

**ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)**  
**DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of Meeting – August 19, 2015**

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met on Wednesday, August 19, 2015 at 490 Woodward Avenue Saint John, NB. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

**Council Members:**

Rob Fowler, Wayne Spires, Bob McDevitt, Roger Nesbitt, Stephen Campbell, Larry Boudreau, Gerry Mabey, Charlotte McGill-Pierce, Joanne Gunter, Sherman Ross and Kerry Olinskie.

**Regrets:** Don Cullinan

**ASD-S Staff:**

Zoë Watson, Superintendent; Debbie Thomas, Director of Schools, Saint John Education Centre; John MacDonald, Director Finance and Administration; Paul Smith, Director of Schools, Hampton Education Centre, Suzanne LeBlanc Healey, Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary.

**1. Call to Order/Welcome/Regrets**

Mr. Fowler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Fowler passed on regrets for Mr. Cullinan

**2. Approvals**

**2.1 Approval of the Agenda & Minutes**

Mr. Fowler suggested that we postpone Item 5.5 - the discussion on Surplus Land – Crescent Valley/St. Pius X School - until later in the fall. There being no further questions or concerns regarding the Agenda, he asked that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the amended Agenda be approved. Mr. Mabey seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mr. Fowler referred to the Minutes of the June 10, 2015 meeting and advised that if there were no concerns or questions regarding the Minutes, that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Spires moved that the Minutes be approved. Mrs. McGill-Pierce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

## **2.2 Public Comment**

Shane Borthwick, PSSC Chair from Back Bay Elementary spoke to Council to advise that the PSSC to be open and collaborative with regard to the upcoming Policy 409 meetings for their school. The group is working on questions and gathering basic information in preparation for these meetings. He spoke about the \$300K in upgrades including a new elevator and that no other work is required going forward. He believes their enrolment is up 12% and reiterated that rural schools are important. He encouraged DEC to visit the school and advised that Back Bay Elementary is “just not ready” for closure.

Mr. Fowler advised that he would be happy to meet with the PSSC in advance of the first Policy 409 meeting if they would like. He thanked Mr. Borthwick for his comments.

## **3. Presentations**

### **3.1 Attendance Matters**

Mrs. Watson began the presentation by introducing members of the working group present who have worked on this initiative, including: Marc Godin, Supervisor Data & Accountability; Lori Wall (now Principal at Sussex Regional High School); Beth Horgan, (retired Principal of St. Malachy’s High); and Erica Lane, Community Engagement Coordinator.

She spoke about where this initiative originated (NBTA Forum in 2013) and how it progressed into the program being launched tonight. This included ASD-S working over 2013-14 to consistently record absences in the same manner in all Centres so the data would be reliable. Once this information was available, it was clear that ASD-S needed to address this issue.

Marc Godin reviewed for Council statistics gathered on grades 9-12 and K-8 with regard to the number of days missed and number of suspensions across ASD-S. He explained how the data was calculated and the definitions used for tardy vs. absent within the schools.

He advised that on a daily average, 18.1% of students are absent in grades 9-12; that 187 students (semester 1) and 149 students (semester 2) were absent 40+ days; that absenteeism in these grades has increased from 16.5% in 2013-14 to 18.1% in 2014-15. The percentage of suspensions in grades 9-12 in all three centres have been declining since 2011-12.

In grades K-8, on a daily average, 5.7% of students are absent; that 231 students (semester 1) and 476 students (semester 2) were absent 21+ days; that absenteeism in these grades has actually dropped from 6.1% in 2013-14 to 5.7% in 2014-15 but that there is a lot of tardiness in the K-8 levels. The percentage of suspensions in years K-8 have also been declining since 2011-12.

High schools will receive attendance data every two weeks and elementary and middle schools twice a year going forward.

The next phase involved meetings with high school Principals in February 2015 to discuss beliefs and values about attendance; to share initiatives that have worked to improve attendance and to identify challenges. In April of 2015 similar meetings were held with focus groups of Principals and Vice Principals of elementary and middle schools. In May/June 2015, a focus group was held with students from 7 high schools and 2 middle schools across the District and was facilitated by committee members. These were a 'mixed group' of students in order to get a wide variety of input. Only two questions were asked, 'why do you come to school?', and 'why do you not come to school?' Students were very open with their comments ... facilitators did not 'lead', they let the students speak freely.

