

**Minutes of the OCASC Secondary School Committee  
Thursday, March 11, 2010  
Fisher Park PS**

The objectives of the Secondary School Committee are to:

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

**Participants:**

(Nadine Clarke (Canterbury, Chair), Jean MacIsaac (Glebe), Robert Weist, (Canterbury), Tanya Bradley-Edwards (Earl of March), Janet Patch (Cairine Wilson), Marilyn Reed (Rideau), Chris Ellis (Rideau) Maria DiRosa (Woodroffe, Putnam), Brenda Packman (Woodroffe HS), Nihan Kavasar (Katimavik).

Guest: Michele Giroux

**Agenda covered at meeting:**

Introductions

Agenda and Minutes/Action items

Presentation Parent Engagement and the OCDSB Board Improvement Plan

Chalk It Up – “What works well at your school?”

Education Committee

Trades and Technology

Other Business

**Presentation: Parent Engagement and the OCDSB Board Improvement Plan  
Michele Giroux, OCDSB Executive Officer**

Hard copies of the **Board Improvement Plan K-12 for 2009-2010**, in addition to electronic copies were made available to committee members.

Learning, Leadership and Community are the 3 key objectives of the Strategic Plan. Over the last 3 years, the board has become more strategic and organized. The curriculum team worked on the documents for the Strategic Plan, the Improvement Plan, the objectives and the budget so that they look the same and to emphasize the connectedness of the plans. Refinement continues as the Ministry directives are released. It is a good thing that we have added a Parent piece to the strategy. While the board can mandate some parts of the improvement plan, it cannot mandate the parent engagement part so the verb WILL (as in the student and staff components) was changed to Will Be Invited To. Michele introduced the discussion with indicators and how they will look different in the elementary and secondary panel and recognizing that the secondary school committee members have been through the elementary experience and can help differentiate the two.

### **What works well in Parent Engagement in the District?**

The question directed the group to capture what was working well as that may be indicators of success, at the District, school and Secondary School Committee (SSC) levels.

District Level: The Speakers Series sponsored by the district were good. A question was asked whether we are reaching everyone through this series. Michele told SSC that another regional grant was awarded to the board for this year to do more speaker sessions and ideas about brain research and emotional intelligence were possible topics.

SSC: Discussion about turnaround days at SSC provided member with the opportunity to bring it forward to her council, to hear about other schools and to share ideas. As a result the principal sent a letter to parents advising them that they could meet with teachers about any exam and as a result the teachers brought a confirming message to their teachers' meetings. The SSC provides a forum to raise problems and share concerns.

School: Principals should be proactive in identifying parents from ethnic and social-economic challenged communities and parents who might be encouraged to participate. As not all principals are comfortable doing that, there should be professional development, they should role model the appropriate behaviour and work with the Multi-Liaison Officers.

District: OCASC has a voice on standing committees such as the Education Committee and then can share that information with councils and parents at the OCSC meetings.

Not only does this help parents share information but it also allows parents to have an impact which is very important. Parents can say what they think but also change people's ideas.

### **Where are the opportunities to Improve?**

More time to respond during the consultation process. Sometimes it is too late when we hear about the issue and need more time to be consulted.

Better communication to the principals at the school level so councils are aware of what is happening in the District.

Councils need information about the data in the School Improvement Plan (SIP), knowledge about what the council can ask for and what input it can have in the discussion about the SIP. There needs to be better communication to the principals about what they should be doing and whether the baseline data from surveys should be given to school councils so they can help the principal on the SIP.

Michele acknowledged that there should be more consistency on how School Councils are involved in the development of the SIP.

There needs to be a willingness within the School Councils and from principals to focus on learning. Most school councils are focussed on fundraising and school events. Although school events are helpful in developing school communities, councils should be asked and informed about their primary purpose. Board should have an understanding of what schools have councils and the degree of participation. The Board needs to address the issue of school council capacity. Finances should be coming to the school councils and often don't.

Michele described the data wall which is an electronic data wall created to allow teachers access to “in year” data in aid of their in class instruction. The issue is that there is a lot of data and it is only available to some and only in certain formats.

