

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday, October 21, 2010

Fisher Park PS Library

ATTENDANCE:

Total Membership: 99

Member schools

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Sanjiva
Sondagar, Carrie Eaton
Alta Vista PS – Petra Alince
Avalon PS – Wally Peters
Barrhaven PS – Ellen Dickson
Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk
Briargreen PS – Suzanne Vanden
Heuvel
Bridlewood Community ES – Lynn
Paterson
Brookfield HS – Susanne Striegler
Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson
Cedarview MS – Ellen Dickson
Churchill Alt S – Stephen Kurelek
D. Aubrey Moodie IS – Sheila Mason
Dunlop PS – Ellen Lamarre
Elmdale PS – Megan Richardson
Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter
Kokkovas
Farley Mowat PS – Kanwar Hazrah
First Avenue PS – Kristen Underwood
Forest Valley ES – Derek Black
Glebe CI – Lillian Thomsen
Glen Ogilvie PS – Christine McNivens,
Trina Whitehurst
Hilson Avenue PS – Mona Pare, Bobby
Chawla
J. H. Putman PS – Maria Di Rosa
Jack Donohue PS – Jeff Gibson
Jockvale ES – Jamesee Winchester
John Young ES – Suzanne Bowen
Kars PS – Elaine Murkin
Katimavik ES – Nihan Kavaslar

Lady Evelyn Alt PS – Gabe Thirlwall
Longfields-Davidson Heights SS –
Dwight Thompson
Manordale PS – Cathy Babyak
Meadlowlands PS – Isabel Ruddick
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch
Metcalf PS – Kevin MacPherson
Mutchmor PS – Cindy Kirk, Hetty
Mennt
Nepean HS – Shirley Netten
North Gower/Marl. PS – Tracey
MacDougall
Ottawa Technical LC – Daniel Oickle
Pleasant Park PS – Nancy Schenk
Rideau Valley MS – Sandra Acacia
Robert Bateman PS – Leona King
Roch Carrier ES – Andrea Kovari
Rockcliffe Park PS – Joel Berger
Sawmill Creek ES – Gennifer Stainforth
Sir Robert Borden HS – Bessie
Giovanopoulos
Sir Winston Churchill PS – Karen
Desjardins
South March PS – Chris Bridgen
Stephen Leacock PS – Enang Akan
Steve MacLean PS – Jennifer Carter
Summit AS – Madelaine Stewart-Dmaj
Trillium ES – Debbie Boisvenue
W. Erskine Johnston PS – Badari
Kurusetty

Non-member schools

Vincent Massey PS – ?

Guests and other persons in attendance:

Paula Hall (OCDSB), 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 September 23, 2010
Chair's Report
Chalk-It-Up
From Your Executive
 Building Relationships . . . Imagine the Possibilities
 Committee Representatives
 Updates
Discussion: What do we want to see in education five years from now?

MINUTES of September 23, 2010: Approved with no amendments.

CHAIR'S REPORT – Anne Teutsch

- OCASC/OCISO/OCDSB symposium “Building Relationships – Imagine the Possibilities” is happening this Saturday. Presently have 41 people registered, split fairly equally between parents and Board staff (including some vice-principals and teachers).
- Reminder that the Board is doing a student survey this fall. Grade JK-6 students will receive a survey to take home for parents to fill out. Grade 7-12 students will fill out the surveys during class time. Survey is voluntary, and very comprehensive. (Was discussed at the September OCASC meeting – see minutes for more information.)
 - Q: If the expectation is that the completed surveys will be returned in students' backpacks, have concerns about confidential information being carried on the school bus, even in a sealed envelope. Anne: Will raise that concern with Jacqueline Lawrence, the coordinator of the survey.
- Next speaker in OCDSB's Connected Conversations Speakers Series is Dr. John Barell, who is also speaking at the Board's leadership conference during the day. The evening talk is on Nov. 4th at 7:00 pm in the Centurion Conference Center, 170 Colonnade Road South and is entitled “21st Century Skills – A World of Discovery: What do students need to learn in a rapidly evolving world?” For more information visit the Board's website at http://ocdsb.ca/pc_pi_parental_involvement_sprk-series.asp#skills.
- The November OCASC meeting will take place at the OCDSB (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board) offices at 133 Greenbank Road. The 7:00 meeting will be preceded by a school council / OCASC reception starting at 6:00. This has become an annual event hosted by the Board as a way to thank parents who are involved in their school councils, and is a way for those new to the system to see where Board meetings are held and to meet some trustees and key staff. The OCASC meeting will be relatively short but will roll directly into a consultation session on the Board's new strategic plan.
- Introduced Paula Hall, the new school council liaison at the Board, who has replaced Cheryle Watson.

