Reaching into Community

In last month’s report, I spoke about the engagement process from last spring and the rich data collected. This included almost 11,000 independent thoughts from the online Thoughtexchange process and Student Forum data that governing board members and staff will now be using as a base for continued strategic planning.

On February 24th and 25th governing board members and senior staff rolled up their sleeves and dug in for two intensive days of close examination and analysis of the community feedback. As one would expect in a large, and richly diverse community such as that of CCRSB, the ideas and comments covered a multitude of topics and a wide variety of opinions and priorities. We looked to skilled facilitators, including our own Acting Consultant of Climate and Relational Approach, Glenn Thompson, to guide the discussion in a relational manner. It was extremely important to the governing board that this process value all contributed thoughts and ideas. We engaged in a series of exercises that helped us to understand the underlying interests and beliefs of our stakeholders.

Throughout the weekend, seven overarching community values emerged: Inclusivity and equity, Sense of community, Preparedness for the future, Empowerment, Growth opportunities, Commitment, and Wellness. This was a great starting point. The test of course, is to reconnect with communities and engage in dialogue to test these values.

During discussions thought provoking questions gave us focus: Who else do we need to hear from? What else do we need to know? Whose voice is not included here? It is critical that the next strategic direction of the governing board truly honour the many voices within CCRSB. This is crucial as historically there are those whose voice has not been actively sought or heard. As a result, the board has committed to addressing this challenge and is now preparing to identify the ways, locations, and formats best suited to the task.

The governing board members of CCRSB are an incredibly committed, caring, and determined group of individuals. As we look forward to supporting the development of the next CCRSB strategic plan we can rest assured that the best interests of each student is always at the forefront.

Gary Adams
Superintendent,
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
CCRSB extends its thanks to the School Options Committee members in the Town of Pictou and the East Hants area for their outstanding work as part of the School Review Process for their respective schools.

Both SOCs spent months listening to the concerns, hopes and ideas of community members to create a report and recommendation for consideration by the governing board.

The Northwestern Pictou County SOC submitted a written copy of their final Report and Recommendation on January 24th and presented to the governing board on March 27th. The East Hants SOC submitted their written Report and Recommendation on March 13th and will make their formal presentation to the governing board on April 10th.

The final decision, by the governing board, for the Northwestern Pictou County School Review Process (Pictou Academy, Dr. Thomas McCulloch Junior High and Pictou Elementary) will take place at a Special Board Meeting on April 5th or April 11th. The April 5th meeting will be held in the cafeteria at CEC. Should the board be unable to come to a decision on April 5th, the decision will happen on April 11th.

The governing board will make its final decision regarding the East Hants School Review Process (Maple Ridge Elementary and Shubenacadie District Elementary) at a Special Board Meeting on April 26th, in the gymnasium at Truro Elementary School.

Both school review processes were necessary to allow the governing board to determine potential future need of two Public, Private, Partnership (P3) schools: Pictou Elementary and Maple Ridge Elementary. The final decision regarding future use, for both P3 schools, must be communicated to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development before the end of May.
Celtic Family of Schools

Grade Primary to 4 students at New Glasgow Academy recently participated in an outdoor mathematics lesson. Students rolled a dice and had to build a block snow train the length that they rolled. They then had to build a block train that was “smaller/shorter than” and one that was “longer than” their original. The class wrapped-up with students ordering themselves from “tallest to smallest” without any talking, and without assistance from teachers. Outcomes included counting, comparing and measuring, and the lesson reinforced these concepts from their math centers in class!

North Nova Education Centre’s Dining and Guest Services class, as part of the Career Exploration Program, prepared a meal and served their families in the Second Annual Family Day Lunch. Students had an opportunity to showcase skills learned in the program, including food preparation, food handling and serving skills. The program includes a four week co-op experience where students work with an employer to further enhance their abilities and understanding of the industry.

