

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday January 21st, 2010

Confederation Education Centre Library

ATTENDANCE :

Total Membership: 82

Member schools

A. Lorne Cassidy ES – Kim Clausen
Adrienne Clarkson ES – Lisa Bloom,
Carrie Eaton
Agincourt Road PS – Norah Vollmer
Barrhaven PS – Donna Blackburn
Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk
Briargreen PS – Suzanne VandenHeuvel
Bridlewood Comm. ES – Tracy Cledgett
Cairine Wilson SS – Janet Patch
Canterbury HS – Bob Weist, Nadine
Clarke (also Secondary Schools Cmt)
Castlefrank ES – Brona Little
Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson
Cedarview MS – Donna Blackburn
Connaught PS – Madelaine Stewart-
Dmaj
D. Aubrey Moodie IS – Sherri Smith
Elgin Street PS – Peter Stieda
Elmdale PS – Stephanie Bolt
Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter
Kokkovas
Farley Mowat PS – Michael Diric
First Avenue PS – Kristen Underwood
Fisher Park PS – Andrea Douglas
Forest Valley ES – Janet Patch
Glebe CI – Deborah Lemkow
Glen Ogilvie PS – Cathy Galligan
Henry Larsen ES – Susan Heckbert
Hilson Avenue PS – Tarin Richards
J.H. Putman PS – Maria Di Rosa
Jockvale ES – Jamesee Winchester
John Young ES – Gwen Foss
Katimavik ES – Nihan Kavaslar
Lakeview PS – Kirsten Devenny
Le Phare ES

Longfields-Davidson Hgts SS – Dwight
Thompson
Manordale PS – Cathy Bubyak
Manotick PS – Michaela Stuart
Meadowlands PS – Karen Desjardins
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch
Mutchmor PS – Gwenda Lindhurst-Ko
Nepean HS – Andrea Douglas
Ottawa Technical LC – Daniel Oickle
Pleasant Park PS – Nancy Schenk,
Sabrah Talib
Queen Mary PS – Chris Ellis
Regina Street PS – Sarah Neville
Roch Carrier ES – Lisa Pike-Young
Rockcliffe Park PS – Joel Berger
Sir Robert Borden HS – Bessie
Giovanopoulos
Sir Winston Churchill PS – Karen
Desjardins
South March PS – Chris Bridgen
Stephen Leacock PS – Enang Akan
Stittsville PS – Rhonda Drakes-Blais
Stonecrest ES – Wendy Storey
Summit AS – Michael Barnes
Trillium ES – Tammy Martin
Viscount Alexander PS – Debby Simms
W.O. Mitchell ES – Brenda Verch
Woodroffe Ave. PS – Maria Di Rosa
Woodroffe HS – Christine King

Non-member schools

Charles H. Hulse PS – Wali Farah
Featherston PS – Wali Farah
Henry Munro MS – Patricia Cole
Hopewell Avenue PS – Geoff Hall
Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth

Guests and other persons in attendance:

Joan Hill-Keast, Juliet Hamilton (OCASC Recording Secretary)

CALL TO ORDER: 7:05 p.m., Anne Teutsch in the chair.

AGENDA: Approved with no changes:

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes of Dec. 17, 2009

Chalk-It-Up

Presentation and Discussion: OCASC / OCISO joint project –

Parent Engagement: Strategies and Resources for Parents and Schools

From your Executive

Follow-up Items

OCASC Constitution

Updates on:

Budget

Transfer Policy

Alternative Review

MINUTES of Dec. 17, 2009: Accepted with no amendments.

