

Date: June 29, 2016

From: Sheila Wilhelm, Executive Director

Subject: Update of the Strategic Plan Survey

I am pleased to share the results of the survey the Board conducted as they began the development of a Strategic Plan. I am also pleased to share the Strategic Plan and associated Work Plan. All three documents can be found on the Centre's website for your review and reference at the following link <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/nanabijou> . You'll note we're committed to adopting the Ministry's How Learning Happens curriculum via Reggio-inspired programming. I will send out more specific information on what that programming entails in the coming months.

One interesting result of the survey were the responses to what the Centre should Keep Doing, Stop Doing and Start Doing. You can see all of the responses in the survey posted on the website, but we decided to also address the major themes raised in order to "close the loop" somewhat on the valuable feedback we received.

Theme One: Rotating Staff

Interestingly respondents to the survey were of two minds – some liked that the staff rotate, others did not.

It's the Centre's practice to move educators approximately every three years however sometimes due to circumstances such as illness, changes happen more frequently. Ideally we rotate our educators after three years because we find the classroom benefits from new approaches of different educators and the educators themselves look at a change of responsibilities as a way to broaden their perspective.

We recognize that when changes are necessary we could do a better job of advising parents and guardians of the changes and we commit to doing so via emails and notices posted in the Centre.

Another related suggestion was name tags (or some form of visual identification) for staff so that parents or guardians dropping off children were assured that the adults are in fact employees of the Centre. I've asked the staff for a solution and will let you know in the next few weeks how we're going to address this.

Theme Two: Food

Again some respondents liked the food choices while others requested more "from scratch" food. This feedback was so important and at the same time challenging that the Board included it in the Strategic Plan. You'll note that Part 4.1 of the Work Plan outlines the kinds of things the Board and the Centre will be investigating; if you are interested in participating in this work please let me know.

For information, each month's menu is pre-approved by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit dietician to ensure that the meals meet the requirements of Canada's Food Guide and the approved menu is posted online.

We will move to as little processed food as possible over time (approximately 60 of our food is already made from “scratch”) but in all honesty it is impossible to completely eliminate pre-made foods.

Theme Three: Communication

There was feedback that parents and guardians would like to see consistent staff documentation (reporting) of their child’s activities. I’ve asked the staff to begin a discussion about what that will consist of; I imagine it will vary by age group but I will wait to see what the staff develop. In the bigger picture written reflection is a very significant part of Reggio-inspired programming; the direction that the Centre is taking per the strategic plan.

Eventually we’d like to have a web-based system (perhaps a closed Facebook group), however that will take some time and funding. In the meantime I commit to improving the consistency of the communication immediately.

Theme Four: Security

We were struggling with air balancing in the building and have had a number of technicians looking at the situation. We have been told that the problem of doors not latching has now been rectified. We will continue to monitor this to ensure that this is the case.

Another suggestion was to occasionally change the door code. I’ve developed a procedure to ensure that the door security code is changed randomly. Watch for the first change in the next few weeks.

Again, you’ll note that 4.2 of the Work Plan outlines the kinds of things the Board and the Centre will be investigating; if you are interested in participating in this work please let me know.

A comment was made that staff shouldn’t be texting at work. We have a policy in place to ensure staff do not do so, unless there is a personal emergency and only if pre-authorized by me. I encourage you to speak to staff directly if you observe them texting or on their phone while at work.

Theme Four: Professional Development for staff

The Board has decided that the Centre will have Reggio-inspired childcare programming and the Strategic Plan outlines the tactics we will use to accomplish that (see 1.1 of the Work Plan). Key to that is ensuring the staff are all qualified early childhood educators and that they are provided with whatever professional development is required to ensure that they can be effective in providing Reggio-inspired programming.

To that end we have engaged Anita Broere from Confederation College to work with our staff. Anita, the coordinator of the ECE program at the College, and Kelly Massaro Joblin from the Ministry of Education began staff professional development with a full day retreat for staff on June 10th; as you have been advised, the Centre was closed that day.

1.1 – 1.3 of the Work Plan outlines the kinds of things the Board and the Centre will be undertaking and our participation on any working committees is most welcome; just let me know.

Theme Five: Finances

This included suggestions for different billing schedules and payment options (i.e. email transfers, auto withdrawal). The Board has also asked for a review of the payment process and I will bring a recommendation to them no later than the September Board meeting. Any changes will be communicated broadly and well in advance of any changes and their effective date.

I am also developing a policy on overdue accounts for Board approval no later than the September Board meeting.

In summary, thank you to everyone who replied to the survey and contributed to the development of the strategic plan. I am excited about the Centre's future direction and look forward to the work ahead.

Parents and guardians, please keep an eye out for our annual satisfaction survey due out to you in July. This is another important tool we rely on in your Centre planning.

Sincerely,

Sheila Wilhelm

Director