

Waterloo Region Assembly of Public School Councils Meeting Minutes – May 5th, 2020

This meeting was conducted online via Zoom and moderated by Heidi Holmes
Attendance: 50 attendees representing 39 Schools, plus 5 Board Staff

I. Welcome

WRAPSC members welcomed to our first online meeting by co-chair Mandi Ballentine. Heidi Holme went over the Zoom protocols.

Motion to approve minutes from February 4th by Mandi Ballentine. Approved.

II. Board Presentation Slides (attached)

III. Question & Answer period

Note: Questions were sent to Board staff in advance of the meeting, to provide time to research the answers. The following Board Staff participated: Angela Mercier, Shannon-Melissa Dunlop, Justin Brown, Andrew Sloan, Lila Read

Green = comments from meeting

Red = questions asked by WRAPSC members in advance

Black = answers given by Board staff in writing

Blue = questions asked during the meeting

A. **General questions**

Please note: There are no specifics yet on many questions as we are awaiting direction and guidance from the Ministry of Health, Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Education. We need to do many of these steps in tandem with 72 other Boards.

1. **When students return to school, either this year or next year, what thoughts or discussions are under way to maintain physical distancing in the classroom? Our existing classrooms cannot accommodate this, so what options are being explored? staggered classes? What about support for mental health?**

- Ministry of Education, Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) will establish guidelines,
- Will work closely with Waterloo Region Public Health on guidelines and plan for return
- A variety of models are being explored internationally and across Canada, will have model and lessons-learned from Quebec before Ontario schools open.
- Supports for mental health will be critical as children return

2. Is the Board gathering feedback from stakeholders about how distance learning is progressing? How is it being measured? What steps are being taken moving forward to address the rapidly growing gap between learners?

- We will be surveying parents, students and families this week and requesting feedback – the question will be “what can we do better”
- The best feedback we are gathering is through the regular communication between teachers and families, specific to students in each teacher’s class
- The equity gap is something we have been very attentive to and we will need to explore additional supports for students who have experienced learning loss
- COVID cohort will need to be monitored and supported, differentiated expectations, focus on key skills and mental health
- Research-informed
- Students may emerge with different skills, not necessarily all negative, children are resilient – more empathy, more aware of their community and those who serve and support them for example

3. Will you need to implement social distancing on school buses?

- The CMOH and the Ministry of Education will provide direction and the STSWR consortium will need to adhere to this and work with their bus operators to put safeguards in place

4. If schools are reopened this school year before June 2020, is the Board prepared to offer support for parents who are unwilling for their children to return to the classroom?

- We will work with parents to support their child’s learning, regardless of the mode of learning, so the answer is yes.

5. Is the Board preparing, like universities and colleges, to have online learning options available for Sept 2020 in case of a 2nd wave?

- Our Distance Learning Program continues to mature and evolve and will continue as required
- The additional time will allow us to continue to refine our approach and allows teachers, educators, students and families to become more comfortable

6. Will my child's grades be affected by work they do via distance education?

- We have been clear that your child’s marks/grades can only improve via distance education

7. Please explain the Board's policy around educators using video as it sounds like it has essentially flip flopped with the latest info (from doing none to educators can choose any platform and how to use it).

Will they possibly investigate Zoom Classroom or something else online that includes real time instruction, especially since school start-up has been postponed again.

- The WRDSB needed time to ensure student and staff privacy, security, and safety were addressed
- Appropriate Training opportunities were developed and put in place to support staff who were not as familiar with the use of videoconferencing
- The decision is up to a teacher's professional judgement but with clear guidelines and limited tools
- Equity, Privacy, Security and Safety are the cornerstones of our approach

8. Are plans being made to help support families with students who have IEP's, IPRC's, etc.?

- Teachers and other educators are reaching out to students and families with IEPs and IPRCs
- The IEP continues to be followed to support the student, as much as possible given the distance learning environment
- Your child's teacher, principal or Special Education Teacher will be reaching out re. IPRCs – Ministry has allowed for a waiver to be signed in the event the placement continues, a virtual meeting can be held if need be
- Equity in education is a key principal.

9. Can personal belongings be retrieved from schools?

- Not at this time – public health and the Ministry of Education continues to advise against this
- If there are individual emergency circumstances parents can contact the principal to discuss
- Board trying to develop a plan to return items to students. Depends on when school resumes. May have to get custodial staff to empty lockers and bag it for pick-up. Secondary schools can have up to 1,700 lockers, so this is not a quick process.

