Strategic Planning Engagement Report

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

September 2023

Table of Contents

Strategic Planning Context **3**

Engagement Process – Your Voice, Your Plan **4**

Overview of ThoughtExchange Results **4**

Combined ThoughtExchange Results 5

ThoughtExchange #1: Learning 5

ThoughtExchange #2: Wellness and Belonging 7

Key Takeaways Across Both ThoughtExchanges 9

Overview of Focus Group Results **11**

Summary of Themes 12

Key Takeaways 12

LEARNING 12

WELL-BEING AND BELONGING 14

RELATIONSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP 16

Summary and Next Steps **18**

Introduction

Every four years, with the election of a new Board of Trustees, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board undertakes a process to develop a new strategic plan for the organization.

To ensure that the new strategic plan sets the vision for a strong and sustainable future and responds to the needs of those we serve, we prioritized stakeholder engagement and collaboration. From March through June 2023, we consulted and engaged with students, staff, families, partners and community members across all regions of our school district, asking important questions and listening openly.

This report provides an overview of the engagement process as well as the key themes and ideas that emerged through regional focus group sessions, meetings, and online ThoughtExchange conversations.

We have organized the key takeaways and insights from focus groups and meetings under three main themes: **Learning, Well-Being and Belonging, and Relationships and Leadership**. Results from the online ThoughtExchange conversations have also been organized thematically. This information will help inform the Board's considerations as we move forward in developing the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

We thank everyone who shared their voice with us and contributed meaningful feedback to help KPR set a strategic direction that will guide us over the next four years.

Strategic Planning Context

KPR's Strategic Plan is a reflection of, and connected to, our Mission Vision and Values, Ministry of Education priorities, and stakeholder feedback. The Board Action Plan operationalizes, or puts into action, the priorities identified in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. The stakeholder insights presented in this report are one of several important components that are taken into consideration as part of the strategic planning process. In addition to the voices of those we serve, planning for KPR's future requires reflection on, and prioritization of, Board priorities and Ministry directives, within the context of organizational capacity and available resources.

Engagement Process – Your Voice, Your Plan

As part of the strategic planning process, we met with representation from key areas of the organization (including Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Indigenous Education, Student Success, Special Education, Mental Health and Wellness, Corporate Affairs, and the Commissioner's Office of Human Rights, Equity & Accessibility). The objective of these discussions was to help develop intentional outreach strategies that would provide inclusive and meaningful engagement opportunities for all members of the KPR community.

The theme Your Voice, Your Plan was chosen to convey the goal of including all voices in the collaboration and consultation, to ensure everyone can see themselves reflected in KPR's strategic priorities.

We used a range of strategies, across various communication channels and geographic locations, with support in multiple languages, to make participation as equitable and accessible as possible.

The collaboration opportunities were promoted through a portal page on the Board website, a series of promotional videos, posters for all schools, social media campaigns, paid advertising, direct email messages to staff and families, Edsby messages and personalized invitations.

Overview of ThoughtExchange Results

Between April 5 and June 30, the Board gathered input from students, staff, families, partners and community members through two online conversations facilitated through an online platform called ThoughtExchange. The first conversation focused on Learning and the second on Wellness and Belonging. The following questions were asked:

- How can we best support the unique and diverse learning needs of all students?
- How can we best support wellbeing, belonging and overall success for students, staff, families and communities?

Approximately 2,500 participants shared over 2,200 combined thoughts and ideas with a total of over 86,000 ratings in the two online conversations.

The following section of the report provides a high-level overview of the participation, most frequent and highly-rated themes within each ThoughtExchange. The ThoughtExchange platform randomizes thoughts for participants to rate, while also ensuring that all thoughts have equal exposure. Participants can share and rate thoughts anonymously and have the option to participate in over 100 languages.

The software allows for moderation of thoughts, to flag and remove disrespectful, hurtful and identifying comments.

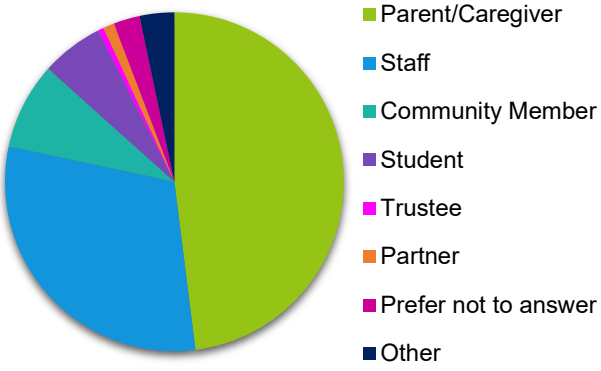
Combined ThoughtExchange Results

2,498 Participants

2,234 Thoughts

86,170 Ratings

Breakdown of Participation



%		Answer
48%	1437	Parent/Caregiver
30%	908	Staff
8%	248	Community Member
6%	177	Student
0.6%	17	Trustee
1%	32	Partner
2.5%	75	Prefer not to answer
3%	99	Other

