

ANGLOPHONE SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT (ASD-S)
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL
Minutes of Meeting – September 9, 2015

The District Education Council (DEC) for Anglophone South School District (ASD-S) met on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 490 Woodward Avenue Saint John, NB. The following Council members and staff were in attendance:

Council Members:

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

Regrets: Bob McDevitt, Kerry Olinskie

ASD-S Staff:

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

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. Olinskie and Mr. McDevitt.

2. Approvals

2.1 Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Fowler asked that we add an item under New Business, (5.2) PSSC Budgets 2015-16 to the Agenda for tonight's meeting. There being no questions or concerns with the amendment to the Agenda, he asked that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the amended Agenda be approved. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2.2 Approval of Minutes

Mr. Fowler referred to the Minutes of the August 19, 2015 meeting and advised that if there were no concerns or questions regarding the Minutes, that a motion be put forward to approve. Mr. Mabey moved that the Minutes be approved. Mrs. McGill-Pierce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2.3 Public Comment

None

3. Presentations

3.1 “Fun Friends”

Gary Hall, Director of Early Childhood Services and Thelma Messer, Healthy Learners Nurse for the Hampton Education Centre addressed Council to update them on the Fun Friends program within ASD-S. Mr. Hall explained that the program is a suite of social and emotional learning programs developed to build emotional resilience. It focuses on cognitive behavioural strategies that equip children and youth with skills to effectively cope with anxiety, stress and challenges. It is for children aged 4 to 7 years and is an evidenced-based, World Health Organization recognized anxiety reduction program.

Statistics show that 15% of preschoolers suffer from atypically high levels of depression and anxiety; 10% of 7 year olds; 15% of 12 year olds and 21% of 17 year olds. Anxiety interferes with normal functioning, often precedes depression and without intervention will likely become chronic. It is important and more effective to intervene early to stop long term effects and adult disorders that arise from this.

The majority of children will feel pressure at some stage in their life. It is important to provide them with effective coping skills to face these challenges and bounce back.

Fun Friends is developmentally sensitive for 4 to 7 year olds. It increases social-emotional competence and decreases worry and emotional distress. An emotional resilience scale is done before and after the program to compare for improvements. The program involves children, their parents, facilitators/teachers in the intervention process. It emphasizes play based activities and experiential learning (ie role play, puppets, games, stories, songs).

Among children who received the Fun Friends program, there was a decrease in anxiety scores, in child behavior difficulties, in behavioural inhibition, and a decrease in parental distress. There was an increase in social and emotional competence and an improvement in parent-child interaction.

A total of \$56,000 has been raised through financial partners including: United Way, IWK, PETL, Fundy Community Foundation, Charlotte Co. Suicide Prevention Committee, Saint John Suicide Prevention Committee, FACE and the Wellness Branch of the Department of Social Development.

This is a unique project in that both Early Childhood educators and Kindergarten teachers have received training. This was done to integrate strategies and develop common language between preschool and school settings. In the Saint John Education Centre, 10 of 23 elementary schools have staff trained in the Fun Friends program; in Hampton, 10 of the 14 elementary schools and in St. Stephen, all elementary schools

have received training (11). Total trained to date - 36 in 2014-2015; 99 in 2015-2016 for a total of 135 (includes 2 ASD-S Psychologists, 3 FACE Staff).

Mr. Fowler thanked Mr. Hall & Ms. Messer for their informative presentation.

4. Business Arising from Minutes

4.1 PSSC Training/Chair Orientation

Mr. Fowler advised that he had received feedback for this session from Mrs. Watson and would add that to the information that the subcommittee is working with to develop this year's sessions.

He suggested the subcommittee would meet on Friday at lunch time for a planning session.

4.2 Provincial 10 year Education Plan:

Mrs. Watson advised that 75+ invitations were sent out to members of the community within the Saint John Education Centre for the upcoming session on September 22nd in Saint John. She reminded Council that there would also be a session in Hampton (Fundy High School, September 29th) and St. Stephen (St. Stephen High School, October 6th). She suggested that if you have any names for invitees, to please let us know. We will provide the invitation lists when complete.

She also advised that the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development would be hosting an Open House in Saint John on September 28th and at Fundy High School on the 29th. These sessions are organized by the Department.

5. New Business

5.1 Open House/PSSC Events:

Mrs. Watson advised that the Open House events for each school are posted on the portal by Education Centre. She suggested that Council members try and attend as many as they can in their own subdistrict. She advised that the Principal will introduce their DEC member at the events.

5.2 PSSC Budgets 2015-16

John MacDonald, Director of Finance & Administration advised that all schools receive a minimum of \$500, regardless of size. He reviewed the budget provided with tonight's meeting materials and advised that schools have been allotted the same amount per student as last year and that it has been allocated based on September 2014 enrolment numbers.

Mr. Fowler asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the proposed PSSC budget for 2015-16. There being no questions or concerns, he asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Nesbitt moved that the PSSC budget for 2015-16 be approved. Seconded by Mr. Spires. Motion carried.

6. Information Items

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Mrs. Watson advised that many excited grade 6 and grade 9 students entered their new schools yesterday – they had the opportunity to participate in assemblies, meet staff, learn about noon and after school activities offered at their schools, have a tour, some students received t-shirts, staff discussed “Attendance Matters,” and reviewed other procedures and policies of their schools. Half of the kindergarten students began school yesterday – by Thursday all students will be with us.