CHALK-IT-UP

Winter Pickup

Metcalfe PS – Kevin MacPherson (boylinux@gmail.com)

- Are a rural school with no sidewalks. Are serviced by 22 school buses, which fill up the parking lot and the nearby side streets. Parents who drive to pick up their children have no place to park and no easy way to walk to the school and back, especially in the winter when there are snow banks on the side of the road. School plows a path on their property but not beyond, and the city doesn't continue it. Do other schools have similar situations and what can be done?
 - Robert Bateman PS – Is there a Kiss and Ride program? A: There is no drop-off lane – buses take up all the available room.
 - J.H. Putman PS – At Woodroffe Ave. PS council asked the city for a traffic safety audit, and had city staff and their councillor come and take a look at the situation.

Spelling Bee

W. Erskine Johnston PS – Badari Kurusetty (Badarik@gmail.com)

- Is anyone having problems running the spelling bee at their school? Last year the principal cancelled it. How do you get money for it?
 - D. Aubrey Moodie IS – Canspell is a free program. Want to introduce it this year. Principal has designated one of the special education teachers to work with parent on it. Suggest you ask principal which staff members would be good to approach with the idea, and work at that level.

English vs EFI Enrolment

Mutchmor PS – Cindy Kirk (cinkirk@gmail.com)

- Trend in the school board is that enrolment in Early French Immersion (EFI) programs is going up at the expense of the regular English program. Schools which only have English programs are therefore seeing their numbers drop. There has recently been talk that the Board is considering congregating English programs. Is this something other schools are seeing?
 - Briargreen PS – Have same issue, but haven't been approached yet with the idea of congregation. A: Not yet, but suspect you may be soon.
 - Hilson Ave. PS – Don't the numbers change in the higher grades as students leave the EFI program and fall back into the regular English stream? A: That used to be the case, but not so much any more. Ever since the Board started providing learning support services to students in EFI there has been a higher retention rate.
 - Rockcliffe Park PS – Have the same problem, and the English program is dying. Most French Immersion students come from outside the Rockcliffe core neighbourhood, and a lot of program choice seems to be based on which school it's offered at.

Teacher Gift Cards

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Carrie Eaton (ocasc.vchair@ocasc.ca)

- How many schools run a gift card program for teachers? Council runs one at Christmas time – parents can give money for certain teachers in lieu of a separate gift, and council buys a gift card for each teacher for the value collected in their name.

- Briargreen PS – Last year raised more money than expected and divided the extra between all the teachers, giving them gift cards to spend for classroom supplies.
- No other schools indicated that they ran gift card programs.

EQAO and EFI

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

- Parents with children in immersion are wondering how the students perform on the EQAO tests, which are written in English.
 - Uncertainty in the room over whether the EQAO Math test is written in English or French, and in which grades math is taught in English or French. Anne will contact the Board to find out.
 - Several schools with French Immersion programs reported that their students did very well on the EQAO tests.

