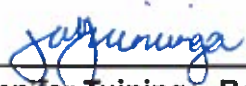


ANNUAL BOARD EVALUATION 2020 - 2021
Summary Report

Pembina Hills School Division
Board of Trustees



Jennifer Tuininga, Board Chair
August 25, 2021

Evaluation Process

The board evaluation provides a time for reflection and continuous improvement. Individual trustees filled in a seventy two question survey and results were compiled to form a board overview of the responses. The superintendent and senior administrative team also provided feedback to the board on their working relationship.

1. Accountability for Student Learning and Wellness

As a board we actively engaged our community this year in helping collect information for our three year education plan. Trustees made personal phone calls to local businesses, partners, municipal officials and school council chairs to elicit feedback on education in Pembina Hills. This was an area that the board had identified last year as needing improvement.

During the pandemic the board spent more time in showing our appreciation to staff through videos and messages. The board was cognizant of the fact that this has been a stressful and challenging year.

Also, we reached out to school based administrators to find out what was needed to support staff and as a result increased the number of education services staff members.

The board has demonstrated accountability for student learning and wellness through providing Student Citizenship Awards, looking at staff/student/parent feedback from satisfaction surveys, and advocating provincially for what is best for our students regarding COVID-19 and the draft K-6 curriculum.

2. Community Assurance

Community Engagement Initiatives:

The board hosts Council of School Councils meetings twice a year. This past year they were done through Google Meet which allowed school council chairs to connect from their own homes. The board would recommend that this practice continues as it was more convenient for attendees, reduced costs, and has the potential for greater attendance.

Trustees engaged the community by contacting key stakeholders via a phone call and conducting short interviews. The information was shared with senior and school administration and used to develop strategies for the three year education plan. Parents were encouraged to complete an online satisfaction survey which is compiled and used as information to develop the school's education plans.

Trustees received significant feedback on the draft K-6 curriculum from parents and the public. The teacher working group reviewing the pilot curriculum provided the board with a wealth of

information. Based on their recommendation the board wrote a letter to the Minister of Education indicating that we would not be piloting the draft K-6 curriculum.

Results of the engagement initiatives:

Engaging with the community was an effective tool to learn what the community values and where changes are needed in education. Individuals provided thoughtful and insightful comments that we were able to incorporate into our decision making process.

Other methods of gathering input:

Trustees gather input through their involvement with school councils and casual conversations/phone calls/emails with community members. Social media, questionnaires, surveys, newsletters and parent responses at school council meetings are other methods of gathering information. All board members sit on community based committees which enable us to share information and data.

Methods of communicating with constituents:

Our board agenda, minutes and highlights are published on the website. Planning documents for Pembina Hills schools can be found on the division website. Other social media platforms are used to share successes and stories about the division. The local newspapers cover board meetings as well as highlighting activities of our schools.

Trustees attend and report at school council meetings, and some trustees have been given the opportunity to include board information in school newsletters.

Comments

Based on the feedback we received through our community engagement the public believes we are doing an admirable job of educating our students to be contributing members of society. The board considers student needs, the wellbeing of staff and the community when making decisions.

Members of the board met with our local MLA(s) and the Ministers of Transportation and Education regarding a transportation regulation on the speed limit that buses travel, and to advocate against the closure of ADLC.

The board belongs to the Alberta School Board Association and the Rural Caucus of Alberta School Boards. The board takes the opportunity to participate in meetings or surveys circulated by Alberta Education.

3. Accountability to Provincial Government

The board is aware of what legislation needs to be followed and we adhere to all policies and regulations.

The board has spoken out when appropriate regarding our board autonomy or decisions of the province that affect our division - the closing of ADLC, College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) bill, bus speed limits, and the piloting of the draft K-6 curriculum.

Decisions during the pandemic flowed through Alberta Health and Alberta Education to the division, often simultaneously with a public announcement. This put the school board in a difficult position as we were not able to answer questions from the public immediately. The public believed that boards had advanced notice to prepare a plan, which is simply not the case.

