

OTTAWA-CARLETON ASSEMBLY OF SCHOOL COUNCILS

Meeting of Thursday, September 23, 2010

Fisher Park PS Library

ATTENDANCE:

Total Membership: 93

Member schools

Adrienne Clarkson ES – Sanjiva Sondagar, Carrie Eaton
Agincourt Road PS – Krista Shibata
Alta Vista PS – Petra Alince, Bonnie Gazal
Barrhaven PS – Ellen Dickson
Berrigan ES – Susan Klimchuk
Briargreen PS – Suzanne VandenHeuvel
Castlefrank ES – Brona Little
Castor Valley ES – Heather Wilson, Natasha Robb Burrows
Churchill Alt S – Dave Fortier
D. Aubrey Moodie IS – Sheila Mason
Elgin Street PS – John Higgins
Elmdale PS – Megan McVey
Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter Kokkovas
First Avenue PS – Kristen Underwood
Glebe CI – Lillian Thomsen
Glen Cairn PS – Mike Hickey
Hilson Avenue PS – Mona Pare, Bobby Chawla
J.H. Putman PS – Maria Di Rosa
Jockvale ES – Jamesee Winchester
Lisgar CI – Liz Melanson
Manordale PS – Cathy Babyak
Manotick PS – Michaela Stuart
Merivale HS – Anne Teutsch
North Gower/Marl. PS – Tracey MacDougall
Ottawa Technical LC – Daniel Oickle, Zippora Anson
Pleasant Park PS – Sabrah Talib
Rideau Valley MS – Sandra Acacia
Roch Carrier ES – Susan Wehrmann
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
Stittsville PS – Rhonda Drakes-Blais
Summit AS – Madelaine Stewart-Dmaj
W.O. Mitchell ES – Liz Desjardins, Susan Wehrmann

Non-member schools

Lady Evelyn Alt PS – Gabe Thirlwall

Guests and other persons in attendance:

Alan Halfper, Beth Doubt (SEAC Rep), Michèle Giroux (OCDSB), Lauren Peddle (OCDSB), Rob Campbell (Trustee, Zone 9), 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 May 20, 2010

Chair's Report

Chalk-It-Up

From your Executive

Engaging Parents Website Project

OCASC Series on IEPs and IPRCs

Building Relationships ... Imagine the Possibilities

Updates

Presentation and Discussion: OCDSB Student Survey

Jacqueline Lawrence, Diversity and Equity Coordinator, OCDSB

MINUTES of May 20, 2010: Accepted with no amendments.

CHAIR'S REPORT – Anne Teutsch

- Continuing to work in two main areas:
 - 3 C's – Communication, Consultation, Collaboration
 - working with schools, trustees, Board staff
 - communication within OCASC – via newsletter and website, getting more people to come to meetings
 - communication with Board – improving parent engagement for all parents and schools
 - Outreach
 - also ties into communication
 - want OCASC to reach all the schools in the School Board
 - last year membership went from 60 to more than 80; this year aim for over 100
 - want to increase the number of people receiving the newsletter (OCASC News) and the number of people looking at the website
 - Anyone with suggestions on how to improve the newsletter or the website, please contact Anne (ocasc.chair@ocasc.ca).
- PRO (Parents Reaching Out) grants are available for school councils, and many in the School Board have successfully applied for them. There are also regional grants that organizations can apply for, and last year OCASC and OCISO (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization) received \$22,000 for a parent involvement project. Are creating a database/website of positive parent engagement activities and ideas. Anyone with a story to add, please contact Anne.

- Have applied for another regional grant this year to hold a symposium with parents, teachers, administration, Board staff and people from the community to discuss parent involvement. Will follow format of session that the Board ran last year, appreciative inquiry, which focuses on an organization's strengths and how to grow on those.
- Planning a pilot project along these lines using money left over from last year's grant. Building Relationships ... Imagine the Possibilities will be held on Saturday Oct. 23 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Travelodge Conference Centre. Information will be available on the OCASC website.
- Parents For Education (P4E) is a provincial organization for parents based in Toronto. It is well respected, and consulted by the provincial Ministry of Education. Its annual conference is being held at York University on November 13th. A group of OCASC executive always attend, but it is open to all interested parents. Information can be found on the OCASC website or the P4E website (<http://www.peopleforeducation.com/>).
- Michèle Giroux, Executive Officer of the OCDSB, is responsible for communications and liaising with school councils. Anne invited Michèle to talk about a consultation happening this fall:
 - Board has an interim Director of Education, Barry Hammond, who has been with the Board 42 years. A search for a new director has been initiated.
 - This year Board is working on a new strategic plan. Present 4-year plan expires at the end of this school year. Starting point for new plan is the document "21st Century Learner", which also includes a previous article entitled "Schools for the Future – OCDSB Planning for the 21st Century Learner." The document is available on the Board's website: http://ocdsb.ca/Documents/Consultations/SFTF/21st_century_learner.pdf.
 - Public consultation on development of a new strategic plan will occur in early November, and all interested parties are welcome to attend. Information will be going out to all school councils. Hope to present a draft version in the spring.
 - Board has a new website rolling out within the next three weeks, which will be more user-friendly.
 - Cheryl Watson, who was the Board's main liaison with school councils, has left that position. A new policy analyst, Paula Hall, will be arriving in mid-October, but in the meantime Lauren Peddle will be filling in.
 - Main conduit for Board communication is through councils' BEAM accounts.
 - The next speaker in the OCDSB Speakers' Series will be Dr. John Barell, who is also speaking at the Board's leadership conference. He will speak on Thursday Nov. 4th at 7 pm at the Hampton Inn. The topic is: "21st Century Skills – A World of Discovery: What do students need to learn in a rapidly evolving world?" More info is available on the Board's website at http://www.ocdsb.ca/pc_pi_parental_involvement_spr-series.asp.

CHALK-IT-UP

Math Mania

Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Peter Kokkovas (peter@magicmixes.com)

- Council is thinking of bringing in MathMania, targeting Grades 5 to 8, and is wondering if other schools had any experience with this. A: No, and Peter was asked to let us know how it went.

Passing Information – Paperless?

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

- Council is trying to go paperless, and is looking at compiling a voluntary list of email addresses for parents or just using a website. Are there Board/Ministry policies relating to this?
 - Anne – You can use email addresses that parents give you, but you can't use the email addresses that the school has on file for students.
 - Michèle Giroux – When sending to the email list, use BCC.
 - Sir Robert Borden HS – They use SynerVoice for contacting parents. Besides phoning with an automated message, it is also able to send emails.
 - Anne – SynerVoice is available through the Board for any school interested in using it.

Playstructure Vandalism – Board Assistance?

Castor Valley ES – Natasha Robb Burrows (tioman_1998@yahoo.com)

- Council fundraised for a primary playstructure. Had a wooden one that was set on fire and destroyed by vandals. Does the Board help in these situations?
 - Sir Winston Churchill PS – Playstructure at Meadowlands PS was damaged in the fall, although not that seriously. Structure was off-limits for the winter, but the Board fixed it in the spring.
 - Briargreen PS – Playstructure was burned. Board replaced it eight months later with something newer and better. Parents did no fundraising for the replacement structure.
- Do any schools have security cameras outside?
 - Barrhaven PS – Had a lot of trouble with graffiti. Council paid for security cameras (got a discount from Costco) and that has helped a lot.
 - Castlefrank ES – Music room was broken into and thousands of dollars worth of musical instruments were stolen. But Board's deductable is set very high so school got no money to help replace those instruments. Now have audible alarms on the windows.
 - Glebe CI – As OCASC rep on Business Services Committee, know that trustees receive reports on damage to school property once or twice a year. Board does carry insurance. Suggest that principal get in touch with superintendent in charge of facilities.

Canadian Parents for French

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

- Ottawa chapter has been quiet for quite a few years, but is becoming active. New Chair came and talked to council in June, and it sounds wonderful. Encourage parents to look up their website (<http://www.cpf.ca/>). OCASC could consider inviting them to give a presentation.