Form this exercise a number of points became clear:

- Students need to feel they belong and are part of the school community
- Teachers can make a huge difference
- Teachers can help you if you get behind
- When teachers care, students do not want to disappoint them by not coming to school

Information gained was then shared with Principals & Vice Principals and in September 2015, ASD-S will launch "Attendance Matters" across all three centres. Tools developed include a video, posters, brochure, family letter of introduction, messages for ASD-S website and school websites and on-going use of Twitter & Synervoice. There may also be advertising on City Transit buses in the fall.

All schools will have an attendance strategy as part of their School Improvement Plan and schools and PSSCs will be engaged in the discussions about the initiative and attendance guidelines. ASD-S will provide opportunities for school leaders to share best practices and what is making a difference.

Mr. Fowler thanked Mrs. Watson and her team for their presentation and efforts on this very important initiative.

#### **4. Business Arising from Minutes**

##### **4.1 PSSC Training/Chair Orientation**

Mr. Fowler advised that due to feedback received, we would be holding these events during the evening, and by centre this year instead of a Saturday. He then reviewed the dates for each centre:

- October 13<sup>th</sup> - St. Stephen Education Centre
- October 21<sup>st</sup> - Hampton Education Centre
- October 27<sup>th</sup> - Saint John Education Centre

Mr. Fowler suggested that a sub-committee be formed to plan these events. Mrs. McGill-Pierce, Mr. Mabey, Mr. Spires and Mr. Fowler all agreed to work on this sub-committee.

He advised that from last year's meetings it was identified that the role of the Chair needed to be included in the training. He advised that no Principal should be chairing a PSSC meeting.

He asked that Council members make every effort to attend the event in their area.

## **5. New Business**

### **5.1 Draft Council Meeting Dates for 2015-16**

Mrs. Watson reviewed the dates for the 2015-16 school year. It was suggested that the November meeting be held at Chris Saunders Memorial School and include a tour of the new school. Also, the March meeting date was moved to March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### **5.2 Draft Annual Planning Calendar**

Mrs. Watson reviewed the draft calendar for the 2015-16 year. She emphasized that this document is fluid and open to changes as Council would like throughout the year.

### **5.3 Budget Approval 2015-16**

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the budget for 2015-16. He explained that it is very close to last year's budget and that the DEC is not allowed to show a deficit at year end. He is forecasting a break-even budget. It was noted that last year a big challenge was the replacement salaries and the "Every Day Counts" attendance initiative will roll out in September in the hopes of reducing costs associated with this line item. He then reviewed the surplus/shortfall notes contained in the budget.

Mr. Fowler asked for questions or concerns on the budget document. There being no issues, a motion was made by Mr. Nesbitt and seconded by Charlotte McGill-Pierce that the budget be approved. Motion carried.

### **5.4 Major Capital Projects – 2016-17**

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the report that had been posted with Council's meeting materials for tonight's meeting. Major capital projects for ASD-S are listed as follows:

- Continuation of 470 student New Elementary School Project for West Side Saint John
- Proceeding on approved/agreed recommendations that come out of the Grand Bay/Westfield Study
- Proceeding on approved/agreed recommendations that come out of the Central/North Saint John Study
- Mid-life upgrade for Saint John High School

Mr. Fowler asked for any questions or concerns with regard to the Capital Projects list. There being none, a motion was made by Mr. Spires and seconded Mr. McDevitt to approve the list as submitted. Motion carried. Mr. Boudreau opposed the motion.

### **5.5 Surplus Land – Crescent Valley /St. Piux X School**

Mr. Fowler suggested that we bring this item forward at a meeting later this fall.

### **5.6 Draft School Rental Guidelines and Fee Schedule**

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the two documents that were posted for Council with tonight's meeting materials. He advised that as part of his research, he looked across all provinces to see what was standard practice in other school districts. He also reviewed recent research available from the province of Nova Scotia. He noted that the provinces give priority to youth oriented activities. He advised that Principals will get this new policy next week, for implementation in January, 2016. This delayed start is due to the fact that we will have a new on-line booking system at that time using new "Elixir" software.

