

# LAMBTON KENT DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

January 19, 2009

### Video Conference – Sarnia and Chatham Education Centres

**Present:** Gayle Stucke, Director of Education; Scott McKinlay, Chair, Carmen McGregor, Vice-Chair; Steve McNamara, Colonel Cameron; Wende Badder, John McGregor S.S.; Jo-Anne Snow, John N. Given/C.K.S.S.; Lynn LeFaive, Johnston Memorial; Tracey Machan, King George (S); Dave Macko, Ridgeview Moravian; Verna Ferencik, Tilbury District H.S.; Peggy Johnson, Winston Churchill

**Regrets:** Judy Krall, Alexander Mackenzie S.S.; Tammy St. Louis, Kinnwood Central; Tim Houle, North Lambton S.S.; Heather Simpson, Ridgetown Public School

#### Welcome – Peggy Johnson

- Peggy welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

#### Business Arising

- The Aamjiwnaang First Nation approved proceeding with the voluntary self-identification. Three of the four First Nations have now approved the process.
- PIC members were asked to consider a review of the Terms of Reference. At the end of the school year 7 of the 12 members will finish their maximum three-year term per the Terms of Reference. It was suggested that perhaps the document could be revised to allow members to stay on beyond the three-year term if there is not sufficient interest from other school council representatives to serve on the committee. The amendment would also ensure some consistency from year to year. It was recommended that Tracey Machan be permitted to stay on as a Co-Chair for a second year to allow for a smooth transition. **Sue will send out the Terms of Reference with the next agenda package to allow for informed discussion.** It was noted that in some private sector organizations the terms for committee memberships allow for a provision for varying membership terms to ensure that there is no more than a set number of members.

#### Binder Project Update – Verna Ferencik

- At the start of the year a sub-committee was formed to investigate the development of a resource binder to assist school councils. Committee members are Verna Ferencik, Judy Krall, Lynn LeFaive, and Tammy St. Louis.
- An overview was shared on the types of documents proposed for inclusion in the binder. Input was requested on a title for the resource tool. The binder would be divided into sections and contain information about the Board's Parent Involvement Committee; general information on school councils; code of conduct, conflict resolution guidelines, goal setting, sample principal profile and school council annual report. One section would include the Board's mission statement, policies and regulations relevant to school councils and information from the Ministry of Education's School Council handbook. Also included will be a list of website links to the Lambton Kent District School Board, the Ministry of Education, People for Education, School Advocate. A section will be set aside for additional information such as agendas and minutes.
- A PIC logo will be designed for the binder.

- **It was recommended that the binder include copies of only the documents related directly to school councils and include a link to the Board's website page listing all policies and regulations. PIC members supported this recommendation as the Board's policies and regulations are reviewed and revised on a regular basis.**
- **Verna will forward the draft documents to PIC members for review.**

#### Early Years Flyer

- At the November meeting it was agreed to provide funding towards the cost of purchasing books for inclusion in the EY registration package along with a letter acknowledging PIC's donation and outlining the committee's mandate. This year JK/SK Registration is being held on January 27 and 28; however the books will not be distributed until the parent interviews in spring. It was recommended that a PIC flyer be developed to include tips on how parents can influence their child's education and relevant website links (LKDSB, Ministry of Education, local health units, Premier Suites software). The flyer will also include some parent volunteer and student photos. **Sue will follow up regarding obtaining photos.**

#### Best Practices / Success Stories - Change in Culture at Winston Churchill - Peggy Johnson

- Peggy Johnson shared background information on the change in culture she has witnessed at Winston Churchill School from the time she and her family moved to Chatham 7 years ago until present.
- Initially there was no stigma attached to Winston Churchill; however slipping EQAO results and moral issues impacted the tone of the school and the school council.
- Over the past two years the new principal, staff and parents have worked together to change the culture of the school. The school community has focused on a number of initiatives including the Tribes philosophy, the development of family groupings within the school, a sports camp day and other family activities. The school family concept involves students from Gr. 1 to 8 being grouped together in tribes with a teacher representative. Monthly assemblies are held where groups focus on areas such as empathy and anti-bullying strategies.
- There has been a definite shift in morale through the team efforts and cooperation of staff, students and parents under the leadership of the Principal. Assessment results are improving. SMART boards in the school have helped to improve student achievement.
- The school hopes to continue the momentum through encouraging volunteers and hosting family and school events.
- Clarification was provided on the identification of OFIP (Ontario Focused Intervention Program) schools. OFIP was established through the Ministry's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to provide additional supports for schools with low assessment results or schools that are moving in a downward trend in provincial testing. Last year six schools in the Board were identified as OFIP schools. This year only two schools were named as official OFIP schools; however the Board identified other schools to receive increased support.
- **Lynn LeFaive will speak at the next meeting on transition activities for students during the consolidation process for Devine and Johnston.**

