

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday, February 17, 2011
Fisher Park PS Library

ATTENDANCE:

Total Membership: 66

Member schools

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Sanjiva
Sondagar, Carrie Eaton
Alta Vista PS – Bonnie Gazal
Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk
Canterbury HS and SSC* – Nadine
Clarke
Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson
Century PS – Jenna Nicholson
Churchill Alt S – Stephen Kurelek
Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter
Kokkovas
Glebe CI – Lillian Thomsen
Glen Cairn PS – Mike Hickey
Hilson Avenue PS – Mona Paré
Jockvale ES – Dion Buechman
Katimavik ES – Nihan Kavaslar
Lady Evelyn Alt PS – Gabe Thirlwall
Lisgar CI – Liz Melanson

Longfields-Davidson Heights SS –
Dwight Thompson
Manordale PS – Cathy Babyak
Manotick PS – Michaela Stuart
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch
Mutchmor PS – Hetty Mannethu
Nepean HS – Shirley Netten
North Gower/Marl. PS – Sandra Acacia
Rideau HS – Chris Ellis
Rideau Valley MS – Sandra Acacia
Rockcliffe Park PS – Joel Berger
Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth,
Suham Alexander
Sir Winston Churchill PS – Karen
Desjardins
South March PS – Chris Bridgen
Steve MacLean PS – Jennifer Carter

Guests and other persons in attendance:

Beth Doubt (SEAC), Juliet Hamilton (OCASC Recording Secretary), Paula Hall
(OCDSB), Michèle Giroux (OCDSB)
(* SSC = OCASC Secondary Schools Committee)

CALL TO ORDER: 7:08 p.m., Anne Teutsch in the chair.

AGENDA: Approved with no changes:

Approval of Agenda
Approval of Minutes of January 20, 2011
Chair's Report
Chalk-It-Up
From Your Executive
 Budget Group
 Committee Representatives
 Updates
Discussion: OCASC and PIC together: Where do we go from here?

MINUTES of January 20, 2011: Approved with no amendments.

CHAIR'S REPORT – Anne Teutsch

- OCASC Membership Secretary, Sandra Acacia, is resigning as of tonight. Cathy Babyak, who has been helping with this position, is willing to take over. Need show of hands to ratify – unanimous.
- School Board organizing second annual Aboriginal Conference April 18 and 19. Conference is an opportunity for the educational sector to get together with the aboriginal sector and share ideas, build understanding and form relationships. Goal is to improve education of aboriginal students in OCDSB. Hoping for over 400 people to attend, half of which will be staff. Want to extend an invitation to all parents who are interested. More information will be coming out on OCASC website (ocasc.ca) and OCASC News. Can also contact Anne (anne@deutsch.ca). Please pass information of this event on to people that may be interested. Attendance is free of charge.
- Been having discussions over the last few months regarding the future of PIC and OCASC within our school board. Very interesting, and will be focusing on this during tonight's discussion.

CHALK-IT-UP

Head lice

Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth (stainers@rogers.com) and Suham Alexander

- School is having a problem with head lice. At least one class has more than half the class affected, one student needing treatment 8 times already. There is no policy to deal with this in the OCDSB. There is one in the (Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB), but it doesn't seem to help.
- Ottawa Public Health provides form with information about what to look for, but much better to have hands-on training.
- Actions taken in problem class: separated desks, keeping coats at desks.
- How do other schools deal with head lice?
 - Lady Evelyn Alt PS – When child was at Riverview AS, school did a lice check of every student at the beginning of the year and again half way through the year. Boys and girls were checked separately to accommodate Muslim students. If signs of lice were found a form was sent home, but care was taken not to draw attention to the student. Those students were followed up on. School had 200 students, used 5 parent volunteers with prior training, showed a movie while screening was being done. Very successful.
 - Nepean HS – From personal experience, lived in a country where head lice was endemic. People think that treatment is enough, but it's not – need to check constantly. Use plastic bags to store all coats, hats, mittens, etc.
 - Steve MacLean PS – Had similar problem two years ago. A company called the Lice Squad had a very effect product and did parent training.
 - Century PS – School has scheduled lice checks every few months. Families with recurring problems need to treat clothing and bedding at home as well. Information sheet going home needs to specify how to do that through washing and/or freezing.

- Carrie (Vice-chair) – Parents need to remember that they may also be exposed at work, and should have themselves checked as well.

PD Days

Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth (stainers@rogers.com)

- What are the expectations of the Ministry of Education with regard to PD Days?
 - Anne (Chair) – Will get that info from the Board.

The Kindness Program

Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson (wilsonheather@rogers.com)

- Have had the Kindness Program in school over the last few weeks. It's a no-cost program that was brought in by their Vice Principal. Can be geared to students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.
- Teacher visits a class with her dog and talks about: kindness towards animals, people and the environment; responsibilities of pet ownership; safe practice around animals; and environmental factors affecting animals in the wild. Program is designed to encourage children to develop empathy for all life.
- In the Ottawa area the Kindness Teacher is Jennifer Snell: (613) 835-4201 or jennifersnell2000@yahoo.ca.

Parent-Teacher Interviews

Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson (wilsonheather@rogers.com)

- Parents are wondering about the lack of parent-teacher interviews after the second report card. Is there a shift in policy because of the new emphasis on ongoing communication with parents? If that is the expectation, maybe it needs to be explained better.
 - Michèle Giroux (OCDSB) – Two PD days are mandated by the Ministry for school improvement. Historically used one PD day for report cards and parent-teacher interviews. There are some changes being made, and there may be some confusion, but parent-teacher interviews are not being eliminated. Will follow up with Superintendent Adams.
 - Rockcliffe Park PS – Losing the second parent-teacher interview is a particular concern with Kindergarten parents because they don't get report cards, so interviews are a primary way to get feedback.

School Yard Security

Sir Winston Churchill PS – Karen Desjardins (karldesjardins@rogers.com)

- Have two public roads that run along the school yard. When school just had older grades that wasn't a big concern, but now have younger children who have access to the fence line. Wondering what other schools do.
 - Steve MacLean PS – Also K-8. Have some concerns. Are educating parents and staff.
 - Other comments: Need to address issue before it becomes a problem. Security cameras have privacy issues.

Middle School French Immersion

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

- Have concerns about how to deal with different skill levels when students from Early French Immersion (EFI) and students from Middle French Immersion (MFI) merge in Grade 7. EFI students tend to have better verbal skills, and MFI students tend to have better grammar skills.
 - SSC – Board did study on French Immersion – very good report was produced. Students motivated enough to continue doing French Immersion in high school do very well regardless of when they entered the FI program.
 - SEAC – Hopewell Ave. PS had both EFI and MFI feeder schools, and had two classes of Grade 7 FI, one for EFI students, one for MFI students.
 - RPPS – Don't have enough students for that.
 - Katimavik ES – Used to keep the two streams separate but more recently mixed them in Grade 6 with no problems.

IPRC Presentation April 2

SEAC – Beth Doubt (ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca)

- Held a very successful IEP (Individual Education Plan) presentation by Lamar Mason, attended by about 40 people.
- Will host another IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) presentation on the morning of Saturday April 2. Please pass the information on to interested parents in your schools. More information will be sent out in OCASC News and in Board mailings from Paula Hall.

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE

Budget Group – Gennifer Stainforth

- Meet before every OCASC meeting. Putting together some “Why do I care” and “What do I need to know” points on frequently asked questions such as bussing. Taking background information from Ministry budget documents and focusing on how the OCDSB is affected. Are using collaborative software to help group develop ideas.

Education Committee – Susan Klimchuk

- Met on Tuesday February 15.
- Trustee Funicello made a motion to strike a new Special Education Ad Hoc Committee to review and consult on the draft spec ed policy and to provide recommendations to Education Committee by November 2011. Motion was approved. Committee will be composed of three trustees and two SEAC representatives. The third part of the motion was contentious and called for the halt of any planned spec ed class closures or relocations until receipt of the final report of the ad hoc committee.
- A secondary school review is being considered. Preliminary thoughts were shared in an information document, and a second information report will come out in April. In June an action report will seek approval for the objectives, scope and consultation process of the review. This review links into the development of a new four-year strategic plan.

- These items have been approved by Education Committee but must still be passed by the Board as a whole.
- Rideau HS – Secondary school review committee will be heavily weighted with Board staff. Two OCASC members will be included, but should push for inclusion of reps from committees such as CCEE, Arts Advisory, Alternate Education, etc., to ensure a wider voice and representation.
- SSC – Documents regarding the proposed secondary school review are available on the Board’s website under the Feb 15 Education Committee agenda. All very preliminary.

SEAC – Beth Doubt

- Want to provide a bit more information on the motion put forward by Trustee Funciello. The SEAC meeting the previous week saw several motions to delay the spec ed class moves/closures because they felt the consultation process was flawed. Concerns had been raised over the last few months over the consultation, how children were being IPRCed, and how places in spec ed classes were being allocated. This was the justification for the third part of the motion.
- Few months ago SEAC formed a communications committee to help reps do their job better and to provide a better conduit between the Board, parents and parent groups on special education issues. Chris Ellis (OCASC rep for Rideau HS) is a member of this committee. Have learned that there will soon be a SEAC corner on the Board website, which will act as a portal for parental access to special education information.
- Have been having an ongoing discussion on Inclusion. Intent was to determine what SEAC thinks Inclusion should entail. Will release a statement in the next few months.

CCEE (Community Council on Ethnocultural Equity) – Dwight Thompson

- Starting a visioning process.
- Providing feedback on draft policies on Religious Accommodation and on Equity and Inclusive Education.

Diversity and Equity Task Force – Chris Ellis

- Had a presentation from Youth Services Board on its work integrating youth new to Canada.
- Also had a presentation from the OCDSB Student Senate.
- Discussed draft policies on Religious Accommodation and Equity and on Inclusive Education. Members of Student Senate gave their feedback as well. OCASC has already commented on these policies (Jacqueline Lawrence, the OCDSB Diversity and Equity Coordinator, presented them at the last meeting and collected feedback). Wondering whether they have been sent to all councils (A: will be). People can contact Chris if they want more info. (Anne – Links to the documents were sent out with the February 1 OCASC News.)

DISCUSSION: OCASC and PIC together: Where do we go from here?

Background Information from Michèle Giroux, OCDSB Executive Officer

Handout entitled “Report to the Parent Involvement Committee – Re: Provincial Parent Engagement Policy and Regulation” was made available. (It can be found on the Board’s website: www.ocdsb.ca -> About OCDSB -> Board Meetings -> Board Calendar -> Jan 24/2011 -> Parental Involvement Committee -> Item 6, or follow the link:

<http://www.ocdsb.ca/calendar/AGENDA%20DOCS/2011%20DOCS/JAN%202011/Parent%20Involvement%20Committee%20-%20JAN%2024%202011/6%20PICREP.pdf>)

- OCDSB has historically worked with OCASC to reach out to and work with parents and school councils, as well as sending emails directly to school councils. This cooperation is strengthened by the representatives OCASC has on various OCDSB committees.
- Approximately 3 years ago the Ministry of Education directed that each school district must form a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), since most areas did not have a group such as OCASC.
- Each Board was allowed flexibility in forming and running their PIC. Since the OCDSB already had OCASC, it used its PIC to reach out to those groups not usually engaged. Existing groups such as OCASC were also involved (the Chair and Vice-Chair of OCASC are automatically members of the PIC), and Anne has been Chair of the PIC for the last 1½ years.
- Ministry has now sent out mandated requirements for Boards and PICs, and some of these are things that OCASC does within the OCDSB. The Board is being forced by the Ministry to go to the PIC, and not being given the leeway to go to OCASC instead.
- How can we take the best of everything we have, OCASC and PIC, and make it work as the Ministry wants? Goal is not to undo what we have but to figure out how to create something that works for everyone.

QUESTIONS on regulations and procedure:

- Sawmill Creek ES – Is OCASC more or less PIC now? A: No, PIC is a separate body made up of 2 OCASC reps, 2 Trustees, 2 principals, 1 SEAC rep, 1 OCISCO rep, 1 CAYRAC rep, 1 CCEE rep. All reps are parents with children in the system. Meet at least 4 times/year. Through PIC the Board applied for funds for their Speakers Series. Also meeting with other community organizations to understand mandate and find shared interests.
- Glebe CI – What specifically would revamped PIC do? What is Ministry specifying as membership? Will Board provide secretarial support? A: Regulation says Board will appoint the number of parent members it deems appropriate, plus the Director, at least 1 trustee, and some committee reps. There is no limit to the size of the PIC. Some are very small, others include a rep from each school.
- Sir Winston Churchill PS – Will OCASC have less access? A: Regulation doesn’t contemplate a pre-existing structure like OCASC. OCASC could remain intact, but practically speaking regulations could restrict OCASC, or could have a lot of duplication.

