

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMS STANDING COMMITTEE

NORTH VANCOUVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Meeting Notes: Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Meeting Attendance:

Trustees and representatives of NVTU, CUPE, NVPAC, Elementary Administrators, and Secondary Administrators attended the meeting, as did members of District Staff. A number of interested members of the public attended. Trustee Susan Skinner chaired the meeting.

Meeting Notes:

The June 2 meeting of the Education and Programs Standing Committee was held in the library at Handsworth Secondary School. The meeting featured a presentation and panel discussion on *Relational Bullying and Social-Emotional Learning*. The presenter was Dr. Shelley Hymel, Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Hymel is recognized internationally for her work on bullying and social-emotional learning.

The presentation by Dr. Hymel focused on the results of the *Safe and Caring Schools Survey* conducted in the school district during the 2007-2008 school year. North Vancouver School District has fewer students reporting physical bullying than the provincial average. Dr. Hymel stressed, however, that the District's results in the areas of social and verbal bullying are fairly typical on both provincial and national scales. She views social bullying as a "part of the culture," which needs to be addressed, foundationally, through embedded educational practices that emphasize social-emotional learning.

As Dr. Hymel remarked, Canada is near the top in international measures of its students' academic success, but our nation ranks only 12th among nations in the area of "child well-being." In measures of "relationships," Canada ranks near the bottom.

Dr. Hymel suggested that social-emotional learning is important for citizenship and the economy. It is estimated that "relationship violence" costs the nation nine billion dollars per year, while mental health costs are in the order of fourteen billion dollars annually.

Social-emotional learning is fundamental to academic and life success. Research in this field confirms that schools and districts can actually increase academic achievement by focusing not on, but through, social-emotional learning. Stand alone anti-bullying curriculum packages are not, in fact, working. It is by consciously embedding social emotional learning as the foundation of all learning that we can make a difference for students.

Local survey findings suggest that it is difficult to get at what students mean by the terms, *safety* and *bullying*. For example, girls report feeling *safer* at home than boys, but boys report feeling *safer* in the community than girls. Though the number of students reporting *bullying* is going up slightly, there has been no change over time in the number of students reporting *victimization*.

The *Panel Discussion* featured responses by four North Vancouver School District educators: Jeremy Church, Vice Principal at the Keith Lynn Alternative Program; Megan Carrico, teacher at Windsor House Alternative Program; Shannon Sharp, District Math Consultant and trainer in the TRIBES program; and Ken Neale, District Administrator for Safe and Caring Schools.

The panelists were asked to respond to Dr. Hymel's presentation through the lenses of their own knowledge and practices in the area of social-emotional learning. Mr. Church explored his understandings and practices in working with students who present challenging behaviours, within in a program that is consciously structured for such purposes.

Ms. Carrico spoke of the features of the Windsor House program which are designed to address social emotional learning through student choice, parent participation, democratic process, and conflict resolution through a "judicial council" which is attended by all community partners.

Ms. Sharp conveyed the essentials of the TRIBES program, which is based on thorough-going mutual respect and forms the basis for cooperative learning. She remarked that TRIBES has become a feature of teaching and learning at a growing number of schools in the District.

Mr. Neale emphasized the need for continuing to monitor progress in the realm of social-emotional learning. He stressed that it is through student self-efficacy, based on social-emotional learning, that all students begin to take charge of their own learning and show academic gains.

During her concluding remarks, Dr. Hymel stated that she has been monitoring progress in North Vancouver School District and that the District is "ahead of the curve" in the ways it is addressing these issues. Mr. Neale remarked that we are definitely on the right track, but we must intensify rather than relaxing our efforts to weave social-emotional learning into the daily fabric of our classrooms and our schools.