#### Suicide Prevention Workshop

- Last year Trustees McKinlay and Dodman had the opportunity to attend the Suicide Prevention Workshop presented by students and staff representatives from Dunnville S.S. Students are trained to identify other students who are experiencing problems and who could be at potential risk. Of the approximate 600 students at the school, almost half have been trained in suicide prevention and how to talk to fellow students experiencing problems. The workshop was highly recommended.

- Representatives from Dunnville S.S. will deliver the Suicide Prevention Workshop on Thursday, April 30 at Country View Golf Course. Each school will be asked to send two student representatives and a guidance counsellor to the session. Trustees and members of PIC will also be invited to attend.
- An overview of the presentation format was provided. Following the workshop students and counselors will take information back to their principal to discuss the training becoming a school initiative. Based on feedback, the training could also become a Board wide initiative.
- At the November PIC meeting it was recommended that a portion of central PIC funding be used to subsidize a secondary school initiative as funds were being donated towards the cost of Early Years books. Feedback was requested on donating approximately \$1000 in funding towards the cost of the Suicide Prevention Workshop. PIC representatives could bring greetings at the event. It was felt that the training would be a good PRO Grant project proposal for next year. The program focuses on the importance of mental well-being and could be looked at as an extension of dealing with potential bullying issues. It was felt that the program would assist elementary students with the Gr. 8 to 9 transition process. **Sue will bring the PIC account balance to the next meeting. Further discussion will take place at the next meeting.**

### Role of Trustees

- PIC Co-chairs have been invited to attend a meeting with the Ministry's Governance Review Committee on February 20. The Governance Review is being carried out to examine the role of Trustees, modernize the Education Act and look at appropriate format and content with respect to student achievement. **Peggy and Tracey will attend. Sue will forward a copy of the Governance Consultation Paper to members of PIC. Comments or input should be directed to Peggy or Tracey prior to February 20.** Verna will also be attending as PIC Chair for the Greater Essex District School Board.
- As part of the Governance Review, the Ministry will consult with all stakeholder groups including Directors of Education, Trustee Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Parent representatives. Carmen McGregor will attend the trustee session with past Chair Jane Bryce.
- Vice Chair, Carmen McGregor provided an overview on the role of Trustees. Trustees are elected for a four-year term as part of the Municipal election. They are paid a stipend for their position on the Board. The Board has developed a Trustee Handbook as a resource for Trustees. The role of Trustees involves establishing the Board's mission and vision statement, setting and approving policies, regulations and Board by-laws, evaluating, recruiting and hiring for the Director of Education, prioritizing the allocation of funds as part of the annual budget development process and approval of the final budget. A number of Trustees are on standing committees such as the Suspension and Expulsion Review Committee and the various Negotiations Committees. All Trustees have committee work and are required to attend Board Meetings.
- Chair, Scott McKinlay stressed the importance of Trustees understanding that the role focuses around policy setting and not the authority for day to day operations. The protocol for dealing with constituent calls was reviewed.

### Director's Update

#### Pupil Accommodation

- Copies of the Board's policy and regulations *Pupil Accommodation/School Closure* were distributed and reviewed. The Board is required to follow the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. An overview was shared on items included in the October Pupil Accommodation Report.

