

St. John Catholic School Advisory Council Meeting Draft Minutes

Tuesday November 14, 2006, 7:00 p.m.

Coffee for the meeting was provided by Starbucks at Hammersmith and Queen

CSAC Members Present: *Amanda Taplin Milberry, Ian Campbell, Paul Coady, Greg Scian, Kristen Evans, Johanna Carlo, Greg Dolenc*

Community Members Present: *David Steiner, Simon Milberry*

Opening prayer

Paul Coady

Adoption of Agenda

Ian Campbell

- Add family skate; playground report and poinsettias. Motion to adopt Agenda (Greg Dolenc, ???????) passed.

Review of October 18 Minutes

Ian Campbell

- The October 18 minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Financial Report

Doug Black

- The budget is reviewed at each meeting.
- We may need additional funds for Pediculosis supplies. Q: If other items come up the budget can be adjusted accordingly. Yes.

Principal's Report

Paul Coady

- Kudos to parents for the Halloween dance
- The Remembrance Day celebration was tremendous. It was organized by Ms. McCann, other teachers and classes were also involved. A war veteran came in to speak to children. There was a banner made by school and it was given to a local legion. A grade 1 student's father is currently in Kandahar. The child received a call from their father and Mr. Coady also had a chance to speak to him. Arrangements will be made for the class to send notes to this troop.
- **Interpreting St. John's EQAO Results**
- The report available to everyone on-line at www.eqao.com. The value in this test is interpreting the data and how it applies to us. In general, the results are great, we are above the Board in all areas, and we have improved over last year.
- Grade 3 reading results show that our students did exceptionally well.
- The Grade 6 results are good; they are more in line with board.
- Grade 6 results are okay but not as strong as we've seen before; they are lower than grade 3 results.
- There is a concern that math has not shown the jump we'd like to see. We are still getting used to the Nelson Math program.
- Keep in mind this is one snapshot, we never try to base the academic year plan for the school around this. This is one set of data; a particular kind of test. It is valuable to use, but there are other things to consider as well: CAT3 test, report cards, etc.
- Mr. Coady is working with the staff, breaking open the data and looking at specific areas in the school/classrooms.
- We have to be careful when looking at small samples. Things can change from year to year that can affect the numbers.
- One thing we're looking at is how many kids are borderline – how many are at the high end of level 3, vs. low end of level 3; some children were so close. Principals can find out what areas of the test children had trouble with. We are analyzing the data to find out who needs help and in what areas.

- Our school is close to being a beacon school which is a school selected for best practices.
- Q: How do the results break down in terms of gender? What steps are being taken to account for this? Females outperforming boys 5 kids to 1 in some areas. In other areas the boys' scores are closer to the girls'. There is a new reading program coming in to attract boys; it is geared to catching boys and bringing them into reading. Improved reading will also help with writing and math (with language based math).
- Q: Is French immersion a factor? Yes. In general if grade 3 and 4 students need extra help, they shouldn't go into extended French. There is pressure to go into extended French but it could be hurting some children who go into it. There is a myth that if your child is in extended French they will have an advantage going into high school. This is simply not true. It is only true if that child is going into extended French in high school. If there are any other questions please email Mr. Coady or drop by the office.

Committee Reports

- **Academic Affairs**

Tom Horn

The Academic Affairs Committee met with Mr. Coady. One of the goals is to have evenings of practical discussions; one every month. If you'd like to get involved with the committee contact Tom Horn.

- **St John Parish Report**

Johanna Carlo

- The altar servers participated in the Santa Claus parade on Kingston Road dressed as Christmas presents; they won!
- St. Vincent de Paul – our parish will help a refugee family as they transition into Canada.
- We'll be doing Christmas baskets again this year to support families in our community.
- Our very own Mr. Scian has joined the folk group.

Other Business

- Pizza lunches: should pop be an option; is there a healthy alternative; after discussion CSAC will vote on this issue.
- Pop has very little nutritional value. CSAC have received several emails on this issue. Pop has been ordered until January, so any change would happen after that. If pop is dropped we have three volunteers that have stepped forward to help.
- Ms. Evans was one of the teachers who originally brought this up (along with Ms. Stelter). Ms. Evans is part of the Health Action Team (which is 5 teachers, the Principal and the Vice Principal). It will expand to include others as well. The team's focus is a health action plan for year. There are two main areas: fitness and nutrition. The plan includes DPA and fitness; and creating a healthy atmosphere at school. For the team, any small step is a step in the right direction; we know we can't change everything, but we would like to see things go in a healthier direction. Pop has no nutritional value; the juice and milk have some redeeming qualities even if they are high in sugar. We're not looking to snap our fingers and fix everything but we believe it would be better if pop were not an option on Pizza days. After lunch on Pizza days, after 32 kids have had pop (full of sugar and caffeine) it's not a teacher friendly environment. We can understand both perspectives, there are lots of issues to consider however we are in favour of a push for pop to be removed; this is the opinion of the health action team. Mr. Scian agrees. From a fundraising standpoint, replacing pop with juice shouldn't have an effect. Parents can send pop in once a month if they would like their children to have it as a treat on Pizza Day. The vending machines removed from school for a purpose. Parents are more than welcome to send pop in with their children. We can't control what parents send in however, we can control what we are directly giving them.
- Just because you pick pop as an option doesn't mean you're not providing healthy foods for your children. Q: Could we have pop as an option for grades 5-8 but not the younger grades? This may make things more complicated for Pizza day organizers.
- If this affects teaching then we are helping the class environment
- The feedback we have received has been split 50/50 (emails to CSAC).
- One of the issues dividing people is insisting on healthy food vs. choice. CSAC must be wary when dictating. But CSAC has to make a decision on this issue (that is, a recommendation).
- Mr. Coady's comments: Mr Coady is staying out of this on purpose. He doesn't like legislating to community that they will follow this. However, he did note that he knows that the days he's going to have major problems in the school yard are pizza days and muffin days.

