



MINUTES

Present: Board Chair G. Anderson, Board Vice-Chair R. Collver, D. Dean, E. Dixon, S. Gibson, J. Richardson, C.A. Sloat, C. VanEvery-Albert, D. Werden,

Administration: Director - B. Blancher; Superintendents – W. Baker, L. De Vos, L. Munro, S. Sincerbox, Recording Secretary – L. Howells

Regrets:

Trustees: B. Doyle, C. Speers, Z. Garbaty (Student Trustee), I. Doxtador-Swamp (Student Trustee), A. Hauser (Student Trustee)

Administration: Superintendents – D. Martins, L. Thompson, R. Wyszynski

A - 1 Opening

(a) **Welcome to Open Session**

The Special Board meeting was called to order by Chair, G. Anderson at 7:00 p.m.

B - 1 New Business

(a) **2020-21 School Year Calendar**

W. Baker referred to the Revised School Year Calendars 2020-21 report providing a high-level overview. W. Baker noted two significant developments since Trustees approved the original calendars in February 2020, Norfolk County Fair has been cancelled and on June 30, the Ministry of Education released a memo encouraging boards to begin school by September 1st. Sr. Administration have met and the revised calendars now have 3 PA Days prior to the start of student instruction. W. Baker noted Sr. Administration is recommending revisions to the previously approved calendar to reflect these Ministry directives.

C.A. Sloat noted on the old calendar that the first PA Day focused around Health & Safety and realizing there may be new operational requirement with reopening and wondering if a day will be the enough time to cover all the items to prepare for students next week? W. Baker responded that this was discussed with Sr. Administration and is why the decision was made to have 3 PA Days and the descriptors for PA Days are listed in general terms. W. Baker further noted that we understand there are some obligations with respect to Health and Safety, ASD, and bullying however this such a unique year we want to make sure those school opening considerations are taken care of and the goal is also to cover the obligatory items, however if we don't get those in at that particular time, we believe the Ministry may forgive us however will make every attempt to capture all of those items.

R. Collver asked for clarification from the Ministry's directive memo, the September 1st – wasn't the directive to have students in class? W. Baker responded Sr. Administration had



talked about that, however that would mean we would have had PA Days in August and that would have entailed making application for a modified calendar and there would be some Human Resources implications with leaves, we tried to balance everything out. R. Collver stated on July 2 we received an email stating our calendars were fine and asked what information was gathered that determined extra time was at the beginning? W. Baker responded that we have been listening to conversations around the province about the planning and if everyone is going with 3 days and you are going with 2 days; you start asking the question “what do they know that we don’t”. W. Baker further stated that after we considered all the implications and challenges for reopening, we were more comfortable going with 3 days than the 2 days.

B. Blancher added an additional comment with regards to R. Collver’s question regarding the reference to September 1 in the memo. There are two interpretation of that 1) as soon as we have staff in for a PA Day we have started our school year and the other is that the Minister wants students in by September 1st. B. Blancher further commented that we did not get a good answer on students in on September 1st and other boards have interpreted differently and it is clear that we are starting the school year as soon as staff is in for the first PA Day of 2020-21. R. Collver asked have you had conversations with other boards that are aligning their calendars that same that we are? B. Blancher responded yes that she has spoken with most SWCODE Directors and some PCODE Directors and some of the Superintendents through their channels and we have aligned with our coterminous board. R. Collver believes that is the right direction to align with other boards as we could get push back.

Moved by: C.A. Sloat

Seconded by: S. Gibson

THAT the Grand Erie District School Board approve the calendars recommended by the Executive Council in the report Revised School Year Calendars 2020-21.

Carried

(b) Verbal update of the School Reopening 2020-21

B. Blancher noted as shared with Trustees during the June 22, 2020 Director’s report the approach to reopening for the 2020-21 was provided to boards on June 19, including the direction for boards to prepare for 3 options

- Normal school day routine with enhanced public health protocols
- Modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery
- At home learning with ongoing enhanced remote delivery

B. Blancher stated that since that time, our team has been diligently working on plans and a great deal of work has gone into these drafts. Back in June the Ministry was clear that boards



would have some flexibility with plans but as of this past Tuesday we were told that some of this flexibility has been removed. B. Blancher stated that plans will be shared with Trustees however, the plans are not ready at this time but will be shared by the end of July. B. Blancher noted that discussions are ongoing with our union partners and our coterminous board. B. Blancher noted that she and the M. McDonald are meeting with our two Medical Officers of Health next week. B. Blancher can share that the Grand Erie adaptive model is based on an AA/BB/C format similar to what has been shared in the media from other boards. In our first iteration the AA cohort would come to school on Monday & Tuesday; Wednesday would have no students in attendance to allow for enhanced cleaning, synchronous remote learning, prep for teachers, professional learning for staff, monthly staff meetings etc.; while the BB cohort would be at school on Thursday & Friday. Students with special needs in self-contained classes, except for Bridges classes at secondary, and Section 23, make up the C cohort and would attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday.

