerns at schools with littering. Student Trustee Vikasni Kuganesan shared the next upcoming October student senate meeting will focus on learning more about United Way and how it serves the youth in the community and will also touch more on environmental issues. Jenny Marino will also be in attendance to do a Mental Health Moment. A new initiative the Student Trustees would like to take on is creating a TikTok account to model how the platform could be used in positive ways to communicate information. Another initiative would be to create a Celebration Booklet. This booklet would be created by the student senators and student trustees and it would share different recipes from cultures and holidays celebrated by all. Student Trustees expressed thanks to Board Chair MacNeil, Superintendent Hamilton, Mental Health Lead Marino, Student Senate liaison Frances Norlen, and the Board of Trustees for their support as they learn their new roles and for making them feel very welcome.

Recommendation # 1

Trustee Lustgarten Evoy 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 presented the Upper Grand Mental Health Update which included an overview of summer projects for students, staff, families, and caregivers with funding from the Ministry of Education specific to summer. She also shared how Upper Grand DSB supported a mentally healthy return to school for students as well as offering support for administrators and staff through professional developments and some highlights for 2021-2022 regarding mental health and well being.

A brief overview of summer projects was shared such as Stress Busters Summer Camp for students aged 8-12 years old. The students were given evidence based stress management and coping skills and shared ideas, thoughts and challenges. Another program offered focused specifically on high school aged students/youth was Living Life to the Full and was in partnership with Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and Wellington Catholic DSB. This offered an evidence based program that helped youth learn ways of dealing with different things that life threw at them and living life to the full through an interactive course and skill building sessions. Also provided was a

parent and caregiver support group offered by Friendship in Action, were people who wanted to connect with others and talk about experiences, challenges, and support, whether it be regarding their families, the pandemic, or getting kids back to school in the fall. Upper Grand DSB was also pleased to offer a summer learning opportunity to caregivers by offering SafeTALK, a half-day suicide prevention training lead by trained facilitators. The board was also able to provide SafeTalk to educators/staff in addition to offering the two day applied suicide intervention skills training (ASIST). All training opportunities for both caregivers and educators/staff were registered in full and attended in full.

Mrs. Marino highlighted Upper Grand DSB's commitment to a mentally healthy back to school that honours the identities and lived realities of students and makes meaningful connections to life at school. She emphasized that all students would benefit from extra caring support, a warm welcome back, steady routines, and inclusive classrooms.

Mrs. Marino shared some highlights for 2021-22:

1. A collaboration with community agencies and in partnership with parents and youth to design and deliver two to three parent webinars.
2. A review of addiction prevention and early intervention programs for schools with a focus on an anti-oppressive anti-racist framework and moving away from programs delivered by our police partners to avoid a message of criminalization which enhances already present stigma.
3. Delivery of two more virtual Stress Busters camps.
4. New outcome survey for all mental health staff.
5. Board wide wellness themes with monthly content.
6. 2SLGBTQIA+ focused resources relating to mental health and wellbeing.
7. ASIST and VTRA trainings as per policy.
8. Third full day sessions with Child Youth Counsellors (CYC) with Colinda Clyne on understanding our history and taking action.

9. Anti-sex trafficking policy, programs and partnerships that are underway as per Ministry direction.

Recommendation # 2

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

The motion carried.

Wellness Works/Umbrella Project Update

The Umbrella Project was introduced last year to provide staff and parents with monthly Wellness themes and skills to support everyday inclusion of wellness into the school and classroom environments. Wellness Works builds on the work of the Umbrella Project to bring this important work to the classroom and throughout the system in ways that highlight important alignment with educator practice with system wide initiatives.

Mental Health and Addiction Lead Jenny Marino introduced Elementary Curriculum Leader Heather Walker, and Experimental Learning Lead Tracy Hunter who were both invited to be on a committee focused on enriching the Umbrella Project so that it could be more responsive and reflective of the diverse and unique needs of the teachers, students, schools, and communities in Upper Grand. The committee worked to create teacher and student supports for Upper Grand DSB and collaboratively shared four key areas: system alignment, new content for teacher and student learning, new website, and next steps. Trustees expressed thanks for all the work done in Mental Health.

