

ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting – December 10, 2014

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met on Wednesday, December 10, 2014 at 490 Woodward Avenue Saint John, NB. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

Council Members:

Rob Fowler, Roger Nesbitt, Wayne Spires, Don Cullinan, Larry Boudreau, Bob McDevitt, Joanne Gunter, Charlotte McGill-Pierce, Sherman Ross, and Gerry Mabey,

Regrets: Stephen Campbell

ASD-S Staff:

Zoë Watson, Superintendent; Debbie Thomas, Director of Schools, Saint John; John MacDonald, Director of Finance & Administration, Kate McLellan, Director of Education Support Services and Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary.

PSSC Chairs Jason Gaudet (St. George Elementary) and Dan O'Connor (Simonds High) were in attendance. As well, Donna Domres (St. George PSSC committee member) and Andrea Anderson Mason (parent from St. George). Media was in attendance.

1. Call to Order/Welcome/Regrets

Mr. Fowler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Fowler passed on regrets for Mr. Campbell.

2. Approvals

2.1 Approval of the Agenda & Minutes

Mr. Fowler requested that the Agenda be revised to include 1.1 Swearing in of New DEC Member. There being no questions or concerns regarding the amended Agenda, he asked that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the amended Agenda be approved. Mr. Spires seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Cullinan then proceeded to swear in Mr. Kerry Olinskie, our new DEC member for Sub-District 10, replacing Mr. Gary Crossman. Mr. Fowler welcomed Mr. Olinskie to Council.

Mr. Fowler referred to the Minutes of the November 12, 2014 meeting and advised that if there were no concerns or questions regarding the Minutes, that a motion be put forward to approve. There being no questions or concerns, Mr. Spires moved that the Minutes be approved and Mr. McDevitt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2.2 Public Comment

Mr. Fowler opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Jason Gaudet, PSSC Chair for St. George Elementary School addressed Council to advise that they were opposed to any reconfiguration of grades in St. George. He advised that the PSSC had sent a letter to the Chair, Superintendent, and MLA Doucet to that effect.

Dan O'Connor, PSSC Chair for Simonds High School, addressed Council about parent concerns with the NBIAA and questioned how this body is governed and who they are accountable to. The concern centered around a recent regional swim meet scheduled for Simonds which was cancelled by the NBIAA one week prior to the event. He questioned their lack of support for swimming.

Mrs. Watson reported that the NBIAA is the governing body for high school sports with membership from each high school. They have a handbook, a constitution and rules. They have an Executive Board – filled by Principals or Athletic Directors from each high school. There is one paid position, Allyson Ouellette, paid for by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Each school pays a fee per playing season. Anglophone districts send one representative to all meetings; that is Jenny MacDougall from the St. Stephen Education Centre.

Mrs. Watson agreed to reach out to Allyson Ouellette.

Ms. Andrea Anderson Mason was next to address Council. She spoke as a parent of two St. George Elementary students. She advised that there was a lot of frustration – that parents do not feel involved and feel they are being ignored. She felt that there were questions that still needed to be addressed from the public meeting.

Mr. Fowler advised that the power point that was used at the joint PSSC meeting on December 2, 2014 answered all the questions put forth, and that a second meeting will be held early in the New Year, providing an opportunity for input from all parents.

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

3.1 School Sustainability Reviews

Mr. Fowler advised that we have had two meetings at St. Patrick's and Seawood to date; one at each of Havelock, Lorne Middle and Pennfield Elementary. He advised that there

had been some positive meetings on the west side. The second round of meetings will be held in early January.

3.2 Grade Reconfiguration – St. Stephen Education Centre

Mrs. Watson advised that she had reached out to the PSSC Chairs at St. George Elementary, Fundy High, Back Bay, Blacks Harbour and Penfield Elementary prior to the first public meeting to gather their questions so that the District could respond during their presentation. Mrs. Watson, Mrs. Jenny MacDougall, Director of Schools, St. Stephen, Derek O'Brien, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Mr. John Tanner, Principal Fundy High School, developed a power point which addressed all the questions provided. A copy of the questions submitted to the District was provided at the meeting and questions were taken from the floor. Mr. Tanner offered tours of Fundy High for anyone interested – he has since received some requests. Mr. Tanner also spoke about safety and keeping the middle school separate. Mr. Derek O'Brien, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, spoke about the middle school concept, and shared some ideas around creating a middle school 'identity'.

