

Meeting Minutes
Working Together to Support the Success of Our Children
Ward H Council Network Meeting
October 24, 2011

PRESENT: D.S. MacKenzie (Paul Burke), George P Nicholson (Terri Rolfson & Erla Anderson), Johnny Bright (Grant Shaigec), Keheewin (Cheryl Logan), Lillian Osborne (Trish Nieberding), Rideau Park (Lori Fankhanel), Steinhauer (Charlene Nistor), Vernon Barford (Michelle Ewoniak), Westbrook (Teresa Harder)

REGRETS: Duggan (Michelle Barkway), Esther Starkman (Charlene Bowman), Richard Secord (Linda Fischer)

MANY, MANY THANKS to Pat Sawatzky (no school affiliation!) for attending and taking such detailed notes!

Principal Mike Suderman welcomed us to Vernon Barford and Catherine thanked him for providing us with the meeting space in the newly opened fitness centre/lunch room.

Catherine welcomed those in attendance. The Ward H Council Network is made up of representatives from school councils in the Ward H district. It is an opportunity for Catherine to provide information to the school councils and for representatives to share concerns and ideas.

She also welcomed Assistant Superintendent Ron MacNeil who was in attendance to speak on "The Superintendent's Role in Supporting the Success of Our Children."

ONE SUCCESS, ONE CHALLENGE

Each representative was invited to share one success and one challenge for their school and/or their school council (S/C).

D.S. MacKenzie

- School Success – Successfully completed installation of Wi-Fi program last year, reasonable class sizes.
- School Challenge – draws from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- S/C Success – Have a plan to implement smart boards in classrooms and a site license for WordQ reading enhancement.
- S/C Challenge – getting parents out, but have 350 people signed up in their electronic database.

Esther Starkman

- School Success -- parking patrol committee and what a great job they have done for the school in getting people in and out.
- School Challenge -- space issue with our school using the library for French and industrial room for math classes due to being over capacity as school enters its second year.

George P. Nicholson

- S/C Success – lots of parents turned out for the first School Council meeting this year to show continued support for the Council and new people have stepped forward for positions. They once again have a healthy council.
- S/C Challenge – last year was a difficult one due to differing viewpoints on the installation of a Wi-Fi system, which caused a decrease in parental involvement.

- School Success – last year the “Leader in Me” program was implemented which really filtered out through the grades.
- School Challenge – this year reading intervention programs have been cut due to budget constraints.

Johnny Bright

- School Success – Sense of community now that they are in their second year, many clubs formed.
- School Challenge – Finding enough teaching space as they are bursting at the seams; two new modular classrooms are expected in early winter.
- S/C Success – As they are in their second year they have hit the ground running, relationships already formed.
- S/C Challenge – What type of communication method will be effective in reaching more parents in regards to what the School Council is doing? They would like to go electronic, but people appear afraid of technology. Have asked school administration to provide stats on School Zone usage.

Keehewin

- School Success/Challenge – Last year the school, with their smaller class sizes, had great scores on achievement tests. Will this be maintained this year with larger class sizes?
- S/C Success – Number of people attending the meetings is up, they have had 25+ attendees at first two meetings.
- S/C Challenge/Success – They have the same people doing positions on both the school council and the funding society council.

Lillian Osborne

- School Success – as a new high school, lots of firsts to celebrate as was the case with an Arts Evening last year and their first awards night this year.
- School Challenge –this is the first year the school has had students registered in all three grades and the school is at capacity which has caused growing pains in scheduling.
- S/C Challenge – trying to meet all funding requests, lots of requests and limited funds.

Richard Secord

- School Success -- getting our two portable computer labs set up and running, giving us some extra space for a new classroom.
- School Challenge -- helping all our families become more involved. We have noticed a huge decrease in parents volunteering and being involved at the school and we are hoping with some new ideas for helping with language barriers we can help more parents become involved.

Rideau Park

- School Success – Kindergarten class merge required an Aide to be brought in to help, has some time to do additional training for the “Leader in Me” program. Also has provided an opportunity for leadership role for older students in class.
- School Challenge – Loss of students to Johnny Bright, lots of new refugees has brought issues of poverty and ELL into school. Kindergarten numbers down, so had to merge classes.
- School Success – Passion for learning, sense of community, coming together, teachers rolling up sleeves, kinship.
- School Challenge – Shortage of lunch supervisors, leads to behaviour issues.

Steinhauer

- School Challenge/Success – last year the school lost nearly half of the school population due to transition to new schools, but this year things are beginning to settle, students are doing well on achievement tests and surveys indicate satisfaction with the school. The decrease in enrollment was both a challenge and an opportunity.
- S/C Challenge – several staff who had been with the school for a long period moved on (principal, music teacher), which required an adjustment period for all while the new staff settle into their roles.

Vernon Barford

- School Success – Program “We are all in” ensures high level of learning.
- School Challenge – Getting parents involved in a meaningful, consistent way.

Westbrook

- S/C Success – 390 people have signed up to receive newsletter electronically.
- S/C Challenge – Very labor intensive for parents who are involved in both the school council and the parent funding society. How to get more people involved?

THE SUPERINTENDENT’S ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF OUR CHILDREN.