School councils should understand the indicators like EQAO, CASI, PM Benchmarks, Assessment tools, credit accumulation and grad rates. The awareness of school councils is building and there should be reporting a couple of times a year.

It makes sense for the principal to sit down with councils and explain the data in an aggregate format. It is interesting to think about the comment that the focus of school councils should be on learning. The data would help in this discussion.

The District should help principals with tools to communicate with parents about the data, the plans and the format.

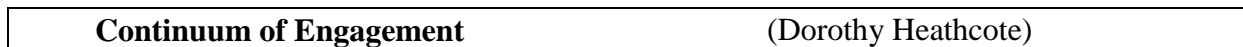
One school discussing parent engagement for the OCASC survey suggested we stop thinking about councils only but also about parents who don't have the time, the language etc to participate. We should not limit our discussion to councils and think outside the “meeting” box. Think about reaching communities before consultation process begins.

Michele showed the Education Improvement Commission's School Improvement Planning, a handbook for principals, teachers and school councils (November 2000).

A question was raised about what “an effective parent” meant in the “How do we Involve Parents” section of the handbook (Figure 4). There are areas of the city where there is a deficit in the parent capacity to help students. The Board could coordinate with other community members in addressing this deficit.

What is the difference between Parent Involvement and Parent Engagement? It was noted that the outline in the handbook looked like that proposed in the Epstein model which reflects the spectrum of activities in the definition of involvement to engagement.

Michele said that this question led into her discussion on the speakers' series and the identification of the target audience. The spectrum of parent involvement is a continuum which recognizes the need in the community and the capacity for involvement.



Attention → Interest → Engagement → Investment → Obsession

The language in the Board Improvement Plan (BIP) has to reflect not only engagement but recognize that moving from level 1 to level 2 may be greater than moving from level 3 to level 4 in performance. A discussion followed about the types of parental involvement, the different roles of schools, principals and parents in that continuum. Welcoming schools are important to parental involvement and principals should facilitate that welcoming environment. This role of principals should be part of the selection process, their professional development and their performance in role modeling those behaviours in their schools.

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The example that students are not allowed to be on school premises before and after school start and end times was used as an example that we are not yet welcoming schools.

Michele agreed that it is not just about ideas but about moving ahead and taking action. The recognition that parent engagement is part of the BIP is a great step.

There is an understanding of the limitation on school budgets so opening up more to the community is seen as a positive step. The “no community left behind” initiative started by the City of Ottawa did not have any education partners. The board went to the City and suggested it be part of the process and then it applied for an Urban Grant for those schools identified in the Community Development Framework.

The discussion reverted to whether we have answered the question about effectiveness of parenting. The board needs to be cautious about telling parents how to parent. The question was asked whether the examples in the handbook (Figure 4) are parenting questions or questions about education. We should focus on supporting parents. (Figure 3)

Examples of schools supporting parents are the option sheets and how to interpret SIP data at school council meetings.

Schools: Every school council should have on the agenda a session about course options and completing the option sheets as parents are expected to sign those sheets.

At secondary school level, kids don't want parents volunteering yet parents need information to do their jobs. Communication is important. An example of that is the School Council Handbook.

Data: Michele highlighted that there is over 5,500 pages of text on the board website which the board is in the process of migrating to Share Point. The board does not have a test site so everything is posted live. Similar to a library, the classifications are okay but if the books are not put back on the shelf correctly then others can't locate them. With Share Point, the board can push information to the schools' websites. This should be available in the fall. The question is what content goes and then the board needs to address other parts of information technology like record management.

Communication offered to parents through SynreVoice. At one school the message is available in 3 languages.

### Measurement

It was suggested that the measurement of the indicators could be done through surveys and could be done in partnership with OCASC. The measurements over time would indicate effectiveness of the actions. For example, hold a conference and ask whether it is worthwhile.

Concern was expressed with reports like the Fraser Institute identify “performing” schools and how to address the impact of these types of reports. If improvement from level 1 to 2 is a greater achievement than from level 3 to 4, it is not recognized in these reports.

Questions: Does the 90% graduation rate apply to the Board or to individual schools. The goal has to accommodate all the diversity across the board. Grade 12 students graduate with OSSD and 2 other levels of certificates.