CHALK-IT-UP

Alternative Program Review

Summit Alternative School – Michael Barnes (michael.barnes@sympatico.ca)

- Summit AS and five other alternative schools are on the chopping block. The confusion caused by the review will affect enrolment.
- High level of dissatisfaction with the review process:
 - felt it was rushed – although supposed to take 10 months, it really only started in September
 - there were no on-site visits, no consultation with parents
 - there are errors in the report, i.e. the student population at Summit AS is reported as 139 when it really is 174
 - people feel their opinions and views were ignored
 - most of the data presented supported Alternative Programming, but that also seemed to be ignored
- Program is working well and has about 1200 students. For many of these kids, the alternative program makes the difference between liking and disliking school.
- Many parents are attached to these schools. Churchill Alt. PS has 60 regular parent volunteers.
- The six alternative schools want OCASC to communicate with trustees about what they saw during the review process.
- Also want OCASC member schools to sign their petition to strengthen and preserve the alternative program.
- Comments were then made by Anne (OCASC Chair) and Madelaine (OCASC Rep on Alternative Program Review Committee).
 - They had many discussions together during review process because of Madelaine's concerns about the process.

- Don't think OCASC is in a position to tell Board to keep alternative schools running – there are other issues that need to be considered, need to look at bigger picture.
- Can tell Board there were issues with the way consultation was done:
 - consultation doesn't have to be confrontational
 - consultation can open the floor to new ideas
 - terms of reference for process were framed with no consultation
 - both research and process review were hastily done; lots of statistics were thrown at people
 - facts didn't match conclusion
- Need to work with Board to make consultation process better; would affect every single review the Board does.
- Have said we want to work with Board on consultation, collaboration and communication.
- Decision making needs to be more open and clean; Board needs to build some trust.
- Canterbury HS – Take your point about consultation and the about the alternative program not being broken. Bigger issue is that the Board doesn't have enough money. Can you give reason why this program deserves to get funding it needs?
 - Financial considerations weren't part of the process until the very end. The calculations on savings if program is cut were made with the assumption that no students would leave the school board. If only 3% of the students leave the board, thereby reducing the per-student grants, there will be no savings.
 - Many students in alternative programs come from the extremes of the learning profile, either gifted or with learning disabilities. Have coped without Education Assistants, but if any need EA's in the regular stream, could actually cost more.
 - Many alternative schools are housed in other schools, which would not have viable numbers to remain open without them, i.e. Fisher Park PS.
- Sir Winston Churchill PS – School is involved in an accommodation review process right now. Get the feeling that the Board, having spent money on the review, feels it has to do something. Feel they just assume something is wrong with the school and want to close it.
- Elgin Street PS – Should OCASC adopt a motion?
 - Anne – Have been talking to Board about this already. They know it needs to change, so a motion or presentation to the Board isn't necessary. But the process is going to take time – won't see immediate results.
 - Elgin – It's an immediate concern. Have said process is bad. What can be done about the decision?
 - Summit – Can't say that everything is wrong. But process has created enough doubt in parents' minds that program will probably die anyway.
- Fallingbrook Comm. ES – This is going to get worse with budget cuts this year and following years. What options are there after the alternative program is closed. Can't assume one-size-fits-all is going to work well.

- Board says it's going to roll out alternative practices. But one key practice is that all activities are non-competitive. That means no sports tournaments or science fairs.

IEP Information Night – Thursday February 25

Maria Di Rosa (for Beth Doubt – ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca)

- OCASC is holding another IEP (Individual Education Plan) Information Night on Thursday February 25th from 7-9 pm in the library at Fisher Park PS. Lamar Mason will be the speaker. Every child in Special Education has an IEP, which lays out the best way to teach that child. Also plan to have an IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee) night sometime in the future.

Replacement Stage

Lakeview PS – Kirsten Devenny (kirsten.devenny@sympatico.ca)

- Trying to source options for replacing their stage. Lakeview PS is a small school and needs a portable stage so that it can only be set up when needed.
- Henry Larsen ES – Have one. Will look into it and forward the information.

Council Websites

Stephen Leacock PS – Enang Akan (enang.akan@gmail.com)

- Wondering what sites councils use to host their websites.
- Castor Valley ES – Latest P4E (Parents for Education) newsletter has an article on technology and what P4E can do to help councils get set up.
- Anne – The OCASC webmaster (Tanya Weiner – webmaster@ocasc.ca) has lots of information as well.