Mrs. Watson stated that there would be a conference call tomorrow at 5:00 p.m. with all of the Principals involved to discuss meetings going forward.

Mr. Boudreau asked if this was still in the 'proposal' stage. Mrs. Watson advised that it is.

Mrs. Watson advised Council that we would post the Charlie Norman Report to the portal for their information.

4. Presentation

4.1 Teacher Wellness

Ms. Carmen Meehan, Program Coordinator, NBTA addressed Council on the Professional Counselling Services they provide for teachers.

The program started as a counselling service to begin with, some 24 years ago. The program has expanded based on evolving needs and wellness was added in the early 1990s.

There are three counsellors who work the Province, and Ms. Meehan covers our District. The program is built on 4 pillars; counselling, wellness, crisis, and connections. The counselling provided by this program is comprehensive; they promote their services in the schools, they have a prevention program and intervention support for crisis response.

Mrs. Meehan outlined the top five presenting issues as follows: work stresses/conflict; loss/grief; marital/partner; personal stress, and family relationships. She stressed that their service is totally confidential.

Ms. Meehan reviewed some of the crisis response examples and what typically happens during this time of stress. She explained that staff are always very appreciative of their assistance.

Ms. Meehan also mentioned their newsletter “Words of Wellness” that is issued on a monthly basis.

Ms. Meehan then opened the floor to questions from Council. One question was “what do you need to be able to move the program forward?” Ms. Meehan responded that they need “more staff”, including an administrative assistant to allow the counsellors more time outside the office. Another question asked if this service is available to retired teachers, and she responded that it was. She also advised that their services are ‘short term’, and if teachers required longer care, appropriate referrals are provided.

Mrs. Watson advised Council that Ms. Meehan is always very supportive of our schools in times of crisis.

Mr. Fowler thanked Ms. Meehan for her informative presentation.

4.2 Minister’s Excellence in Teaching Awards

Mr. Fowler advised Council of his attendance at the award ceremony held in Fredericton and how it is always a highlight of his year. He then went on to introduce each winner, and their vignettes were played for Council.

The three winners were Patti Deering, St. Stephen Middle School; Julie Matthews, Rothesay Park, and Tracey Meahan, Lakefield Elementary School.

5. New Business

5.1 Review of Governance Policies #8-10

Mr. Fowler asked if there were any questions or concerns with regard to Governance Policies #8-10 which had been posted with tonight’s meeting materials for Council to review.

Mr. Boudreau questioned on GP #10, Linkage Opportunities, if requests of groups or individuals who want to appear before Council should not be directed to Council first? After discussion, it was agreed that the sentence in the policy would be revised to read ...”Groups, or individuals, shall then inform the Superintendent and/or DEC Chair, of their desire to appear before Council” There being no further questions or concerns, Mr. Fowler then asked for a motion to accept policies 8 & 9 as posted, and #10 as amended. Motion was made by Mr. Boudreau and seconded by Mr. Cullinan. Motion carried.

5.2 Review of Council-Staff Relationship Policies #1-3

Mr. Fowler then asked if there were any questions or concerns with regard to Council-Staff Relationship Policies #1-3 which had also been posted with tonight's meeting materials for Council to review. There being no questions or concerns, Mr. Fowler asked for a motion to approve policies #1-3. Motion was made by Mr. Cullinan and seconded by Mr. Spires. Motion carried.

5.3 Budget Update

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the budget document that was posted to the portal. He advised that we are forecasting a \$4.3 million deficit. The main challenges are staff replacement costs and plant/operating expenses. Plant operations are at issue because we need to spend more to maintain a number of old schools in our District. Mr. MacDonald advised that the Department is predicting a deficit of \$38 million.

He advised that Mrs. Watson and finance staff are meeting with the Department next week to review the budget forecast. They are trying to find ways to mitigate the deficit position we are facing.

