

SBES School Council
MINUTES
Wednesday, September 25, 2013

Attendees: Sam Itani, Andrea Borysiuk, Joelle Shen, Vicki Hoare, Bill Moshenko, Amanda Manning, Heather Deveaux

As the longest standing member of Council, Sam has stepped up tonight to chair this meeting, and has indicated that if anyone would like the role, she is more than willing to step back! (elected Chair by acclaim!)

Introductions – attendees took a moment to introduce themselves around the table

Role of School Councils

School Councils ensure that parents have a role in our children’s education as an advisory board by offering our thoughts to the school and, through our principal, to the Board, to help inform their decisions. Councils discuss school programs, new initiatives, offer specific input when requested by the Board (as will be discussed tonight), liaise with the parent community of the school and fairly represent their views. The overall purpose is to improve student achievement and enhance accountability of the school system to the parents.

There are print and electronic resources available that council members can access to explain these goals, responsibilities and role more fully. A number of members indicated interest in obtaining a copy of the handbook.

Action: Sam to get copies of booklets and have available at next meeting.

Membership on School Council is generally for a one-year terms. There is a ‘formal’ elections process that we have never really followed; we have been fairly informal in our recruitment efforts, which seems to be working so far.

Composition of Council:

The council is comprised of a Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, Community Liaison, Teacher Liaison, the Principal of the school, and Parent Members.

For 2013, those roles will be filled by:

Chair – Sam

Co-Chair – Vicki

Secretary – Heather

Community Representative – Jo McArthur did this last year, perhaps she will be willing to continue in this role? Anyone else we should consider asking to fill this role? The CR does not need to be a parent of the school, but can be.

Teacher Representative – Andrea will work on recruiting a staff rep.

Parent Members – Amanda Manning, Joelle Shen, Bill Moshenko, others who are not here tonight

Communications housekeeping

- The group was asked if anyone had trouble with communications by email. No objections. Also, no objections were raised to the email list being visible to all other members of the Council.
- No objections were raised to the sharing of council names being shared in school communications – websites, newsletters, displayed at the school, etc.

Joint JDH/SBES Open House

By all accounts this event was a great success, very well attended from the SBES perspective. Teachers gave a count of families from their class that attended, and anecdotally about 75% of families attended. Lots of positive feedback from families and staff alike.

What went well:

- Feeding people was great
- Very few leftovers! (a couple of melons were left uncut, donated to Food for Kids program. Leftover corn was “doggie-bagged” and sent home with families, cookies were gone first, apples were a huge hit, also ‘sold out’!)
- Weather was fabulous!
- Central gathering point was wonderful, lots of interaction between kids, parents and families from both schools, lots of mingling. Having something for the kids to do (playground) gave parents a chance to converse.
- Holding Open House on the same night as JDH is optimal for everyone

What we could improve:

- Butter (or substitute) & salt available for the corn, or different food offerings?
- Change the night to Thursday – it was a little bit of a late night for kids/teachers for a mid-week event.
- Handout for families with info on both JDH/SBES to welcome families to visit both schools, no matter what school kids go to. Include maps of both schools, and a welcome, to invite families to visit both schools, no matter which school their child attends.
- Highlighting of “new initiatives”, maybe offer a demonstration eg. Drumfit.
- Have planning, food ordering done in May or June, have that completely wrapped up so that the only thing to deal with in early September is details and tweaking, assigning of tasks.

Principal's Corner

New building addition:

- The new classrooms are fantastic, large, well designed and stocked. There are a few kinks and issues are still being worked out, but nothing really serious.

- The windows are excellent, low enough for little children to see out of!
- Outdoor classroom is a big hit. Would like to look into having holes drilled for umbrellas. (fundraising?)
- New Driveway: People are getting used to the new driveway and drop-off area. One-way traffic makes it safer. Early bus picks up right at the main doors. Extra parking spaces have been added, relieving congestion and parking issues at pickup/drop off times.

Newsletter:

- A lot of time goes in to putting the newsletter together, and we know that many parents aren't really reading it.
- A couple of small notes have been sent out with children through their classrooms, on bright paper. Perhaps going to snippets of information as needed, rather than a four-to-eight page whopper once a month? Do we keep the printed newsletter, change it to something else, move toward facebook or social media?
- We need to give this a little more thought, have a few more people in attendance, get some ideas generated and have a full discussion/decision at the October meeting.
- Can we survey parents and staff before the next meeting, to find out how they would prefer to hear from us and/or their school? Council members can discuss this among their friends and networks.
- Perhaps Andrea could send a single question survey home to parents, and see if we get much response before we reconvene to discuss?
 - Sample: "We are re-thinking how we communicate with you, the parents, and would like to hear your opinion. How do you prefer to get your information from the school or School Council? [Current monthly newsletter is fine / Shorter, timely notes sent home with my child / electronically: options – email, website, facebook, other(specify)]"

Allergy Awareness:

Stuart Baker continues to refine its preventative planning for food allergic students.

