

Executive Board Report – for May 8, 2017

Media

April 4th – 250 News – Springwood reopening recommendation

April 4th – Vista Radio – Springwood Reopening Motion

April 5th - CKPG – Springwood Reopening Motion

April 18th – CKPG - Springwood Parent Information Night

April 18th - 250 News – Springwood Parent Information Night

School District

April 4th – School Board Meeting (Gillian Burnett and Sarah Holland)

April 18th – Springwood Parent Information Night (Gillian Burnett and Steve Shannon)

April 24th – Presidents Table Meeting (Gillian Burnett)

April 25th – School Board Meeting (Gillian Burnett and Sarah Holland)

(Draft of) Presentation to Board – April 4th

Good evening. I'm Gillian Burnett representing the District Parent Advisory Council. I sit before you tonight, knowing that our organization has failed – we have been ineffective in influencing change that we have spent years advocating for. The release of the recommendation to reopen Springwood Elementary- what should be a good news story-, and the subsequent response from many families, has followed our anticipated, predicted and feared path.

For many years we have kept vigilante watch on enrollments, projections and capacities. We have written reports, delivered presentations and had numerous conversations about the need to plan in advance for a better response to ever changing demographics and emergent issues.

Let's look at two examples. The declining enrollment and under-capacity of our buildings that resulted in the 2010 closures had been evident for quite some time, and it was the loss of the Annual Facilities Grant which made the problem critical. Compare that to today. The increasing enrollment and subsequent capacity challenges in the Hart area have been evident for quite some time, with class size changes now making them critical.

The very nature of a crisis implies restrictions on the length of time we have to plan and act and results in what DPAC has called “unnecessarily disruptive processes “. We have repeatedly called upon the board and administration to develop a process that allows time for fulsome consultation, communication, planning and implementation. Our recommendation is the same today as it was in March, in January, or 5 years ago:

We recommend that a standing committee with full partner group representation be created. That the committee meet annually to review the district's enrollments,

capacities and projections in order to identify trends, challenges and emergent issues. That partner groups be engaged in providing input on proposed solutions and implementation plans.

If you approve Item 7.1 later this evening, there is a lot of work to be done in order to make this successful for our affected communities.

We know transitions can create stress for those affected. We know that stress is a contributing factor to vulnerability in childhood development. We know that the Hart area has seen an increase in the number of kids vulnerable on 1 or more scales of the EDI. And good news, we know that strong relational communities that provide nurturing and enriching environments are most effective in mitigating the negative outcomes for vulnerable children.

Some of the processes necessary to implement this plan have been predetermined and are outlined in the recommendation already, but more is needed. We need a process that can begin to build a sense of community. We need to ensure that from this point forward, communication with affected parties is improved and that those affected are engaged in developing an effective implementation plan. We need a process that identifies the supports and resources necessary to ensure Springwood becomes the very best environment we can provide.

I hope my presentation has helped identify constructive solutions to improve the outcomes for our students, their families and communities. Thank you.

(Draft of) Presentation to Board – April 25th

Good evening. I'm Gillian Burnett, presenting on behalf of the District Parent Advisory Council.

On April 12th, DPAC was able to offer parents in Prince George the opportunity to learn how to keep their kids safe on-line, and we had about 90 parents come out to hear Darren Laur, better known as the White Hatter. We'd like to thank SD57, for partnering in this fabulous event, as the Duchess Park family of schools brought him in for the day, and offered him to us for the evening. This sort of opportunity would be terrific to offer to our communities of Mackenzie, McBride, and Valemount as well, and we'd love to discuss how that might work at some point.

We'd also like to thank you and administration for hosting the Parent Information Night regarding the Springwood re-opening. It was a great opportunity for parents to come together and have their questions, concerns and advice heard. This is precisely the type of communication that parents would have liked to see before a decision was made. Or for that matter, before they needed to make decisions on the transfer process. We look forward to finding out how the transfer process has gone; specifically the number of people who have applied for transfers and the number of people who can be accommodated.

You might recall that DPAC brought forward a specific recommendation last month. We re-iterate that recommendation this month.

We recommend that a standing committee with full partner group representation be created. That the committee meet annually to review the district's enrollments, capacities and projections in order to identify trends, challenges and emergent issues. That partner groups be engaged in providing input on proposed solutions and implementation plans.

We recognize that enrollment and projections are not static numbers, they flow and change over time. How that affects our various buildings with limited capacities is worth discussing at least once a year. In the past year, there have been recommendations come forward as a result of these challenges for McBride, Mackenzie, Duchess Park, Edgewood, Glenview and Heather Park. In all cases, the affected communities have risen up and invited you to engage them in further conversation around these matters. We encourage you to see this as the communities sending you a clear message that our current reactionary processes are not working. Let's work together at developing a better proactive process for our future.

Periodically, we refer back to the Strategic Plan that was received by the board May 2016 – about this time last year. It talks about what your goals are, what your values are, and how you can measure whether or not you are making progress. The conclusion talks about how this document will serve as a frame work that guides decision making throughout our district. The document contains many great words and we're seeing progress in some areas, but the concept of engagement still needs some work. Open communication with the education community, transparency, trust, support and clarity about processes are good goals to have. We'd like to see more progress in this area and look forward to working with you to develop some concrete plans as to how that might look.

Thank you and please say hello to Mackenzie parents in attendance tonight from us. I'm sorry my schedule didn't allow me to attend in person myself. To the board and Prince George based staff there, we wish you a safe drive back.