

District PAC Meeting for December 13, 2007

In attendance:

Kirsten Brandreth	- DPAC President & GW Graham
Debbie Phillips	DPAC Secretary & Vedder Middle
Charlie Hawkes	Unsworth Elementary
Mary Giesler	Sardis Senior / Vedder Middle
Laurie Lawrin	Chilliwack Middle School
Suzanne Gresham	Chilliwack Senior
Martha Wiens	School Trustee

Kirsten opened the meeting with introductions and requested a motion to accept the minutes from November's meeting and to adopt the agenda. Mary put forth the motion and Laurie seconded and it was carried.

Heather Brezden was unable to attend to present the treasurers report but Kirsten advised there was \$3224.47 in the General Account and \$2622 in the Gaming Account of which \$2500 was received in November. She advised that we had received funds from the School District for Parent Education which will be a great help towards funding our Parent Education event in early 2008.

Martha Wiens touched on the Trustee's Meeting the week before and brought up the Middle/High School review which was presented to them as well as the Early Literacy program that is being implemented.

She also advised that the District of Chilliwack had offered to pay for a study with regards to Evans Elementary and the traffic issues that are going to come with the flyover past the school. She said that Evans Elementary PAC, the District and school have agreed to follow the recommendations that are made.

Committee Reports:

Ed. Policy and Planning : Laurie reported that their meeting was held on November 18th and the majority of the time was spent on the Healthy School Lunch policy and what can and can't be served in the schools. The guidelines were provided at the meeting and we were advised it could be accessed on line as well. Laurie advised that there has been a good response from parents and the general public on-line and it is hoped there can be more communication this way. No time was available for the Code of Conduct at this meeting.

Curriculum and Instruction: DPAC – December 13, 2007
Curriculum & Instruction Report – Mary Giesler

Mary-Anne Smirle presented a handout titled ‘Tilting the Scales’, Supporting Diverse Learners. It sets out the process and programs used to meet the needs of all learners.

Aboriginal Education:

Nerine Graham updated us on the Aboriginal Kindergarten Program. There are 53 students at three schools, Evans, Bernard and Central.

Brenda Point did a presentation on the Enhancement Agreement. She is currently meeting with all the different Aboriginal groups in our School District. The Enhancement Agreement is a commitment made by the school district, all local Aboriginal communities, and the Ministry of Education, to work together to improve the success of all Aboriginal students.

Curriculum Department:

Ruth Wiebe talked about the District Literacy Plan. 15 – 20 primary teachers are working with Ruth to review early literacy in the District. They don’t want assessment time to take away from teaching time. We are developing our own formative assessments. These include SMART Reading and 1st Steps in Math. All schools will use the same assessment tools.

We talked about the shortage of psychologists. They make more money in private practice than the School District would ever be able to pay. Some parents have asked if the District would reimburse costs if they had assessments done privately rather than waiting for the District. No.

There are more students entering kindergarten with no social or language skills, never been to a dentist, for an eye exam, etc.

BAA Courses:

We passed two recommendations on to the Board. The first was to change YCED from a one credit course to two credits. This is an orientation course that all students taking on-line courses need to take. The other was to approve TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as a course. Students whose first language is not English are required to pass this test for entrance into college or university.

Student Services: Debbie advised the meeting was held Nov. 28th and the majority of this meeting was spent discussing how little the T/A formula has changed over the past 20 years. There has been some tweaking here and there but all in all the formula is much the same as always.

The demographic of our students and the classrooms have changed dramatically over the past 20 years with ESL students and a gigantic increase in the number of students needing assistance but not “designated” as such so no additional help is in place.

It was agreed that an overhaul of the whole program may be recommended but first it is necessary to break out where the money that is received goes specifically and Mary Ann will try and get some answers to that question.

Committee members were asked to use their “contacts” in the province to see how other districts fund programs that we would like to implement but don’t have the funds. The money may be there and just need to be juggled around.

Currently we receive approx \$7,000,000 in additional funding for special needs and our T/A support uses \$6,800,000 of that money.

Note: 1 FTE Teaching Assistant costs our district \$42,518 including benefits each year.

BCCPAC Parent Rep – Phil was unable to attend our meeting but Kirsten was able to advise us that a satisfaction survey will be going out to parents, students and teachers in early 2008 in specific grades. They are looking for current feedback on how things are going. It is hoped everyone who is asked, will complete the surveys.

She also made mention of the BCCPAC Newsletter and if everyone was receiving it by email that is interested. Discussion in this newsletter included the Resolution process and she briefly touched on how that works.

Old Business:

Pac List Serve : Advised PAC presidents are now able to access the List serve and Kirsten hopes they all make use of it. She really likes how she gets great ideas by using the DPAC list serve.

School Trustee’s Dinner – November 29th’s dinner was well attended and very enjoyable. The topics discussed by the parents will be collated and shared in the New Year. Kudos need to go to Sardis Senior students and staff for a wonderful meal.

Teaching Excellence Awards: There are 2 separate awards (one Provincially and one Federally) awarded for outstanding teachers. We all know Chilliwack district has some outstanding teachers and it is hoped Parents and students will nominate their favourite.

Middle/Secondary Review – As earlier mentioned the review was presented to the board and there has been a lot of legwork that has gone in to its development with the input from many students, parents and teachers. The review identified the problems but didn’t really have the answers... that will be the next step and that needs to be tackled soon.

BCCPAC Fall Conference: Kirsten touched on the conference she attended in Victoria and how there was so much valuable information to gather and it was well worth attending. Due to time constraints, Kirsten will present the official report in the near future.

It was decided that as we need a minimum of 6 weeks to book any of the BCCPAC guest speakers we will carry forward our Parent education workshop until February 2008 when there is more time to get informative speakers and better weather to aid in attendance.

New Business:

School Websites: It was brought up that there is a real lack of consistency in how the websites for each school are updated and the ones that are current and up to date are usually taken over by a teacher at the school who has the “knack” and interest otherwise they are out of date. Who is responsible for the websites? The district or individual schools?

Ministry of Education Parent Conference - The ministry is holding a conference on January 28,2008 in Vancouver and they are looking for parent delegates. If anyone is interested there is a link on the District website to apply and then they will be picking from the list randomly.

School Budget Meetings for 2009 : There will be 4 meetings held this year open to all the interest groups with the first being held at The Kipp Centre on January 24,2008 from 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. It is hoped that the same people attend all 4 meetings as they are consecutive and ever expanding.

Networking:

Welcome to Charlie and his family as they are new to our District and BC as having moved in from Edmonton.

Discussion was brought up with regards to the traffic and the students at Unsworth and Kirsten mentioned the walking school bus program developed by ICBC and the Road Sense Group. Advised everyone to check out the site at www.icbc.com to see if it is something that may work for them as it worked well at Promontory.

Laurie Lawrin brought up the Fresh fruit and Veggie program at CMS and how positive it is going! Some of the students developed original artwork and presented it to the volunteers of the program for all their hard work. There are 673 students at Chilliwack Middle School and they really like the program that provides different fresh fruits and vegetables for all to try.

School Planning Councils: Discussion around how many attended the training session and what they felt was gained by going? Some found it very helpful and others are unsure how to gather/read the data. It was suggested that their school principal is the one to approach and have explain what kind of data is available and together decide what information is going to be relevant for their school. Kirsten advised that all schools should be had their first Meeting by the end of January.

The motion was put forward by Laurie Lawrin to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Charlie.

Next Meeting – January 17th and the Kipp Centre.