### **Chalk it Up**

Woodroffe shared a new pilot program called A.C.E.S. (Alternative Character Education Students). There are 16 students who are completing 4 credits in grade 9 and 10 (English, Math, Outdoor Education and Managing Personal Resources) through supportive and challenging settings on and off the school site and inside and outside the classroom. It was noted that it sounded similar to Winning Attitudes, a program at the Earl of March.

The discussion about trips not authorized by the school, which was brought up at the last OCASC meeting, was beneficial in that the principal will send out letters to parents about unauthorized trips. A sign that a trip is not likely authorized is if there is no Field Authorization Form to complete. Others noted that principals will send letters to graduating students' parents to let them know there are no authorized grad parties.

One school had concerns about the change in the way the math course was split into Advanced Functions and Calculus and Vectors, taking a lot out of the previous calculus course. The provincial curriculum changed a few years ago. Universities are teaching what has been taken out of the calculus course in grade 12. This was noted in an earlier SSC meeting.

### **Education Committee**

The link to the Secondary School gifted report will be provided and will be on the agenda for Education Committee on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. There are 2 motions pending:

1. The board is looking into the start times for schools, elementary earlier and secondary schools later. The staff will study the pedagogical reviews and brain research to determine if this is the right approach.
2. The motion to look at another non semester school site morphed into a larger motion to look at more sites and more options. There are subject areas requiring practice that may be better as a non semester course. The potential options will not come back to the board until October 2010. One member noted that the proposal came up in previous years but the issue was that OC Transpo wouldn't schedule buses for a later start time.

### **Action Register from February Meeting**

1. Follow up on **"turn-around day"** or a day in which to review the final evaluation or exam from the previous semester. A turn around day is the first day back set aside for students to review their final exams from the previous semester.

Answer provided by Barry Bickerton, System Principal, Secondary, Curriculum Services.

The Ministry provides direction to all districts in terms of the number of examination days (i.e. 10) that can be utilized over the course of the school year. In setting their examination schedules, schools plan for one of three formats for examinations: 5/5 split, 4/6 split or 0/10 split. For example, a school which chooses to run a 5/5 split would schedule five examination days in the first semester and five examination days in the second semester. Similarly, a non-semestered school would opt for a 0/10 split. In order to meet Ministry criteria in terms of the number of instructional days per semester and the number of examination days per semester, schools would be required to schedule a 'turn-around' day within the examination block which, in turn, would generate more examination conflicts for students.

2. There was a concern expressed by several parents that secondary schools used different instructions for the completion of the **board-wide grade 10 math test**.

Barry Bickerton Provided the answer:

We are in a pilot year regarding the grade 10 district-wide examination as both the grade 10 Applied and grade 10 Academic examinations have been reformatted to align with EQAO formatting and the Ontario curriculum policy documents. Our community of mathematics teachers and mathematics Heads have been engaged in focused professional learning and dialogue throughout this period and we recognize that we are in the early stages of a shift in the district-wide format which includes a focus on engaging students in assessment AS learning (i.e. metacognition) and opportunities to demonstrate their highest level of learning against the criteria. For example, a student might access a Level 2 question if that is where they feel most confident and then proceed to a Level 3 question - or even a Level 4 question - to demonstrate their highest level of learning. In my conversations with secondary principals I have emphasized the importance of preparing students well in advance, including seeing the rubric and understanding the rubric that will be used to evaluate their performance.

Our math community continues to gather information throughout the pilot phase which includes conference marking and teacher moderation (i.e. using authentic student artifacts to develop a common understanding of what Level 1 work looks like...Level 2....Level 3, and Level 4).

In terms of the early implementation stages of this pilot we have observed a range of strategies within the district which help to prepare students to demonstrate their highest level of learning with confidence. As we move to greater consistency across the district we will continue to provide opportunities for our teachers and administrators to meet in professional learning communities, and in networks with instructional coach support, in order to share the best practices that have the greatest impact on student achievement.

### **Trades and Technology**

Report sent with last month's meeting notes.

