

Minutes of the OCASC Secondary School Committee
Thursday, March 5, 2008
7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Fisher Park PS

The objectives of the Secondary School Committee are to:

- (a) Increase parent knowledge of and involvement in secondary school education in Ottawa-Carleton;
- (b) Promote the development of school councils and parent associations to represent parents of students in each Ottawa-Carleton secondary school;
- (c) Sponsor and encourage research into and study of education issues and concerns in Ottawa-Carleton secondary schools;
- (d) Formulate recommendations regarding secondary school education in Ottawa-Carleton, and to assist in implementing such recommendations.

Participants:

Eileen Jessop (Colonel By), Bob Weist (Canterbury), Maria Di Rosa (Woodroffe Elementary), Juliet Hamilton (Bell), Alix MacLean (Nepean), Elaine Morgan (South Carleton), Susan Klimchuk (OCASC Education Committee Rep), Lorna Rankin Worley (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), Anne Teutsch (Merivale), Farzi Khazi (Earl of March)

Guest: Jennifer Adams, OCDSB Superintendent of Curriculum

Anne chaired the meeting in Nadine's absence.

Agenda covered at meeting:

Introductions
Presentation: Assessment and Evaluation
Agenda and Minutes/Action items
Chalk It Up
Secondary School Program Review report
Trades and Technology report
Other Business
Topics for the 2009 meetings

Agenda and Minutes/Action items

Minutes from February meeting were passed with minor corrections.

Assessment and Evaluation

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Adams, Superintendent of Curriculum

- New Assessment and Evaluation policy and procedures were put into place last year, and the Board received lots of requests from teachers and administrators for help in implementing them well. In response the Board created two Educators' Resource Guides, one for the Elementary level and one for the Secondary level, containing information, suggestions and examples for working with the new procedures.

- Copies of the Educators' Resource Guide (Secondary) were passed out to look at and Jennifer highlighted a few pages.
- Backwards planning is a key component of the new system. Teachers start with the curriculum documents, looking first at the overall expectations and then moving into the more specific areas. They then Identify the Desired Results of the curriculum ie what most if not all of the students in the class should be able to do at the end of the each section. The next step is to Determine Acceptable Evidence that a student has learned what is required. Then the teacher Plans the Learning Experiences and Instruction.
- Another key component is the separation of academic achievement from learning skills.
- The new policy and procedures aims for greater consistency from class to class, department to department, and school to school.
- The Board understands that how teachers should deal with plagiarism and late and missed assignments is a point of contention. The goal is to put proactive measures in place.
- The new policy encourages teachers to give students a good sense of what they need to do to do well. As an example: At the beginning of a large assignment students would be given a rubric indicating expectations for each level of achievement, and exemplars (sample work) of similar work at various levels. Then several benchmarks would be set to help students manage their time, such as due dates for an outline and rough copy. At each stage there would be feedback on how to raise their work to the next level of achievement.
- Q: What if a major piece of work is missing? A: A student will not be given credit for a course in which they have not completed a major assignment. In this regard the new system actually sets a higher standard than the previous one, because a student could get a 0 on an assignment and still pass the course. But now the student is not allowed to fail therefore they are forced to do the assignment.
- There are set steps to follow when an assignment is late.
- Q: Can parents get a syllabus of a course? A: Course outlines are provided to students at the beginning of the term. If requested, teachers are required to provide that to parents. Q: Can they be put on-line so students can find them if they've been misplaced? A: It isn't a requirement, but some teachers do.
- Concerns voiced about communication. Some of the comments included:
 - Policy makes communication with parents much more important. Union agreement states they only need to communicate once.
 - The level of communication has actually dropped because so many assignments are late that teachers are swamped.
 - Hearing about a lot of kids not getting work done and parents not hearing about it.
 - Can more be done on-line?
- Response: Many teachers are doing more on-line. Board is looking at going in that direction but collective agreement issues prevent quick action. Not many teachers want their students to fail. So the aim is to show that this new strategy works and have teachers buy in.

- Comment: School council (at rep's school) and many students are against it. Have examples of students who have missed credits because of new policy. A: Shows how important that communication is.
- Schools are trying to put things in place that make sense for staff as well, such as clemency weeks (late assignments can be passed in with no penalty) and Friday nights lights (pizza night where students can come and get help to finish work).
- Q: Is there evidence that this is the right direction to move in? A: Many teachers have been doing this for quite a while, so it's not "new". Now it's the expectation. Are asking principals for feedback and will adjust practices as needed. Board is tracking various data.
- Q: Is overall goal to prevent students from dropping out? To make province look good? A: Goal is to improve graduation rates at grade 12 and to get supports in place so all students can be successful.
- Q: What about students who find school boring? A: Comes down to differentiated instruction. The new assessment and evaluation policy is all about learning different strategies to engage different kids.
- Q: How can students be encouraged to pass things in on time? Smart ones figure out angle to new policy and abuse it. A: It's about student engagement. Students will figure out that their work will suffer if they leave everything to the end. And they will learn that the feedback they get on work they complete on time will help them to do better.
- Comment: New policy should allow more students to succeed by working outside the box. A: Will get better with time as teachers who have been doing it for a while help those to whom it is new. Parents need to give feedback about what's working, and encourage teachers.
- All students can be successful with the necessary help and scaffolding in place. We are not letting the kids feel they've been given up on.
- Q: Are we going to leave percentage marks and move to levels 1-4? A: Don't think public is ready for that.
- Universities are finding that grades are not a good indicator of success in first year. They are looking for other ways to predict which students will succeed. There is discussion at the provincial level about putting Learning Skills marks on the transcript. These would give post-secondary institutions a better picture of the student.

Chalk-It-Up

- South Carleton – Had Olympic Athletes visit for Canadian Sports Award. SC is a True Sport school.

Secondary School Program Review Report

- No meetings so far this year.
- Ad Hoc mandate had been reached.
- Q: At ARC meetings in the east end people want the Board to look at what programs the community wants instead of just considering the school buildings themselves. Is this something the SSPR committee should be looking at? A: There is a need for a strategic plan for programming.

- Comment: SSC was a key force in the creation of the SSPR. Do we need to try and help out if it is floundering?
- Comment: East end has some low enrolment schools. Think some specialized schools such as a technical centre or a sports centre might help. A: Framework that SSPR created actually moves away from creating more specialized centres and towards making different programs accessible to more students.
- Comment: Considering the large projected provincial deficit and the decline in enrolment, strategic planning is going to be very important.

Trades and Technology Report

- Had a meeting February 19. Presentation was given by Kimberly Lovett, a Pathways of Instruction coach at the OCDSB.
- Intermediate schools are being targeted for tech instruction. Have concept of a portable tech room that would move from school to school.
- T&T committee is in 4th year of a 3 year plan. Have a new 3 year plan for next year.
- One concern is why focus program numbers are so low. One issue may be marketing, and Board is coming out with a new ad campaign aimed at kids. Competition between schools may still be an issue as well.
- Comments on this last point:
 - Large problem may be that kids are shy about going to a different school unless they're really driven. Providing an opportunity for kids to meet first may help alleviate this.
 - Since grade 11 is the ideal time for students to take advantage of focus programs, schools need to be selling those options at grade 8 information nights, and to kids in grades 9 and 10.

Other Business

- Question from floor: How does SSC get in touch with Board if there is an issue? SEAC is being encouraged to fill out forms and send them in. Maria offered to bring one in to show us. ACTION – Maria.
 - SEAC is a committee of the Board, whereas SSC is a committee of OCASC, so OCASC is who we should go through.
 - Right now we take things to Michele Giroux.

Topics for the 2009 meetings

- No suggestions were made.

Next Meeting

Thursday, April 9, 2009 7:30 p.m.
Fisher Park PS

Subsequent Meetings for 2009
(at Fisher Park unless otherwise noted)

May 14
June 11