- Rideau HS – Communication is key. OCASC doesn't have the resources necessary to reach everyone, but PIC could have. OCASC should stay as it is – at arms length and with autonomy. A: Belongs to the subsequent discussion.
- Lisgar CI – Would PIC have committee representation like OCASC does? A: Up to us to create what we want – there is no intention to stop having parent representation on Board committees.
- Hilson Avenue PS – Does regulation allow for group membership or only individual membership? For example, could all members of OCASC automatically be members of PIC? A: No. Parents, and representatives of groups can be members.
- Glebe CI – Have to recognize that OCASC is very unique.
- Castor Valley ES – Have you talked with other Boards that have similar structures? A: Catholic Board took a different tack and rolled their parent group into their PIC. Anne – We (OCASC) were originally asked if we wanted to become the PIC, and declined because of the issue of maintaining our autonomy.
- Katimavik ES – What resources are available to PIC? A: About \$10,000/year. Used it for a brochure, to pay for PIC meetings, to pay for some OCASC members to attend P4E Conference.
- Nepean HS – What is in the regulation that makes the PIC non-autonomous? A: Regulation assumes a collaborative relationship.
- Glebe CI – Will PICs let individual parents raise motions, and would Director and trustee be excluded from the vote? A: Depends on how PIC is constructed. Q: Is there a way to protect that within the structure? A: Should be able to do that.
- Lisgar CI – Will the PIC be able to make bylaws to allow for things like that? A: Yes. If a PIC already exists, it needs to redefine itself, not the Board.
- South March PS – Do we have a copy of current PIC bylaws? Do they meet regulation? A: Current PIC mandate is in the handout. There are 3 parts to the handout. Appendix B doesn't include specific directives, but Appendix C does.

DISCUSSION

- The following questions were posed by Anne to start the discussion:
 - What is it about OCASC that is most important to us?
 - What are the best practices that we don't want to lose?
 - What more would we like to do that we haven't been able to do, for what ever reasons, that would make our organization better?
- Rideau HS – Regarding resources – look at PIC as a Board creation with the resources of the Board behind it. There are many things that PIC could do because of these resources, such as reaching hard-to-reach communities. OCASC still struggles to reach certain school councils, partly because of a lack of funding. Think we need both PIC and OCASC.
- Lady Evelyn Alt PS – One best practice at OCASC is networking through Chalk-It-Up. It's a level playing field – we're all peers, parents involved on school councils. The peer-to-peer link-ups are great.
- Rockcliffe Park PS – OCASC great at lateral communication. OCASC is reaching people already committed, but don't see that as a fundamental flaw. PIC sounds more like vertical communication – Board to masses.

- Castor Valley ES – From the school council perspective, the communication aspect is key. Conversations deal with issues at schools, and there is lots of expertise to tap into. It's a huge help to councils and parents.
- Fallingbrook Comm. ES – We seem to be talking about things we're scared of losing. The two groups should be complementary – should not lose anything. Anne: Need to know what we want to protect. Can we create something better than the sum of the two organizations?
- Glebe CI – Have seen OCASC evolve over the last decade. This is not an either/or proposition. Enhanced PIC could have more OCASC members. The people who come to OCASC are those who are engaged and can come to evening meetings. Hope Board staff would still come and speak at OCASC, which is a parent-managed open forum.
- South March PS – OCASC is definitely parent-driven. Will PIC be parent- or Board-driven? Got wonderful help from OCASC when starting up a new council in a new school. Concern – there are times when there is unhappiness with the Board. Can't see that being addressed well at a Board-run group. Anne: Other committees have their share of complaining about the Board, such as SEAC and the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee.
- Sawmill Creek ES – Want to keep the support network that OCASC provides. The group is very approachable, and it is a non-threatening place to come and talk and ask questions.
- SSC – Structure of SSC (Secondary Schools Committee) is an important part of OCASC. Allows for a separate focus on issues that affect secondary school parents, students and councils. Also, PIC structure is like a school council – provision in regulation that Board through their Director will have accountability for student achievement and parent involvement. OCASC has a broader mandate. But OCASC can't tell the Director to do something.
- Lisgar CI – OCASC has a broader mandate, greater breadth of topics and influence. It is entirely parent-run at its core. What might we lose? Regulation says Board has to communicate through PIC. What would be some examples of this? A: One of the duties of PIC is to communicate the Ministry's messages to parents (Ministry -> Chair of PIC -> parents). As Ministry has increased references to PIC, they are no longer going through the Board. Since OCASC deals with the Board, not the Ministry, it would be totally left out of this loop if the Chair of PIC wasn't also the Chair of OCASC. Also, historically have paid for OCASC members to attend P4E conference. Will now have to go to PIC first. Can see formal/non-formal collisions that we need to be aware of.
- Lisgar CI – Message seems to be that it will be dangerous to be separate, but we're dealing with intangibles. A: Need to hear from as many voices as possible.
- Anne – As another example of possible issues, the province is having its second annual PIC conference, attended by the Chairs of all the PICs. If I (being Chair of OCASC) wasn't Chair of our PIC, OCASC wouldn't have a representative there, regardless of the fact that OCASC is the strongest parent group in our Board.
- Lady Evelyn Alt PS – How would PIC parent members be chosen? How open is membership/attendance? Would members be able to bring a friend, like we can to OCASC? Is there a way to formalize OCASC's relationships with PIC? A: PIC

meetings are open to the public, which means anyone can attend, but doesn't imply that non-members can speak. Right now PIC has members appointed by community groups. Could have a monthly assembly.

