

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday, December 16, 2010

Fisher Park PS Library

ATTENDANCE:

Total Membership: 61

Member schools

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Carrie Eaton
Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk
Canterbury HS – Nadine Clarke
Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter Kokkovas
Hilson Avenue PS – Bobby Chawla
Lisgar CI – Liz Melanson
Manor Park PS – Alison Laidlaw
Manordale PS – Cathy Babyak
Manotick PS – Michaela Stuart
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch
Nepean HS – Shirley Netten
Rideau HS – Chris Ellis
Rockcliffe Park PS – Joel Berger
Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth

Non-member schools

Glen Cairn PS – Mike Hickey
Jockvale ES – Jamesee Winchester

Guests and other persons in attendance:

Beth Doubt (SEAC), Juliet Hamilton (OCASC Recording Secretary), Paula Hall (OCDSB), Pam FitzGerald (Trustee, Zone 5), Rob Campbell (Trustee, Zone 9), Jennifer McKenzie (Trustee, Zone 10; OCDSB Chair)

CALL TO ORDER: 7:10 p.m., Anne Teutsch in the chair.

AGENDA: Approved with no changes:

Approval of Agenda
Approval of Minutes of November 18, 2010
Chair's Report
Chalk-It-Up
From Your Executive
Follow-up Items
Spec Ed Info
Budget Talk
(Holiday potluck after adjournment)

MINUTES of November 18, 2010: Approved with no amendments.

CHAIR'S REPORT – Anne Teutsch

- Nothing to report.

CHALK-IT-UP

IEP Presentation

Beth Doubt (ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca)

- OCASC is hosting another presentation for parents of students with Individual Education Plans, entitled 'Getting a Good IEP for Your Child.' Lamar Mason, former SEAC Chair, will talk and answer questions on Thursday January 27 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm in the Woodroffe HS Library, 2410 Georgina Drive in Nepean. Presentation is aimed at both elementary and high school. Response from previous events has been extremely positive. Event is not restricted to OCASC members - all parents are welcome and encouraged to attend.
 - Sawmill Creek ES – If parents can't attend, is the information available another way? A: Can provide PowerPoint presentation – will put on website.

Severn Avenue Public School

Beth Doubt (ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca)

- Since Beth no longer has a daughter in the public school system she has attached herself to a local school, Severn Avenue PS. Severn has lots of challenges and not a lot of money to meet those challenges. Area does not have a strong fundraising base, and Beth asks that schools with lots of fundraising capacity consider teaming up with more needy schools, sharing funds or holding joint events.

Perception of School

Rockcliffe Park PS – Joel Berger (RPPSParents@gmail.com)

- Becoming aware of a certain perception of the school when dealing with the Board and the community. Rockcliffe Park PS is perceived as a school for rich kids and many people don't see any need to donate during fundraising events. Yes, the school is in a wealthy neighbourhood, but it is a public school with a much larger catchment area. School was built in 1950 and has aura of wealth, but is costly to maintain. Wrestling with questions such as what is reasonable to ask community to do, what is reasonable to ask Board to do, and how to ask without being shot down.
 - Jockvale ES – Do you do any fundraising? A: Yes, have a huge book fair, and proceeds are shared with more needy schools as well.
 - Lisgar CI – The community newspaper would be a great way to make people aware of issues. Publicize fundraising events and highlight that funds are shared with other schools. Have article written about needs and complexities of school and how it partners with others.
 - Rideau HS – Rideau is looking to raise the profile of its feeder schools, so can work on this together. All communities need to come together for their neighbourhood schools.
 - Fallingbrook ES – When fundraising, do you publicize a fixed money target or target a particular item? Find they have success when they specify a certain big-ticket item as the target for fundraising, such as a play structure.