ThoughtExchange #1: Learning

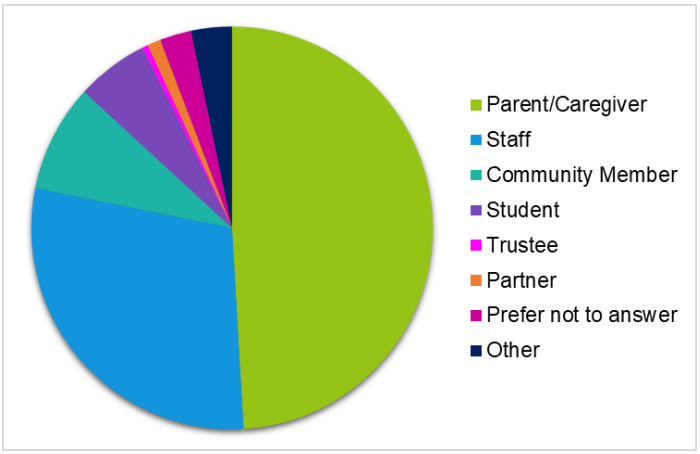
Question: How can we best support the unique and diverse learning needs of all students?

1,773 Participants

1,654 Thoughts

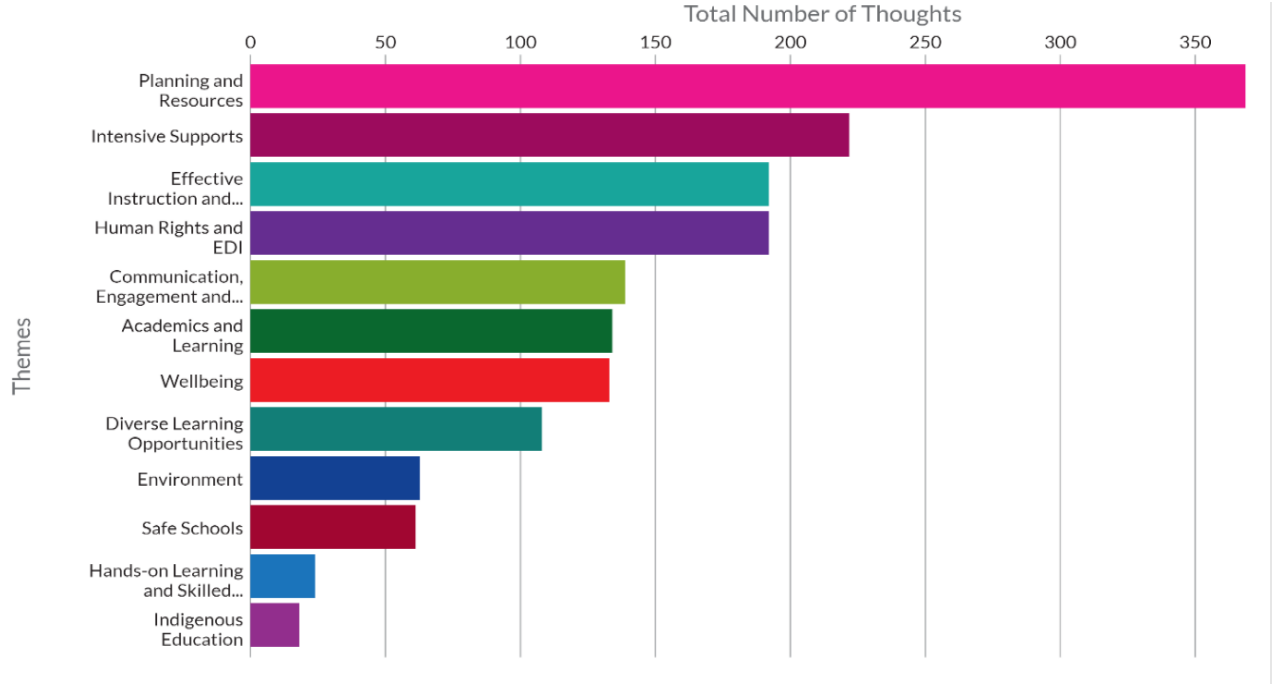
68,666 Ratings