### **Next Meeting**

**Thursday, April 8, 2010**

**Fisher Park PS**

## Action Item Summary

ID	Actions	Assigned to	Date Raised mm.dd.yy	Target Date mm.dd.yy	Status
<b>ITEMS OPENED</b>					
A4	Send Link to the School Improvement Planning Handbook	Nadine	03.11.10		Done
A5	Send Link to the School Councils Handbook	Nadine	03.11.10		Done
A6	Send link to the updated Secondary School Gifted Program report (includes SEAC input)	Nadine	03.11.10		Done
A7	Check previous Secondary School Minutes for information about the math curriculum changes for grade 12	Nadine	03.11.10		
<b>ITEMS CLOSED</b>					
A2	Is there a policy, procedure, recommendation or decision on "Turn-Around Day" evaluation process for end of the semester exams	Nadine	02.11.10	Next meeting	Done
A3	Presentation on the new testing format for standardized math test, Grade 10 and Assessment of the test	Nadine	02.11.10	April or May meeting	Done
A1	Request/Ask for information or for volunteers from OCRI for one on one tutoring. Contact Lee-Ann Scott at <a href="mailto:lscott@ocri.ca">lscott@ocri.ca</a> or 613-828-6274 X247	All	09.10.09	Ongoing	Reminder

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ID	Actions	Assigned to	Date Raised mm.dd.yy	Target Date mm.dd.yy	Status
<b>CARRY-FORWARD actions</b>					
A1	Record locations and numbers of students enrolled in focus programs for secondary school (T&T completed)	Anne	09.11.08	11.13.08	Anne reported on the Trades and Technology. Will update after the SS Steering Team meeting
A3	What are schools doing to help students transition to post-secondary education. Consider school councils hosting sessions in which guidance counsellors present options. Check and ask Board to consider preparing a booklet or web based outline for transitioning help	Nadine and Anne	09.11.08	11.13.08	Anne updated that the staff is interested but overloaded now. Follow up with timing later
A4	What is the Board position on students taking a 5 <sup>th</sup> year. What are the schools authority to allow or limit	Nadine and Anne	09.11.08	11.13.08	Answered than additional questions asked for clarification
A11 of 007-008	Check at the end of the SSC term to see if any change to Action # 6 on consultation	All SSC Reps	2007.10.11	2008.06.12	OUTSTANDING
A24 of 007-008	Action items 12 and 13: update SSC on gifted centres and mandate at SSPR. Define issues and decisions	Juliet	2008.03.06		uncertain
A06 of 007-008	Check whether consultation on program changes occur with their school council	SSC reps	2007.09.13	2007.10.11	Responses that the consultation varies across the board. Some councils are asked for input, some consultation and some no request.
A12 of 007-008	Form discussion group to focus on Secondary Gifted Centres issue.	Chairs	2007.12.13	asap	Revised
A13 of 007-008	Write, get email okays and send feedback on Secondary Gifted under SSPR mandate to Education Committee	Juliet?	2007.10.11	2008.01.22	Revised
<b>CLOSED ITEMS</b>					
A2	Record those exams which are board wide exams	Nadine and Anne	09.11.08	11.13.08	Sent 10.16.08 and again 11.13.08
A5	What options are there for students and parents to follow up the evaluation and final report for students (after the school year ends and summer starts)? What options to close the feedback loop for students at the end of the school year? Is there a Board process, policy or protocol?	Nadine and Anne	09.11.08	10.09.08	No policy or protocol



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<b>ID</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>	<b>Date Raised mm.dd.yy</b>	<b>Target Date mm.dd.yy</b>	<b>Status</b>
A6	What is the credit recovery option?	Nadine and Anne	09.11.08	10.09.08	Credit recovery, credit rescue and upgrading explained
A8 from A4	Can you be on school teams of you are in the 5 <sup>th</sup> year of secondary school? If you graduate after 4 years, how does your average calculated with the additional courses?	Nadine	10.09.08	11.13.08	Reported 11.13.08
A9	What new curriculum is expected next year which will require new textbooks? Who's going to pay; province or board?	Nadine	10.09.08	11.13.08	Reported 11.13.08
A11	What is the school policy on parents' choice of class timetable for siblings of the same age?	Nadine	10.09.08	11.13.08	Reported 11.13.08