Pace Car Project

Agincourt Road PS – Krista Shibata (kristashibata@hotmail.com)

- Council is looking into neighbourhood pace cars. Has anyone implemented this program, and has it been successful?
 - South March PS – Started up last year through community police officer. About 20-30 parents signed up. Usually in coordination with traffic issues, and in conjunction with signage and speed traps.
 - Roch Carrier ES – They and St. Anne's were one of the pilot projects. Not a lot of parents have signed up, but there does seem to be more awareness. Had heard that city was going to get their workers involved.
 - Hilson Avenue PS (rep used to go to Roch Carrier) – It's definitely a neighbourhood thing, to raise awareness in the area.

Mathletes

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

- Brought Mathletes into school for two days. (Mathletes rep came and did a Chalk-It-Up item at OCASC last February.)
- Program is one day in length and can handle 200 students per day. It is available in English only. Can be run for students in Grades 3-8.
- ACES targeted Grades 4, 5 and 6, and had 400 students, so ran the program 2 days. Cost them \$2200. Would have liked to include Grade 3 students, but because of the dual track program at the school some of those students are doing math in French.
- Only glitch was that a large number (36 each day) of volunteers were needed, but they were only given two weeks notice of this. Schools with Grades 7 and 8 can use those students as volunteers with younger students. Schools that use parent volunteers can put their PRO grant money towards the cost of the program, since it is a form of parent engagement.

Autism Registry

Manotick PS – Michaela Stuart (michaela13@rogers.com)

- Speaking on behalf of Ottawa Police, who have developed an Autism Registry. This is a voluntary pilot project that will run until December. Not getting a large response, and would like to spread the word.
- Police are often called to deal with situations involving students on the autism spectrum. These students can sometimes react quite violently, and can be triggered by a wide variety of things.
- Aim is to collect as much relevant data as possible on children with autism, so that police officers can be as prepared as possible when called in to deal with these students. That includes photos, likes and dislikes, fears, triggers, behaviours, etc. Info can then be sent right to the squad car, and can be very useful if a child is reported missing or is being approached outside of school.
 - Anne – Have you gone to the School Board? A: No. Program is set up to be voluntary, so parents must volunteer the information to the police. Schools are not allowed to pass on the information they have. The province is interested, and if program is successful could introduce it in other communities.

- SEAC Rep – Program was mentioned at SEAC. Would be useful if there were information fliers available that could be distributed to schools and councils. (Michaela handed out paper copies, and will email Anne an electronic version).
- Fallingbrook Comm. ES – Idea of such a registry was talked about at Autism Ontario years ago. It's a wonderful idea and really deserves to be supported. Reactions of children with autism can be quite extreme.

FROM YOUR EXEC

New Executive

- New executive was introduced. Updated list, including email addresses, will be on website shortly.

Engaging Parents Website Project – Anne Teutsch

- Already spoke about this in the Chair's Report. This is the name of the new website being developed with the funds from the regional PRO grant. It will be connected to the main OCASC website.

OCASC Series on IEPs and IPRCs with Lamar Mason – Maria Di Rosa

- OCASC held several info nights last year and got excellent turnout and feedback. This year going to bring the sessions to different parts of the city to make them more accessible. Sessions deal with all aspects of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) and IPRCs (Identification, Placement and Review Committees) and are very informative. Will be useful for anyone with children in special education. Please pass the info on to parents in your schools:
 - Wednesday, Sept. 29, 7:00-9:00 pm at Ridgemont HS, 2597 Alta Vista Dr.
 - Thursday, Sept. 30, 7:00-9:00 pm at Rideau HS, 815 St. Laurent Blvd.
 - Thursday, Oct. 7, 7:00-9:00 pm at Woodroffe HS, 2410 Georgina Dr.
- Sawmill Creek ES - Will there be childcare available? A: Have had the YMCA provide childcare at previous sessions. Need to check into room availability. Will put info on the OCASC website.

Building Relationships . . . Imagine the Possibilities – Anne Teutsch

- Already spoke about this in the Chair's Report. This is what the appreciative inquiry session is being called. Will have prior registration – session is free, but would like to know how many people are coming, because food will be provided.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) – Beth Doubt

- SEAC is a legislated committee of the School Board. It meets once a month, and its purpose is to give advice to the Board on special education issues.
- This is her 5th year as SEAC rep, and she's looking for someone to take over. Ideal if that person could step forward now to have a period of overlap and start to learn the ropes.
- Would also like to hear from anyone interested in helping out in any way. There is a lot that can be done to make people aware of things happening in Special Education, and to involve parents. Aim is to help parents get the best education for their children. Need help with things like the IEP/IPRC information nights. Also held a

spec ed corner before OCASC meetings last year, and would like to continue with that. This is a great way to learn things that apply to your child or to help friends or parents at your school.