- There is a school board template letter that goes out to families at the beginning of the school year. Andrea is uncertain if it serves the purpose for which it was intended. It is possibly not generating the empathy that it could, and is perhaps less than clear as to what parents are expected to do once they read this letter.
- Teachers then also send home a more specific letter to the parents in their class, listing the specific allergens, to build awareness of what allergies exist in their classroom.
- The school is putting up signage at classroom entrances, with pictures of the allergen with the words.
- There are safety plans for each food-allergic child (and there are quite a large number of them!), school-wide policies being put into place to prevent

allergic reactions. (eg, photos of allergic children, both in and out of winter gear).

- Teachers are being trained in managing allergies, specific to each child. Teachers are sharing information from one year to the next.

MindUp Curriculum:

This has been rolled out through all the classes and grades. Some teachers were a little nervous or uncertain of this program initially, but in delivering the curriculum they are seeing the results. Andrea is altering her approach according to things she has learned.

DrumFit:

Exercise, dance, fitness, release of energy. This program has been exciting to both staff and students. Even sound-sensitive children and doing this program successfully and having fun!

Parent Resource Library

- Joelle asked whether there were funds to improve upon/build the parent resource library. Andrea indicated that if there were great resources out there that we want to consider for the library, we will find the funds, either through school or council funding.
- Joelle is interested in inclusion and diversity issues, and handed off some lists of books that could be considered, specifically pertaining to LGBTQ issues and stories, but there are many other subjects in the area of inclusiveness issues. She forwarded a booklet of suggested additions for the library.
- Heather suggested that we send home a note to Kinder families (new to the school) to let them know that the library exists for their use, and how to go about accessing it.
- The library list is available online, but could be improved upon.

PRO Grant Update:

We obtained a PRO (Parents Reaching Out) Grant of \$1000 last year, on the basis that we would hold a workshop or parent engagement activity on a subject matter derived from the results of a parent survey. The survey we sent out to parents came back with the following priorities identified.

1. Inclusion/Diversity, Self esteem confidence, Resilience
2. Embracing a healthy lifestyle
3. Enhancing Communications with parents

Disbursement of PRO Grant funds to be discussed further at next meeting.

Future Council Meetings:

Third Wednesday of the month still works for everyone, still at 5:30-6:30 time slot.

Food and child care are still good incentives, and worth keeping. Council supported providing pizza at no charge to attendees for future meetings in hopes that it will attract others to join/attend.

Ministry of Education *a facilitated flipchart exercise*

The MOE has asked us to consider a number of questions for the Ontario's Education Strategy / Community Consultation process.

1. *What are the skills, knowledge, and characteristics students need to succeed after they have completed school and how do we better support all learners in their development?*
 - Social Skills
 - Opportunities for social development
 - Financial Skills
 - Resilience
 - Educating kids for jobs that don't exist yet!
 - Empowerment

2. *What does student well-being mean to you and what is the role of the school in supporting it?*
 - Protection / Safety
 - Acceptance & belonging
 - Open minds/exposure to a wide variety of experiences, cultures, lifestyles, mindsets
 - Being prepared for school
 - Balance
 - Opportunities

3. *What opportunities exist to close gaps and increase equity to support all children and students in reaching their full potential?*
 - Exposure to experience or schools of thought that may be outside a student's 'normal'
 - Not as many opportunities in smaller rural communities
 - Training for parents/staff/community in diversity/inclusion/awareness
 - Outdoor education is a big opportunity available here
 - Vibrant arts community
 - Gaps are happening outside the school and need to be addressed to make things equitable to all
 - Food bank – increases inclusion
 - Clothing (ASES has a second hand clothing store)
 - Free after school recreational program (Point in Time), Family Fun night
 - Transportation can be an issue to inclusion

4. *How does the education system need to evolve as a result of changes to childcare and full day kindergarten?*
 - More integration of older w/ younger children to help out and develop their empathy skills
 - More blended classes (multiple grades)
 - Regular naptime/quiet time for Kinders
 - Before school programming in addition to after school programming
 - Consider adult bus monitors

5. *What can we do to keep students engaged, foster their curiosity & creativity and help them develop a love of life-long learning?*
 - Take them outside more, more engaged in surrounding environment
 - More experiential learning, less desk time
 - Purposeful planning
 - Inquiry/interest-led learning (allow children a say)

6. *How can we use technology more effectively in teaching and learning?*
 - Lessons/goals online for parents and children to see in advance
 - Typing programs
 - Tablets/touch screen technology
 - Social media savvy
 - Parent workshops on technology and social media

7. *Opportunities for partnership that can enhance the student experience, and how can they benefit parents, educators and our partners, too.*
 - Kids doing volunteer work, as part of classroom time
 - Partnerships with artists, outdoor educators
 - Parents with specific skill sets who could be tapped to volunteer to teach a class on what they do or know. Specific requests for types of volunteer work/opportunities.
 - Make contact with “industry” or corporations for funding/partnership opportunities

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 16th, 5:30 - 6:30

Meeting Dates for 2013 School Year:

Oct 16, 2013
 Nov 20, 2013
 Jan 15, 2014
 Feb 19, 2014
 Apr 16, 2014
 May 21, 2014
 Jun 18, 2014