

2009/2010 Year End Report

OCASC - Sharing Information – Facilitating Communication – Representing our Membership

It is now two years since I first chaired a meeting of OCASC, and much has happened in the two years since that first uncertain meeting. Just as I started in as Chair, we completed a visioning process for OCASC and created a new statement of purpose, something that I find myself referring to regularly when reflecting on what projects or issues to get involved with, and how to handle different situations.

Our visioning process led us to identify three areas of importance for OCASC, as defined in our purpose statement:

- Sharing Information
- Facilitating Communication
- Representing our Membership

The role of OCASC, in a nutshell, is to help with communications amongst school councils, and between school councils and the school board, both staff and trustees.

I am a firm believer in the power of communications. Strong communications can build relationships, understanding, cooperation and collaboration. This is what we want and need in the OCDSB.

Picture a triangle - at one point are the parents; at another the school board staff, and at the third the trustees. In the centre of the triangle are the students. We all want the same thing for the students – the best education we can give them. Picture what we can achieve if parents and school board staff and trustees are all working together. OCASC can take a lead role in working to achieve a truly collaborative, cooperative school board. What I find exciting and inspiring is that there are staff and trustees on the same page, working towards the same goal. If we all pull in the same direction, we can get where we want to be.

OCASC 2009/2010 – Outreach – Consultation – Collaboration – Communication

A year ago, we created what we called our “Looking Ahead” document, which outlined our goals and plans for the 2009/2010 school year. As the year draws to a close it is time to look back on those goals and see how we did.

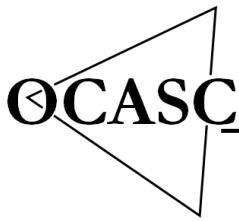
OCASC had two main areas of focus for the past school year:

- Outreach
- The 3 C’s – Consultation, Collaboration and Communication

In terms of outreach, we wanted to try to involve more school councils in OCASC, to increase our membership, meeting participation, newsletter readership and website usage. We wanted to build awareness and knowledge of OCASC among school councils, parents, schools, and school board staff. We wanted to develop partnerships with other groups and organizations.

As I look at that list, and back at what we have done this year, I like to think we didn’t do too badly.

- Our membership has increased from 60 to over 90 school councils.
- Visits to our website have increased by 50%, to approximately 120 visits per day.
- OCASC has gone out to participate in meetings of many school councils this year.
- We have been involved with a number of the OCDSB’s leadership events.
- Principals tell me that they are promoting OCASC to their school councils.



- Senior staff at the school board invited OCASC participation in organizing the most recent “Make a Positive Impact” leadership event.
- OCASC partnered with OCISO – the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization on our PRO grant this year.
- I was invited, as OCASC Chair, to participate in the visioning process the CCEE – the Community Council on Ethnocultural Equity – is going through right now.
- OCASC has two seats on the OCDSB’s Parent Involvement Committee, which has representation from many partnerships and advisory committees. As one of the OCASC representatives, I chair our PIC.
- OCASC sent five members of the executive to the annual People for Education Conference in Toronto in November.

So, there have been lots of good things happening. I am excited about the continued growth in our membership, and the participation of parents and school councils in OCASC, and about the continuing opportunities for OCASC to be involved with the school board and its many partnering organizations.

It is pretty easy to tie outreach to communication. In fact, it’s pretty hard to separate them. Communication, collaboration, consultation - they all tie together too. They are all about respect, trust, working together, understanding. In fact, when I look at the Community of Character Wheel that the OCDSB uses we see these ten attributes:

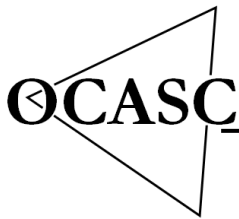
- Respect
- Cooperation
- Fairness
- Integrity
- Empathy
- Appreciation
- Responsibility
- Acceptance
- Optimism
- Perseverance

Our school board is embedding character education, with these character attributes, in the students’ learning and in the staff’s workplace. Similarly, we need to ensure that we, as parents and school council members value these character attributes in our work we do within our schools, with the school board and even beyond the OCDSB.

When we identified consultation, collaboration and communications as a priority for OCASC this year, our main focus was on relations between parents and the OCDSB. We wanted to work with school board staff to identify areas where consultation could be improved, and explore ways to make changes. While it is difficult to quantify the progress that is being made, I know we are seeing changes, and I am confident that we will continue to move towards collaborative approaches to solution finding.

A few of the things that OCASC has been a part of this year:

- Two meetings of OCASC executive with OCDSB Executive Officer and communications staff;
- Letter to trustees indicating concerns with consultation process, following Alternative Education Review;



- OCASC Education Committee representative speaking at a committee meeting about consultation process concerns;
- OCASC Chair meeting with Director of Education and Chair of Trustees to discuss the consultation process and some potential solutions;
- Numerous informal discussions with individual staff and trustees about the consultation process

A few things that indicate some progress with respect to consultation:

- Revisions to the Consultation Plan document that is completed prior to every consultation
- OCDSB staff requesting to speak at OCASC Assembly meetings about events, reviews, consultations

I stated earlier that I am a firm believer in communication. I am also a firm believer in the collaboration. Together we can do more.

If, in my term as the Chair of OCASC, I can help to create a culture of cooperation and collaboration within our school board I would feel like I have accomplished something worthwhile. That culture is something that I see starting to develop and it is thanks to all the people who believe in it that we are moving in the right direction. Our culture of cooperation and collaboration will involve trust, respect, integrity – and all the attributes on the Community of Character Wheel.

Many, many parents, staff, trustees and other stakeholders are making this journey together and our kids will all be better off for it. Thank you to all of you who join us, all in your own ways.