- Anyone interested please contact Beth at ocasc.seac@ocasc.ca.
- SEAC also follows financial issues at the Board. The OCDSB is in a financial crunch and cut-backs are on-going. The province is changing how money designated for special education is being handed out. Board staff will be meeting with Ministry officials about this issue soon.
- SEAC is interested in hearing about the changes that are happening in the various schools. If you notice any changes in how your spec ed student is being educated, both positive and negative, please let Beth know.
- Inclusion is a big topic at SEAC – will talk about that at another OCASC meeting.

Education Committee – Susan Klimchuk

- Last meeting was held two nights ago, on Sept 21.
- Heard from a delegation from the Ottawa School Supplies Working Group, who are concerned about the cost of filling the lists of required school supplies at the beginning of the year. Given that 1 in 9 students live in poverty, and that on average it costs around \$100 per student to buy the requested school supplies, this is a huge problem in many families, especially if there is more than one child. Group would like to partner with the Board to try and limit the size and cost of the lists (i.e. don't request brand-names or large size of crayon/coloured pencil packages) and eventually to get rid of school supply lists altogether. The presentation was well received, and trustees indicated that they understood the issue but Board is unable to cover the costs, which would be over \$7 million.
- Changes to Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting of Student Achievement (P.083.CUR): Staff was seeking approval for minor revisions that would bring Board documents in line with provincial documents. Also, parents will see improvements in elementary report cards this year, with plainer language that is easier to understand and more meaningful. Report cards will only be issued twice a year, in January and June, and progress reports will be sent home before these. Goal is to have assessment being done on an on-going basis to help students progress.
- Trustee Brockington put forward a motion to study the feasibility of offering swimming lessons to all students by Grade 3. Idea is not to teach swimming to each student each year, but to target students in a certain grade. A lack of Board facilities and cost are issues, as well as seeing how it fits into current curriculum requirements. Motion passed to have staff do the study; goal is to present report to Education Committee in March.
- Questions/Comments:
 - Will the changes to the report cards affect Grades 7 and 8 as well? A: Yes – all the elementary grades will be affected, but not high school (Grades 9-12).
 - Are agendas part of school lists? A: Not as a school supply that needs to be bought at a store. All schools provide agendas; some include the cost as part of the school fees, some charge separately for them. It varies from year to year and from school to school.

- Was there any discussion on the wording used when requesting school supplies and school fees, i.e. what is voluntary, what to do if finances are an issue, how teachers follow up? The messaging is key.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

OCDSB Student Survey

Jacqueline Lawrence, Diversity and Equity Coordinator, OCDSB

- Been with the Board almost two years.
- Board introducing a new initiative this year – a student survey. Aim is threefold: to fully understand the uniqueness and diversity of the school population; to discover if there are particular populations of students being underserved; to tailor interventions and programs accordingly.
- Several important trends to consider:
 - ageing population – affects the number of students in schools
 - migration trends and family dynamics – i.e. a growing number of aboriginal students
 - advances in technology
 - local and national requirements for development of workforce
 - students are going into a different world than we did
- Board knows school population is very diverse but wants to move from assumptions to solid data.
- Ministry of Education has Equity and Diversity document and is implementing strategies with the key principles of equity and inclusion, which are paramount to academic excellence.
- Board was already working along those lines. Want to look at how schools and the school populations connect to the broader community. Want to build on our strengths to move forward.
- Know that:
 - Students who have a sense of belonging and feel connected to their school do better academically.
 - Students who see their culture reflected in the curriculum do better academically.
 - Exclusion and bullying lead to behaviour problems, lower achievement, and result in higher drop-out rates.
 - Certain groups have more barriers to learning.
- In the spring the Board did a Work Force census, to learn more about their staff and what unique strengths were reflected in their people.
- The questions on the Student Survey are different. There will be Perception questions, Learning questions, and Processes questions.
- The survey will be confidential and voluntary, but not anonymous, because they want to be able to link information from the survey to existing information such as attendance records, EQAO results, etc. This will help identify groups that need more assistance.
- Information from the survey will be used to:
 - develop and enhance programs
 - identify barriers to learning