Recommendation # 3

Trustee MacNeil moved that the verbal update on Wellness Work/Umbrella Project be received, with thanks.

The motion carried.

Police Presentation in Schools

Executive Superintendent McDonald, Principal of Equity and Indigenous Education Gerald Walker, and Elementary Teacher (Former Curriculum Leader from Student Support and Program Services Department) Connie Howald provided an update to Trustees on the work completed since the Board motion adopting the recommendations from the Police Presence in Schools Task Force report from last March, which reflected

an equity and human rights based approach to working with the police services in the Upper Grand DSB. The approved recommendations also provided police with opportunities to work in schools in order to build relationships and foster community.

Updates were shared on the following three approved recommendations:

Recommendation # 3 - That all police presentations be vetted using the presentations in schools guidelines developed by the Student Support and Program Services Department of the Upper Grand DSB.

One of the tasks as a committee was to look at all the work being done by police in elementary schools regarding presentations. Three key areas of focus were: diversity and inclusion, positive messaging, and are the presentations connecting to curriculum and age appropriate.

Recommendation # 4 - That all students and parents be notified in advance of all police presentations at schools.

This will allow parents to have an outline of how the presentations will connect to curriculum and will provide a prompt for parents to discuss the content with their children.

Recommendation # 5 - That all staff collect feedback from students and staff on all police classrooms school presentations.

Feedback forms were created to collect feedback from students after each police presentation. This will allow insight into the student experience and give further direction regarding the need for additional or different content moving forward. The surveys would collect information about the grade and the school, but not the individual student.

Fall updates included continued discussions with a staff team from Homewood Health regarding developing presentations around addictions that move from the lens of crime and punishment and look more from a lens of health and safety. Also procedures and protocols have been updated for administrations around when police are called to support schools/students and what documentation needs to be completed along with the gathering of feedback.

Recommendation # 4

Trustee Lustgarten Evoy moved that the verbal report on Police Presentation in Schools be received, with thanks.

The motion carried.

Camp Discovery Report

Superintendent of Education Heaslip reported that this was the seventh 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. This year the literacy and numeracy program focused on children who were heading into either grade 2 or grade 3. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the program was again held virtually.

Camp Discovery took place each morning and all day on Wednesdays and ran from July 5th to July 23rd. Students who would benefit from additional literacy and numeracy instruction were referred by their teacher or principal. Students from 24 elementary schools across the system benefited from this program. Curriculum Leader Mitchell took the lead coordinating the literacy and numeracy program this year with the help of Curriculum Leader Connie Howald, Early Years Lead Carrie Conrad and Denise Knapp.

Curriculum Leader Mitchell noted that the goal of the program was to provide a different experience than the online learning students had experienced during the school year and integrated the areas of focus, literacy and numeracy while also providing fun and engaging lessons. A number of professional development opportunities were provided to support teachers and held a weekly debrief meeting to brainstorm and share ideas. Parent involvement was a critical component to the success of the program, and parents were sent an individualized report of student learning at the end of camp. Each child received a knapsack full of materials to use not only for camp, but for the entire summer.

Early Years Lead Carrie Conrad shared student learning data collected at the end of camp. She noted all children made progress towards or mastered at least one skill in either literacy or numeracy and educators and/or their parents reported students having gained either more confidence in or enjoyment of math and literacy. The students home teacher initially provided the students' reading level and the students were re-assessed again at the end of 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 Years Lead Conrad reported that almost 60% of

students went up at least one level of reading and a quarter of students increased from 2 to 4 levels. In numeracy, 96% of students either mastered or progressed on 1 or more of the skills they focused on. Staff also benefited from the program and learned a lot about teaching, literacy and numeracy strategies, and 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. Trustees expressed thanks for the terrific report and all the work done to provide additional supports for students.

Recommendation # 5

Trustee MacNeil moved that the verbal report on Camp Discovery be received, with thanks.

The motion carried.

OPSBA Report – nil report

Other Business – nil report

Adjournment

Trustee Bailey moved that this Committee adjourn at 8:53 p.m. to report to the Board.

The motion carried.

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