



Cape Breton-Victoria Regional Centre for Education

Meeting of the Regional School Advisory Council

Teams Meeting, June 3, 2026, 7 p.m.

In attendance:

John Berk

Natalie MacAskill

Krista Smith

Kirt Winter

Leslie Shepard

Susan Kelley

Suzanne Aucoin

Marjorie Graham

Debbie Madore

Heather Calder

Unable to attend:

Allison Boutilier

Beth Gillis

Alex Paul

Welcome

Susan opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and followed with a land acknowledgement recognizing that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People as well as a people acknowledgement of our African Nova Scotians who have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years. She announced her upcoming retirement on July 31 and that Paul Landry, Regional Executive Director SRCE, would also be assuming her role at CBVRCE in the interim.

Back Pack Program / School Supply Program Update (Suzanne Aucoin)

We have been fortunate to partner with Humaniti International who are supporting us by providing free, pre-filled backpacks to students in need ahead of the upcoming school year.

Approximately 2300 backpacks are scheduled to arrive at schools by the end of June, or shortly after. The contents and colors of the backpacks are all different and are tailored to be age-appropriate according to grade level. The packages include school supplies and essential toiletries that exceed expectations in content and quality. Local community groups are also assisting with this initiative.

Humaniti has also granted us access to their wholesale supply list offering a significant discount on purchases which is a game-changer. Schools wishing to purchase supplies submit a requisition through the Purchasing department. Orders will go through Suzanne before being finalized with Humaniti. Principals who reviewed samples at a recent Principals' meeting were very pleased with the quality. Suzanne is currently checking on pricing for schools that have inquired about purchasing extra filled backpacks to have on hand.

Suzanne was congratulated and thanked for her leadership and work on making this initiative a success.

School Lunch Program Update (Debbie Madore)

The school lunch program was launched in September 2024 initially serving 26 schools that included Primary and Pre-Primary grades. In 2025, eight more middle schools came on board and in 2026 the final four remaining high schools were added to the program which will be rolled out in the fall. While the first two phases relied on external vendors, such as Chartwells, Horizon and catering companies, this final phase will be self-operated meaning CBVRCE hire staff directly.

A draft menu has been released which includes larger portions for high school. Debbie shared the menus with vendors for review and feedback will be forwarded to EECD. Debbie emphasized the value of gathering vendor feedback as their unique perspective is very beneficial. Managing food service for some of these large student populations is expected to be challenging, especially regarding pre-ordering logistics.

The primary goal of the lunch program is to introduce students to new foods with an emphasis on vegetables. Seeing their peers enjoying these items often encourages reluctant students to try them too. Most importantly, the program ensures that children who might not otherwise bring lunch will have access to food at lunchtime.

The school lunch program is also discreet as no money is exchanged at a cash register. One of our breakfast volunteers noted that the children at her school aren't coming back as much for seconds at the breakfast program which could be a result of them knowing that lunch is also available to them.

It is Debbie's hope that the school lunch program will continue to grow and be successful. She sees 40% utilization at the breakfast program at the elementary level and 50-60% at middle and high school. That variation could be due to it secondary students seeing it as a social time or they are simply more rushed to get out the door. For the lunch program, the current target is 30% reflecting the 30% of students who currently do not bring lunch, however the program is available to anyone who wants to access it.

School Experience Survey (Heather Calder)

Heather presented the results of the School Experience Survey that was distributed to all PP-12 families and completed late May. They are in the very early stages of reviewing the data and noted feedback/concerns were not unexpected. The survey saw a 10%+ participation rate (varying by the number of children per family). This survey provided parents with the opportunity to share specific suggestions on what worked well or needs improvement. This information is high level at this point, and the Regional SAC was the first to see results. Regional staff and principals will review the data and use it to set goals and priorities for next year.

It was noted that a similar survey could be directed towards volunteers, including Home and School and School Advisory Councils. Heather asked if there were any questions/comments.

A concern was raised around possible cuts to inclusion (more about not having inclusion) as well as requesting additional supports. It was suggested that this was the most challenging year for inclusivity and accessibility. In response, Susan clarified that there would be no cuts at the classroom-level aside from adjustments resulting from declining enrolment and noted that the budget is set provincially. Susan also highlighted the return of the Student Success survey. This survey is a creative way for all students to have a voice, and all voices need to be there.

The meeting closed at 7:55 p.m.