Assistant Superintendent Ron MacNeil gave a presentation on the district reorganization and how students and schools are being better supported. Ron provided the *Edmonton Public Schools District Plan – At a Glance* for background. The document shows how the Superintendent is planning to address the Vision, Mission, and Priorities set by the Board last winter through four main strategies: Enhancing Staff Capacity, Enhancing Quality Teaching, Enhancing Supports for Diverse Learners, and Ensuring Effective and Efficient Business Practices.

The reorganization process was a huge undertaking that began about two and a half years to support the Superintendent’s 2020 vision of having all students complete high school.

- Believes citizenship will play a huge role in students completing high school
- Reason students drop out is not because of marks it is usually related to drugs, criminal activity, weapons, dysfunctional home life

The reorganization included the assignment of 4 Assistant Superintendents to work exclusively with schools (in schools 80-85% of time) and within high school catchment areas (His areas include Harry Ainlay, M.E. LaZerte, J. Percy Page.) This structure was implemented in 2010-11.

Last spring Student Learning Services (OTs, SLPs, cultural liaison workers, psychologists, etc.) was also restructured in an effort to be more responsive and timely in supporting students and staff. Teams of experts now work consistently in catchment areas. This new system is being implemented as of this fall.

The reorganization has also meant that Core Services (such as Technology, Communications, Maintenance, Student Learning Services) have been removed from individual school budgeting responsibility so all schools get the same amount of service (regardless of school’s financial position).

The reorganization continues this year in Corporate Services and Financial Services areas.

How does the Central Reorganization affect the work of an Assistant Superintendent?

- Due to catchment area structure, allows him to follow a student’s career from Kindergarten through graduation
- Also, better able to share resources and expertise between schools at little or no cost to benefit student success
- Knows his principals very well and getting to know staff better
- Schools are grouped in teams for meetings with the Assistant Superintendent and with colleagues for common Professional Development delivery.
- Better able to link the common threads of Data Analysis and sharing of best practices within the catchment area schools
- K-12 Literacy program supported in every school.
- Each Assistant Superintendent has a “central services” team to work with (Budget, Finance, Human Resources, Inclusive Learning, Support for Staff and Students, Student Assessment and Data)

Question/Answer Session:

Q: Charlene – Do teams stay together for the year?

A: Yes

Q: Teresa – Is this model taken from somewhere?

A: Ron has been asking for this type of catchment structure for six years, all levels of employees working together.

Q: Catherine – Do you know of any other districts using this model?

A: Calgary uses quadrants.

Q: Paul – What aspects of the plan support the teaching and learning of 21st century literacies?

A: Key driver is teaching priorities and a consistent quality approach in every school.

Q: Lori – In your explanation you named the high schools you work with but you did not mention schools such as LY Cairns, School for the Deaf, or Old Scona.

A: These schools have no geographic catchment area but all three are included under me as an Assistant Superintendent.

Q: Lori – How is Inclusive Education handled?

A: Teams work with Assistant Superintendent in their catchment areas.

Q: Erla – Could you please list some of the core services each school should be able to access?

A: Those that are a necessity and those usually legislated. Examples: Facilities & Maintenance, Air Quality Testing, Occupational Health & Safety concerns, Boilers, Tech Support for computers, Websites, etc. Previously principals had to look after each of these items for their own school.

Q: Catherine – What are Principals doing with all their free time? 😊

A: Now they have more time to support teaching and learning, and the Assistant Superintendent coaches and supports them.

Q: Michelle – Is there any update on the Gifted and Talented Program?

A: A review was requested last year.. Results should be coming out in mid-November

Q: Lori – How do we get a copy?

A: Does not know how this will be distributed. It will be in the form of recommendations to the Superintendent and will have to be accepted by him before it is distributed.

Q: Paul – The Board accepted the Special Needs Task Force's recommendation around the implementation of Universal Design for Learning. What stage of engagement and implementation are schools at?

A: Schools are at varying stages in implementing.

Catherine thanked Ron for his presentation and passion for his position.

Catherine also provided a document on the Board of Trustees 2010 – 2011 Highlights.

<http://www.epsb.ca/datafiles/BoardHighlights2010-2011.pdf>

WHAT IS THE "ONE THING" YOUR SCHOOL COUNCIL CAN DO TO SUPPORT THE SUCCESS OF OUR CHILDREN?

DS MacKenzie – Have a clear plan, his school council prepared a policy document with top five priorities.

George P Nicholson (1) – Developed School Council Plan to provide opportunities to develop the parents' roles as partners in education. They are having informational sessions rather than meetings. Organized in committees so they have "focused" volunteering.

George P Nicholson (2) – Show children that we (parents) are interested in their learning. How can we get people involved?

Johnny Bright -- Advocating for fostering of parent engagement in the school, sense of belonging.

Keheewin – Enable huge volunteer base of parents to be involved in the classroom, builds awareness.

Lillian Osborne – Facilitate communication between staff and parents.

Rideau Park -- Asked school to identify if there was any 30 minute time slots that parents could volunteer for. Hoping this approach will be more manageable time commitment for more people and take away apprehension as volunteering can be overwhelming.

Steinhauer – Support teachers in clubs, field trips and other enrichment activities.

Westbrook – Clarify what the School Council role is in the school.