JK-8 Configurations and Guidelines

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

- In previous years school only had Grades 7 and 8, but now are JK-8. How do other schools deal with this grade spread as far as combining or separating the junior and intermediate students?
 - Castor Valley ES – Students are very integrated, with the older students being role models, mentors and classroom helpers in the younger grades.
 - Metcalfe PS – Grade 7 and 8 students are on separate sides of the school, with separate entrance. Have some integration in the classroom.
 - Bridlewood Comm. ES – Junior and intermediate students are separated both in the school and in the yard.
 - Avalon PS – Have separate recess times.

Council Minutes Audited

Barrhaven PS – Ellen Dickson (ellenian@rogers.com)

- For the first time ever, council was asked by the Board to submit its minutes for the last two years. Wondering whether any other councils have had to do this?
 - No one indicated that they had.
 - Sir Robert Borden HS – Probably they're just making sure you spent the money on what you said you would. Ties in with financial audit.
 - Sir Winston Churchill PS – Was there something special that council did this year? A: Yes, there was a lot of fundraising towards an unusually large project.
 - Rockcliffe Park PS – Minutes are legal documents that support financial documents – help to confirm that you spent specified amounts on specified items.

MailChimp

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

- Many councils are in the process of setting up email communications servers. Wanted to let people know their council is using MailChimp.com. Can have up to

1000 addresses for free, and a large number of messages. Service has a website where you create your message, then they deliver it. They are able to get through most spam filters, which can be a real issue when sending email to large groups of people.

- Pleasant Park PS – How does it compare to SynreVoice? A: Being careful not to use Board resources if we don't have to. Email creation tool a nice perk to MailChimp – more people will read the email if it's eye-catching.
- Anne – Council email service would use council email list, while SynreVoice would use the school's email list.
- Adrienne Clarkson ES – How do you get parents to sign up? A: That is a definite problem. Got some to sign up at Meet-the-Teacher night and other parent nights. Encouraging school to mention the council email list and the website.
- Sir Winston Churchill PS – Is it a private corporation, and does this give them access to private school information? A: It is a private corporation, but the only information is the council email list and whatever council messages get sent. Totally separate from school.
- Castor Valley ES – Are you using it for regular emailing, or just sending newsletters? A: Just newsletter. Don't want to overuse it – that leads to people ignoring messages.
- South March PS – Two suggestions for getting email addresses are to sign up parents at the JK intake nights and to send out a welcome letter at the beginning of the year.
- Anne – Did that at Sir Winston and had a class competition to see which class could get the most families to sign up.
- Mutchmor PS – Each year they delete their email list and start from scratch. Council puts out a directory of all the students each year, and forms for that directory go out at the same time as the pizza order forms at the beginning of the year. Get a 95% sign-up rate. SynreVoice sends only one email per family, which can be problematic, especially in split families.

Pizza Box Recycling

Briargreen PS – Suzanne Vanden Heuvel (david.vandenheuvel@sympatico.ca)

- What are you doing with pizza boxes?
 - Robert Bateman PS – Work closely with very accommodating custodian. Arranged pickup with city. A: Had resistance because of food residue on the boxes.
 - Adrienne Clarkson ES and Farley Mowat PS – Pizza company comes and takes them away.
 - Steve MacLean PS – Had same problem with dirty boxes – suggestion was to cover bottom of boxes with wax paper.
 - Pleasant Park PS – Used to recycle with cardboard and food waste was an issue, but now use the organic waste program and food waste is not a problem.

- Robert Bateman PS – Their pickup is now through the organic waste program.
- Sir Winston Churchill PS – Have been talking to city about getting green bins for all food waste.

Before-School Care

Briargreen PS – Suzanne Vanden Heuvel (david.vandenheuvel@sympatico.ca)

- What before-school programs do you have at your schools?
 - Adrienne Clarkson ES, Glen Ogilvie PS, Avalon PS, Barrhaven PS, Steve MacLean PS, Mutchmor PS – Before-school care available at separate facilities (Children’s Village/City of Ottawa/YMCA/Walter Baker Centre) either attached, next door, or close to school.
 - Carrie – Believe that W. E. Gowling PS has something in their gym.
 - W. Erskine Johnston PS – Have something in school itself.