Breakdown of Participation

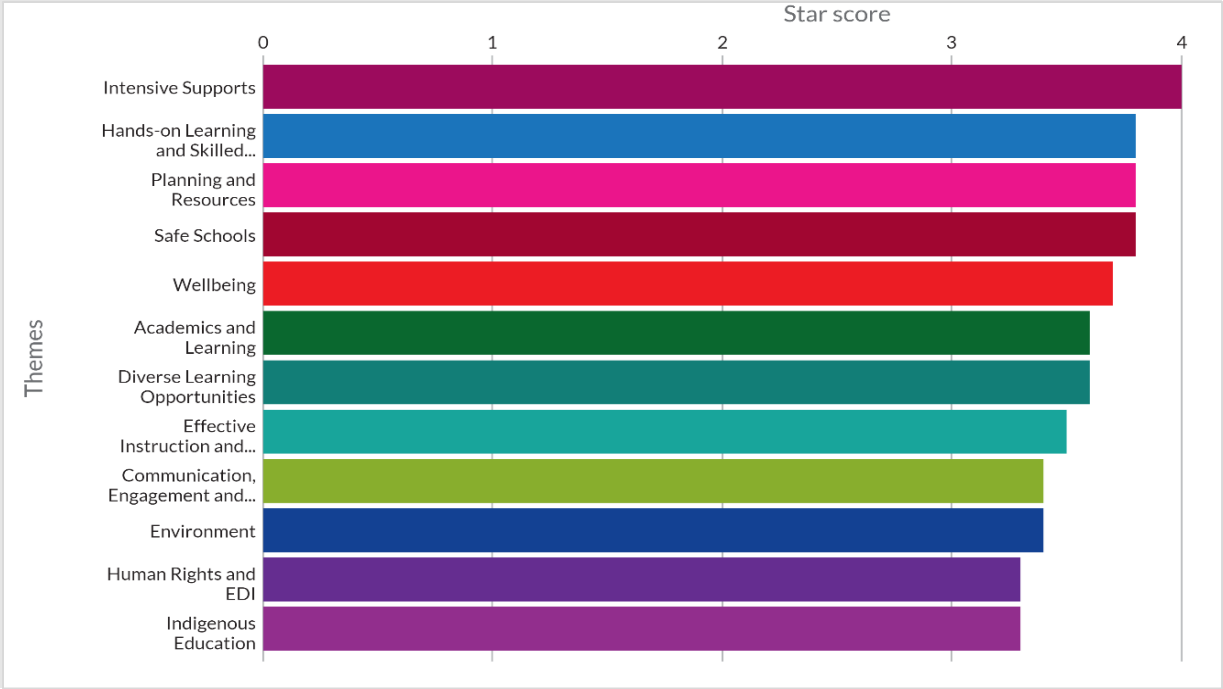


%		Answer *(Multi-select)*
62%	(1046)	Parent/Caregiver
37%	(620)	Staff
7%	(124)	Student
1%	(10)	Trustee
11%	(184)	Community Member
1%	(23)	Partner
3%	(54)	Prefer not to answer
4%	(70)	Other

