

DPAC Chair & Vice-Chair Report for June 2012

It is hard to believe we are already at our last DPAC meeting of the year. However the recent horrific findings at the former Kamloops residential school have resulted in our DPAC executive working very hard to examine how we can build relationships and connections with local Indigenous communities to ensure their voices are heard at both a local school and PAC level, as well as that of DPAC. We are also reviewing how we work and function as a DPAC to ensure that we are supportive, open and inclusive to Indigenous as well other minority groups in the work that we do.

In addition we have continued with our weekly Thursday one-on-one meeting with SD57 senior administration, which will also continue throughout the summer. Highlights from those meetings include:

- Update regarding policy changes and development: Drafts and Feedback are all on hold waiting for Board direction; all work is currently stopped; once work starts up again in current process the feedback DPAC has provided will be integrated prior to next draft review
- We were asked *“If you could say three things to school admin and leadership as they head into summer to think on prior to next year, what would that be?”* and our responses were as follows:
 - Teachers and administration did amazing given the challenges they faced this year; despite a lot of criticism and concern, we want them to know that did an amazing job in a very challenging time and we dare anyone to do better as a whole if they were in the same situation
 - Everyone take care of themselves because they are worth taking care of; mental health is so very important and the increase in mental health issues as a result of the pandemic are large and far reaching; we need our teachers and we want them healthy and whole heading into next year
 - What are the challenges that this year made you notice for yourself? What areas did you struggle with and where can the district and DPAC support you in going forward? Especially in the light of digital and online learning and the increased demand for teaching in an ever virtual world and an increased need for digital literacy
 - What are the impacts of increased technology on our students, communities, and mental health? What have you seen and what are key areas that the district and DPAC need to focus on to support families and students moving forward into next year and beyond?
 - We do want to look forward to a time when community is visible again; schools were the hub of a community where connections and relationships were made - we look forward to when schools can hopefully be that community hub again come September.

We have also had the first meeting with senior leadership and school administrators to work on developing a best practices “manual” for school leadership and administration. It was a very successful and constructive first meeting, focusing on identifying important key topics and brainstorming ideas and themes that need to be explored and addressed further.

This coming month and into the summer will see DPAC continuing to actively work with the district despite summer coming, as there is budget, strategic plan, policy & governance restructuring, and truth & reconciliation work that are vitally important to improving the education experience for all students.

Presentation to the Board for May 25th, 2021

Good evening trustees, and to all Rights & Stakeholders, and to the Ministry of Education Special Advisors,

It is incredible to believe that we are just 5 weeks out from the end of the school year. It has, to say the least, been a year unlike any other and DPAC has been amazed by the resiliency, creativity, determination and patience shown by our students, families, PACs and stakeholders and rights holders throughout this pandemic. This last month DPAC posed a series of questions to our partner groups aimed at understanding District 57 Teachers' perspective and experience on how this year has gone, and what they picture going forward that will enable them to do their jobs and maintain their well-being both professionally and mentally/personally.

We as the DPAC know that there are increasing administrative, system navigation, and reporting elements beyond 'just grading' that are put upon teachers, that more often than not requires additional time which is often taken away from either the teacher's personal life or the classroom teaching. If we have collectively learned anything throughout this pandemic it is that the publicly funded social systems have been hanging on by a shoestring pre-pandemic and that the public sector workers have been and are moving mountains to keep up with the change - this is not sustainable in the long run.

In the responses to our questions, which were brought forward at our March DPAC meeting were the very real and sometimes heart wrenching answers, but also the very positive - namely that PGDTA and SD57 are actively engaging to resolve issues and concerns by teachers frequently and on an ever on-going basis. We were so glad to hear that their relationship is a positive one despite the challenges of this year, as this relationship trickles down to our children and their learning experiences. Even more positive was the news that SD57 is collaborating actively with the teachers and ministry on a strength-based approach to what parents are concerned about when we as parents speak about 'gaps' in learning. The Superintendent immediately understood our concerns but also re-framed the concerns on workload as asking about wellness, which is entirely correct and accurate. The pandemic has given us a renewed perspective on how important it is for our children to be in a supportive learning environment with a healthy routine and structure to support it. The community public school is critical to our community's well-being in getting support to children and families where and when they need them. We need all of our education team to have full cups to pour from if they are to continue to support and lift up our children.

There is so much good news from this year in spite of the difficulties a pandemic learning year has brought. From student enrollment numbers in our schools, increased parent and PAC engagement and voices at every level in the district, SD57 is starting to see employment inquiries from outside the district due to the work environment. This is huge and any educator that chooses to move here will not be disappointed in the welcome they receive from our community and district administrators.

In other positive news, this coming weekend on May 28th and 29th is BCCPAC AGM and Conference this weekend, as well as connecting and engaging with DPAC's and PAC's from around the province to share experiences and knowledge. As mentioned last month, we are really excited for our parents and PACs at the upcoming Parent Education Conference: Empowerment through Knowledge and Sharing. This BCCPAC hosted parent conference is focused on parents and guardians becoming more empowered for themselves and their children through a better understanding of all that encompasses "schooling and parenting" (during and post-pandemic) and by sharing what they learn and their experiences with their peers. The opening keynote speaker, Dr. Gordon Neufeld and closing keynote speaker Dr. Ashley Miller of the Parent Conference will be an amazing learning experience for parents and families attending.

Additionally, we are working with the mayor and city, local RCMP leadership and ICBC to have a town hall style meeting this June looking at discussing traffic impacts on our schools and surrounding communities, and the issues surrounding increased traffic, school and community density. This will be a great opportunity

for PACs and school communities to discuss issues, concerns and potential solutions with key community partners in attendance.

In closing, I would once again like to say that the community collaboration and having parent voices actively at the table this year has been invaluable in making a challenging year exceptionally more manageable.

Despite the challenges, we have learned so much, just not perhaps in the ways we were expecting.