Insurance

D. Aubrey Moodie IS – Sheila Mason (sheila.mason@rogers.com)

- Are there any guidelines on how to choose to buy insurance?
 - Metcalfe PS – If school has nothing to do with the activity then you need insurance. If event is sanctioned by the school and school staff are present, then event is covered by school’s insurance.
 - Anne – The Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA) sells insurance every year. Cost is around \$135 and covers all council activities for the year. The Board will be sending out the information soon.
 - Show of hands indicated that quite a few councils purchase this insurance.

Website for Parents

J. H. Putman PS – Maria Di Rosa (windward@magma.ca)

- www.OttawaParentsEducationNetwork.weebly.com
- Website created by parents looking to engage and inform other parents on school issues. Can help parents navigate education system. Submitted questions to trustee candidates and have posted responses.

School Bands Linking with Long Term Care Facilities

J. H. Putman PS – Maria Di Rosa (windward@magma.ca)

- Encouraging schools to reach out to seniors’ groups and facilities by having bands or choirs go and perform. Great for fostering empathy, making connections; can help towards volunteer hours.

FROM YOUR EXECUTIVE

Building Relationships . . . Imagine the Possibilities – Anne Teutsch

- Already mentioned in the Chair’s Report.

Committee Representatives – Anne Teutsch

- OCASC has representation on many of the Board’s committees. These reps and their alternates are elected at the November OCASC meeting for a one year term. These

positions require active participation in OCASC because reps need to speak for OCASC at the meetings they attend.

- The following is a list of the committees to which OCASC elects a representative:
 - Standing committees: Business Services, Education, Human Resources
 - Advisory committees: Advisory Committee on the Arts (ACA), Children and Youth at Risk Advisory Committee (CAYARAC), Community Council for Ethno-cultural Equity (CCEE), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
 - Other committees: Budget, Diversity and Equity Task Force, Calendar, Trades and Technology Steering Committee
- Many reps are willing to continue, but people can come forward regardless. Positions being vacated are: Human Resources, ACA, CAYARAC, Budget, Diversity and Equity Task Force. Will need a new SEAC rep next year – anyone interested is encouraged to become the Alternate this year and learn the ropes.
- Anyone with interest or questions can contact Anne at ocasc.chair@ocasc.ca.
- Stephen Leacock PS – Is there still an item in the budget allowing reps to get reimbursed for babysitting while attending committee meetings? A: Yes.

Education Committee – Susan Klimchuk

- Last meeting was held two nights ago, on Oct. 19th.
- Staff presented the draft Board Improvement Plan. Encourage you to take a look at it (ocdsb.ca > About Us > Board of Trustees > Meeting Calendar > Oct 19 > Education Committee > Item 8):
http://ocdsb.ca/Documents/Board_Meetings/Meetings/2010/October_2010/Ed_Oct19_2010/8_10-178_Ann%20Rep%20on%20Stud%20Achievement.pdf
- Ministry now requires all Boards to create Board Improvement Plans for Grades JK-12. They focus on improvements in four areas: Literacy, Numeracy, Pathways, and Character Development. For each area the plan must specify a goal and follow-up actions to achieve that goal.
- Of particular interest to parents is how we are included in the plan. Parents and councils are being invited to help the Board reach its goals.
- Big question is how to make sure information from Board gets to as many parents as possible. Parents going to council and OCASC meetings already feel comfortable and empowered – need to reach others. Principals need to be proactive; needs to become part of how teachers reference work being done in the classroom.
- A consultation on school fees is happening this fall. Since this is a very popular topic at OCASC, may want to bring in a speaker.
- Questions/Comments:
 - Glebe CI – Board Improvement Plan (BIP) is supposed to be accompanied by School Improvement Plan (SIP), which is a great time for parents to get involved.
 - Mutchmor PS – How does BIP feed into SIP? Anne – Every school has a SIP done annually. Some schools involve parents in this process. If yours doesn't, can ask principal about it and what the goals are – make them aware that you're interested in it.