Mrs. Watson wanted to extend a thank you to the facilities staff in schools and at the District level for all of the work done through July and August; we had a couple of emergencies but worked through those and all schools opened on time with the exception of the new Chris Saunders Memorial School which will open on Thursday. This is a K-5 school of about 330 students in English Prime and FI; a very exciting time for staff and families of the new school. The school is located next to Quispamsis Middle School.

Mrs. Watson spoke of a new program this year, “ATTENDANCE MATTERS”. ASD-S is promoting to students and families, the importance of good attendance and being on time for school. A working group has invested considerable time since last winter on this initiative, and there have been opportunities for administrators to discuss their beliefs and values, their successes and challenges. Beth Horgan and Lori Wall conducted 7 mixed focus groups of high school students and two of middle school students to discuss why students come to school and why they do not. We have posters for our schools, a video on the ASD-S website featuring our own students, and each K-8 student will receive a brochure. High schools have received multiple copies of the brochure to be used at open house events or meetings with parents. This is not a campaign to blame anyone – it is to bring awareness to the fact that “ATTENDANCE MATTERS.” High schools will receive updated attendance information every two weeks and twice a year at K-8; this data can be used in discussions with ESS, the school based Core Leadership Team and PSSC.

ASD-S will continue with the priorities as identified in the District Improvement Plan. Literacy, numeracy and science remain a priority – our leads are focused on K-3 in literacy and at upper elementary in numeracy. Assessment remains a priority and this is applicable to all areas of the curriculum – this work will be important as we move toward the implementation of the new Student Information System called Power School, which will eventually replace Win School. Chris Sherwood, formerly of the St. Stephen Centre will take the lead as our Coordinator of Power School over the next two years – the timeline for implementation will be determined this fall in consultation with the Department staff. Chris was very involved with the ASD-W implementation and is well known to high

schools with “Bring Your Own Device” and the student laptop program. He has worked the last five years at the Department.

Plans are being developed for the October 8 and 9 Professional Learning Days – October 8 everyone will be engaged in discussions and professional learning on mental health which is a focus of the District Improvement Plan of ASD-S. October 9th is curriculum focused with topics set by ASD-S.

Ann Marie Churchill, a Psychologist from Newfoundland who specializes in stress and anxiety, spoke to all Saint John teachers on September 1st and all Kennebecasis Valley, Hampton and Belleisle teachers on September 2nd on coping with stress and anxiety as an adult. This was organized by the local NBTA branches.

ASD-S will continue our emphasis on mental health and mental fitness; the focus will continue on professional learning for staff and on programs to provide students with the tools they need - some schools are pilots for “On the Right Track”, “Mind Up”, and “Fun Friends”.

Many open houses are being held this week and next! The dates and times for the open house events for all schools has been posted on the portal by Education Centre. Council members were encouraged to attend as many as they can in their subdistrict.

As part of our District Improvement Plan, we will soon have a parent/family survey on our ASD-S site and on each school website to collect feedback on communication – we want to determine how families prefer to receive information from the school, teachers and the District. We will also have a PDF available for Principals to use as we know that not all families have access to the websites.

Mark the date – the Provincial Student Leadership Conference meets on November 5th. This provides Superintendents and DEC an opportunity to meet with Student Council leaders from our District. It will be held in Fredericton.

Question arose on the delay of the opening of Chris Saunders Memorial – (ie complaint re contractors being late) and should a complaint be made. Mr. Fowler explained that there has been a marked improvement in projects being completed on time since Mr. Webber (Department of Transportation and Infrastructure) made some changes in the tendering process, but that he can bring it up.

A Council member asked if there had been any instances of ‘bullying’ this fall. The Superintendent advised that Principals have made it clear that ‘rookying’ would not be tolerated and there seems to have been a marked improvement.

6.2 Chairperson’s Report & Updates

Mr. Fowler advised Council that he and Mr. McDevitt attended a meeting in Fredericton recently to discuss Storm Days. He reported that a committee from the Department had met for a number of weeks prior in order to provide feedback to the meeting.

He advised that there seemed to be sense from the participants that storm days are not as much of an issue as general attendance. He said many good points were raised and we will see what comes as result of this meeting.

He reminded Council that the next Minister's Forum is set for November 13/14. This will also include a meeting with the DEC Chairs, Superintendents and the new President of the Anglophone NBTA (Guy Arsenault) to discuss where they might be able to work together.

6.3 Correspondence

None

6.4 Members Notebook

Mr. Boudreau asked if we required a subcommittee to review our DEC policies. Mr. Fowler advised that as the policies come up for review, if there are any concerns to bring them forward at that time. A subcommittee could be formed at that time, if required.

Mr. Fowler advised Council that Stacey Brown, DEC Manager, would be sending some blanket-nature policies to us for our feedback in the near future.

Mrs. Gunter asked if the Nutrition Policy could be part of the upcoming PSSC training sessions. Mr. Fowler advised yes, it could be.

Mr. Spires advised that he attended an open house at St. Stephen Elementary and they had great attendance. The former PSSC Chair and the Principal worked together to ensure the event was a success. He suggested that PSSC Chairs should remain in place until a new one is elected the following school year. Mr. Fowler advised this could work, unless it was the end of the Chair's term. He went on to suggest that it might be worthwhile to have PSSC elect their new Chair at their June meeting.

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, October 14, 2015 beginning at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Fowler, Chair

Clare Murphy, Recording Secretary