

**Report of the Durham District School Board
Standing Committee Public Session
May 2, 2022**

The hybrid regular meeting of the Standing Committee of the Durham District School Board was held on this date.

1. Call to Order:

The Chair, Christine Thatcher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Trustees Michael Barrett, Chris Braney, Paul Crawford, Donna Edwards, Darlene Forbes, Carolyn Morton, Linda Stone, Niki Lundquist, Scott Templeton, Student Trustees James Kay, De-Mario Knowles, Kayla Malcolm

Regrets: Trustee Patrice Barnes

Officials Present: Director Norah Marsh, Associate Directors Jim Markovski, David Wright, Superintendents Gary Crossdale, Erin Elmhurst, Mohamed Hamid, Margaret Lazarus, Andrea McAuley, Heather Mundy, Stephen Nevills, Jack Nigro, Executive System Lead Robert Cerjanec, General Counsel Patrick Cotter

Recording Secretary: Kathy Fitzpatrick

Trustee Christine Thatcher shared that it is Ontario Education Week and that the theme for this year is “Moving Forward”. Trustee Thatcher acknowledged the important contributions of trustees and staff to Ontario’s public education system, and the important role that parents/guardians play in helping to support students and thanked everyone at the Durham District School Board (DDSB) and all of the partners for what they do to help students achieve their goals and dreams.

This week is also Children’s Mental Health Week. The DDSB is celebrating and acknowledging Children’s Mental Health Week by bringing awareness to mental health through a series of activities and events which include daily themes and classroom activities as well as pre-recorded and live streamed presentations from well-known mental health advocates.

This week brings attention to the on-going commitments to belonging, well-being and mental health in the Durham District School Board. The theme for this week, “Hope in Challenging Times” is fitting as we continue to navigate challenging times and do so with the optimism of hope.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Durham District School Board acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today, this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the Mississauga Peoples and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this time.

4. Motion to Approve the Agenda

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MOVED by Trustee Christine Thatcher

THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED.

CARRIED

5. Community Presentations

There were no community presentations at this time.

6. DDSB Presentations

(a) Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB Introduction to Kindergarten Program Update

Superintendent Jack Nigro introduced Senior Manager of Early Years Stacey Lepine-Fisher and the Early Years team who provided trustees with an overview and shared a PowerPoint presentation on the new “Great Beginnings Start at the DDSB Introduction to Kindergarten” model (formerly Welcome to Kindergarten).

Trustee questions were answered.

7. Director's Update

Director Norah Marsh provided trustees with the following update:

COVID-19 Update: there is approximately a 5% decline in staff absenteeism. The decline is most notable on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Absenteeism is status quo on Mondays and Fridays. The opportunities for occasional teachers

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and other staff in schools including Early Childhood Educators is positive within the Durham District School Board (DDSB), at approximately 93%.

Student absenteeism: there has been a decline in the number of student absences. April 11-14 was the highest absences since January with an average of 13,500 a day. Last week the absences were down to an average of 11,600.

Ontario Public School Board's Association (OPSBA): the DDSB is participating in a project with OPSBA with regards to practices that have been initiated to address the shortage of French teachers. This is an issue within the DDSB and across the province. The superintendent for French programming has volunteered to be part of the initiative.

Capital Funding: Trustees had written a letter to the Ministry of Education with concerns that the needs of the Durham community were not being met. The Ministry of Education has confirmed that the DDSB will receive \$46 million for the unnamed Oshawa secondary school and \$19 million for the unnamed Pickering elementary school.

Director Norah Marsh acknowledged Ontario Education Week and Children's Mental Health Week and thanked those involved in organizing the events and informed families and trustees that registration was still open. More information is available on the website and social media to the many events planned.

Trustee questions were answered.

8. Recommended Actions

There were no recommended actions at this time.

9. Information Items

(a) Student Trustee Report

Student Trustee James Kay shared that at the Student Senate meeting, on April 19th, 2022, Manager of Accountability and Assessment Chris Conley and his team spoke about the Student Census survey.