The goal for ASD-S was to combine the previous policies of all three centres into one for ASD-S. Rentals are now divided into groups as follows:

- Direct School Services
- Group A – Under 18 Youth Oriented, Not for Profit
- Group B – Under 18 Youth Oriented For Profit and Over 18 Adult Oriented
- Group C – Commercial

Mr. MacDonald reviewed the key points under each group and what the priority will be for requests. The user requesting use of ASD-S space will fill out the necessary paperwork and will be required to pay up front. It was noted that the Principal has the authority to refuse a rental he/she may have concerns about.

Questions from Council included liability concerns, Visa/credit card charges, custodian fees and responsibilities which Mr. MacDonald addressed.

Mr. Fowler asked for any questions or concerns with the rental guidelines and fee schedule. There being none, motion was made by Mr. Spires and seconded by Mr. Nesbitt that the rental guidelines and fee schedule be accepted. Motion carried.

## **6. Information Items**

### **6.1 Superintendent's Report**

Mrs. Watson advised Council of two deaths over the summer months. We had a student from Bayside Middle School pass away as well as a St. Malachy's teacher, Ray O'Donnell from cancer. She asked for a moment of silence in their memory.

She noted that most summer improvement projects had been completed with the exception of the lift at Princess Elizabeth. She thanked all Facilities staff and our Custodians for their hard work during this busy time of the year.

She advised Council that a fire at Fairvale Elementary School saw the loss of two modulars and their contents, as well as a significant amount of playground surface pellets which belonged to the Home & School. She advised that the quick action of the KV Fire Department and our Facilities Department ensured an efficient clean up of the property. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure along with the Department of the Health were looking at the proper way to dispose of the surface pellets.

Mrs. Watson noted that the Chris Saunders Memorial Elementary School would be ready on time but advised that staff would be unable to enter the school until after August 31<sup>st</sup>.

The New West Side School Committee has signed off on the construction plans and are now awaiting the final announcement of the location for the new school in West Saint John.

Mrs. Watson extended her thanks to Suzanne LeBlanc Healey, Director of Curriculum and Instruction and her group for the Summer Learning sessions that took place July 13-17<sup>th</sup>. They were informative and well attended.

Mrs. Watson was happy to advise Council that three schools have received an extra 1.5 fte for Literacy support for the coming year from PALS - Hazen White St. Francis, Princess Elizabeth and Prince Charles.

Mrs. Watson noted the many meetings coming up to get ready for the new school year including New Administrators, Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, all Principals and Vice Principals on August 26<sup>th</sup> and Principals by Centre on August 27<sup>th</sup>. All teachers return on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

ASD-S back to school ad is currently posted on the ASD-S site including information on the Grade 6 and 9 transition days. She advised that Gary Hall, Director Early Childhood Services would be appearing on Rogers Cable to provide tips to parents on getting their children ready for school.

## **6.2 Chairperson's Report & Updates**

Mr. Fowler reminded Council members who attended the Spring Symposium to ensure their expenses were submitted prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> and to also remind any PSSC members to do so as well.

He advised that DEC Chairs met in Shediac last weekend and worked on policies which will be sent out for feedback.

Karen Branscombe Power presented to the group on how the 10 Year Provincial Education Plan Consultations would roll out. Mr. Fowler advised that Council will be responsible for a public session in Saint John. Karen will have handouts available for these meetings.

Mr. Fowler advised that he had received the survey results from the DEC Spring Symposium and that he would have the results posted on the portal. He also advised that both he and Mr. McDevitt would be meeting for a session in Fredericton on Snow Days.

Mr. Fowler asked for a subcommittee to assist with setting up the plans for the Education Plan Consultation meeting. Gerry Mabey, Charlotte McGill-Pierce and Mr. Fowler agreed to work on the event planning.

The next Minister's Forum is set for November 13/14.

### **6.3 Correspondence**

None

### **6.4 Members Notebook**

One Council member asked about the Minutes of the Minister's Forum & Council of DEC Chairs meeting. Mr. Fowler advised that he would send them out.

Mrs. McGill-Pierce reminded Council of the 2016 May elections and asked that if they were not planning to run again, to talk to folks in their subdistricts for other interested parties. She also suggested to the Chair that while meeting on Snow Days that they look across Canada to see what is done in other provinces.

It was suggested that if Council members would like to tour Back Bay or Lawrence Station schools, that they come one half hour earlier than the scheduled Policy 409 meeting times.

## **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, September 9, 2015 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Rob Fowler, Chair

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Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary