

## OTTAWA CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Fisher Park Public School

### ATTENDANCE:

#### Zone 1

A. Lorne Cassidy ES – Kim Clausen

#### Zone 2

Bridlewood ES – Anne Bowes  
Castlefrank ES – Richard Perkins  
Glen Cairn PS – Mike Hickey  
Katimavik ES – Nihan Kavasler  
Roch Carrier ES – Anne Bowes  
Roland Michener PS – Sheila Smellie  
Stephen Leacock PS – Enang Akan

#### Zone 3

Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk  
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch  
Mary Honeywell ES – John Tucker

#### Zone 4

D. Roy Kennedy PS – Terrena Bennett  
Woodroffe PS – Maria Di Rosa

#### Zone 5

Agincourt PS – Norah Vollmer  
Bell HS – Juliet Hamilton  
Briargreen PS – Suzanne VanderHeuvel

#### Zone 6

Alta Vista PS – Lillian Thomsen

Canterbury HS – Bob Weist

Ottawa Tech LC – D. Oickle

Pleasant Park PS – Nancy Schenk

#### Zone 7

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Lisa Bloom  
Castor Valley ES – Jen Danby  
McDonald  
Osgoode Township HS – Jeff Esau  
Steve MacLean PS – Lara Malashenko

#### Zone 8

Fallingbrook ES – Irene Lupin

#### Zone 9

Glebe CI – Robert Keene

#### Zone 10

Churchill Alt S – Terrena Bennett  
Connaught PS – Madelaine Stewart-  
Dmaj

Hilson Ave PS – Tarin Richards  
Lisgar CI – Kate Preston-Thomas

#### Zone 12

Forest Valley ES – Janet Patch  
Glen Ogilvie PS – Trina Whitehurst  
Henry Larsen ES – Janet Patch

### Guests and other persons in attendance:

Walter Piovesan (Superintendent of  
Instruction, OCDSB)

Beth Doubt (SEAC Rep)

Jennifer McKenzie (Trustee, Zone 10)

John Shea (Trustee, Zone 8)

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:07 p.m., Anne Teutsch in the chair.

**AGENDA:** Approved with no changes.

**MINUTES** of February 19, 2009: Approved with no changes. Follow-up to last month's appeal for a secretary – Juliet Hamilton of Bell HS has agreed to fill in for the rest of this year.

### CHAIR'S REPORT

- Several recent changes at OCASC have generated a few comments and questions. Would like to address them and explain the rationale behind them.
- Change in style of meetings, away from motions and voting in favour of discussions and information sharing. Allowing more time for Chalk-It-Up, as many feel this is

the best part of the meeting. Aiming to make meetings more “user-friendly”, a comfortable environment for everyone to participate in. Also prefer to present Board with an overview of the opinions of the group rather than a simple *yes* or *no* vote.

- Want to make two additions. One is an Action Register (already used successfully by the Secondary Schools Committee) to track items that need follow-up. The other is to use a flip chart during discussions aimed at providing feedback to the Board. Will use the flip chart to list the points that will be shared with the Board, so that everyone can see what has been noted.
- The item “New Business” is not being included on the agenda. This does not imply people are not welcome to bring things to OCASC. Purpose is to try and have meetings end at a reasonable time by not having something unexpected come up at the end of the meeting. Prefer that issues are brought up at Chalk-It-Up. If item requires more substantive discussion it can be put on the agenda for a future meeting if the membership is interested. This allows councils to be consulted, more research to be done, and the chance to find an expert to speak to the Assembly. Also allows different means of follow-up, such as the website, the forums on the website, or OCASC News.
- Occasionally get asked why most of our guest speakers are from the Board. Large part of role of OCASC is to help parents become more informed, to better understand the education system, and to become better advocates for children. Board staff are the experts on our schools and programs and initiatives underway. OCASC more than willing to invite other speakers as well, and would welcome any suggestions.
- Feel free to contact the Chair ([ocasc.chair@ocasc.ca](mailto:ocasc.chair@ocasc.ca)) with any feedback, questions or suggestions.
- Follow-up discussion:
  - Regarding bringing new items to Chalk-It-Up, what if the item is time sensitive? A: Two ways to handle a time sensitive issue. 1) Bring it to Chalk-It-Up and, if membership chooses, more time can be allotted for discussion. 2) Bring it to the attention of the Chair in advance so the Executive can decide how it should best be dealt with.
  - If a time sensitive item is added to the agenda, use email and OCASC News to give people a heads-up so that councils can be consulted.
  - Action Register will help reps know what they have to bring back to their councils.
  - Regarding bringing concerns to the Board, SEAC is being encouraged to fill out new forms. Maria willing to bring some in. (Action – Maria Di Rosa, WoodroffeES)
  - Not sure New Business can be omitted from a meeting format. Carrie will check into that. (Action – Carrie Eaton, Vice-Chair)
  - Are people comfortable with the way meetings are going? General nodding of agreement.

## **CHALK-IT-UP**

### **Our Town – Ottawa Citizen**

Carrie Eaton – OCASC Vice-Chair [ocasc.vchair@ocasc.ca](mailto:ocasc.vchair@ocasc.ca)

- Our Town is a section in the Ottawa Citizen where people can put information about upcoming events. There is no cost. Schools could use this to advertise about activities. Contact [ourtown@canwest.ca](mailto:ourtown@canwest.ca).

- Suggestion from floor that OCASC do this once a month. (Action – Carrie)

### **Councils as Charitable Organizations**

Maria Di Rosa – Woodroffe ES [windward@magma.ca](mailto:windward@magma.ca)

- In 2005 an OCASC group called PAGE (Parent Action Group for Education) provided information on charitable organizations.
- Woodroffe ES council is a registered charitable organization. When deciding to become one they brought in someone from Revenue Canada to talk about it. The speaker provided packages of information.
- Discussion which followed touched on protecting council funds, council and Board accounting and audits, GST rebates, Home and School Association. There was enough interest that a fall meeting (tentatively October 2009) will be dedicated to this issue. (Action – Anne)

### **After-School Extracurricular Activities**

Briargreen – Suzanne VanderHeuvel [david.vanderheuvel@sympatico.ca](mailto:david.vanderheuvel@sympatico.ca)

- Council has been organizing activities such as baby-sitting classes after school. These activities are paid for by parents. Have been getting some resistance from administration. How many other schools do similar things? (Show of hands – none)
- Some schools do have extracurricular activities, but organized by the school or done through Community Use of Schools. A few have tried but insurance issues prevented it. Some do run language schools.

### **Math Night**

Norah Vollmer – Agincourt PS [nvollmer@sympatico.ca](mailto:nvollmer@sympatico.ca)

- Held a math night attended by 300 students, parents and teachers. Students made tools to help with homework. Activities were adjusted for different age groups. Any family that didn't attend had a kit sent home. The cost of each kit was \$3 to \$4, and funds came from various sources. Made a movie. Contact Norah if you'd like to have more information and templates for the activities.

### **Fraser Report**

Beth Doubt – SEAC Rep [ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca](mailto:ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca)

- Fraser Report published its school rating recently. There are concerns about comparing schools based on EQAO results. Beth presented the following numbers showing that there is a definite link between general socio-economic status of the school population and average scores:

Indicator (Averaged)	Schools with Low Test Averages		Schools with High Test Averages	
	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 3	Grade 6
Household Salary	\$47,000		\$100,000	
English Lang. Learners	38%	26%	9%	6%
Spec. Ed. Students	23%	35%	9%	14%
In Canada <3 yrs	10%	5%	2%	2%
Stability Indicator (in same school 3 years)	44%	49%	71%	69%

- Lillian Thomsen volunteered to follow up with the Fraser Report and EQAO and find out if they would come and speak to us. (Action – Lillian, Alta Vista PS)

### **Consultations - Gifted French Immersion (GFI) and Transfers**

Kate Preston-Thomas – Lisgar CI 223-0038

- The GFI programs at First Avenue and Hopewell are both being moved because of overcrowding. Concern with Board's consultation process – schools given very little warning of changes, length of consultations uncertain. Stephen Leacock and Stittsville PS also affected by changes to French Immersion programs with very little notice.
- Lack of proper consultation process results in parents of different programs in same school fighting between each other. Councils should do all they can to represent all the parents at their school – ask OCASC for help if required.
- Schools with issues such as overcrowding should be on guard for sudden changes being proposed.
- Consultation on transfers policy about to begin.
- Comment from Jennifer McKenzie (Trustee) – if trustees don't have enough information then their decisions tend to fluctuate as more info comes to light.
- Anne: Issues around the consultation process should be addressed. OCASC has been talking about what the focus for OCASC should be next year. One option - working with Board on how to make consultations and communication more effective.

### **FROM YOUR EXEC**

**Calendar Committee** – report by Anne Teutsch in Nadine Clarke's absence

- September 1 date for 2009-2010 school start approved by Board, waiting for Ministry approval. Comment from floor that Minister not happy and is considering moving PD days to first of the year.

### **Consultations**

- Several consultations are coming up:
  - Transfer policy – consultation process yet to be approved by Board. Tentative dates call for a decision by June.
  - Care of children with life-threatening conditions - consultation process yet to be approved by Board. Tentative dates call for a decision by October.

### **OCASC Budget Representative**

- Madelaine Stewart-Dmaj has stepped down. Kate Preston-Thomas (previous budget rep and present alternate) has agreed to take her place. No vote necessary since she was the alternate rep. Terrena Bennett nominated to become budget alternate – accepted and elected (unanimous).