10. Have all the chrome books been handed out and are more available?

- Chromebooks are available for those students who require them – parents should contact their child's teacher

11. Will borrowed tech be returned in June or kept until we see what happens in September?

- We have heard from students and caregivers that they have greatly appreciated the use of borrowed technology. We plan to continue to have this equipment loaned out until such time as schools reopen
- For those students who are graduating or not returning to their school (perhaps they are moving), there will be a process for the collection of these devices

12. Will the Corona virus be added to health curriculums, to combat common misconceptions and false cures such as injecting bleach into your body?

- The Ministry of Education establishes the curriculum however teachers are likely to use the current context of the Corona virus to explore a number of different topics

B. Secondary learning

1. For graduating high school students who have already been accepted into a post-secondary course of study, what will happen if they have a required course this semester? For example, if you need calculus and you actually need the content in your first-year university course, how can a student make up for not learning everything due to the disruptions caused by Covid-19? Will expectations change for students applying for post secondary studies?

- Teachers are working hard to cover the key content for any course
- Universities and colleges are in discussions about the impact of school closures on this year's cohort of students and want their students to be successful as well
- There will be gaps, but all students across the province will have gaps so they can be addressed together.

2. There are many resources for parents to help elementary students. There is much less available for parents of secondary students. In particular, content learning is very much up to the student. What will happen to secondary students who 'pass' grade 10 math but actually haven't covered all the content and/or haven't understood all the content that was covered? How will they succeed at grade 11 math when they start so far behind?

- Secondary teachers are providing the key content for their courses and that which is essential to set students up for success next year
- Board and school staff will be putting supports in place for the students and recognize that there will probably be gaps

3. Will our high school students be completing their exams online (will there be exams?) and if so, will they follow suit as University/College exams where the

students are required to do a 360 degree pan with their laptop and have a Proctor viewing via webcam?

- Exams have been cancelled for all semester 2 courses
4. Events such as graduations have been cancelled. Is it up to schools to organize a fall grad if they choose? What about yearbooks? Will anything be produced for the 2019-20 year?
- At this time they are postponed until the fall but we do not know what the fall will bring
 - We are currently looking at possible options to support some type of graduation
 - Some schools are already organizing virtual promos etc...
 - Board is asking student senate and student trustees for input on these issues.

C. Elementary learning

1. Grade 6 and 8 students that are graduating: Is there a loose plan for them to get some closure on their elementary school years somehow when it is safe before they leave for good.

- Graduations are postponed until the fall but we continue to review possible options
- Some schools are planning virtual year-end celebrations with their students

D. School Council questions – answers to these questions were obtained separately, not in the meeting.

1. What happens to the PIC and PRO money we had planned to spend this Spring? Can it be rolled over?
- Regarding PIC and PRO Grants, the Ministry has not provided additional direction on PIC/PRO Grants but have noted it is on their list. Going forward, school councils should finalize and submit their reports in accordance with the original timelines.
Some schools are using the money for online webinars.
2. Can school councils access the food they have stored in schools and donate it to Nutrition for learning?
- Administrators and Facility Services have removed food from schools and have dropped it off at Nutrition for Learning pop-up locations. We appreciate you raising this as an issue but at this time School Councils need not access our schools.

E. Questions asked during meeting

1. How are students and parents supposed to receive feedback from teachers during distance education protocols?

Angela Mercier: The Board is trying to give specific supports to teachers to provide feedback, either via email, google hangout, or google classroom. Feedback is crucial as it keeps students engaged.

Participants reported that they are not seeing much feedback.

Rachel McQuail reported that Google Classroom does not have pop up notification for comments, you need to go to the list of Assignments to look for them.

3. Will students have to wear PPE in class?

Not that we know of yet.

4. How will report cards be delivered?

We don't know yet, awaiting direction from Ministry of Education. Will depend if schools re-open to either staff or students.

5. How will CO-OP placements be handled?

They will still take place, but will likely need to meet additional standards in social distancing factors etc. Where these standards can't be met, may need to find a different kind of placement. Student Safety and well-being is always the priority.

IV: Closing: Heidi Holmes closed the meeting by reminding people that our next meeting will take place on Oct 6th, 2020. It may be online again, we don't know yet. Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm

8 May 2020/aa