Top Themes by Total Thoughts



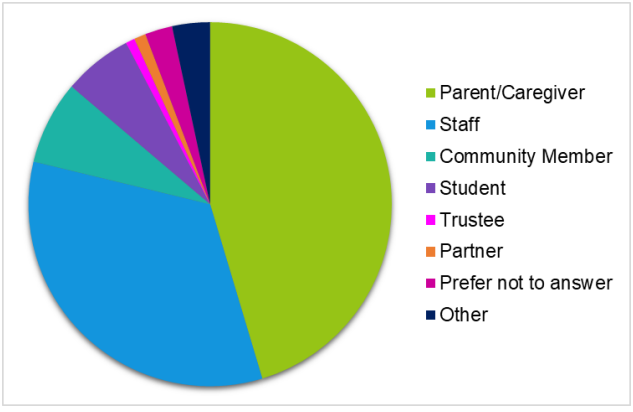
Top Themes by Star Score



ThoughtExchange #2: Wellness and Belonging

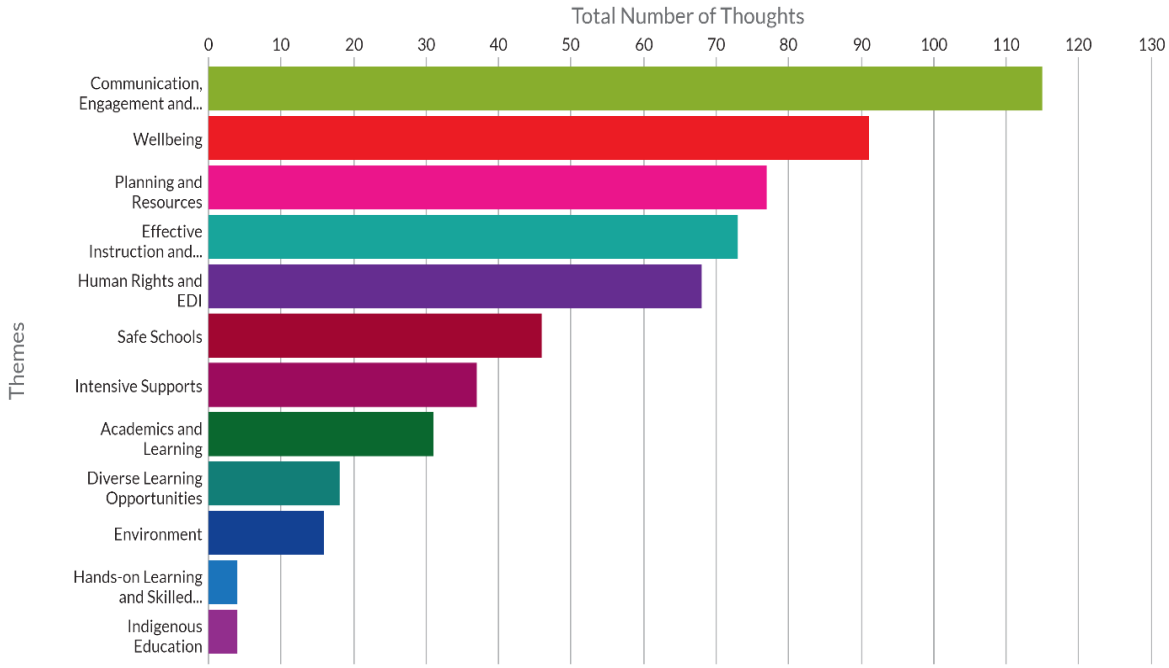
Question: How can we best support well-being, belonging and overall success for students, staff, families and communities?