4. Fiscal Accountability

We have maintained our commitment to ensuring we maximize the resources that go to schools and students. We have continued to be prudent in any board spending.

Our external audit is an example of having accountability practices in place. Every financial line is reviewed on a regular basis. The board is fiscally responsible and monitors the division's finances closely, asking questions of clarification when needed. With changes in the reporting to Alberta Education some of the past ways of presenting numbers have been adjusted. The board has been drawing down the division reserves in a fiscally responsible manner with the goal of reaching 5% of total revenue. The board also received department assurance/information reports at regular board meetings.

The unpredictability of Vista Virtual School (VVS) student numbers and adult enrolments is challenging, but the board realizes the revenues VVS generates positively contributes to all of our schools.

5. Board/Superintendent Relations

The Superintendent kept the board informed about school situations that might become problematic, as well as provided human resource updates. Issues were brought directly to the board in a timely manner and there was effective communication with the board chair. Superintendent Garbutt listened, and then shared his experience and professional advice on the matter at hand. The superintendent ensured that information provided to the board was accurate and complete so that good decisions could be made.

As a board we are committed to doing what is right for our students and Superintendent Garbutt also embodied this belief. During COVID-19 the board and superintendent worked closely to keep students safe and in attendance at school when possible.

There was mutual respect and a solid and trusting relationship with the superintendent and his team which allowed the division to function in the best interest of the students that we serve.

6. Board Development

As a board with diverse backgrounds various strengths and talents were brought to the board table. There was mutual respect for one another and individual trustees were open and honest about situations that may have arisen in the community. The effectiveness of the board was a result of having a focused and compassionate board chairperson. The board did not always do what was popular, but what it felt was right for students.

Virtual meetings at times reduced the engaged discussions that occur in person, and sometimes poor video connections were frustrating. However, online meetings were convenient and cost effective.

As a strong and high functioning board, trustees shared information freely and held each other to high standards. Diverging views and animated discussion resulted in interesting meetings as comments were made respectfully and with a desire to understand one another and make the best decision possible.

7. Policy

The board reviewed all of the division policies and made changes where necessary. This is integral to the work of the board and this process should be continued. Strong policy is important for effective governance.

8. Political Advocacy

Our Board continued to work with the town and county representatives on issues which affected students or staff. All local municipal councils were invited to a meeting regarding the efforts to prevent the closure of ADLC. The board kept the mayor of the Town of Barrhead and the reeve of the County of Barrhead informed of the advocacy efforts and communication with Alberta Education relative to the closure of ADLC.

The board has always tried to advocate for what is right for students and the division. Relationships with MLAs were at times frustrating as there was a lack of understanding of how school boards work, and certainly in the case of ADLC the board felt abandoned. Most of the board's provincial advocacy was directed at Alberta Education or through the Alberta School Boards Association.

Final Comments

The board areas of focus for the 2020-2021 school year are listed below, and have been accomplished:

1. School trustee elections will be held in October 2021: the board will develop support materials that communicate the importance of the role of local school trustees, and distribute these resources in our communities while actively recruiting suitable

candidates.

2. The board will work with Alberta Education to conclude the operations of Alberta Distance Learning Centre as of August 31, 2021.

3. The board will strive to balance the learning needs of our students, staffing levels, and changing health and safety measures due to COVID-19, as well as possible schooling scenarios during the coming year.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, board decisions were made with the success and wellbeing of staff and students as the number one priority. Individual trustees came to the table with different points of view, but all trustees want what is best for the students under the board's supervision. The board continued to advocate for public education and the school division throughout the year.

The coming year will be one of change for Pembina Hills with the retirement of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, a new secretary-treasurer and a new board being sworn in on October 27, 2021. Going forward it is essential that the board upholds the statement that defines the school division — "Together We Learn".