Student Trustee Kayla Malcolm shared that the Student Voice Working Group is working on what student parliament and student government will look like when they return to school in September. The group has been continuing their work on student voice representatives by stressing the importance of having a strong and working student council and grade and homeroom representatives. The Student Voice Working Groups are looking at ways to improve student knowledge and where they can contribute ideas within their schools. For example, knowing who their senators are and having Google forms posted in classrooms for anonymous contributions.

Student Trustee James Kay shared that the Student Success Working Group is continuing to work on the Mental Health Resource: *The IN's and OUT's of Finding*

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Help. The intention of this document is to contribute to destigmatizing mental health while helping students to better understand what finding help actually is and looks like.

Student Trustees are collaborating with the DDSB Mental Health Leadership team to ensure the information that has been created by students is accurate and representative of the DDSB values while staying true to the vision of the student-driven document. A special thank you to the DDSB Mental Health Leadership team for their continued support. The document will be completed by the end of this school year.

Student Trustee De-Mario Knowles shared that the Equity Working Group is currently working on a two-part initiative and will continue to do so for the rest of the school year. The first part promotes inclusivity in the classroom by means of spreading awareness through short videos about important topics related to equity, such as gender pronouns and gender identity. The second part is about spreading awareness through short videos about days and months of significance, such as Pride Month and Asian Heritage Month.

Student Trustee Kayla Malcolm shared that during the regional breakout groups the West Region Senators voiced their concerns about next year school times. Schools within the region are getting ready for the Relay4Life events.

Student Trustee De-Mario Knowles shared that student participation in school activities has been very high in the past month. Schools have held celebrations for Ramadan and fundraisers to support the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Graduation events and prom planning have been going smoothly and many grade twelve students have mentioned that they are looking forward to school commencements.

Student Trustee James Kay shared that the Northern Regional breakout would like to host a regional wide spirit week to celebrate the 2021/2022 school year.

Student Trustee Kayla Malcolm shared that May 2nd, 2022 is the start of the Mental Health Symposium. Student Senators have been working with Steffanie Pelleboer, her team, student trustee advisors, and the project coordinator to plan and create this week-long event. Schools will receive daily mental health and well-being videos, made by the Student Voice Working Group. Schools will receive focused activities for each day of the week. On Wednesday, all registered classes will watch a presentation from guest speaker, Shaun Booth, about hope in challenging times.

Student Trustee James Kay provided an update on the Student Senate Virtual Open House that is in the planning stages. This event is tentatively taking place near the end of May 2022 and serves as an opportunity for students, parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers and community members to attend a virtual meeting and learn more about Student Senate and how to get involved.

Student Trustee Kayla Malcolm provided an update on the Student Trustee elections. The three new incoming student trustees for the upcoming 2022-2023 school year are as follows, Ben Cameron, representing the West Region, Lauren Edwards, representing the North Region, and Gwen Kuyt, representing the East Region.

(b) Indigenous Book Review

Superintendent Erin Elmhurst provided trustees with an update on the temporary removal and review of *The Great Bear* and two other Forest of Reading books from the District's library collection.

Trustee questions were answered

(c) OPSBA Report

Trustee Donna Edwards provided an update on the Labour Relations Symposium for trustees that took place in April 2022.

10. Committee Reports

(a) Equity and Diversity Ad Hoc Steering Committee Report, February 23, 2022

Trustee Christine Thatcher provided trustees with the Equity and Diversity Ad Hoc Steering Committee minutes from the February 23, 2022.

11. Correspondence

- i. Avon Maitland District School Board
- ii. Bluewater District School Board
- iii. York Region District School Board

The above correspondence was shared with trustees for information.

12. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

13. Adjournment

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MOVED by Chair Carolyn Morton

SECONDED by Trustee Linda Stone

THAT THE MEETING DOES NOW ADJOURN.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Carolyn Morton

Chair

Noreh Haul

Secretary