Breakdown of Participation

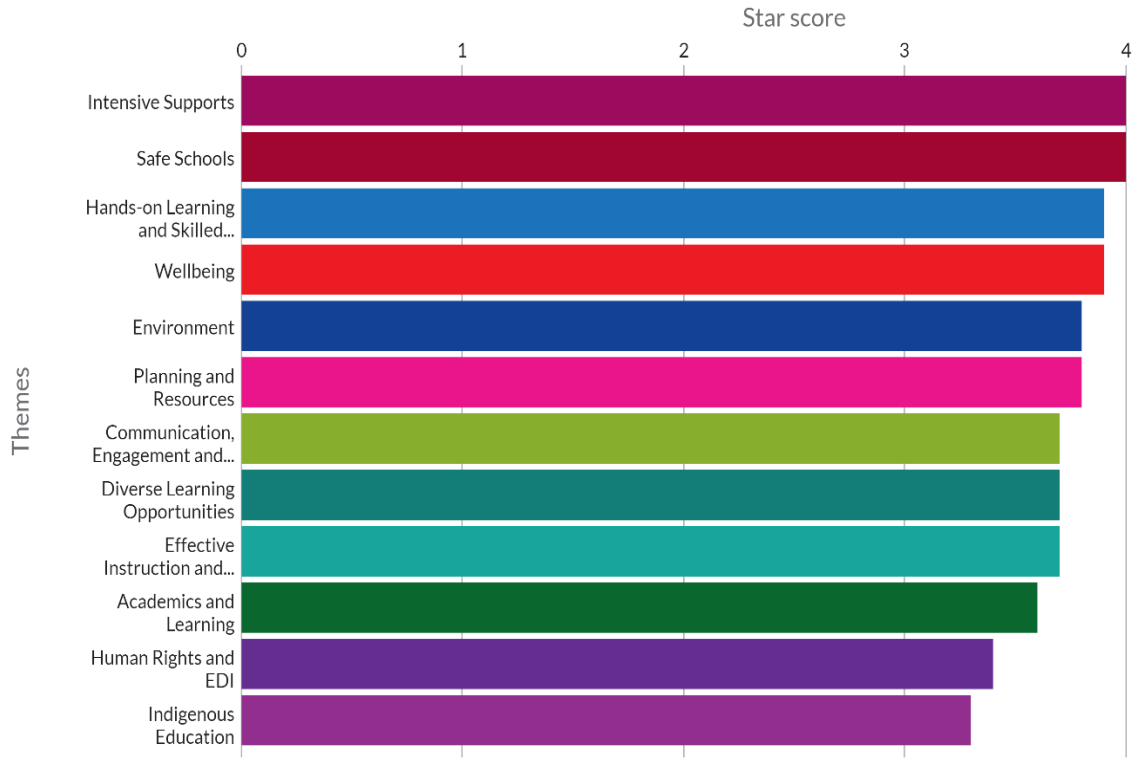


%		Answer *(Multi-select)*
56%	(391)	Parent/Caregiver
41%	(288)	Staff
8%	(53)	Student
1%	(7)	Trustee
9%	(64)	Community Member
1%	(9)	Partner
3%	(21)	Prefer not to answer
4%	(29)	Other

Top Themes by Total Thoughts



Top Themes by Star Score



Key Takeaways Across Both ThoughtExchanges

Academics, Learning and Diverse Learning Options

- Comments have a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, with many participants seeking improved literacy programs and in general, a "return to the basics/fundamentals" in reading, writing, and math.
- Some participants express a desire for a more flexible curriculum and diversified course selection that is accessible to all students regardless of which region they live in. Some thoughts advocate for virtual learning.
- Several thoughts emphasize the importance of learning about financial literacy and other basic life skills (i.e., critical thinking, soft skills, resilience, food safety, cleaning skills, cooking, mechanics etc.).
- Thoughts also highlight the importance of the arts and having adequate funding for arts programming as well as providing more enrichment programs.

Communication, Engagement and Relationships

- A significant volume of thoughts focus on engagement and relationships at all levels of the organization. Many thoughts discuss the importance of showing kindness, respect, and compassion and most importantly, listening to students, families and staff. Participants express a desire to see more opportunities for sharing feedback, contributing towards decision making and building connections.
- Several thoughts mention communications and promoting awareness, and the importance of ensuring there is open and consistent communications. In particular, participants are looking for more proactive communication between schools and families. Some expressed concern about the use of Edsby (I.e., confusing/not user-friendly, inconsistent use among teachers).
- Thoughts emphasize the importance of collaboration and partnerships to create community, reduce siloes and to ensure students receive the support they need to be successful.
- Some thoughts also suggest a need for greater accountability and consistency in leadership/ direction, and more time spent by Board administration in schools.

Effective Instruction and Assessment

- Many thoughts describe professional development and staff training as a priority, particularly to help increase the skills and knowledge in the areas of disability support, mental health, neurodiversity, and physical and intellectual disabilities. Some additional areas of interest for PD include leadership programs, First Aid/CPR, and Indigenous learning.
- Comments shared regarding assessment and evaluation are mixed. Some participants prefer less standardized testing, and more diversified options for assessment, while others would like to see formal exams in all grades, increased homework and more accountability overall.
- Many thoughts emphasize the importance of classroom management to effective learning, suggesting that reduced class sizes, additional staff, as well a more control over cellphone use would create more effective learning environments.
- Thoughts that mention de-streaming are primarily not in favour of it.

Environment

- Although there are a small volume of thoughts that fall into the category of Environment, these thoughts are highly rated. Thoughts focus primarily on the importance of learning about climate change, outdoor education to support engagement and well-being, and improved play equipment and structures.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- The majority of thoughts encourage students and staff to continue building cultural awareness, focusing on accessibility and inclusion and knowing 'who we are' (lived realities and intersections of individuals) to serve the needs of all learners.
- Many thoughts identify a need to prioritize the recruitment of staff that is reflective of the student population, and to invest in resources and learning material that represents the diversity of students and their families. Several participants also identify a need for more EDI professional development and training to support staff in addressing hate and discrimination in schools, and more workshops and learning opportunities for students.
- Some comments express concern or disagreement with the focus on equity and diversity. These participants would like to see schools spend more time on academics and feel that issues pertaining to sexuality, gender, race, religion, and other sensitive topics with ranging views should be "left to the family."

Hands-on Learning and Skilled Training

- Although there are a small volume of thoughts that fall into the category of Hands-on Learning and Skilled Training, these thoughts are highly rated – suggesting that increased experiential learning and opportunities in the skilled trades and STEAM are a priority.

Indigenous Education

- Many thoughts advocate for more of a focus on Indigenous education (including the integration of land-based learning, more staff training, and expansion of programs).
- A few thoughts question the purpose of the daily land acknowledgement in schools or the Grade 11 Indigenous English course as a requirement, which identifies an opportunity for further communication in this area.

