

St. John Catholic School Advisory Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

Eunice Miller Library, St. John Catholic School

Opening Prayer

Mr. Matyas

Welcome and Adoption of Agenda

Stephanie Horning

- Review of February 21, 2008 Minutes – comment made about inserting number of days for dispersals of students – Motion to pass made by Greg Dolenc. Carried.
- Doug Black is absent – no new financial information

Principal's Report

Marguerite Thomson

- Ms. Thomson mentioned that traditionally in her previous school there was no March meeting – not much to report since our last meeting (given the March break period)
- Grade 4 Religion Testing – will take place at St. John's. The testing is only done in certain wards and St. John's has been chosen as one. The date for the testing has yet to be determined but possibly the end of April. A comment was made as to the purpose of the testing. Apparently a few years ago there was concern at the Board level that religion was not being tested in schools. Now some Trustees feel that testing should be completed. The challenge is that it is a faith curriculum – may fit the curriculum taught in Grade 4. The old report cards used to have four pages with the last page dealing with religion. A question arose as to what happens with the results of the testing - currently unknown.
- Lockdowns – previous dates for lockdowns were reported at CSAC meetings –in the past one was announced and one was unannounced. A suggestion was made that it might be helpful for parents to know that there will be a certain number of practice lockdowns. Where there are real lockdowns, the parents will be notified.
- Technology – Ms. Thomson reported that some of the teaching staff have brought to her attention the challenge of keeping up with adequate technology in our school. Currently the computer lab is made up of 50% Dell computers and 50% Tandex. Tandex is the older model and they are extremely slow for the students – to the point where only one half of the students in the class actually get to access them during class time. Currently the school only has 1 projector and 1 laptop as well as 1 Smart Board. The library has Dell computers which are adequate and other terminals are scattered throughout the school in various classrooms. It was noted that this problem is not isolated to St. John's – however we have more 'drops' here. Question: Are we seeking more funds from CSAC for new computers? Ms. Thomson stated that presently we do not have enough funds but

at some point in the future, this issue will need to be addressed. Is it a case of just adding ram? We will need to investigate that. Perhaps a 'wish list' could be compiled by the teachers as to their needs and then fundraising for technology could be addressed.

- We do not know the Board's criteria in terms of buying. While it is unlikely that any funds will be forthcoming from the Board, Ms. Thomson will make the inquiry. Our initial supply of terminals etc. came directly from the Ministry. Question: if we raised enough money to purchase new systems, could we use them? Any technology that comes into the school must be approved by the Board and it is ultimately the property of the Board.
- Dispersal of Students – Ms. Thomson addressed the concern with respect to the dispersal of students due to various activities taking place in the school. The reality is that if a teacher is coaching a sporting activity (eg. meets, games, tournaments), they will have to arrange to disperse their students for that time period. It should be noted that, generally speaking, coaching comes out of a teacher's personal time. A concern was expressed that some teachers may have dispersal days in excess of 25 days. Ms. Thomson indicated that this seems rather high. Comment was further made that some parents view it as a problem and that most events only benefit a certain number of students. What about intramural – can we determine how many days are used for dispersals? Some parents feel that the lower EQAO results for Grade 6 were a result of the dispersals. Can parents be involved with coaching? Yes, but we would still require teachers.
- A discussion ensued with respect to activities at the school, eg. sports, movie days, assemblies, students assisting with moving furniture for assemblies – and the concern for the education of the children.
- Ms. Gregory mentioned that she recently coached the volleyball team and was out for 2 days – this did not affect her students. She ensures that the students are given proper work and guidelines when going to another teacher's class. When students are dispersed, they should have things to do – a package is given to take to the classroom for kids to do – the question is where they all are diligent enough to do their work.
- A suggestion was made to perhaps monitor the situation to determine how many dispersals there are and to sit down with any parents that feel the dispersals are an issue. Ms Thomson advised that she will count how many days/dispersals there may be to the end of the year. However, parents need to remember that children do come to school for fun in addition to academics.

Other Business

- Fundraising – Cindy Hood reported that at the last CSAC meeting a motion was made to have a letter sent home to parents addressing funding for the library. It was subsequently discovered that the school librarian had already initiated a school 'Read-a-Thon' event. The children who participate in the event would receive half of the money they raised with the other half being applied to the library to purchase books. A suggestion was made that the students consider forfeiting their share of the money raised for books and that it be applied as a

whole to support the library. In those instances, students could pick out the books they wanted to donate and/or a gift certificate could be given back to the school. The library funding issue will have to be addressed once the read-a-thon event has taken place.

- Swim Meet – St. John's has been asked to host the Swim Meet for April, 2009. This event could generate quite a lot of revenue for the school and is a huge fundraising initiative. Marnee Gamble has agreed to head up the swim meet committee which means that we are currently in need of a Fun Fair Committee Co-ordinator. The Fun Fair this year will be on Saturday, September 20th.
- Other – Cindy mentioned that we do need to look at whether there is something else we can do to fundraise. Laps for Lungs this year is on May 14th.

Closing Prayer

Meeting Adjourned