

The Trustee Report

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Victory in Europe Tour

Discussion related to the educational value, logistics and cost of extended field trips, particularly those involving destinations outside the country is a frequent topic considered at the board table.

One such trip, getting a good deal of attention this year was the Victory in Europe Tour that involved the participation of many schools not only from Durham but from across the country. Students from both Brock High School & Uxbridge Secondary School participated in this event.

Reports from both students and staff reflected positively on the excursion. Student commentary on their visits in France, Holland and Germany suggests that this



Victory in Europe Tour - Participants from Brock High School

experience made history real and meaningful.

Presentations to the Board demonstrated the detailed planning and tight curricular links that were the underpinnings of this successful excursion.

This experience served to demonstrate clearly that while a great deal of preparation is essential, such excursions can prove invaluable life experiences for our students.

DDSB Faces Declining Enrolments

The DDSB continues to face declining enrolments. Projections suggest that this trend will continue at least through the 2012 – 2013 school year. This situation presents a variety of challenges for the Board

and its staff. To date, the necessary staff reductions have been managed through normal attrition. However, new hiring is very limited and staff transfers must sometimes be prescribed. Declining enrolments in

some schools may limit the program options that can be offered.

Projected Enrolments	
2010-2011	64,999
2011-2012	63,660
2012-2013	62,915

Accommodation Review

Over the past two years the DDSB has been working to better align its school accommodation with its student population. Population shifts can leave existing schools under-utilized & inefficient, while areas of recent development may require new schools.

Two accommodation reviews were conducted by

the DDSB this past year. In examining secondary school accommodation in east Oshawa, the Board decided to close Dr. F.J. Donevan Collegiate Institute, relocating its enrolment into Eastdale Collegiate Vocational in September 2010. In southwest Whitby, the Board approved the closure of R.A. Sennett Public School with its

remaining students being relocated to West Lynde & Willam Stephenson Public Schools.

Similar reviews in other Durham municipalities are needed and will be conducted by the school board going forward.

“Use of technology tools that are already familiar to students, project-based learning practices that incorporate real-life experiences and mentoring from community members are practices that may help retain students in school and prepare them for further education, careers and citizenship in ways that traditional practices are failing to do.”

The Horizon Report

Operating Budget for 2010 - 2011

The DDSB is currently deliberating on its operating budget for the upcoming school year. A balanced budget proposal of \$618,011,450 is currently under consideration. While this budget proposal is greater than 20 million dollars over expenditures in the current school year, the Board’s contractual wage obligations more than account for this increase.

Consequently, fewer dollars will be available for that portion of the budget unrelated to staff salaries.

Given declining enrolment, an off-setting reduction of staff in various areas including principals & vice-principals, custodians, clerical staff and teachers is proposed. In the area of special education, the number of educational assistants has been maintained

at the current level.

Education funding is based on student enrolment. The further decline in student numbers is a concern. While, the Ministry of Education does provide short-term funding relief to offset the immediate effect of declining student numbers, the cost pressures stemming from an ongoing enrolment decline will present a growing challenge to the board in years to come.

Parents Reaching Out Grants

The DDSB was pleased to learn that thirty-four of its schools had received “Parents Reaching Out Grants” from the Ministry of Education. These grants are intended to assist the work of school councils in support of school programs.

Congratulations to the five

Uxbridge / Brock schools that were successful with their project grant proposals.

Beaverton Public School – Anti- Bullying Parent sessions (\$300)

McCaskill’s Mills - Anti-Bullying Program (\$1000)

Thorah Central – Bringing Other Cultures to Our Community (\$1000)

Uxbridge Secondary School - Special Speaker Event (\$1000)

Uxbridge Public School – Literacy Night (\$500)

The Early Learning Program

The Ministry of Education remains committed to the implementation of full day kindergarten. Offering parents optional before & after school child care for their kindergarten aged children is also an expected component of this extended day program.

The program is to be phased in over the next five school years. The Ministry of Education has identified fifteen schools in the Durham District School Board that will offer this program next year. Thorah Central Public School is one of these schools. Schools that will offer the program in 2011 - 2012 have not yet been announced.

At the school board level,

there has been a great deal of related work taking place in consultation with Ministry of Education officials and in developing a local implementation plan. Finding a way to offer the optional child care component at an affordable cost to parents is proving a particular challenge to school boards.

The DDSB sees the proposed extended kindergarten day as only one way to support the development of young children. For the past two years, the DDSB has been working in partnership with child care community to explore programs that support pre-school children and their parents. Stemming from this endeavour, the DDSB has secured over 1 ½ million dollars beyond its educational

operational budget that will be devoted to school-based summer pre-school programs and parent resource centres.

Consequently, a Parent and Literacy Best Start Hub is available to parents and young children at Beaverton Public School. Sessions for parents to learn with their pre-school children are being offered at McCaskill's Mills and Thorah Central Public School.

"School's Cool" summer sessions for pre-school children will be offered this summer at Beaverton and Uxbridge Public Schools. In addition, support is available for any school wishing to offer 'Welcome to Kindergarten', a program offered across Canada by The Learning Partnership in conjunction with local school boards and community agencies.



"The evidence is clear – experiences in early childhood have a major impact on future learning, work, health, social and emotional makeup."

Dr. Charles Pascal

School Food & Beverage Policy

The DDSB has begun consideration of a newly released school food & beverage policy guideline from the Ministry of Education. This policy requires that by September 2011, all food & beverage offered for sale in schools complies with a stringent nutritional standard.

This guideline is publicly available at: www.ontario.ca/healthyschools.

Implementation of this policy will present a number of hurdles. Trustees identified the challenge of offering food that is both appealing and economical to be a primary concern.

Parent and student groups who have used the sale of food as a fundraiser for special events have raised concern. In this regard there is provision in the policy for

the principal to designate up to ten special-event days on which food & beverages sold in schools would be exempt from the nutrition standards.

The policy calls for public consultation in developing a board level implementation plan. Knowing this matter is of interest to many, keep an eye for opportunities to express your views on the implementation of this policy.

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Suspension & Expulsion Rates

A recent report shows a declining rate of student suspension and expulsion within the DDSB over the past three years. This decline is directly attributable to staff efforts to apply methods of progressive discipline and restorative practice. From my perspective, I do appreciate the efforts of school administrators in Uxbridge / Brock schools where suspension is used sparingly and the application of these progressive and educative strategies is particularly prevalent.

Allin Seeking Second Term

While this newsletter was created to inform folks taking an active role in Uxbridge / Brock school community councils about discussion in the boardroom of the DDSB, I decided to also use the correspondence to announce my decision to seek a second term as school trustee.

Over the past four years, I have enjoyed being engaged in an ongoing discussion about public education. I have endeavoured to be accessible and worked to champion the open flow of information.

Going forward, I see much to be done.

I would delight in further involvement in the work of enhancing programs for young children. I see this work involving much more than implementing full-time kindergarten. I see a need to continue to strengthen partnerships with other community service providers who support young children, making our schools service hubs where a variety of supports are available to the families of these children.

School accommodation also presents some interesting challenges. In Uxbridge, the secondary school needs an enhanced physical education facility. In Brock, declining student enrolments in both the elementary schools and the high school are presenting serious challenges to program options.

As an advocate for greater and more innovative instructional use of technology, I see new and less costly opportunities. The world-wide-web is much more readily accessible and the gadgets that can be used to connect are getting cheaper. It is important that our instructional strategies take advantage of our young people's familiarity with this technology. We must not have our kids checking this knowledge at the classroom door.

I truly hope that the good folk of our community will once again extend me the privilege of serving as their school trustee on the DDSB.