



SD No.23 EARLY YEARS PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

Summary of Discussion

Tuesday, January 26, 2016

In Attendance: Cheryl Fralick, David Widdis, Donna Kozak, Nicole Crane, Rhonda Ovelson, Lela Ross, Tami Ruhr, Michelle Dickie, Cathy Disbery, Vivian Hughes, Myrna Kalmakoff

Regrets: Sue Bergen, Lee-Ann Tiede, Rolli Cacchioni (Alternative Trustee), Caroline Noga

Invited: Dave Hentschel (MCFD) and Carla Hees (ECEBC)

Opening comments from Rhonda:

Now that we have created our policy and received approval from the Board of Education, we can begin to focus on our mandate:

- Focusing in on families regarding transition
- Making it our goal to meet our families where they are at
- Deciding how are we going to work together
- Moving forward with coordinating and collaborating in this intentional and purposeful work
- Creating some common language for transition
- Using an Inquiry framework that could drive our work

1. Thoughts that resonated regarding these two articles:

- *Learning About Families' Connections with Services in the Central Okanagan* by CATCH and *Four Things to Know About Transition to School* from Harvard Family Research Project (see attached)
 - Need to create a sense of belonging so that parents don't feel judged
 - Moving from child-centered to family-centered
 - Going to families where they are to see what they need
 - Partnership can be changed to relationship
 - Communication vs conversation
 - Family structure has changed – parents don't have time anymore
 - Fearful of the school system because of what the parent has experienced – don't want their child to have a diagnosis
 - School invitations to events such as family fun nights can be frightening for new parents
 - Different families need different things in different ways – multiple ways of reaching out – more flexible model – more empathic
 - EDI – focusses on the weakness of a child – should look at the child's strengths and gifts (part of the Aboriginal culture)
 - Deficit model of being ready for school

- Idea that children need to be ready for school instead of thinking that the school needs to be ready for the children entering
- Create a safe place for children
- Transition – how we build relationships with the family — what can we do differently

2. Rhonda shared the *Spirals of Inquiry* protocol which could be effective in leading the committee towards their mandate (see attached)

- **Step one is the scanning process: Empathy Map** was used (see attached)
 - **Parent point of view with a child with a disability**
 - Hopeful for their child
 - Important that teachers see their child for who they are
 - Need to have a connection between the teacher and themselves
 - Strategies that are currently in place will continue upon day one of entering kindergarten
 - Seeing the same staff at the transition meetings at the school in September
 - Special needs children want to make friends
 - **5 year old perspective of coming into the kindergarten room**
 - See a room full of possibilities
 - ☺ Bright Idea: using a connection from home – family photo on the wall in the classroom
 - **Vulnerable Parent point of view**
 - Slow and long process to transition into kindergarten
 - Would be nice to have 1 to 2 years being part of the StrongStart program or some type of enhanced early learning program
 - Need to feel comfortable with the school – principal and teacher
 - Ask how the parent would like to be involved
 - Some parents need a hand through the orientation process
 - ☺ Bright Idea: StrongStart days for incoming kindergarten families – community connection day
 - **Teacher perspective**
 - Parents and teacher have already met – open door policy – parents can stay
 - Variety of activities for different communities
 - Families drawn in to play – teachers get to know the families and can learn who they are
 - **Aboriginal family/child point of view**
 - First day of school would be culturally responsive by having an Elder there, prayer, drumming, family in attendance, welcomed as a group

- **Step 2 and 3 Focusing and Developing a Hunch:** conversation will continue at our next meeting on **Feb 16th**. Below are some suggested questions that we could choose as our main focus but please feel free to add your own upon reflection of the materials and discussion to date.
 1. How can we be intentionally inclusive of aboriginal families as we support safe, seamless and positive transitions from home to school?
 2. How can we honour the diverse needs of families as they transition to and from early learning programs (including kindergarten)?
 3. How can we be more culturally responsive in the early years? How can we celebrate and help foster the cultural identity of each child/family?
 4. How can we bring family, school and learning together in more meaningful, more authentic ways?
 5. How might we ask parents, children and kindergarten teachers about their experiences with transition and as well as seek their input into how to enhance those experiences?
 6. Other?

REMINDERS:

Meeting dates: 2015-2016

~~Oct 20~~

~~January 26~~

Feb 16

June 14