### **Special Education Report** – Beth Doubt

- At Spec Ed Corner tonight group talked about accessibility (many schools inaccessible to those with mobility issues), GFI
- At last SEAC (Special Education Action Committee) meeting had a good session with a speaker from York District Learning Disability Association. Information about how other SEACs operate.
- Also at that meeting discussed a motion about special equipment funds and the difficulties in applying for these funds. Discussion revealed that the application process was not the issue, so motion was deferred and SEAC will continue to

monitor the situation, since there are concerns about how long it takes for families to get those funds.

### **Zone 7 OCASC Liaison Officer**

- Jeff Esau of Osgoode Township HS has volunteered. Elected (unanimous).

### **Budget Report – Kate Preston-Thomas**

- Board held its first budget meeting. Looks like this year is okay (maybe \$½ million over) but next year could be difficult (estimate \$8 million over, have \$5 million in bank but trustees may/may not choose to use it). Next meeting is tentatively set for April 27, when the staff proposed budget will be presented. Date may be delayed if the funding numbers from the ministry haven't arrived. Check Board calendar ([http://ocdsb.ca/au\\_bot\\_meeting-dates.asp](http://ocdsb.ca/au_bot_meeting-dates.asp)) for confirmation.
- Kate would like feedback from the membership. She has the ability to bring concerns up at the table, where all involved parties will hear it. She would prefer people call her instead of using email (613-233-0038)
- Request by Kate that last year's budget survey be put on the OCASC website. It included a lot of good information about the budget process, and councils found it a very educational exercise to go through. She is willing to talk about it in more detail at the next OCASC meeting. (Action – Anne, Kate)
- Comment from the floor about confusion over budget consultation dates. Kate replied that the Board usually holds an open meeting looking for feedback from the public.

### **PRESENTATION ON CULTURAL PROFICIENCY**

Walter Piovesan – Superintendent of Instruction, OCDSB

- Title of presentation was Education for Success – Inspiring Learning and Building Citizenship
- Need to reflect on how we deal with differences if we want schools to succeed.
- Schools are vastly different across the city. The Ottawa area has a high immigrant population, has been growing quickly, and a large percent of the population has a college or university education.
- Cultural differences no longer mean traditional race/ethnic differences. Examples of differences that create distinct cultures are: socio-economic status; gender; single parent families; special needs.
- In many families of recent immigrants 30%-50% of income is going into accommodation. 1 in 6 of children in Ottawa lives in poverty. Many live in homeless shelters. Many children have special needs.
- Cultural proficiency is being aware of how we work with and respond to people who are different from us.
- The Board is using an Inside-Out approach.
- Walter then had the group go through several exercises designed to explore different aspects of cultural proficiency.
- First exercise had partners telling each other their Name Story (the history and explanation of a person's name). It revealed how much of our identity and links to our heritage can be imbedded in our names. Afterwards Walter explained how painful it can be for people to lose that identity, which often happens to immigrants given anglicized names for the ease of their new acquaintances.

- Second exercise, with a new partner, involved one person answering questions about the other based purely on appearance. The questions related to: background/heritage; languages spoken; favorite music, movies, TV shows, pets, activities/hobbies. Lessons to be learned both from having to make those assumptions out loud based only on appearance, and on listening to someone make those assumptions about you.
- Third exercise had us each write 5 words that described the essence of who we are. After sharing them with a partner, we were asked to remove one, then a second. People found this very difficult, like losing part of one's self. Walter then asked us to think about several questions. What do we ask students to take off their lists when they come to school? What do we ask parents to take off their lists when they come to school? What do we ask parents to take off their lists when they come to a school meeting? What do we need to do to change that?
- He then shared two quotes with us.
  - “We need to adapt our schools to our students, not our students to our schools.”
  - “If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way that you think about it.” – Mary Engelbreit
- Regarding the Board's consultation process, so much outreach is done on-line, but what about the people not reached that way.
- Everyone has an emotional intelligence and emotional triggers. Unlike IQ, these can be changed. One can visualize involvement in different situations and practice responding differently.
- There are five basic emotional needs that everyone has: the need for safety, power, respect, acceptance, and feeling valued. Understanding these helps us understand how we and others react to situations.
- Schools are being encouraged to develop cultural proficiency, and Board is promoting a Diversity Framework. Teachers can use Name Story exercise with their students. Principals can use restorative practices (dialogue between aggrieved parties) to deal with incidents, and their knowledge of emotional needs and intelligence can help them see responses more empathetically.
- Question from floor: You are also in charge of implementing the new Safe Schools Act. How do existing policies and restorative practices mesh? Answer: There are no more compulsory suspensions or expulsions, and if one of these is being considered, must also consider mitigating circumstances, because we all do things to meet an emotional need.
- Need to consider Intent versus Impact – they can be very different.
- For teachers and parents, our default behaviour is often one of power.
- When working through an issue, useful to start at the opposing point of view and work over to your own. If you start at your point of view you're already saying you are right.
- As a system we all need to reflect on how we operate. As a Board we need to look at who we are and how we deal with things that are different.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.