- explore partnerships with other organizations
- Aim is to increase achievement rates, decrease achievement gaps, and strengthen community relationships.
- Survey will take 20-30 minutes to complete.
 - Survey is voluntary, but students and parents are strongly encouraged to participate, since the data collected will be used in future decision-making.
 - Surveys for students in Grades JK to 6 will be sent home to be completed by a parent.
 - Surveys for students in Grades 7 to 12 will be completed in class. Before that, parents will receive a form giving them a chance to opt-out of the survey, in which case their child will not take part.
- Regarding the anonymity of the surveys, staff are being very careful to follow standard research methods and to comply with the Human Rights code and the privacy code. There will be no name or student number on the survey, just a unique identifier.
- There will be three reports prepared:
 - district level – who we are; how we compare to the general Ottawa demographic
 - school level – to help with business and school improvement plans as well as the Board’s strategic plan and diversity initiatives
 - hopefully a more detailed one in the future
- Information will be provided on:
 - basic demographics such as race, disabilities, living arrangements, education level of family
 - perceptions of respect
 - bullying and harassment – when, where, how often, where do students go for help
 - learning – homework, expectations at home and at school, support from homework clubs or outside school
- Your role/participation as parents is crucial. Communication is key is achieving a high rate of return.
- Present timeline:
 - Going to Director’s Executive Council next.
 - Will then speak to and educate principals, then vice-principals, then teachers.
 - Parents will be getting information towards the end of October.
- Questions/comments:
 - What if Grade 7-12 students filling out the survey in class don’t know details such as their parents’ education levels? How can you ensure that the students understand the purpose of the survey? What if they need help? A: Each school will develop a team whose members will know what and why info is being asked. Teachers will be well equipped. OCISO and MLOs (Multicultural Liaison Officers) will help with translation. Help will be available for special-needs students. There will be posters so students know about the survey in advance and why it is being done. Student leaders will be educated about it.
 - Have surveys been pilot tested? What kind of response rate are you hoping for? A: Some preliminary testing has been done, and more is to come. The Toronto District School Board had a 78% response rate on a student survey in Grades 9-

12, and 68-70% from parents. The OCDSB Work Force census had a 53% response rate.

- If a family has more than one child, should a separate survey be filled out for each of them? A: Yes. Parents will be given a way to differentiate which survey is associated with each child. Q: Will it be obvious from the results that kids are related? A: No.
- Are there concerns that populations that need the most help will probably have the lowest return rate? A: We are reaching out to community organizations to promote and support the survey. A certain percentage of surveys will be translated as required.
- Are there legal concerns? A: Have vetted the survey through all the relevant groups. The Human Rights Commission supports school boards doing such surveys.
- Will any questions on the survey enable the identification of deviant behaviour on the part of student or parent? A: No.
- Will survey be available on the Board website? A: Yes.
- Will surveys be sent home and back in sealed envelopes? A: Yes.
- Concerns were voiced about opt-in versus opt-out for older students, given how unreliable backpack communication can be. Also mentioned that students over 18 are a separate consideration. Some comments from audience members:
 - Written opt-out (default opt-in) could have legal ramifications.
 - Written opt-in (default opt-out) could result in huge drop in response rate. Multiple contact attempts might help a bit. Using SynerVoice needs to be carefully planned to avoid last-minute deluge of calls to school.
 - Consider what other Boards have done.
- Regarding the legal issues, if the Human Rights Commission guidelines have been followed, there should be no problems. The Rights of the Child encourages kids to provide information that will be used to help them.
- What would you like us to do? A: Pass on information about the survey at council meetings and directly to parents. Board staff are willing to come and speak about the survey to school councils.

Announcements

- Every council should have received an OCASC information booklet. Extras are available.
- Please pay annual dues and return membership forms by November. OCASC dues are \$35/year. If a council/school is unable to pay, there is the option to waive the fee on request.

NEXT MEETING:

- Thursday, October 21st, 7:00 pm, Fisher Park library.

Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

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