

Minutes – PACE Meeting August 5, 2020

Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement

The meeting began by acknowledging that it is taking place in Mi'kma'ki traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Affirmation

The acknowledgement was followed by an affirmation.

Approval of the Agenda

Council approved the agenda

Approval of Minutes

Council approved the May meeting minutes.

Review of Nova Scotia Back to School Plan and Response Plans

EECD provided an overview on the Back-to-School Plan.

After reviewing with Public Health, IWK and other partners, it was clear that the best place for kids was in school. Students will return in September with the same classes, same curriculum but with new health and safety rules. Public Health committed to working closely with EECD to direct the system based on epidemiology.

Learning in September will resume with the full curriculum. Teachers will undertake comprehensive assessment of where students are in the learning. Teachers and schools will provide a supportive environment with supports to transition back.

Enhanced health and cleaning protocols are a big focus. Mandatory mask usage in certain areas, enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces, self-screening, hand hygiene all major components of the plan.

There were some questions about additional supports. The plan outlined that there will be a focus on better supporting our African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq learners based on learnings from the spring. This will include priority access to computers and other technology, additional support workers, and the increased use of culturally relevant pedagogy. Furthermore, the plan commits that children who need additional supports will have access in September. If required to move to one of the other learning models, supports will also continue to be available but in delivered differently.

EECD talked about the development of the plan. Certainly, it is rooted in the context of Public Health with experts from the IWK. The plan also had input from other stakeholders, based on input from the spring at-home learning, including school staff and PACE who went through reflection questions. This was supplemented with the parent and student survey which generated over 28,000 responses. It was made clear that greater access to technology is required and predictable schedules were important.

Technology was important to build into the approach. 14,000 additional computers will be available for students who need them. This will be important if Public Health recommends that some or all schools transition to a blended learning model or at-home learning model. Blended would mean PP-8 would be learning in school with reduced class sizes and 9-12 students would learn from home. For any at-home learning component there will be expectations for teachers and students with a mix of real-time instructed and self-directed learning.

Overview of Implementation

Halifax Regional Centre of Education briefly described the process of implementing based on the Back-to-School plan. This includes the problem-solving meetings set to happen with principals, different logistical challenges each region is working through and the processes being put in place.

Update on Anti-racism

EECD provided an update on the work happening around anti-racism.

EECD presented the resources developed and activities created for Black Lives Matter. This included the new website (<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/acs/objectives/anti-racism>) with resources for parents, families, and schools. There was also information included in the At Home Learning Package sent to all students.

The approach for the upcoming school year will be different, however, there were a lot of lessons learned. EECD discussed the approach, including a focus on access to technology and consistent communication along with ensuring that the Inclusive Education policy implementation continues to move ahead with full implementation. EECD is also developing a mandatory anti-racism, anti-discrimination leadership training module for later in the school year. There was clear emphasis put on the lessons learned from past practices and the need to address systemic issues rather than simply responding to issues.