Planning and Resources

- A significant volume of thoughts/comments relate to staffing and express a need for more staff and overall capacity in schools – particularly, support and front-line positions (i.e., EAs, CYWs, ECEs, SERTs, secretarial, custodial, maintenance etc.)
- Class size is mentioned frequently. Participants express a desire for class sizes to be reduced to ensure that students receive the time and support needed to be successful, and for teachers to be able to succeed in their roles as well.
- Several thoughts comment on the need for virtual learning, listing its benefits and noting it should continue to be an option for families.

Safe Schools

- Thoughts express concern regarding incidents of bullying, racism and violence in schools, and some participants would like to see greater consequences and discipline measures in response.
- Several thoughts mentioning violence in classrooms also suggest a need for additional support staff and smaller class sizes to help prevent and address this issue.

Special Education Supports

- A significant volume of thoughts under the Special Education Supports theme also relate to staffing and express a need for more support staff in schools. In particular, participants advocate for the board to hire and increase the compensation of EAs, CYWs, and ECEs to more effectively meet the needs of students and address the current burnout among staff.
- Many thoughts identify the need for additional funding in special education, including resources and improved access to intensive support for students with learning and behaviour needs.
- Other topics mentioned frequently include programs and placement/ integration of students with disabilities or special learning and behaviour needs – with several participants advocating to bring back special education classrooms or to offer additional specialized programs (LLS, Primary Communications, etc.) for children who require more intensive support.

Well-Being

- The majority of thoughts in this area advocate for more mental health and wellness resources, particularly in the form of additional staff (e.g. support staff, school counsellors, mental health clinicans, CYWs etc.).
- In addition to increased resources, many thoughts identify a need for more mental health education for students and training for staff. This includes building wellness learning and practices into the daily curriculum for students (e.g., stress management, navigating social and academic pressures, yoga and mediation etc.)
- Several participants comment on the well-being of staff, noting concern regarding burnout, workload and expectations and lack of work-life balance among other issues.

Overview of Focus Group Results

Through a series of focus groups, staff meetings, and regional meetings we heard from over 260 students, staff, parents/caregivers, and community partners. The following list is a summary of the various sessions and meetings that took place throughout May and June.

- Peterborough Alternative and Continuing Education (May 16, 2023)
- Port Hope High School (May 25, 2023)
- Brighton Public School (May 25, 2023)
- Kirby Professional Learning Centre (May 31, 2023)
- Trustee-School Council Dialogue (May 4, 2023)
- Online Focus Group (May 31, 2023)
- Staff Focus Group at Kirby (June 6, 2023)

- Student Leadership Focus Group (May 23, 2023)
- KPR Managers Meeting (May 10, 2023)
- Clarington, Northumberland and Peterborough Regional School Council Meetings
- Indigenous Education Advisory Committee and follow-up discussions (May and June 2023)

Summary of Themes

LEARNING

- Academics
- Instruction and Assessment
- Learning Pathways and Extra-Curriculars
- Materials, Courses and Resources
- Special Education and Intensive Support

WELL-BEING AND BELONGING

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Indigenous Education
- Mental Health
- Newcomer Support
- Safety, School Environment and School Spaces

RELATIONSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP

- Board and School Leadership
- Communication
- Community Building and Partnership
- Parent Engagement
- Staff Voice
- Student Voice

Key Takeaways

LEARNING

Academics

- Focus on fundamentals and core subject areas, by continuing to create a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy and addressing learning gaps that exist.
- Improve awareness and promote consistency of programs, by communicating updates and information regularly to staff and families.
- Provide a diverse range of learning opportunities, with balance between academics, the arts, and physical activities. Provide equal access to specialized courses and programs.

- Maintain current literacy and numeracy programs and invest in additional support and resources. Share post-pandemic learning recovery and specific next steps.
- Increase learning opportunities and specialized programming for high-achieving students, challenge gifted students and address concerns and misconceptions about de-streaming.

Instruction and Assessment

- Create consistency and a unified approach in the delivery of programs and implementation of curriculum. Strive for common language in assessment and consider alternative or non-traditional measurements of success.
- Explore new methods, formats and strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of all students.
- Create positive learning environments that are responsive to different styles of learning (visual, hands-on, auditory)
- Inspire excitement and passion for learning.
- Reinforce expectations, reduce classroom disruptions, address classroom behaviour and discipline in a consistent and proactive manner.