Mr. MacDonald then addressed questions from Council, including the comment that it is illegal for the DEC to run a deficit budget. Mr. Fowler explained that we have an acknowledgement from the Department that our deficit is because of programs that did not come into play. Mr. McDevitt then asked if the Department would cover our deficit. Mr. Fowler advised we will not be held responsible, and that it will be rolled into the Department's overall budget deficit.

Mr. Fowler thanked Mr. MacDonald for his budget update.

6. Information Items

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Mrs. Watson advised that schools were well into the festive season with a long list of Christmas concerts, band and choir performances, Christmas Markets, turkey dinners, drama productions, and readers' theatre presentations. Staff from the District make all attempts to get to several of the special events as they are important celebrations and she suggested that DEC members get out and attend as well. A schedule of events was posted with tonight's meeting materials.

Mrs. Watson advised Council that the last day for students and teachers is Friday, December 19th. Teachers will return on January 5th, and that will be a PD day focused on the School Improvement Plan.

The week of December 3rd Principals and ESST-Guidance (or another member of the ESST) participated in Centre-based PREPARE training led by our facilitators Bronwyn Tanner (SSEC), Lori Byers (ESST Guidance at Sussex High) and Michael Butler (Principal of Barnhill School in SJEC). PREPARE stands for Prevent, Reaffirm, Evaluate, Provide,

Respond and Examine. Participants were informed about the characteristics of a crisis event, the phases of crisis management, development of a safety plan and a crisis response plan.

ASD-S had a number of schools attend the "WE DAY" celebrations with the Kielberger's in Halifax Friday, November 26. Fairvale Elementary, Sussex Middle, Hampton Middle School, Quispamsis Middle School, and River Valley Middle School were all in attendance and reported it was a very positive experience.

Mrs. Watson advised that our CELEBRATE Champions are busy planning a "soft" re-launch of CELEBRATE. Champions are being assisted by Tracy Friars and more information will be available early in the new year.

Derek O'Brien, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for ASD-S will be leaving at the end of December. He has accepted a job with the town of St. Stephen and will be on a two year leave of absence, with the option of a third year. The position has been advertised and interviews for this position will be held likely early in the new year.

Mrs. Watson advised that this week, or early next, letters will be going home to parents of students who are zoned to attend the new K-5 school in Quispamsis. The ad has closed for the Principal position, and interviews will take place shortly. The new Principal should be named prior to Christmas, and will start after the March Break.

6.2 Chairperson's Report & Updates

Mr. Fowler advised Council that the DEC Chairs had a conference call with the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister. There is discussion on a 10 year educational plan with more details to follow on how it will be developed.

Mr. Fowler reminded Council of the Christmas Dinner at Hazen White St. Francis tomorrow and that he looks forward to attending the event every year.

6.3 Correspondence

Christmas cards received were shared with Council.

6.4 Members Notebook

Mr. Cullinan advised that he met with the PSSC at Saint John the Baptist King Edward and that it was an eye-opening experience. They face a number of challenges but there are a lot of good things going on as well. He suggested they would like to address the DEC sometime in the future.

Mr. Nesbitt advised that he attended the Lakefield Elementary Christmas concert and was amazed at the size of the student choir – 150 students! The place was filled to overflowing and he was happy to see the interest of parents at that level.

Mr. Mabey advised that two groups of PSSCs from the west side are interested in a joint session on mental fitness for their committees. This would also be a chance for them to exchange ideas. Mrs. Watson advised that she will have Pam Miller and Alberta Stanton from the District contact him.

Mrs. McGill-Pierce advised that her PSSC wanted to talk and brainstorm amongst themselves as well. She suggested maybe clustering of PSSCs during the PSSC Forum so that they talk and share as a group. Mr. Fowler advised that we need to look at the timing and format for the PSSC forum next year, beginning in possibly May or June.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Fowler thanked all who attended this evening's Council meeting and advised that the next meeting will be held at the Saint John Education Centre, 490 Woodward Avenue, Saint John on Wednesday, January 14, 2014 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Fowler, Chair

Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary