



Truth and Reconciliation Week and Orange Shirt Day

Truth and Reconciliation Week and Orange Shirt Day are an opportunity for the CDSBEO to honour the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in a meaningful, age-appropriate way that is respectful to both survivors, intergenerationally traumatized students and to the truth of our history. Clearly communicated messages to both staff and parents ensured that CDSBEO students sensitively begin their journey of building awareness and understanding of our Canadian history through a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspective.

Indigenous Consultants Patrick McFadden and Melissa Mader-Tardif, presented details to the board on how Truth and Reconciliation Week, as well as Orange Shirt Day, were unpacked in CDSBEO schools through various initiatives which focused on empathy, respect, and kindness.

CDSBEO had a focused, scaffolded lead-up to Orange Shirt Day. With guidance from the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, students and staff were encouraged to participate in a weeklong Truth and Reconciliation Initiative spanning from September 27th to October 1st. The focus was centered on the theme "In CDSBEO, Every Child Matters: I Belong Here."

"With the goal of honouring the survivors and the victims of residential schools, the Indigenous Education Team was hard at work supporting National Truth and Reconciliation Week in the CDSBEO. Letters were preemptively sent home to parents. While reconciliation calls us to teach our students about the traumatic history of Indigenous colonization, we wanted to reassure parents that such learning would be age-appropriate and sensitive to the individual needs of our students. Resources and professional development opportunities were distributed to teachers. Scaffolded for grades K-12, we offered suggestions for mentor texts, learning experiences, and online experiences to bolster residential school system pedagogy in our classrooms," explained Melissa Mader-Tardif.

Schools embraced the learning and participated in many ways through activities that demonstrated their commitment to "Every Child Matters." Posters, videos, murals, class discussions, fundraising drives to support Indigenous organizations that support residential school survivors and reading and discussions about Indigenous literature were some examples of how students honoured the commemoration.

"St. Mary Catholic High School's grade 11 Hospitality class made the traditional Haudenosaunee Three Sisters Soup recipe, and the Grade 11 Indigenous class volunteered to read for the "Truth and Reconciliation Prayer Service" that all classes participated in," noted Patrick McFadden. "Students at J.L. Jordan Catholic School began Orange Shirt Day with a liturgy, and then each class painted rocks to create a remembrance rock garden on the school grounds."



"As we continue to focus on engaging all our students, staff and community members, we will improve student achievement, close the gap, and build capacity around awareness of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture and history in our schools. It is essential to take the time to celebrate culture and to encourage the consistent integration of First Nations, Métis and Inuit history and perspective in all classrooms, both in person and virtual, throughout the school year."

"We appreciate you both coming here today to share all of the great work taking place in our schools, and through the work being done by your department. Congratulations to you both, you are certainly making a difference through the message we are sharing with our students," concluded Chair Lalonde.

STEO Inclement Weather Cancellation Review

During the winter season, there are times when the weather or road conditions will disrupt school bus and special vehicle transportation. STEO, the school boards, and local bus companies work together to ensure that our approach to transportation during times of inclement weather is planned, coordinated, and communicated with the safety of students and drivers in mind. Additionally, any decisions which are made regarding inclement weather transportation cancellations are driven by safety concerns, not fiscal considerations.

In response to a resolution that was passed by trustees of the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) requesting a review of a zonal cancellation model for inclement weather, STEO GM/CAO Janet Murray presented information to CDSBEO Trustees on the STEO Inclement Weather Cancellation Review. The presentation, which was provided to the STEO Board of Director's on October 7, 2021, and to the UCDSB Board of Trustees on October 13, 2021, gave an overview of the current cancellation model and what factors would need to be considered in shifting to a model that cancelled transportation by zones.

"There are a number of elements of the inclement weather process," noted Murray. "Safety of students and drivers is always the most compelling consideration, but there are other considerations as well."

STEO receives up to date information on regional weather through a meteorological service, KSMI, who provides daily notifications of road conditions and consultation with a meteorologist if weather and road conditions are unclear. When inclement weather is forecast for the morning hours, weather captains from STEO's contracted bus companies, with support from their staff members as well as local road crews, physically check on road conditions as early as 4:00 a.m. This information is then reported to the STEO weather team, who consult with school boards to make a decision prior to 5:45 a.m.



Under the current model, transportation is cancelled on a system-wide basis. There are several reasons for this, but primarily because the weather patterns within Eastern Ontario generally are consistent and impact all or most zones within the region at some point during the school day. Because of the rural nature of the system, road maintenance services, timing challenges, cross-boundary driver and student travelling routes, and accurate and effective communications are all principles which are considered under the current regional system-wide model.

In moving to a zonal cancellation model, there would be many elements for consideration including student and driver safety, driver coverage, geographic zonal identification, special programming locations, and the complexities of school boundaries,

“One example would be the implications to student and driver safety, and the considerations of a driver shortage. Again, because of the rural nature of our board, about 80 per cent of our drivers park out, which means they don’t park at a depot, but they park the bus at their homes,” noted Murray. “Because of the rural nature of the region, we may be asking a driver to cross a non-operational zone to service an operational zone, and we cannot compel a driver to do this. This adds another layer of complication because now you may be operating in certain zones, but potentially not operating certain vehicles within those operational zones. I mention this to note that when there are many complex considerations, and a zonal model impacts many different stakeholders.”

This additionally could impact the routing structure, the geographic zonal identification, how vehicles are routed based on crossing over zones, which may also impact sharing of vehicles. Road maintenance schedules are an additional consideration since municipalities may operate on a different schedule when clearing rural roads, and without that alignment, what would be the impact on a zonal model.

“It would also be paramount to ensure communication to stakeholders so that everyone understood what zone they lived in, and attended school in. There is the possibility that you may have a family that resides in one zone, but whose children attend school in another zone, or multiple zones. It is very multi-layered and extensive review. A potential communications strategy, would need to consider accurate and timely communications to parent and community stakeholders to ensure student safety.”

Murray highlighted that there is a benefit in the potential opportunity for a greater number of students to attend in-person learning with transportation on inclement weather days, but that risks must be considered with regard to safety of students and drivers and the potential for miscommunication, shifting weather and road conditions, the potential for further constraints to driver coverage, and impacts or constraints that may affect routing.

Elements of a zonal cancellation model review will include consultation with the STEO Board of Directors, the safety risk analysis, a logistics review which includes geographical viability,



routing impacts, driver coverage and road maintenance, the gathering of protocols and a review of communication opportunities and constraints.

Moving forward, an extensive review will take place to determine viability, which will be compiled into a preliminary report that will be shared with the STEO Board of Director's in the new year. If the review determined that a zonal model of vehicle cancellation was possible and if the changes were to be approved by the STEO Board of Director's, the earliest implementation would be the 2022-2023 school year.

Associate Director Norton noted that another consideration would be board staff who would potentially need to cross over zones that are cancelled to attend work, adding another layer of complication for staff.

"As we can see, through this extensive presentation, there are many considerations. This is a very complicated process, and for STEO to conduct this review is very difficult and complex because there are many factors to be considered."