B. Blancher stated that earlier this week we were told that the Ministry would not entertain a model with the Wednesday not being utilized for face-to-face learning in some way. The team is now currently revising their models to include alternate Wednesday's for the AA and BB cohort and include every day attendance (5-days) for the C cohort.

B. Blancher referred to the results of the survey we conducted at the end of June to gather information from parents/guardians/students about their perspectives on potential plans for September. B. Blancher stated in consultation with other Directors, our data is similar to theirs, in terms of the fact that slightly more families noted that they are more likely to send their children to school in an adaptive model rather than in the normal school day routine. B. Blancher provided a high-level overview on the results.

B. Blancher further commented that based on the Minister of Education's comments during the Director/Chairs teleconference and certainly during his last press conference, it appears that he is leaning towards a full return to school in September, no decision yet but it could come next week. B. Blancher further stated that we are working very hard on our plans, vetting them through various channels and we are aware that the Provincial Union teams are working on a cohesive deal.

C. VanEvery-Albert stated that her biggest concern is if students are going to school part of the time, how are we going to get through the actual curriculum, are there any moves to relook at the present curriculum to ensure that certain expectations are taught and some have to be left behind? C. VanEvery-Albert further stated that she is concerned about sending all the children back to school as we do not fully have a handle on this virus and don't know what will happen, and don't know where parents are or will be and who is carrying the virus, but do we forsake our kids for the sake of the economy and finds that very worrisome?



B. Blancher responded that she cannot answer what the Minister may direct the School Board's to do but can answer the first question around curriculum. B. Blancher noted that our focus will be on overall expectations and realizes that does not solve the problem completely. B. Blancher further stated while the students are not in school, there still needs to be a check-in with them, some sort of synchronous learning – there are a lot of ideas out there to support the curriculum.

S. Gibson asked about masking, if some communities are looking at universal masking and do you foresee that will be required for students and how will we address those students who have kept up learning and are ready for the next grade but some didn't and how are they going to teach the next grade curriculum while some of the students need to be caught up? B. Blancher responded that she really cannot respond on the mask issue as that it is a Public Health direction but noted that what we have been told that in the adaptive model with only 15 students in class and limiting contact with others – masks will not be needed. B. Blancher stated that if the Minister does announce going back to normal with enhanced Health Protocols, what are those and then maybe the masking comes forward. B. Blancher further responded that one of the focus areas for both of our continuity plans is a gap analysis which would be done early in the school year. B. Blancher also noted that in a typical school year we have some students that keep up with their work and other students with gaps in their learning and that is part of the teaching and learning process to catch them up. L. De Vos further added that we will be working with our educators and this will be part of the training, what types of gap analysis in literacy, numeracy and wellness, we need a robust picture of where every student is. S. Gibson commented that she is hearing many students checked out of their French classes, that may be an area that needs some focus for elementary students.

C.A. Sloat thanked B. Blancher and her team for all their hard work and stated that in Toronto there was push back to rent space in Southern Ontario and hire every Teacher and ECE and financially that is not doable, and there are some interesting thoughts, but asked what will we do if classes are bigger than 30? B. Blancher responded that there are couple of strategies for that which could be to create another class but the idea of 15 student per class is based on an average classroom size of 750 sq. ft, we have space in many of schools that is bigger than 750 sq. ft. and if you need to have 17 students in a class they can be relocated to a larger space.

R. Collver commented that she knows you are looking at a Grand Erie model, but do you also look at individual schools with higher needs to accommodate students, for example Houghton where we know the challenges of not having computers, connectivity and would we consider finding additional space for the student to attend? B. Blancher responded that when we create these cohorts, they go back to the school administrator for review and they



connect with the Superintendent to review the issues and problem solve and we would take that into account.

C. VanEvery-Albert commented that she is interested in what the assessment and evaluation program and what reporting will look like? B. Blancher responded that we are getting new elementary reports cards next year and knows that the Superintendents that have been working on the plans have also talked about what assessment and evaluation will look like and this will be included in the plans.

Moved by: C.A. Sloat

Seconded by: E. Dixon

THAT the Grand Erie District School Board receive the Verbal update of the School Reopening 2020-21 as information.

Carried

C - 1 Adjournment

Moved by: C.A. Sloat

Seconded by: D. Werden

THAT the meeting be adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Carried

Board Chair, G. Anderson