

# Report: Education Plan Public Meeting



## FHS

February 15, 2016

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## 1. Summary

David visited two groups of FHS students. The first was a short meeting of about 15 minutes with Sally MacAllister's Word Issues class, where we got some general thoughts on education from various students. The second was a meeting with the Student Representative Government over the lunch hour. For this meeting, David led a general discussion using themes and a dot survey as prompts. It was an open discussion format.

Some of the main highlights coming out of both meetings included a need to deal with and teach about mental health; the importance of critical thinking; the need for more practical life skills and knowledge (filing taxes, career development, time management, the political system, practical and inclusive sex education, etc.); need for more consistency between classes; having different levels for classes is better than having all levels in one class; need to focus on social responsibility, learning, hard work and values rather than grades; and too much extracurricular activity that does not count towards school credit, leads to high levels of stress and anxiety.

## 2. Notes and comments

### World Issues Class:

Immersion: Bring it back to first grade. Have noticed that with the grade 3 start, French levels are lower. Currently, there is not enough French speaking practice, need more opportunities to speak French.

Anxiety is a really distracting thing to deal with. We haven't been taught what to look out for, what the warning signs are for intense anxiety or depression. We don't know when it's a problem that we need to seek help for.

Should develop more values and passion, rather than focus only on grades and rank. We need to know how to use our passion to better society. There's too much focus on just getting good grades. Need more focus on improving society, social responsibility.

There are different levels for English, Science, etc. People base their intelligence on what level they are.

Having different levels can discourage students from trying to achieve more, because they may think that they are not capable of doing a higher level, or maybe they don't want to work too

hard or risk their grades by doing a higher level. They accept the level that they are assigned and believe it reflects their abilities.

People don't know how to work hard anymore.

There is a problem with integrating ESL (English as a Second Language) students. The ESL classes used to be scattered so students were more integrated into the general population, but now they are isolated in one wing, so they only interact with each other and don't have as much opportunity to integrate.

For French, younger children are able to learn languages more easily and quickly, so French immersion should start at an earlier age.

We need to accommodate the human body; teens need more sleep, sleep later, so schools should start later.

Having different levels is good, because otherwise, if you have all different levels in the same class, this marginalizes those who are low or high, and only the middle level gets attention.

## Student Representative Council:

In the grade 10 mandatory class on health, personal development and career planning (PDCP), we never talk about same sex sex, it's only heterosexual sex. Sex ed should be more inclusive to sexual minorities. It should also be more practical, about what a person can expect from a first sexual experience, how to really put on a condom - all students should be given a condom to practice, etc.

Religion is an important part of the world and society, but it is never taught in school and there is general ignorance about religion, and therefore, increasing fear of religions. Different religions and world views should be taught.

Anxiety: workload drastically and suddenly increases in grade 9. We need a smoother transition between middle school and high school. Grade 12 should have increased work and better preparation for university so that transition is also smoother. Currently, grade 12 students are not properly prepared for university.

Critical thinking is important and needs to be taught at earlier. Currently, it is only mandatory in grade 12. I believe it's the most important skill to learn. It should be mandatory in all grades.

Students should be allowed to evaluate themselves. I have a teacher who is doing that now, and it allows students who do not do well conventionally to assess how best they learn, and what they are good at. Gives space for students who don't normally do well to do well.

Life skills: need knowledge of practical life skills: how to file taxes, how the political system works. We need to produce informed voters.

Political awareness: a lot of young people hate politics. Would creating a course forcing people to learn about politics not make them hate it even more? Could turn them away from politics even more. (David interjects: "Politics is how a society makes decision. Let's start with that.")

Current PCDC text is like a self-help book, *Seven Habits for Highly Effective Teens*. It's an ineffective course, it spends way too much time on this text, when the material in the text could be covered in a week. There are more important life skills that don't get taught because so much focus is on this book.

Look at other provinces that are successful, take them as a model, get ideas from them.

Bigger cities have more programs, like International Baccalaureate (IB).

Too much disparity between the same classes based on teachers. Need consistency, if you're choosing a class, it shouldn't differ dramatically from the same class taught by a different teacher. More standard in math and science, more variety in English classes.

Should gear classes towards what New Brunswick has to offer, job-wise, so that students don't come out prepared for jobs that don't exist in New Brunswick.

Mental Health: need to find the root cause and deal with that, rather than just make students able to function while suffering from mental health problems; mental health issues are arising from unresolved causes.

Too much extracurricular activities that don't count towards school credit or help with grades. This only reduces time available for doing schoolwork and ends up increasing anxiety. More extracurricular activities should be incorporated into the structures of schools.

Small classes help with reducing anxiety.

Teachers need training and knowledge on mental health, and need to know when a student is suffering from mental health issues, and be able to accommodate that.

Agree that communication should be at the top of important life skills.

Ability to manage personal time and work load is an important skill, which will help decrease anxiety.