The Grade 6 class from Thorburn Consolidated had the opportunity to visit and tour the production facilities at Sugar Moon Farm prior to March Break. Students arrived at the Farm at just the right time as they had just begun to boil this year’s sap. Students took this opportunity to learn about the earliest production of Maple Syrup in Nova Scotia and the process that it goes through. They were also able to hike the mountain, visit the area where the trees have been tapped and find the old sugar shack.

Nova Family of Schools

Students from South Colchester Academy competed in the annual Brain Wars competition on Friday, February 24th at SMU. Many thanks to Mr. Crewe for organizing this opportunity for students! Brain Wars challenge the mind with a series of 30 stations each testing a different component or a combination of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math).
Taking students on new adventures with ‘Phyll Us’!

New to the CCRSB community is Nova Scotia’s first telepresence robot, Phyll Us! Named for the way she “fills us with knowledge,” Phyll Us is bringing new opportunities to students across CCRSB.

Late in February, Winding River Consolidated received the first official school visit from Phyll Us. Students had a firsthand opportunity to learn about Phyll Us’ capabilities by maneuvering and controlling Phyll Us, sending her to visit other classrooms throughout the school.

Phyll Us is an extraordinary piece of technology. She has the ability to take students on virtual tours to locations they may have never been able to experience on their own.

The telepresence robot took students at Cyrus Eaton on a virtual tour of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia just last week. Thanks to Phyll Us and Louise Haycocks, CCRSB’s Technology Integration Learning Consultant, students in Ms. Benjamin’s Grade 3/4 class at Cyrus Eaton Elementary were able to take a tour of the AGNS in Halifax without leaving their classroom in Pugwash.

The AGNS has an exhibit on folk artist, Maud Lewis, whom Ms. Benjamin’s class has been studying. While the students and Ms. Benjamin controlled Phyll Us from Cyrus Eaton, Louise was in Halifax at the Art Gallery accompanying Phyll Us for the guided tour throughout the gallery. Students were able to view the artwork they had been studying and were able ask the tour guide questions about what they were seeing.
Steve Wells, Principal at Cyrus Eaton Elementary, was excited to have Phyll Us’ maiden, virtual voyage happen at Cyrus Eaton. Wells highlighted the opportunity Phyll Us provides for schools in rural communities, “It makes the world a little smaller for us, it makes everything not so far away.”

Louise is also very excited to have Phyll Us in the CCRSB community and for what the robot can bring to schools. In her grant proposal to the Program Development Assistance Fund from the Nova Scotia Teachers’ Union, Louise highlighted how effective Phyll Us can be to teachers and students in classrooms.

“It [Phyll Us] allows teachers more flexibility in the schools and causes less disruption to teachers and students class time. It can also be used to go into environments that cannot easily accommodate students or where transportation costs could prohibit students’ visits or limit the time on location.”

We are very fortunate to have Phyll Us join the CCRSB community and we look forward to learning about her next great adventure!
Elmsdale District students Kennedy C., Madison M., Teaghan S., Sohier M., Sophie C. and Erin N. are in a battle! This team of five have been reading and practicing for the Battle of the Books since the fall. The team has already participated in Round 1 games and are looking forward to Round 2! Battle of the Books is a program created by Woozles book store in 1986 to encourage and promote the joy of reading; stimulate reading beyond students’ individual choices; provide an opportunity to compete on a non-sports team; and recognize and reward the value of teamwork and cooperation. The competition inherent in the Battle of the Books program takes place in the context of good sportsmanship and mutual respect.

Winding River Consolidated had the opportunity to welcome ‘Phyll Us’ – Nova Scotia’s first Telepresence Robot – to their school in February. Louise Haycocks, CCRSB’s Technology Integration Learning Consultant worked alongside the grade 5/6 teachers and their students to learn about this powerful source of technology. The students were able to control the robot from their classroom and had it visit all of the other classrooms in the school. Students in Grade 5/6 could communicate with the other students via the robot. Other sources of technology were explored as well, including a 360 camera– so cool!