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE

Follow-up: School Year Calendar Committee – Nadine Clarke

- Have had some very interesting discussions around the table this year. Among the issues raised was how students can have very different needs and that the schedules for elementary and secondary students could be quite different. For instance, high school students would benefit from starting earlier in the year and having a break in November.
- Dates for beginning and end of next school year were set to be September 6, 2011 and June 29, 2012. There was no consultation on these dates, despite the fact that a survey from a few years ago of parents and councils found that a majority preferred to start before Labour Day.
- There is discussion on the dates for the Christmas break. Present options for the last day of classes are Tuesday Dec 20, Wednesday Dec 21 and Friday Dec 23. Break would be 2 weeks long.
- The allocation of Professional Development days is also under discussion.
- Have been given until January 20 to consult – OCASC will do a quick survey.
- Trustees Blackburn and FitzGerald – Nothing has been decided yet. And Dec 18 is still an option.
- Glen Cairn PS – If a previous survey indicated a preference for starting before Labour Day, parents may feel their input is not being considered when that option is not chosen. A: There are many other issues that need to be considered and balanced.
- Nepean HS – Are all these dates being coordinated with other Ottawa Boards? Does the Christmas break have to be the same? A: All the Boards consult with each other, and shared bussing is involved, but the four Boards do not necessarily come up with identical schedules.
- Trustee McKenzie – There is some discussion about doing multi-year planning, so OCASC may want to start talking to parents about up-coming years.

Special Education Information – Beth Doubt

- SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) is working on several things right now.
- It is trying to start up a communications committee and increase its profile.
- It is working on some of the language in Spec Ed policies.
- Major concern right now is the budget. Already have a gap between what the Board pays out in salaries and what it receives from the province for salaries. Now province is readjusting how money for Special Education is allocated and that may negatively affect the OCDSB. Province is trying to develop a prediction model to decide how much money to give boards. Would think there are too many issues to consider for this model to work well.
- Another concern is that the Board has worked hard to increase our EQAO results, and now the province says that boards with high EQAO results don't need as much money.
- Nothing concrete on any of these yet, or timelines for when they will happen.

- Last year some LSTs (Learning Support Teachers) were cut, and some cuts were delayed until this year. Have personal experience with how useful LSTs are, and have concerns about the results of these cuts.
- Sawmill Creek ES – Regarding educating parents about SEAC – looking for a ‘SEAC 101’ to send out to parents at school. Is something like that available? A: (Anne) That is something that OCASC could take a stab at, which might provide SEAC with a starting point.

Budget Talk – Gennifer Stainforth

- Have started the pre-OCASC-meeting budget meetings – a group of interested parents that arrive early on OCASC nights and take about budget issues. Have tried to pick up from where we left off last year.
- Looking at big-picture view: “Show me your budget and I’ll show you your values.” Our role is educating parents about budget issues.
- Would like things to change at the provincial level, basically along the lines of: Sooner, Better, Faster.
- Will be looking at other large boards to draw comparisons and see what is working for them.
- To communicate effectively, have decided we should focus on three points.
- Next steps for group are:
 - Educate ourselves;
 - Analyse the information;
 - Identify issues;
 - Delegate tasks (in January);
 - Draft messages, aiming for 3 levels: 1) quick read; 2) a bit more information but still quite general; 3) lots of details (numbers and data).
 - Review messages and publish messages (once have enough agreement will get message out, probably on a web page where it can be modified and added to).
- Rideau HS – Provincial election is coming up. Hopefully this information will make it easier for parents to lobby for improvements in education.

Meet the Trustees

Since there were so few items for Chalk-It-Up and no Chair’s Report, the trustees in attendance were given a chance to introduce themselves and speak for a few minutes.

Jennifer McKenzie (Trustee, Zone 10; OCDSB Chair)

- Started involvement at school council level during the Harris years.
- Board is going through the process of looking at the roles of staff and trustees. There is a diversity of views around the board table, but great commitment to schools and areas. Have a newly elected Board, with four new trustees.
- Major focus right now is the new strategic plan, which involves thinking about where the OCDSB wants to go over the next four year.
- One goal is to really engage advisory committees.
- Other items being worked on:
 - Student survey (student senate is also doing a survey).

- A Secondary School Review is under consideration.
 - Search for new Director is on-going.
- Lisgar CI – What is the time-line for finding a new director? A: Last time Board started looking at the same time and got someone in June who started in September.
- Lisgar CI – What is the status of the student survey? A: Still answering questions from the Privacy Commissioner. Using time to look at communication.

Rob Campbell (Trustee, Zone 9)

- Been involved in education issues for approximately 17 years.
- As Budget Chair this year hope to make process run smoothly.
- Always available for questions.

Donna Blackburn (Trustee, Zone 3)

- Started on school council, became the OCASC rep, then sat on Board committees as a representative of OCASC, and is now a new trustee.
- Looking forward to hearing from and working with OCASC and all parents, not just those in her zone.

NEXT MEETING:

- Thursday, January 20, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the Fisher Park PS library.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm, followed by Holiday potluck.

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