- Rockcliffe Park PS – Principal has been using BIP to improve SIP and reallocate some resources.
- Pleasant Park PS – Are SIPs tied into school budgets? A: Only because principals have to decide where resources are spent and the SIP guides that process.
- Barrhaven PS – Could you put links to the consultation on school fees on the OCASC website? A: Yes.

DISCUSSION

What do we want to see in education five years from now?

- There are several things going on at the Board that OCASC can have some input on, and we would like to hear from parents and councils. (Used the remainder of the evening to hear feedback from reps on some of those issues.)
- **A new OCDSB Director of Education:** The OCDSB is in the process of hiring a new Director. The Director sets the tone, leads the staff and liaises with the Board of Trustees.
 - What is the most important quality required for a new director?
 - What should OCASC tell the Director Selection Committee that parents are looking for in a new Director?
- Responses from floor:
 - Collaboration – willing to see parents as partners
 - Accountable – be answerable for decisions
 - Strong ties to industry – gives insight into direction to move students
 - Communication – be able to speak to parents without being too academic or bureaucratic
 - Diplomacy and negotiation skills – for dealing with the Ministry of Education and other levels of government
 - Willingness to work with all levels of government, and with other Ottawa school boards
 - Open to effective meetings with the public for things like budget input
 - Commitment to making a difference – a willingness to put heart and soul into the job and tackle not just what’s under the umbrella but also what’s around it.
 - To use both head and heart, and make decisions based on what’s good for students.
 - Q: Do they typically hire from within? A: No. The Interim Director, Barrie Hammond, came from within because they needed someone who could step in quickly and fairly seamlessly.
 - Q: Parents have direct role in selection of principals and vice-principals – are they involved in the selection of higher positions? A: No.
- **A new Board of Trustees:** The Oct. 25 election will bring a new Board of Trustees. One of their first Board meetings might be an opportune time for OCASC to make a presentation to the new Board.
 - What point(s) do we most want to get across, in a positive way, to our trustees?
 - What are we most looking for, over the next four years, from our trustees?

- Responses from floor:
 - Work with staff and value their advice – often the trustees vote against staff recommendations.
 - Increase community involvement – hold more open houses.
 - Understand that the English program is fragile – look and see where you want it to go.
 - The record of trustees coming to school council meetings and holding zone meetings is inconsistent – encourage them to do this as part of accountability.
 - Work with city and province to deal with overcrowding – some growth areas need a quick solution.
 - Be committed to your zone and work with councils and parents, but realize that some issues cross zone boundaries and work fairly on those as well.
 - Have more respect for the community that comes to Board/committee meetings for particular issues. For example:
 - in-camera meetings often run late and leave the public waiting, which is disrespectful
 - wasting time wordsmithing – trust staff to get the wording right and move on to the next issue
 - Chair should move agenda items of strong public interest earlier in the meeting
 - In general there is a huge lack of interest in trustees and their work, but we're there to witness when they do good things.
 - Take a more global view.
 - Some policies show lack of foresight (i.e. number of portables at some schools). New schools are not being built in a timely manner – shows need for longer-term planning.
 - Need to find solutions for short-term problems even while looking long-term.
 - Have more timely meetings on issues like budget. Give heads-up on upcoming problems.
 - Q: Why is this only a part-time job? A: That's an issue that needs to be addressed to the Ministry of Education.
 - Suggestion: Our next meeting is after the election – could encourage the board to invite all incoming trustees.
- **Provincial Parent Engagement Policy**: Ministry had introduced a new Parent Engagement Policy, which includes regulations for Parent Involvement Committees (PICs). The OCDSB PIC is composed of parent representatives from a number of the Board's advisory committees and staff members including an elementary and high school principal, the diversity and equity instructional coach and the Director of Education. Currently the Chair of OCASC is the Chair of the PIC, and the OCASC Vice-Chair is also a member of the PIC. OCASC didn't want to become the PIC because it wanted to remain autonomous. Suggestion was made at PIC that the OCASC executive comprise the parent portion of PIC, which would create strong connections.

