

ANNUAL REPORT ~~2020~~

Greater Essex County Parent Involvement Committee

GECPIC EXECUTIVE 2019-2020

Kristen Siapas, Chair
Julie Fraser, Vice-Chair

Committee Members:

Allison Whitehead, Derek DeMonte, Francine Faccenda, Jessica Watson, Kadiye Abdulkadir, Katrina Elchami, Lisa Renaud, Mohamed ElSadeek, Stephanie Slipiec, Walter Cassidy, Rebekah Harrison

Principals:

Laura Bates, Desreen Burnett

Community Members:

Rima Nohra, New Canadians Centre for Excellence
Liam Giles-Hayes, United Way
Jason Tarnopolsky, Windsor Police Service

Greater Essex County Parent Involvement Committee (GECPIC)
Meetings for 2019-2020

Time: 7:00pm Location: Published with each agenda

Tuesday, October 22, 2019 - Board Office
Tuesday, November 26, 2019 - Tecumseh Vista Academy
Tuesday, January 28, 2020 – Forest Glade PS
Tuesday, February 25, 2020 – Herman Academy
Tuesday, April 28, 2020 – Virtual Meeting via Teams
Tuesday, May 26, 2020 – Virtual Meeting via Teams

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR:

The Parent Involvement Committee continued its work with the board this year similar to previous years, sending representatives to the People for Education conference as well as providing parent voice on the Single Use Plastic Committee, the Active Transportation Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, and the Bullying Committee. We were also happy to support the Mental Health Seminar series as we have in the past.

Much of our work this year focused on the creation of the GECPIC Plus conference, which was unfortunately cancelled due to Covid-19. It was to take place Saturday, April 4th. GECPIC PLUS is a free one-day conference for Greater Essex County District School Board that focuses on providing our families workshops that assist in 'Parents Understanding & Learning Strategies' to support their children as life-long learners. We

are extremely proud of the work that went into creating this conference and look forward to offering it again in the future. This fall we will be exploring ways of bringing that conference virtually to parents as well.

The committee was very happy to begin meeting virtually in April, to continue the important work that connects us to our purpose – identifying barriers to parent engagement and providing meaningful feedback to the board regarding parent experience. Our members brought together their own experiences in the transition to online learning and were able to hear from Superintendents Pyke and Wilcox as well as Director Kelly about what kind of work was being done initially to help support students learning at home. This was an incredibly valuable experience for parents as it helped our committee feel that we are able to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way. Indeed, as we go forward, we will be eager to provide a parent voice in whatever capacity is needed. Parents and caregivers are being asked to engage with their children's education in a more active way than ever before, and if this model of learning is to continue, parents need to feel as though they are a part of that conversation. If the board is expecting parents to shoulder this responsibility, they must be invited to the table.

We were also very pleased to hear the results of Superintendent Hillman's parent survey. What we're hearing from parents now is that there are no clear answers in the new world of online education. We may be able to take statistics that tell us what works best for a majority of families – for the majority of families surveyed, that is – but that doesn't tell us much about the parents and families that aren't engaging at all. What we've seen is that any of the barriers we identified as being challenges for parents, for example, language, poverty, access to technology, parents' attitudes towards education, and so forth, have been amplified in this crisis. The gap is widening. The focus must be on the individual needs of each family. Teachers and administration can be empowered to make those individual connections to meet the needs of individual families. Communication needs to go forward on all channels. We need a plan and we need parents to be a part of helping to create that plan. Our committee looks forward to helping to find ways to improve that network of communication as our work moves into the summer and fall.

Again, as we go forward, we will continue to look for those opportunities to improve communication between the board and parents, and to continue working to break down barriers to parent engagement to help everyone in the school community feel that they have a voice. I want to applaud the work of the committee this year for their flexibility, passion, and commitment to improving the relationship between families and schools to support students' education and wellbeing.