Bussing Schedules

Farley Mowat PS – Michael Pirie (michael.pirie@pwgsc.gc.ca)

- This year school has 800 students in grades K-6, next year will be up to 1100.
- Have heard there will be some amalgamation of busses next year. School starting time also changing. Would like to hear from schools who had these issues this year what impacts there were and what concerns they should raise.
- Briargreen PS – When their start times changed, no one drove the routes beforehand. Seemed to use Google maps to plan the routes, resulting in unrealistic timing. Kids were ½ hour late for first month, and many had to wait a long time after school, too.
- Meadowlands PS – School is the second run for busses. Found that after school started the bus times slowly changed until they worked well, but the original schedule sheets were never updated to reflect the new timing. Substitute drivers are given the original time sheets, which really messes things up.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: OCASC / OCISO joint project

Parent Engagement: Strategies and Resources for Parents and Schools

- Norah Vollmer suggested OCASC apply for a regional PRO (Parents Reaching Out) grant, and has been spearheading the project. A group of interested OCASC reps was formed: Norah (Agincourt Road PS), Heather Wilson (Castor Valley ES), Nihan

Kavaslar (Katimavik ES), Anne Teutsch (OCASC Chair and Merivale HS) and Wali Farah (OCISO and Charles Hulse PS)

- Joined with OCISO (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization) because regional PRO grants are only given to incorporated organizations. Organizations can apply for grants up to \$30,000.
- Grant application has been submitted. Would like feedback on the presentation tonight, and then would like reps to take the presentation back to their councils and get their feedback on it.
- Presentation is posted on OCASC website in both document and PowerPoint format, and the questionnaire as well.
- Presentation gives:
 - an overview of OCASC and OCISO – who they are and how they help
 - an overview of parent engagement/involvement (items are listed in order of parents' preference) and barriers (listed on the Ministry of Education website, and what the PRO grants aim to overcome)
 - an overview of the goals of the PRO grant
 - questions aimed at gathering information to meet those goals
- Wali also passed out a sheet of ideas on ways councils can use their annual \$500 PIC grants to become more diverse and welcoming to immigrants, and a DVD in 17 languages that encourages immigrant parents to get involved at their schools. Immigrant parents bring unique and different skills and perspectives to the school community.
- Then spent a few minutes on each of the questions posed by the presentation (also available on a separate questionnaire).
- What strategies does your school council use successfully to engage parents in your community?
 - Bridlewood Comm. ES – Offer free childcare during council meetings (using high school students, who can then get community service hours). Are getting a lot more parents.
 - Briargreen PS – Sent notice home at beginning of the year with a list of activities with which help would be needed. Were very specific, i.e. instead of 'library', had 'mending books', 'checking out books', etc. Indicated how many other volunteers would also be working on that activity, and specified that volunteering for something did not mean you would end up running it. Got a lot of response.
 - Fisher Park PS – Several years ago held a council meeting at a community centre, with food and babysitting, and invited the school's MLO (Multicultural Liaison Officer). A lot of new people came to that meeting, but it did not result in any new people attending subsequent council meetings.
 - Viscount Alexander PS – Asked parents what time would work best for them for council meetings. Now meet at 6:00 pm, and for only one hour. Get a very good turnout.
 - Connaught PS – Offer food and childcare at every meeting. Everyone comes for dinner, then kids go and play in the gym. Also, have started

asking for 'help' instead of 'volunteers', and for many small one-off jobs. Find that after people help once they tend to get more involved.