- CSAC's function is an advisory group, to tell community.
- It should be noted that the work of Sandra (who organizes pizza days) is greatly appreciated.
- We need to move the meeting along. We need to vote.
- How did we come up with the choices in the first place? It's just always been that way.
- This is a contentious issue; let's word this properly to make sure we're sending the right message.
- Motion to see pop remain on the pizza lunch menu as a choice? (Greg Dolenc, ??????????) Two CSAC members abstained, one in favour, the remaining CSAC member vote against.
- The recommendation to the Principal is that pop be removed from the pizza day menu; however, parents are free to send in the drink of their choice.

- **Dance-a-thon**

- *Sharon McLaughlin*

- Tomorrow morning there is a pep rally at 10:45 in the gym to launch the dance-a-thon. Each child will receive a personalized package which will include a permission form. This is a fundraiser to support CSAC initiatives; it replaces the walk-a-thon. There is an outside party running because we were not able to get the volunteers to run it ourselves. The outside party retains 20%. This is the first year we are trying this.

- **News from the People for Education Conference**

Linn Baran

- Linn has brought some handouts from the conference. It was a fabulous opportunity. There were excellent workshops; one highlighted a new provincial new parent initiative; there is an available one million dollars to be spread out around the province. Schools can apply for a grant, November 21st is the deadline.

- Starbucks at Queen and Hammersmith are doing their annual holiday book drive; it will benefit our school and St. Denis. Starbucks also has a literacy grant program.

- **Pediculosis**

Johanna Carlo

- Head lice – we have an epidemic – of the 20 classes, 13 of classes have cases of pediculosis. This is epidemic compared to last year. Eight parent volunteers have completed a check; notes were sent home. The notes were sealed for privacy. This is a sensitive issue for some parents. Even if only one nit is spotted, it is a positive case. If live adult lice were seen then parents were called, as board policy demands. The parent volunteers do the check, they then inform the school administration, and then the school manages it from there. Dr Buttignol provided the board policy, and they came up with program; there is a plan in place. Mr. Coady's comments: there is an epidemic in east part of Toronto, and there has been since the summer; the problem is not specific to our school, but it is a problem in our school. We've been finding lice in our school since September; the correct procedure has been followed every time.
- Yesterday a second letter went home that speaks to the problem. The excuse from school form is from Board manual. If there are live lice in a child's hair they have to be sent home. There is a company coming in to do a check, then following the incubation period (7-10 days) there will be another check, then there will be a third follow-up check; aggressive steps are being taken to get it under control. It will come back, but if we move on it hard and fast at least we can get it to a controllable stage. 2/3 of the classes are affected. Q: How many children? 50 children out of 500.
- There are all kinds of treatments, homeopathic, etc. Everything from olive oil to chemicals. The medical community can't come to a consensus; the alternative health care community can't come to a consensus. There isn't one guaranteed treatment. Some things work well for some but not for others. What about families who can't afford the treatment? The Principal's Discretionary fund may be able to help. We will try to do another check in January; after the holidays is a common time to see cases.
- Family Skate – we have two booking options: Saturday December 23rd or December 30th. The majority of attendees are in favour of the 23rd.
- Playground – needless to say it has not been started. We met in the summer with Angela Kennedy and representatives from Board to go over final plans. By end of summer we understood (the school administration and CSAC) that it had all been approved. In August it was held up, it's not that it isn't approved, it has just been held up – this is the case for all schools in Toronto. Our project was given a priority 1; which is the most needed to be done. We are hoping to have some answers within the next week.
- Poinsettias

Dianne Ryan

- A parent suggested has suggested a poinsettia Christmas sale as a fundraiser for the community. When parents come to pick up their poinsettias there will be a social with apple cider and hot chocolate. The timeframe might be tight. With so much coming up (dance-a-thon, Christmas baskets, Christmas Concert) it might be too much. It is a nice idea; could we do something in spring? Perhaps for Mother's day/Easter/Father's day?

Closing prayer

Ian Campbell