- Timelines for the pupil accommodation process were reviewed. In 2007 a committee consisting of all stakeholder groups was established to develop the Board's School Valuation Template which is used by the Accommodation Review Committee in the accommodation process.
- Under the new guidelines, the Ministry has made it onerous for boards to close schools. The Ministry provides top up funding to rural and single community schools if they are below capacity and provides funding for a full-time principal, secretary and custodian at each site. Technology such as e-learning is making small secondary schools more viable.
- The only time an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) is not required is in the case where schools are being consolidated on a new site. This was not the case with the Devine and Johnston consolidation as the new school is being constructed on the Johnston site.
- Parents and school councils can be assured that if their school is placed "under review" there is a thorough consultation process that must be adhered to. The fundamental change in process is that recommendations to the Board now come from the ARC whereas in the past they came from Senior Administration.
- It was noted that the Board closed 11 schools in the first years of amalgamation.
- Lynn LeFaive spoke briefly to the pupil accommodation process at Devine and Johnston stressing that the process provides an opportunity for all voices to be heard.
- The Board is faced with issues such as declining enrolment and the number of schools spread over a fairly vast area which results in resources being spread very thin.
- Ideally it is hoped that an ARC will reach consensus around the recommendation to Board; however if this is not possible the recommendation of the majority of committee members would be presented.
- Comments shared supporting the revised pupil accommodation process and the establishment of Accommodation Review Committees.
- **A copy of the ARC template will be shared electronically with the next agenda. Lynn LeFaive will bring a copy of the condensed version.**
- The Director advised that Jim Costello will be attending the February 23 PIC meeting as she is unable to attend.

#### Networking / Challenges and Opportunities

- The cost to replace the bulbs in SMART Boards was noted. PIC members were encouraged to stress the benefit of SMART Boards with secondary principals as they are more prevalent in elementary schools. A staff sub-committee has been formed to review how IT dollars are spent. In the past school computers were purchased based on a ratio. The Committee is looking at the benefit of purchasing of more laptops, SMART Boards and other equipment and fewer desktop machines.
- Timelines for the release of school budgets was shared. The budgets are not released until the Board receives the Revised Estimates based on the October 31 Enrolment Report. Ministry funding is based on two count dates, October 31 and March 31.
- The question was raised whether resources are shared among family of schools or with schools in other districts and whether there is dialogue between secondary schools and local colleges around the use of facilities. Community groups are permitted to use school gymnasiums and auditoriums through the Community Use of Facilities program. The use of automotive shops is not permitted due to liability issues. The use of facilities is negotiated at the school level and not at the Board level. It was noted that in Sarnia Lambton the secondary school PAIRS Conference is held at Lambton College each year.

- Restoration Masters, a world renowned vehicle restoration company, has partnered with secondary schools in the Chatham Kent providing students an opportunity to work on classic vehicle and gain experience in this field of employment. A portion of the profits from the sale of the vehicles will be donated back to the schools. Board staff investigated liability issues and how the program could be tied to curriculum. Information will be presented to the Board as a good news story.
- The Principals and School Councils of King George VI Sarnia, Errol Road and Cathcart Schools have coordinated a Media Violence Workshop similar to the October 23 workshop.
- The Ministry is expected to announce soon the approval of school PRO Grants.
- Frustration was expressed around the need for a change in staff at some schools to initiate a change in culture. The Director explained that administrators are typically assigned to schools for 4 to 6 years and that teachers apply to posting for vacancies. It was clarified that teachers are not required to participate in extra-curricular activities outside of regular school hours.
- Tracey Machan indicated that the King George School Council had T-shirts made up for staff and held a breakfast for staff to thank them for their efforts. Simple gestures such as this helped to change the culture at the school

#### Future Meeting Dates

- February 23 – Video Conference – Sarnia and Chatham Ed. Centres – 6:30 p.m.
- April 16 – School Council Chairs – L.C.C.V.I. – 7:00 p.m. PIC will discuss possible agenda topics at the February 23 meeting. It was noted that parent consultation is required as part of the annual budget development process.
- May 4 – Dinner Meeting – Chatham
- Introductory Meeting – Sarnia Education Centre – early June with the date to be confirmed at the next meeting.

#### Negotiations Update – Gayle Stucke

- Factual information is posted on the Board's website under Contract Negotiations Updates.
- An update was provided on the status of negotiations with ETFO. A province-wide strike vote will take place on February 13. The atmosphere in elementary schools continues to be positive.
- OSSTF has reached a provincial table agreement. A local meeting is scheduled on January 21. The Board is very optimistic that an agreement will be reached with OSSTF prior to the January 30 deadline.
- Locally school boards are tied to the funding set out under the provincial framework agreements.

#### Other Business/Future Agenda Items

- 2009/2010 PIC Committee – Recruiting New Members

#### Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be held February 23 beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Video Conference Rooms at the Sarnia and Chatham Education Centres.

Adjournment: 9:02 p.m.

Sue Fraser, Recording Secretary