

Executive Board Report – for May 11, 2015

Executive Meeting

Discussions held by email.

One mention in media, Opinion 250 News ran update on DPAC elections.

Chair has been invited to take part in K-12 Innovation Forum on June 15th. Invitation only forum “on how to best support BC’s K-12 Innovation Strategy as it moves from concepts to everyday practice”.

Williams Lake DPAC & Gary Anaka

Currently scheduled for September 24th, 2015, at Duchess Park. No expressions of interest as yet from schools.

Conference Committee Report

Conference scheduled for October 24th, 2015, at the Civic Centre. We are currently looking at various speakers. Planning for \$30 per ticket, open to all districts, 2 free tickets per PAC. We may be receiving BCCPAC funding for a regional conference.

Policy and Governance

Discussion on whistle blowing policy, which is a policy that would encourage people to speak out if they have legitimate concerns about wrongdoing, as distinct from individual grievances, to ensure retaliation is not taken against whistleblowers. The draft policy as prepared by senior administration only provided protection to employees, engaged in discussion as to whether or not this should apply to students and volunteers as well.

Draft Presentation to Board – April 28, 2015

I’m Sarah Holland, on behalf of the district parent advisory council.

I was looking back at previous May addresses to the board, to see what DPAC was previously talking about at this time.

I note that in 2013 and 2014, we had some comments about the fees and deposits. In 2013, we noted that: “Information about the support for parents with financial hardships should go out to each and every parent, each and every time there is a request for money, or a statement of fees.”

In 2014, we said “You have a financial hardship policy, which states that that access to goods and services, as well as to co-curricular programs and opportunities (for example, field trips) is available to all students, and no student is to be denied that access because of financial hardship. It also states that “All communication with students and/or parents regarding fees and deposits must include a statement that explains that fees will not be a barrier to student participation in school activities.” Please ensure that all communications – including the communication in this agenda package – includes that the information that fees will not be a barrier for students. This information in this document is not good enough.”

I'm therefore delighted to note that on circle page 40, it states that "policy 5101 is to be referenced in conjunction with this schedule". Thank you for making that change.

As a reminder, schools cannot charge for "goods and services" without which "the student could not meet required learning outcomes or assessment requirements." I'm not entirely sure how this works with the requirement for students to pay for planners – even on a cost recovery basis.

Parents are in sympathy with the financial difficulties of the board and the district. Parents spend a lot of money on sending their kids to schools, and parents also spend lots of time and money contributing to schools. You'll see in this very agenda book playgrounds for Blackburn, Foothills, Hart Highlands, Pineview, and Vanway listed. Just like playgrounds, school supplies aren't cheap.

Some budget comments from 2014: "I can't say that DPAC is thrilled about the budget, and the financial constraints that have gone into this budget. We're also concerned over seeing a structural deficit appear in the budget again. ...and... Perhaps if there was more school-level budget information provided, that would be of assistance – that's where it really seems to matter to people. "

From 2013: Some suggestions we made then were taken up, such as starting the consultation process earlier and clarification of the mandate. Unfortunately, not the suggestion for changing the acronym. Additionally: "We would also appreciate more of the actual decision making about the budget – this \$140 million of taxpayers money, spent by this public body – to be made publically. If the board only publically discusses things that they are unified on, then this gives the impression that decisions are only made behind closed doors. It does not lend itself to a perception of transparency and openness. There is indeed democratic reasons, public interest in having controversy or disagreement in public."

DPAC shall reserve comment on the Long Range Facility Plan on tonight's agenda for next meeting. We have long been interested in a facilities plan, and are aware that this has been in the works for quite a while now. One thing the board may wish to do a better job of is communicating to the public the relationship between the budget process, the strategic planning, and this facilities plan. All are happening at about the same time – but not for the same reason. Quite frankly, it would probably be more useful if the board wrote more letters to the public, to let us know what's going on in plans for the district, and fewer letters to the Minister. The public is perhaps more likely to pay attention.

If board and staff do have questions or concerns from parents regarding the budget, strategic planning, and the facilities plan, do please refer them to DPAC – our June meeting will be held June 1st, at 7pm, at the Van Bien Training Centre.

All parents are welcome.

Thank you.