- What is the best way to move forward collaboratively with OCASC and the OCDSB while maintaining OCASC's autonomy?
- What is the best way to move forward with both OCASC and PIC in the OCDSB and have both offering valuable services, without too much overlap?
- Responses from floor:
 - Does PIC make decisions or just confer and advise? Because if they take votes, would the OCASC exec have pre-discussed the issue and vote as a block or take individual positions? A: PIC doesn't make a lot of decisions, and when they do it's by consensus. But the exec members would be there as informed individuals who have an interest in parental engagement.
 - Not all schools in the board are part of OCASC, which is one reason why we didn't want to be the PIC. Raises a similar concern if OCASC people are the only parent reps.
 - Who would we be displacing if we were the parent reps? A: We wouldn't be the only parent reps – there are also reps from other groups and committees.
 - It would be a good way to formalize relations with the Board. But decisions by voting wouldn't fit with OCASC's goal of reflecting the varying opinions of its members. Shouldn't endanger the inclusion of parents from non-OCASC schools.
 - How much responsibility do we have to the large majority that are not involved? A: Main job of PIC is to get more parent involvement. OCASC does outreach work, but also focuses on sharing information among the participating school councils. PIC wants people who are keen on getting more parents involved.
- **OCDSB Strategic Plan Renewal Consultation:** The OCDSB is developing a new five year strategic plan. Board is approaching approximately 200 stakeholder groups, including the police and many community organizations. Consultation meetings will be held in November, with one consultation night being incorporated into our November OCASC meeting. It would be helpful if parents/councils have time to think about some of the questions in advance:
 - What do you want to see in education in Ottawa 5 years from now?
 - What works well now in the OCDSB that you want to see maintained?
 - What positive new initiatives do you want to see the OCDSB move forward with?
- Responses from floor:
 - Electronic books – easier to carry, easier to get updated material
 - Risk people forgetting how to communicate verbally and work in groups
 - Face to face communication still easier than texting
 - More kids, especially boys, are getting diagnosed with learning disorders such as ADHD as more activities are stationary, and technology is just making it worse. Losing spec ed teachers due to cost-cutting. Depth of knowledge and interest is decreasing, and the broad scope of education is disappearing. Need to monitor these things and increase awareness that hyperactivity isn't necessarily due to a learning disorder.

- What's happening to hands-on activities such as shop and home economics? Were always a refuge for non-academic students. Need to find ways to engage all kids.
- So much sitting and quiet activities – more and more kids who struggle with that get labelled.
- Should include more teaching mentoring and sharing best practices. Use strong teachers as resources. Too much time, effort and resources are going into meeting standardized testing requirements.
- In Edmonton teachers were meeting every few weeks to share best practices.
- Further comments on any of these topics can be emailed to Anne at ocasc.chair@ocasc.ca.

Announcements

- Principal and vice-principal competition is coming up. OCASC is looking for two reps to take part. Contact Anne if you're interested.
- Membership fees (\$35) are due in November, and must be received before or at the beginning of the next meeting if the rep is to vote during the election of committee reps.

NEXT MEETING:

- **SPECIAL MEETING** – note time and place!
 - Thursday, November 18th at the OCDSB Offices, 133 Greenbank Road
 - OCDSB School Council / OCASC / Committee Rep Reception at 6:00 pm in the main lobby
 - OCASC Assembly Meeting at 7:00 pm in the Boardroom – will be short and immediately followed by Strategic Plan Development Consultation Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm, but discussion on the future of education and the strategic plan continued.

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