Learning Pathways and Extra-Curriculars

- Support and promote all educational and career pathways by ensuring students have access to a diverse range of programs and opportunities.
- Provide more experiential and out-of-class opportunities for students to put learning into practice, develop important skills, and form community connections.
- Inform students and families about opportunities that exist related to different learning pathways including, OYAP, co-op, and the skilled trades. Continue providing strong guidance support to help students make informed decisions about their futures.
- Continue offering a wide variety of extra-curricular activities (i.e., teams, clubs, groups, volunteer opportunities, etc.) to foster student leadership and keep students engaged in positive activities.
- Ensure staff are supported in the delivery of extra-curriculars, and there is equal access to opportunities for all students.

Materials, Courses and Resources

- Diversify learning materials and resources to ensure they promote a sense of belonging for all students and align with the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusiveness.
- Provide learning environments that are accessible and adaptable, and promote balance and overall success.
- Expand elective course offerings, and incorporate more life/practical skills (e.g., personal finances.).
- Provide access to technology for students across all grade levels and equip them with the appropriate skills and knowledge to navigate the technology.

- Consider impacts of social media and artificial intelligence (AI) and support students in navigating technology and social media and understanding the potential benefits, risks and dangers. Enhance learning on digital literacy and digital citizenship.

Special Education and Intensive Supports

- Prioritize special education and increase support for students with special needs. Support early and proactive interventions.
- Increase specialized classroom placement for students with needs that are not met in traditional classroom setting (i.e., Primary Communication Classrooms).
- Increase support staff and review and build capacity in the training and skills of staff to ensure they are equipped to meet the needs of all students.
- Continue use of Individual Education Plans (IEP) to support students and ensure staff have the appropriate tools and knowledge to work with IEPs.
- Prioritize and understand relationships with students and families, applying a trauma-informed approach, to create welcoming, caring, and safe environments.
- Support the transition to Kindergarten and address the lack of skills/readiness in new students with special needs.

WELL-BEING AND BELONGING

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Increase identity representation of staff to reflect the diversity of students and families and to ensure students see themselves reflected at the front of the classroom.
- Amplify marginalized voices and conduct more active, intentional outreach with diverse audiences and marginalized groups for input.
- Continue to embed the principles of equity, diversity, inclusiveness, and address barriers that impact marginalized students.
- Support, celebrate and cultivate learning about cultural diversity and traditions. Ensure religious accommodations are met.
- Increase equity training and professional development for staff (e.g., support them in understanding and implementing the CRRP and addressing racism and discrimination).
- Address racism and discrimination with proactive work and enforce consequences for harmful behavior and actions. Focus on education, transparency and relationship building when incidents occur, seek counsel and support from community groups and partners to educate.

Indigenous Education

- Continue to be a leader in Indigenous Education, expand and prioritize Indigenous Education across KPR.
- Continue offering NBE course, create new courses (e.g., Indigenous Languages and Indigenous Studies in general), and increase Indigenous perspectives in other subject areas (e.g., history).

- Incorporate learning that celebrates Indigenous excellence and triumph in addition to the historical traumas and injustices.
- Invite authentic Indigenous voices and perspectives into classrooms.
- Provide experiential learning opportunities for students to engage with community, form meaningful relationships, and deepen their understanding.

Mental Health

- Increase overall focus on mental health and well-being, and integrate mental health education into daily classroom practices, with a focus on self-regulation and tools and strategies for stress management and anxiety.
- Promote mental health resources (within schools and the broader community) and build awareness among students and families of how to access mental health support at school (i.e., process for connecting with a Mental Health Clinician or support worker) and destigmatize the process of asking for help.
- Provide inclusive, quiet and safe spaces in schools where students feel safe discussing their mental health and can access resources and support. Provide more frequent check-in opportunities for students to discuss mental health.
- Increase in support staff, mental health professionals and in-school counsellors, ensuring all staff have tools to respond to student mental health needs appropriately.
- Provide accessible and meaningful mental health support for staff, especially support staff.

Newcomer Support

- Provide more direct support and programming for newcomers in reading, writing, and social skill development.
- Implement further supports for families with language barriers.
- Provide mentoring for newcomers and encourage student and staff leaders to take a more active role in supporting new students (e.g., navigating the school, joining sports teams).

Safety, School Environment, School Spaces

- Prioritize student and staff safety and address violence in the classroom and other safety concerns (e.g., school washrooms, vaping). Increase support staff to help prevent and address aggressive behaviours.
- Support student attendance and retention, continue alternative education programs.
- Build inclusive school cultures that foster a sense of belonging and promote respectful, trusting relationships. Empower students to create an inclusive school culture and provide opportunities for socialization and community building through groups, clubs and teams. Form positive student/teacher relationships to help create safe spaces for students.
- Prioritize building maintenance and cleanliness to help promote a welcoming and positive school environment.
- Continue with classroom renovations, new furniture and school improvements. Ensure this work is completed equitably for all schools.
- Leverage spaces to bring students and staff together and promote connection and community building (e.g., staff lounge spaces and more student lunch spaces).

RELATIONSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP

Board and School Leadership

- Increase the visibility and presence of leaders for all students and staff, including school and Board administration to help strengthen relationships and build trust and respect.
- Ensure appropriate structures and processes are in place to address concerns from staff and help them navigate challenging situations.
- Improve consistency in leadership and management at all levels of the organization.
- Increase focus on accountability, transparency and opportunities for staff to share feedback and communicate openly about concerns. Encourage collaboration to resolve organizational challenges.
- Improve staff morale, reduce siloes and address concerns that some employee groups feel disconnected or undervalued.
- Acknowledge the hard work and accomplishments of all staff and provide meaningful recognition so they know they are valued and appreciated. Provide team building and training opportunities for all levels and employee groups
- Prioritize succession planning and develop the skills and leadership of staff through mentorship.

Communication

- Build trust and strengthen relationships through more proactive, consistent, transparent, and streamlined communication.
- Support ongoing dialogue and two-way communication by actively seeking and listening to the feedback and input from students, families, staff and community – prioritizing diverse representation and ensuring all voices are heard, especially those of students.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communication and make improvements based on evidence and consultation.
- Use digital communication methods to complement and not replace traditional communication (e.g., phone calls and face-to-face).

Community Building and Partnerships

- Prioritize and strengthen current partnerships including those with childcare providers, local police services, crossing guards, post-secondary institutions, employers, etc. Ensure partners are kept up to date and included in communication and projects.
- Seek new partnerships and collaborations with community agencies to support student learning and well-being and address gaps in staff knowledge and expertise (e.g., schools as community hubs).
- Cultivate student-community connections and integration through volunteerism, environmental stewardship, community projects and collaborations.
- Build a sense of community and positive culture within schools by hosting events, providing student mentorship, and promoting opportunities that strengthen school spirit.

Parent Engagement

- Strengthen relationships and build trust with parents, caregivers and families through increasing parent involvement and communication.
- Invite and welcome parents to visit schools, attend events, connect more frequently and share their voice.
- Address system/district navigation and clarify processes for advocacy and sharing concerns.
- Encourage stronger parent participation on school councils and expand school councils to include representation from Trustees, Superintendents and community. Explore new formats and timing to accommodate family schedules. Encourage principals to attend regional council meetings and increase meeting frequency.

Staff Voice

- Hire more support staff, address shortages and improve capacity to meet students' needs.
- Focus on staff retention and reduce movement of staff to create consistency and stability.
- Reduce class sizes to create greater capacity for teachers to manage behaviour and well-being of students and focus on teaching.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for staff to collaborate, learn and develop. Provide professional development and support to staff with the implementation of resources and programming (CRRP, Indigenous Education, de-streaming).
- Address burnout and support the well-being of all staff, especially those navigating challenging and complex situations. Offer options and solutions where possible such as flexible work arrangements and part-time employment.
- Build and embed professional development into work and school days and explore alternative formats to improve uptake and accessibility (e.g., online platforms, paid afterhours professional development).
- Deliver professional development that covers a range of topics relevant to each employee group, including curriculum delivery and expectations, mental health, equity, sensitivity training/ critical and complex conversations, leadership, crisis management, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NVCI) etc.

Student Voice

- Respond to the changing needs of students and involve them in decisions regarding their education.
- Promote student voice and provide more opportunities for students to share their feedback.
- Create equal access and reduce barriers to leadership opportunities (e.g., social dynamics and norms) so that they are accessible to all students.
- Recognize the value of student input and promote a more open-minded culture where students are trusted and have the flexibility to explore ideas and implement change.
- Support student leadership and advocacy by investing in student council.

Summary and Next Steps

The rich data collected through this process has been consolidated and organized thematically in this report to help inform the development of the KPR's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. A more detailed breakdown of the engagement results will also be made available to departments and shared throughout the organization to inform system and department level operations.

The strategic planning process provides opportunities for stakeholders to share genuine feedback, identifies areas of strength and opportunity, and helps to align and clarify our priorities.

Following this data review, the next step in the process will be another visioning session to consider draft language capturing key high level priorities.

By December 2023, the new strategic plan will be approved by the Board of Trustees. At the end of the process, we look forward to having a plan that:

- Reflects the voices and lived experiences of our communities,
- Identifies Board and Ministry priorities, and
- Helps us achieve our shared goals.