Cobequid Family of Schools

West Colchester Consolidated School will soon see a Disc Golf course for their local area and school. The school has purchased three baskets and a class set of discs to be installed in the spring for the community park and playground. This will give students and community members along the shore a place to play this growing sport. Students will be given tutorials in the coming weeks and the mobile baskets will eventually become stationary once the course is designed for the space.

African Nova Scotian students from Truro Junior High School participated in a field trip on March 17th that took them to the Sexton Campus at Dalhousie for an IDEA (Innovation and Design in Engineering & Architecture) building construction site tour. The tour focused on the kind of research that goes into engineering and construction. It was a fun-filled day which ended with the launching of the rockets at Halifax common!
Thanks to the generosity of Charlie A’Court, one Cobequid Educational Centre student graduating this June could be the first ever recipient of the Charlie A’Court Scholarship for Excellence in Music (CASEM). CASEM is a brand new scholarship being offered to students who wish to pursue their musical education. Whether applying to a university or a college, students could be eligible to win $500 to put toward their education! A’Court, an award-winning blues musician, created this scholarship as a way to help students with musical ambitions further their passion for the arts. As a CEC graduate himself, A’Court is excited to present this scholarship to a graduating CEC student this year!

Chignecto Family of Schools

Students from River Hebert District School put their handiwork to the test in early March. Mr. Eaton’s Grade 9 Technology Innovations class created puzzles using wood, stencils, and a scroll saw. These amazing wooden puzzles will be passed on to the elementary classes within the school. Great work!

In Wallace Consolidated’s Grade 5/6 class, students place a particular focus on individual styles during their explorations in art. Students explore their own personal style while utilising various elements, materials, and techniques. Focusing on colour and form, the 5/6 students explored the elements of art in the creation of watercolour doodles. The students created the coloured forms and were then challenged to add detail, or create a series of figures out of their painting. The coloured forms were brought to life and given emphasis with Sharpies. Using Sharpies gave students the opportunity to give their piece more character and definition. The end products were individual to each student and highlighted their personal artistic styles!

Every Friday until the end of the school year, students from Cyrus Eaton Elementary School will be enjoying a fresh fruit snack at recess! Through a grant provided by the Cumberland Health Authority, students will be able to enjoy this healthy treat every week. Cyrus Eaton staff, parents/guardians, and employees from the local Co-op in Pugwash, have all been volunteering their time to chop and serve these fruit cups to students. With 150 fruit cups being prepared and served, students can enjoy their fruit and even go back for more! So far, Fresh Fruit Fridays have been a huge success. With the addition of blenders in the school, students will soon be able to enjoy fresh fruit smoothies too!
Anita Geddes, Central Office Receptionist

Some may recognize her as the face of Central Office, welcoming visitors at the front desk. Others will know only her voice: a welcoming, calming presence at the end of the line that is always willing to help find information and connect callers with staff. In-person or on the phone, Anita Geddes has been helping her fellow CCRSB staff members, students, parents and the public for 34 years.

Anita came to work in reception at the Central Office front desk via the Property Services division. After 16 years as a receptionist, Anita said that she has never been bored with her work. “It’s always new and I’m always learning, even after all [these] years.”

Between the constantly ringing phones, the influx of emails, and people coming and going from the office at all times of the day, Anita is always busy. As the first point of contact from the CCRSB website, her phone line and email can quickly become backed up with questions or comments from the community. She is tasked every day with responding to all of these new messages. Her goal is to get the proper information back to people as quickly as possible. Anita says that staying calm and keeping a level head are what helps her manage everyone’s concerns.

For Anita, life as a receptionist is filled with many of her favourite things. Meeting new people, answering different phone calls, and handling new situations every day are a big part of why Anita loves to come to work. She says, “The challenges only come when I repeat the same things over and over again. I enjoy the days that have a little bump in them!”

Her only wish is that she could make more people have a better day.

“My best days are when people come in and I can help them. You can just see that they’re in a better frame of mind [leaving] than when they came in. Sometimes people just need someone to listen.”