- Rockcliffe Park PS – OCASC exposes reps to what's going on in the rest of the Board and the province. School councils can be very insular.
- Rideau HS – OCASC can respond to changing political landscape. Will advocate for keeping OCASC separate. The form of PIC being discussed now is different from the form of PIC first created, because of a political edict. If we merge, a subsequent political edict could change things even further, in ways we can't imagine. There might come a time in the future when we'd need to re-create OCASC and might lose valuable time. Have OCASC recognized at PIC as an important community voice.
- Nepean HS – See confusion over terms such as parent-led vs Board-mandated. Sounds like PIC is parent-led and Ministry-mandated, just like school councils (they are mandated by the Ministry). Don't see reasons for fear.
- Michèle – Part of the problem is that the name (Parent Involvement Committee) is staying the same, although what the committee is is changing considerably. Hard paradigm shift to be involved in creating something new when the name stays the same. Similar problem happened when City of Ottawa amalgamated.
- Sir Winston Churchill PS – We have something that works and are being forced to change it, but how does that help other places that don't have anything to start with?
A: Not sure other Boards will be successful. We are very lucky to have partners who are willing to come to the table to build relationships built on respect and collaboration. Our task is to build a structure. Success in other Boards will depend on their willingness to set things up. Some PICs are not working well at present.
- Glebe CI – What is the time line on this? A: September/October. Glebe CI – Suggest next OCASC meeting be held in-camera for OCASC members only to discuss this. Then as a collective we could direct Anne and Carrie to raise specific questions. A: Why in-camera? Whole idea is to be collaborative. Right now PIC meetings are very collaborative – anyone who comes can participate. Meetings are not run like a standing committee.
- SSC – There are multiple steps which need to be taken. 1) Understanding what's out there. 2) Answering the questions posed by Anne at the beginning of this discussion. 3) Sitting at a PIC meeting and discussing these things together. 4) Bringing the results of that discussion back to OCASC.
- SEAC – Main thrust of Glebe rep's comments is that OCASC needs to put together its idea of what's needed/desired. OCASC as a whole needs more opportunity to take a stand on it.
- Carrie (Vice-Chair) – Can have discussion beyond the scope of those preliminary questions. Anne – Will continue discussion on OCASC and PIC at our March meeting.
- Fallingbrook Comm. ES – The Ministry is mandating PIC 2.0. OCASC is an independent body, could act as an oversight committee. When there's a link to the Board there's the element of non-separation of concerns. Goal could be to work together but with that factor of oversight.
- South March PS – What other groups of interested parents, either individuals or within organizations, are there? A: Most of the people who are interested in PIC are

in this room. Q: Are they going to try and get a representative from each council on PIC? A: Some do.

- South March PS – Given that the person with the best knowledge of both OCASC and PIC is Anne, who is the Chair of each, what is her opinion on all this? Anne: Have gone back and forth on this. Collaboration between parents, councils and Board very important. Need to all be working together. What if we don't agree? That's fine, but we need to be able to work through that together. Would love to see an organization where we don't have to charge a \$35 membership fee. Monthly meetings are great for sharing ideas. Ideally all councils would attend. Ideally the Chair of OCASC wouldn't have to worry about minutes, agendas, newsletters, membership lists, etc. Need to do a better job as a collective to reach unengaged parents. That's the mandate for PIC, but how successful they'll be is still a question. Biggest question is autonomy. Will we lose the ability to do anything we do now if we merge with PIC? Might help the thinking process if we call it something other than OCASC and PIC, such as PAC (Parent Advisory Committee).
- Michèle was taking notes on a flip chart as the discussion was under way. Here are the points she noted down:
 - Questions:
 - What is most important to us about OCASC?
 - What are OCASC's best practices?
 - What more could we do that would make us better at parental engagement?
 - Resources – could PIC be better resourced?
 - OCASC peer to peer (Chalk-It-Up) is a best practice
 - OCASC connects people who are engaged in public education
 - Information sharing and communication at peer to peer level is phenomenal
 - Parent led and driven
 - Autonomy
 - Keep support network
 - Approachability
 - Elementary and secondary differentiation
 - PIC has accountability mechanism built into it
 - OCASC has broader mandate
 - Can we formalize role/relationship between PIC and OCASC?
 - OCASC offers reality check
 - OCASC responsive to changing political landscape and protected from Ministry-driven changes

NEXT MEETING:

- Thursday, March 24, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the Fisher Park PS library. PLEASE NOTE this is one week later than usual, due to March Break.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

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