

Ward H Council Network
Minutes for November 4, 2009 Dinner Meeting

Present: Brookside (Debra Scharff), DS MacKenzie (Jane Reid), Earl Buxton (Sara Hiebert, Judy Wilkie), GP Nicholson (Terri Rolfson), Harry Ainlay (Karen Hann), Lillian Osborne (Margot Hrynyk), Richard Secord (Terry Connolly), Westbrook (Teresa Harder, Shelley Robertson)

Out of a “question” basket came four questions, three of which we discussed before heading off to the Centre of Education for the School Council Training Workshop.

What do other schools do for “School Spirit”?

Lillian Osborne: Created a School Song (very energizing) and established a Cheer Team. Every student has to sign up for a club.

Harry Ainlay: Lots of sports provide focus for spirit. Also, Student Union is a core group aimed at building and promoting school spirit. There are lots of clubs at Ainlay so that there is something for everyone (but still, not all kids get involved).

Brookside: Student Council works on “Crazy Days.” Also, 40th anniversary this year has provided focus for great school spirit. The School is creating a clay mural and everyone is involved.

Earl Buxton: Also has Student Council – Div 1 works on “fun days” and Div 2, on fundraisers (for example, CBC Turkey Drive). It is an absolute thrill and very unifying for whole school when staff agrees to be dunked/shave heads/do something strange if a certain goal is reached. Last year “EB Staff Rocks” was introduced. For a set time period, students were encouraged to bring in notes saying “X teacher rocks because.... “ I think there is a computer site set up to submit entries, too? (My notes are vague on this!)

DS MacKenzie: School is redesigning its logo and involving kids to do so. Contest is part of this. Very exciting. School Wear (T shirts) also adds to School Spirit.

George P. Nicholson: Student Council organizes theme days. It also has School Wear, and run a School Spirit Day where everyone “wears their school wear.” Also has a Social Awareness Committee that looks at issues and/or does fundraisers – eg Breakfast for a Buddy program for Eastglen School. This is great for school spirit, too.

Richard Secord: Theme days are good. Recent parent & kid dance was successful. Also has Super Student Month (where kids get recognized). Reading buddy program (Grades 5 & 6 reading with younger children) builds camaraderie.

What is the best way to advocate?

We had quite a long discussion on this, which also veered into some comments about fundraising and the district's practices around purchasing. With respect to a Council's advisory role and how that ties into advocacy versus a Parent Society's fundraising role, the free workshop by Alberta School Councils Association on Roles and Responsibilities was recommended by several. See <http://www.ahsca.ab.ca/> for more detail on this workshop and others offered.

Since the meeting, I have created a more complete document listing my thoughts on the topic of advocacy, and I have posted it online at <http://www.catherineripley.ca/docs/Processes%20for%20Advocating%20Effectively.pdf> (or go to my website, look under Issues, Q&A in 2007-10....)

What are other councils doing to ensure a culturally/ethnically diverse council that truly represents the demographic make-up of the families in the school?

- Having Classroom Reps for each classroom can be helpful to ensuring everyone feels connected. Reps can email out information and receive thoughts. School Zone is also effective in ensuring that everyone has access to same information.
- Think about the issues that are relevant to parents and brainstorming guest speakers.
- Check the Oilers schedule and don't schedule anything on an Oilers game night.
- Make it fun!

What is happening to Grade 3 Provincial Achievement Tests? Are they doing away with these?

We didn't have time to discuss this question. The short answer is: Don't know! There has been and continues to be discussion around the usefulness of Grade 3 PATs and if the effort would be better spent on diagnostic types of tests to ascertain strengths and weaknesses of students.