

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Report No:

Date: November 21, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of the
Superior-Greenstone District School Board

FROM: Nicole Morden Cormier, Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: 2016-2017 Board Learning Plan: Promoting Success for All Students

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: Student Achievement and Well-Being

Background

The Board Learning Plan: Promoting Success for All Students (BLP) is a document that enacts the Strategic Plan, specifically the focus areas outlined in the Student Achievement and Well-Being priority area. The Board Learning Plan captures our collective commitment to enhance the learning of all students in our district, and thus, it is a document that responds to the specific learning needs that schools identified in June and September 2016. These learning needs resulted from an analysis of individual school student achievement and well-being data (both qualitative and quantitative data including EQAO, Report Card evaluation, educator and student perceptual data from surveys, observations, conversations and products, etc.), as captured by School Learning Plans. This process is illustrated by the graphic below where it is student learning needs that drive the School Learning Plan, and the School Learning Plan that drives the Board Learning Plan. What is apparent is that the student need is at the center of this process.

Illustration 1.0: Student Learning Need as the Driver of Improvement



The Board Learning Plan incorporates and guides the work at all levels of our board to attain systemic improvement for all students. It identifies goals and related theories of action for the improvement of student achievement, describes our strategic actions and outlines processes for monitoring, making adjustments and for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan.

Current Situation

With the implementation of the Renewed Mathematics Strategy and the identification of mathematics as the most urgent learning need for our students, and the knowledge that student centered learning environments and pedagogy are vital to the well-being and thus, growth of our learners, our 2016-2019 Board Learning Plan has been designed to ensure that these areas are a priority. This is not new work for us but a continuation of the learning that we have been engaged in for the past several years. We know that the enhancements that we wish to see are quite significant, thus it is important to provide the system with enough time to see the impact of our work. By providing both a focus on student achievement and a focus on well-being, we know that the work outlined in our BLP will continue to have a positive impact on the “whole” student.

Focus Area: Student Centered Learning – Motivation and Belonging Supporting Improved Well-Being

Theory of Action: If we foster student centered learning environments and pedagogy, then learners will possess an increased sense of belonging and be motivated to learn.

Goal: By June 2017, 100% of schools will demonstrate an increase of at least one stage of implementation (awareness, beginning, partial, full) in an area of focus in their overall rating of the self-assessment of the SGDSB Student Centered Learning and Pedagogy Success Criteria, as they work towards full implementation by June 2019.

“Well-being is that positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). We believe that by creating fully student centered learning environments and pedagogy, student well-being will improve as they will be increasingly engaged in their learning, achieve greater success and thus, feel an increased sense of belonging both to the school and to their learning. A student centered learning environment and pedagogy is defined by shifting the focus from teaching to a focus on learning. In this instructional approach, students are active participants in the learning, they influence the content, activities, materials and the pace of the learning, and they engage in deep, open-ended problem solving that require both critical and creative thinking. Students have a voice in their learning, within the context of the curriculum. Research has shown that this type of environment can positively impact student engagement and motivation. *“Motivation, engagement and student voice are critical elements of student-centred learning. Without motivation, there is no push to learn, without engagement there is no way to learn and without voice, there is no authenticity in the learning. For students to create new knowledge, succeed academically, and develop into healthy adults, they require each of these experiences”* (School Effectiveness Framework, 2013, pg. 22). To achieve this very lofty goal, we have created criteria that will guide our work in four key areas including:

- *Formal and Informal Leadership*
- *Foundational Principles to be Developed in the Learner and the Environment: Learner Mindsets for All*
- *Conditions for Learning: Risk Taking, Collaboration, Relationships, Responsive Instruction*
- *Assessment for/as Learning Culture: Learning Goals, Success Criteria, Feedback, Peer and Self-Assessment, Individual Goal Setting*

These criteria have been and will continue to be embedded into all of our work with adults and student learners, and will be monitored closely both at the school level and at the system level.

Focus Area: Mathematics Learning – Communication

Theory of Action: If we foster effective communication in our classrooms, then our students will be able to organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking AND analyze the mathematical thinking and strategies of others.

Long Term Goal: By 2019, 100% of our students will exceed or maintain their achievement scores as measured by their grade 3 to 6 or grade 6 to 9 EQAO Cohort Data in Mathematics.

