

DPAC Chair Report for September 2021

The first month of the school year has already kept our DPAC busy and we wanted to share some of the work we have been engaged in and accomplished in the last month alone:

- Developed an annual DPAC work plan with focused goals, priorities and action items that has been communicated out to parents, and have shared our work plan with Senior Administration
- Have organized and booked Ivan Coyote as a live presentation and supported education and engagement with parents on Inclusivity, Equality and SOGI
- Engaged with the Indigenous Education department and have provided our Constitution and Bylaws to them to review for colonialism and provide feedback
- Have worked with Senior Admin on reviewing and following up on the draft AP for Modified Days
- Reviewed every single school website and did an audit of availability of school plans for each school to the public
- Also collected and are in the process of reviewing every single school supply list for every school and grade in District 57 from an equity lens
- Developed monthly surveys to better understand and engage parents about the issues important to them and challenges and barriers they struggle with in engaging with this district
- have commitment from Cindy and all the panelists from the Traffic Safety Town Hall to in person do an environmental scan utilizing the three Es (education, enforcement and engineering) and assessment of three high priority/issue schools: ECHE, Blackburn, Glenview
- Organized an online PAC training event for PAC executive for October 14th
- Formally asked to review Bylaw 4 Appeals (see DPACs public presentation to the Board at the September Public Board Meeting)
- Are working with SD57 on getting babysitting approved for PAC meetings in this district
- Connected with SD57's new Communications Officer Serena Shaw to review the current issues with SD57's school website and looked at three other B.C. districts websites as a standard to work towards

Our DPAC has heard the issues round advocacy that were raised by our PACs and parents over the last month, namely:

Perception of Advocacy and PACs:

- Overcome that PACs are just for fundraising
- A need for tools and resources to help engage and help parents resolve questions and issues

Principles of Advocating as a PAC and as Individual Parents:

- respect and professionalism are important
- we have the same goal: 'What's best for students.'
- take advantage of opportunities for feedback (use it or lose it) at all levels.
- not all demographics of families are present at PAC or have the resources to engage, so it's important for PACs to ask about inclusiveness and reach out to parents
- Understand that there is trauma for some families when dealing with the school system for various reasons - be sensitive to concerns

Perception of Advocacy and School System:

- Parent requests help or referrals but not sure when to expect follow-up or follow-up does not take place.
- Concerns of retribution for speaking up for your kids too much
- Worried about feeling judged by other parents

Ideas:

- Breakdown the PAC commitment to be manageable or less 'time' to participate
 - Alternate methods to gather feedback that is not the 'traditional' PAC meeting format
- Explain processes and acronyms proactively, make new attendees feel welcome and encouraged in the PAC space
- Bring conversations and concerns off social media to the proper forum(s) - PAC as a bridge to assist in that effort (not going to be 100%)
- Engage teachers to report to PAC and discuss general learning outcomes or projects in their classrooms
 - build trust, share
 - create a forum for asking questions about curriculum and learning goals

As you can see from our work and the presentation I gave to the board last week, we are and continue to be hard at work advocating for you and your right to advocate. What is important is to keep speaking out and keep making sure parents use their voices as the power of the parent voice is in its freedom – parents can't be fired or let go. So we ask that parents keep making noise, speaking up and advocating.