- Sir Robert Borden HS – Parents who attend council meetings are allowed to present the diplomas to their children on stage at the graduation ceremonies.
- Viscount Alexander PS – Work well with community organizations and the University of Ottawa. Have free fruit every Friday, cut up by volunteers. Show results in community paper so everyone can relate to the school even if they don't have children attending the school.
- What are some of the challenges that your school council faces in engaging parents in your community? (Not just for council meetings, but for involvement in general.)
 - Queen Mary PS – Need school administrators who are keen on reaching out to the community and who take the initiative by extending personal invitations to community leaders. The OCDSB needs to do more to train administrators on what needs to be done and how to use MLOs effectively.
 - Henry Larsen ES – Communication is a big issue. Paper doesn't always get home, and it's not environmentally friendly. Hard to get people to website regularly, and which (school/council) website. Messaging is also key, i.e. volunteer vs help.
 - Rockcliffe Park PS – Geography is issue. Have oddly shaped catchment area with a French Immersion program that reaches across four or five neighbourhoods. Have little parent involvement outside the immediate school area. Therefore council and volunteers are not reflective of the school population.
 - Woodroffe HS – High schools are totally different. It's not cool for parents to volunteer. Parent involvement decreases as students get older. Still have a small core group. Some teachers even discourage parents from coming to parent-teacher interviews. Need to give parents tips on how to interface with teachers. (Wali – OCISO has video on dealing with teacher interviews for immigrant parents.)
 - Pleasant Park PS – Parents who are at the school regularly to drop off and pick up their kids tend to come for other things, but parents of students who are bussed come much less often.
 - First Avenue PS – Are trying to use all kinds of electronic communication, and council is pushing to go totally electronic.
- What would help your school council to further engage parents in your community?
 - Farley Mowat PS – Have to go to website to get homework, and have put school and council information there, too.
 - Queen Mary PS – The Board or another central agency could identify all the community groups and agencies, both social and religious, and all publications focused on immigrants so that councils and the Board know where to advertise for meetings, events and consultations.
- How do you measure success? What are your parent engagement goals?
 - Berrigan ES – To have a volunteer for every need.

- John Young ES – To have council and volunteer involvement reflect the student population, both ethnically and across the multi-track programs.
- Henry Larsen ES – To replace people leaving council one for one.
- Stonecrest ES – In retention of council members (already have lots of co-compositions to share burdens). To have an on-going OCASC rep (distance makes it more difficult).
- Secondary Schools Committee – Provincial Parent Board did some work on measuring success of parent engagement.
- Norah – Please take this to your councils and go through this process. Then send the results of the discussion back to her (nvollmer@sympatico.ca). The questionnaire can be filled out by individuals or councils. You can bring them to the next OCASC meeting, or send the responses in an email, or scan them, or send them to OCASC via Board mail from your school's office (addressed to OCASC, 133 Greenbank Road).
- Pleasant Park PS – What will they be used for? Norah – to accomplish some of the goals of the proposal even if we don't get the grant. Would like to collect all this information in one place. Also looking into some sort of mentoring: how to be a council treasurer, how to be a council chair, how to start a council, etc.

FROM YOUR EXEC

Follow-up Items – Anne Teutsch (Chair)

- During the budget discussion at the last meeting, people wondered at the 80% allocated to salaries and whose salaries that included. It is for all salaries: director, superintendents, teachers, etc.
- Have also tried to find out which trustees are having zone meetings with Michael Clarke (OCDSB Chief Financial Officer). Several have already had those meetings (Zones 3, 6, 9). Zone 2 (Kanata) will meet on February 4. Zone 8 (Orleans/Cumberland) has yet to meet, but no date has been set). Michael Clarke or someone from his staff will be at the February OCASC meeting to talk about the budget.

OCASC Constitution – Anne

- Were supposed to be done with this after the vote in November, but it turns out that majority requirements were not met. Needed a majority of members of OCASC, not just of members present at the meeting. Therefore will do the vote again in March. Proxies are allowed, so if your rep will not be at the meeting please send in a proxy vote (will post information on website and in OCASC News).

Budget – Anne

- Public budget forum will be held next Monday at Confederation Education Centre, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm.

Transfer Policy – Anne

- Transfer policy deals with how students can go to a school other than their designated school.
- New policy was passed recently, and details are available on the Board website (www.ocdsb.ca). Will get the information posted on the OCASC website as well.

Alternative Program Review – Anne

- Most information covered during Chalk-It-Up discussion earlier. No final decision has been reached. Still at Education Committee, and a special night to continue the discussion has been scheduled for February 1. It needs to pass at committee before it goes to Board.

NEXT MEETING:

- Thursday, February 18th, 7:00 pm at Fisher Park Library.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Items to report back on:

- Further zone meetings with Michael Clarke.

Past minutes and more information about OCASC can be found at www.ocasc.ca.