Short Term Goal: By September 2017, through a focus on COMMUNICATION, the EQAO Math cohort data will show

- 100% of students who met the standard in grade 3 (49% or 39/80) will meet the standard in grade 6.
- 50% of the 13 students who were approaching standard (Level 2.7-2.9) in grade 3 will rise to standard in grade 6.
- 100% of students who met the standard in grade 6 (18% or 14/80) will meet the standard in grade 9.
- 50% of the 8 students who were approaching standard (Level 2.7-2.9) in grade 6 will rise to standard in grade 9.

The Ontario Ministry of Education Mathematics Curriculum - Revised (2005) has identified Communication as one of the seven mathematical processes that are integral to student success in mathematics. *“Communication is the process of expressing mathematical ideas and understanding orally, visually, and in writing, using numbers, symbols, pictures, graphs, diagrams, and words”* (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 17). When students engage in discussion about their math thinking, represent that thinking using various tools, and justify their thinking to their peers and to the teacher, they gain a better understanding of mathematical concepts as they consolidate their thinking. *“Communication is an essential process in learning mathematics. Through communication, students are able to reflect upon and clarify their ideas, their understanding of mathematical relationships, and their mathematical arguments”* (Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 17). Research suggests that this leads to students seeing themselves as mathematicians as they gain an improved level of confidence and success, thus improved well-being.

Next Steps

While the BLP mathematics goals are trailing indicators, we will be actively engaged in planning for the success of our students in mathematics throughout the year. This will include ensuring that teachers and school leaders are engaging in professional learning designed to enhance our mathematics instruction in the areas of math talks, problem solving, and a focus on understanding the transitions from grade 7 to grade 9 in terms of instruction and curriculum. In addition, all of the Portfolio Leads in the system will also provide opportunities for professional learning as they either provide a deeper understanding of the supporting conditions for greater learning to occur or directly integrate math learning into their leadership. These goals are captured below:

Special Education: If we build on our communication and regular use of accommodations (including assistive technology) for Students with learning disabilities then our students will improve in their numeracy achievement.

Information Technology: If we explicitly embed digital resources into our practice, then students will use a variety of communication methods to demonstrate and communicate their learning.

FSL: If students learn French through Problem Solving, their communication skills, confidence and proficiency will improve.

Mental Health: If we can provide explicit instruction on metacognition (what it is and how to develop it) to students, then students will learn how they can self-regulate those processes through the use of specific strategies that will enable them to learn more effectively.

MISA: How do explicit connections between mathematical representations help to deepen conceptual understanding?

FNMI: If we learn about indigenous perspectives with our local First Nations, then we will be able to better incorporate a First Nation perspective into our Learner Centered Environment.

Positive Behaviour Support: If we use the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills and Applied Behaviour Analysis Teaching practices we will see improved communication and a transference of mathematical skills and behaviours across multiple environments (with a specific focus on counting behaviours and connecting mathematical behaviours with geometry and spatial thinking).

Student Success: If we build teacher capacity for effective mathematics instruction through Professional Learning Communities, then we will have increased percentages of students being successful in the applied and academic program.

OYAP/CO-OP: If through experiential learning initiatives, we demonstrate the relevance of the mathematics discipline to the workplace, students will appreciate the importance of the subject and increase their focus on developing sound numeracy skills

In addition to these theories of action, each individual school also has a theory of action that will guide the adult learning in that school. We are confident that, through this aligned focus, students' mathematics ability and overall well-being will be improved. However, it is important to remember that while the BLP monitors and measures specific priority areas (mentioned above), there is a significant amount of additional improvement work that is taking place as represented by the Work Plans that each Portfolio Lead has created. Thus, there are a number of other focus areas for professional learning to support well-being and learning.

Respectfully submitted by:

Nicole Morden Cormier
Superintendent of Education

References

Ontario Ministry of Education (2005). Ontario Mathematics Curriculum Revised. Toronto: Queen's Printer.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2013). School Effectiveness Framework. Toronto: Queen's Printer.

Ontario Ministry of Education (2016). Ontario's Well-Being Strategy Discussion Paper. Toronto: Queen's Printer.