

Board Meeting

Director's Update - Pino Buffone

28 March 2017

1. **Start-up as DOE – 21 February 2017:** My sincerest thanks to the students, staff and school communities of Renfrew County for the warm welcome and kind words of encouragement and inspiration during my first few weeks as Director of Education, including a school visit to Beachburg PS on my first day (21 February 2017), as well as a series of school visits since that time...twelve to date! Special thanks to Chair Hewitt and Vice-Chair Humphries for accompanying me on a number of these informative site visits during my first week, as well as Student Trustees Webster and Edge for the tour of their respective sites, Fellowes HS and Arnprior District HS. I have also had the opportunity to meet and speak with senior administration, principals, vice-principals and managers at Opeongo HS to share my vision for the district, and, participate in professional learning sessions related to mathematics (RMS) and implementation of FSL initiatives in our classrooms (CEFR/DELF). These opportunities have made me feel right at home in the county!

Note: Thank you to the Board of Trustees for their collaboration, flexibility, patience and understanding regarding the shift of committee and board meetings during the month of February 2017, as I transitioned into the new role. My gratitude to Former Director of Education, Roger Clarke, for his advice, guidance and support in the transition planning period that took place over the past number of weeks. I have left two half-days left with Roger in the transition planning...a half-day in April and May 2017...to pick up on elements of achievement and well-being for students, staff and school communities across the district, moving forward.

2. **Fentanyl – FYI:** The Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has prepared a 'student alert' and 'parent alert' regarding the use of fentanyl, especially as it relates to the potential for overdoses and deaths from fake prescription opioid drug usage. The fact sheets share information related to what fentanyl is, what its effects are and how to counter its effects. The main goal of this outreach is to be proactive and provide educational materials and resources to all stakeholders, including our students. This information, along with the availability of Naloxone Kits free of charge from the Health Unit, has been posted to our website....as well as to Student Councils and School Councils.
3. **Destination Imagination – 04 March 2017:** On Saturday, March 4th, 2017, our students (20 teams from six schools) participated in the Eastern Ontario Tournament of Destination Imagination at École Paul Desmarais in Stittsville...the largest supporter of the initiative as a district in the region! The performances, skits, challenges and on-demand improvisational experiences were superb...including the short play "Five Tones of Creativity" performed by the intermediate students of RCIS...a wonderful learning opportunity for our students!
4. **Start-Up Ottawa Valley – 23 March 2017:** On Thursday, March 23rd, 2017, Chair Hewitt and I attended the launch of 'Start-Up Ottawa Valley' at Algonquin College's Waterfront Campus...looking at promoting entrepreneurship and innovative thinking across sectors, including the "It Can Happen Here" initiative – a college-run program for students in Grades 11 & 12 that encourages students to think about entrepreneurship and innovation in a new light (to be held on 12 May 2017). The Director's Office will enthusiastically support the advertisement of this initiative across our secondary sites over the coming weeks.

5. **Whitney Public Information Night – 27 March 2017:** Last night, our district hosted a Community Information Night at Lester Smith Community Centre in Whitney at 6:30 p.m. The engaging, informative evening provided a two-fold opportunity to engage community stakeholders, including parents/guardians and students in an explanation of the pathway to our shared space collaboration within Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board's St. Martin of Tours Catholic School in Whitney, and, listen to community perspectives on the move forward in this collaboration. (Reference letter received by Whitney Public School Parent Council on 27 March 2017.)
6. **Board Strategic Plan Renewal 2017-2020:** At our meeting of Senior Administration on 29 March 2017 (tomorrow), Executive Council will be continuing the important work of strategic plan renewal with principals, vice-principals and managers. We will be leading a design thinking activity related to the 'actions' that will accompany the sound guiding principles and goal statements currently in place (and approved) by the Board of Trustees...in essence, the 'operationalization' of our strategic plan in our classrooms, schools, school communities and office spaces. The input/feedback/perspectives of these key stakeholders will be brought to the Board of Trustees – in draft form – for review later this spring.
7. **Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) – 30 March 2017:** On Thursday, our secondary students (first-time eligible and previously-eligible) will have the opportunity to participate in the OSSLT. Our secondary sites have diligently prepared our students – predominantly in Grade 10 as part of the Ministry of Education's literacy graduation requirement – throughout the school year for this assessment. This version of the test will be conducted through paper-and-pencil medium. Students with specific literacy-based needs will be provided with targeted supports and/or interventions (assistive technology, a quiet work space, for instance) if/as permissible and/or required. Our district holds high expectations and a belief that all students can develop the literacy skills for success in school and life.