

Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE)

May 9 & 10, 2019

2021 Brunswick Street (Department of Education and Early Childhood Education)

DRAFT Minutes (Subject to approval of Council Chair)

Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement

The meeting began by acknowledging that it is taking place in M'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 (see <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/PACE/documents>)

Africentric Cohort, Auburn Drive High School

At the invitation of PACE, Principal of Auburn High School, Karen Hudson attended the meeting to discuss the Africentric Cohort at the school. Along with Principal Hudson, three students from the cohort were present. The Africentric Cohort was developed to improve the education of students of African descent and to address concerns around mathematics shown through course grade evidence and choice.

DEECD staff shared two documents with PACE, *Africentric Education – Selected Questions and Answers* and *Research on Africentric Schools*. The research regarding Africentric schools generally shows mixed results.

Principal Hudson described the early evidence showing more students were enrolling in higher level mathematics courses. Additionally, more students in the cohort are achieving higher grades in mathematics. The approach of the teacher and school leadership includes active parent engagement, intentionally developing relationships and addressing apprehension, a cultural and historical perspective to the program and the promotion of a “we can” mindset.

The students offered their experience stating the class feels more like a team where they support each other and work together to succeed. They collectively highlighted the environment within the cohort as more comfortable and that they have classmates they can turn to for assistance without judgement. They described a setting where they all work together in small groups and that there is the opportunity for community outings and study time outside of the regular school day.

PACE members, Principal Hudson and the students discussed ideas about test driving employment opportunities for students, industry partnerships, public communication about the cohort, Africentric identity, peer mentorship and evaluation of the program.

Principal Hudson recognized the support of the Halifax Regional Centre for Education and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the Africentric Cohort at Auburn Drive High School. PACE is interested in receiving updates on the cohort, as more evidence is collected.

System Improvement Planning

Deputy Minister Cathy Montreuil said each regional centre for education and Conseil Solaire Acadien Provincial will be required to have system improvement plans in place for the first time, next year. Staff described the recent two-day system planning session completed at the DEECD with the intent to keep the system accountable and measure impact of its work. System improvement planning will be discussed in more detail at the PACE June meeting.

B.Ed. Programs and Teaching Standards

The university accreditation measures for those schools offering Bachelor of Education programs will be sent to PACE members.

A copy of the *Nova Scotia Teaching Standards Excellence in Teaching and Learning* was distributed to PACE.

Public School Program: Senior High

Staff provided a summary of the revision of the Public School Program (PSP) in Nova Scotia. The revision summary included:

- Highlighting that a jurisdictional survey to identify unique and promising practices was completed (high school pathways, graduation requirements, high school credit system, teaching, learning and curriculum).
- A description of the proposed format of the PSP (the foundation and guiding principles, programs from Primary to grade 8 and programs from grades 9 through 12).
- A vision for secondary education in Nova Scotia (secondary school structure, secondary school credit considerations and options for Nova Scotia high school diploma).
- Through discussions with over 300 students, it was noted grade 9 students asked for explicit course content on study skills, note taking, career exploration and other explicit content to support transition to high school grades.

PACE members emphasized the important of considering how any changes to the PSP could affect marginalized student populations.

Deputy Minister Montreuil explained to PACE members for the first time ever, there is the requirement for regional system improvement plans to include specific and measurable actions to address the achievement gap. We now have the leadership at DEECD in the African Canadian and Mi'kmaq Services Divisions, the beginnings of a DEECD strategy and the advice from PACE that there needs to be intentionality and evidence in the work being completed. Deputy Montreuil committed that the PSP will only progress after further consultation and after any equity issues are identified and addressed.

Assessment Policy Consultation

Confidential drafts of the *Student Assessment Policy* and procedures related to *Due Dates and Use of Zeros*, *Student Grade Level Placement* and *Student Transfer and Course Withdrawals* were shared with PACE members for input. Staff explained that this particular policy has been experiencing extensive consultations and has been seen by over 1130 groups and individuals.

Deputy Minister Montreuil emphasized the importance of a proper implementation of these policies. These policies and procedures are very student focused.

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development

Minister Zach Churchill joined PACE, and discussed their work to date. His response to their recommendations to date was also shared. The Minister supports the three recommendations, with specific responses as follows:

Recommendation	Response	Action
When applications are made to the department for funding, require that the applicant include intended outcomes, supported by evidence that demonstrates progress of those outcomes.	Accepted	This direction is being shared with all department staff who consider funding applications. The department will be amending the application process in accordance with this recommendation.
Recognizing that progress takes time, PACE should receive progress goals for African Canadian and Mi'kmaq learners, based on evidence.	Accepted	The Executive Directors of the African Canadian and Mi'kmaq Services branches have been asked to share any updates provided to CACE and CME with PACE as well.
In consultation with CME and CACE, explore the efficacy of the role of elders and knowledge keepers to assist with the spiritual well-being of Mi'kmaq and African Canadian learners.	Referred	This recommendation is being referred to CME and CACE for their consideration.

The Minister and PACE members discussed communication, budget, the recent inclusive education supports distributed to regions, and barriers to hiring of a diverse work force in education.

Inclusive Education Policy

Department staff shared the draft Inclusive Education Policy, focussing on the guiding principles. PACE members provided observations and advice related to definitions of some professional language in the policy, that academic enrichment needs to be explicitly articulated, that student transitions from grade to grade are key to student success and asked how inclusive education will fit into the performance appraisal of teachers.

There was discussion about the program planning process and possible changes. PACE members noted that there are some schools where amazing work is being done in the program planning process.

Pace members received a copy of the 2019 \$15 million Inclusive Education Supports recently distributed. The Deputy Minister answered questions for clarity purposes.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 14 and 15, 2019 in Membertou, Cape Breton.