

Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Meeting
UNOFFICIAL Minutes
Tuesday, September 9, 2008 at 7 pm
Rainbow District School Board
Board Office – 69 Young Street - Sudbury

Attendance:

PIC Executive: Chair Leo Bisson

RDSB: Trustee Ruth Ward, Trustee Jeanna Miller, Superintendent Norm Blaseg, Senior Advisor Nicole Charette, Principal Iva McNair, Lorrie Beausoleil, OPSEU

PIC Members: Vickie Hancharyk, Lockerby Composite School/Lansdowne Public School, Sharinna Appanna, Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School

Parents: Patricia Kitching, Gatchell School/Princess Anne Public School, Barb St. Jacques, Confederation Secondary School, Dorothy Cooper, Churchill Public School/Westmount Avenue Public School, Stephanie Boyuk, Cyril Varney Public School, Cynthia Séguin, Ernie Checkeris Public School, Tonya Marcotte, Queen Elizabeth Public School

1. Welcome: Leo Bisson

Chair Leo Bisson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He asked if there were any volunteers for the position of secretary. Superintendent Blaseg explained the role of the secretary and indicated that the volunteer must come from the 10 PIC members who were elected at the Annual General Meeting held in November 2007. Nicole Charette served as recording secretary for the meeting. Cynthia Séguin of Ernie Checkeris Public School will serve as PIC secretary, replacing Stephanie Cooke. She can be reached at cyn.home@gmail.com.

2. Self Introductions

Chair Bisson invited Committee members to introduce themselves.

3. Approval of agenda

The agenda was followed, as presented.

4. Approval of minutes

Motion: That the minutes of the meeting held on June 10, 2008 be approved.

Moved by Vickie Hancharyk. Seconded by Sharinna Appanna. Passed.

5. PRO Grant Ideas: Superintendent Norm Blaseg

Superintendent Blaseg indicated that the Board had yet to receive details regarding the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants for 2008-2009. This information will be sent to schools as soon as it is received. (Info was subsequently emailed to all schools on September 17, 2008). Superintendent Blaseg indicated that grant dollars received in 2007-2008 must be spent by September 15, 2008. Any money that is not spent will go back to the Board. PIC will decide how these dollars will be redistributed. Superintendent Blaseg indicated that schools should be prepared to complete the grant application when it arrives. There will be

a quick turn around time. The purpose of the grants is to encourage parents to get involved. The Ministry of Education has three key priorities – to raise the achievement bar, build public confidence and close the gap.

Nicole Charette shared the following information regarding the schools that received grants for the 2007-2008 school year.

Rainbow Schools receive grants to enhance parent involvement

Innovative parent involvement projects are being implemented in Rainbow Schools thanks to funding provided by the Ministry of Education's Parent Engagement Office. Eight Rainbow Schools and the Board are sharing a total of \$26,000 in Parents Reaching Out Grants to support School Council and Parent Involvement Committee initiatives to further engage parents/guardians in their child's learning.

"Parents, as the first teachers in the home, are important partners in the learning process," said Jean Hanson, Director of Education for Rainbow District School Board. "Research has shown that the involvement of parents and guardians in their child's education has a positive impact on student achievement and overall school performance."

While each project varies from school to school, the initiatives have one thing in common - they are intended to enhance communications between the school and the home and help to create a more welcoming environment for parents/guardians.

Central Manitoulin Public School will host a number of workshops. Preparing your child for school will be the focus of a workshop for parents with children in Kindergarten. Parents with children in Grades 1 to 6 will learn reading strategies to help their children at home. A cyberbullying workshop will be presented for parents with children in Grades 7 and 8.

Assiginack Public School will host a series called "Sharing of Talent Days". Parents/guardians will be invited to share their talents with students at the school during an Arts Day, Career Day and Literacy Day.

Redwood Acres Public School will present interactive "Math Magic!" workshops to enable parents to support numeracy in the home. Through these workshops, parents will see that children can learn math through a variety of mediums and techniques in an enjoyable and entertaining way.

Balancing Healthy Families: Socially, Mentally and Physically will be the focus of the Parents Reaching Out project at Carl A. Nesbitt Public School. Community partners will be invited to present a series of educational workshops. Parents will gain helpful hints and insights to deal with life's daily challenges.

Ernie Checkeris Public School will establish a Parental Resource Centre at the school. Parents/guardians will be able to consult and borrow a variety of

books/materials on parenting and education, including literacy and French-language resources. The Parental Resource Centre will increase cooperation and collaboration between parents and teachers, which will have a positive impact on student achievement.

At Chelmsford Valley District Composite School, parents/guardians will be invited to a series of after-school workshops and in-school events to build community connections and encourage literacy. Parents and students will receive literacy learning materials and resources, including Family Literacy Night Kits. They will also receive support and guidance.

Sudbury Secondary School will bring parents/guardians together with staff to inform parents about the EQAO Assessments (Education Quality and Accountability Office) and outline strategies which can be used at home. This will provide additional support for student success by engaging parents in the process.

Staff from Lively District Secondary School will gather together for a traditional feast with parents of students at the Whitefish Lake First Nation. Through informal conversations with parents, teachers will gain a greater understanding of individual student interests. The sharing of traditions will enable Whitefish Lake First Nation and Lively District Secondary School to build bridges towards cultural understanding.

Rainbow District School Board and its Parent Involvement Committee will help students and parents/guardians make key decisions in the transition from elementary to secondary school through an evening information session, dynamic video, student/parent guide and web information. Information will focus on pathways, course content, timetabling, selecting courses, learning tips, school life, student success and testimonials. All schools will benefit from the project.

Copies of the book "176 Ways to Involve Parents" Practical Strategies for Partnering with Families by Betty Boulton will be sent to all schools in Board Mail the week of September 15th. The books were purchased by PIC.

Nicole Charette provided an updated on the 2007-2008 PRO Regional Grant received by the Board to produce a Transition Video, Guide and Poster. The Committee viewed the video and looked at a sample of the guide/poster which will be launched at the Transition Evening on Tuesday, November 18, 2008 at Cambrian College.

PIC members were asked to share ideas for the PRO Regional Grant application for 2008-2009. It was suggested that the Board produce material on "what parents can do to get involved". The goal is to help new parents engage in school and overcome any barriers (ie. child care at School Council meetings). How can they get involved? What ways can they help? What volunteer opportunities are available? (ie. produce a master list of practical ways parents can get involved in their child's school and education). It was suggested that material be sent to all parents of new students in August. Other topics included tips on motivating parents to make them feel needed. (We have a job for you. Can you help us with...?)

It was indicated that the Sudbury & District Health Unit has an activity bag that parents can “rent” for free.

It was suggested that we apply for a PRO Grant to produce material on education for sustainable development. What do we mean by going green? What are some tips for schools? How can parents get involved? The idea is to engage parents by focusing on a theme.

Committee members were given two weeks to submit any ideas for PRO Regional Grants to Nicole Charette.

Education Today (Summer 2008) featured information about the Rainbow District School Board’s PRO Grant for 2007-2008 – The Literacy Tip Sheets and Video – in their article on “Parent Engagement: Building Partnerships for the Future”.

6. Anti-Bullying Day: Chair Leo Bisson

The following news release regarding the Board’s first Anti-Bullying Day was shared:

Stand Up Against Bullying Day: Wear Pink on Thursday, September 11th

Staff and students in Rainbow Schools will wear pink on Thursday, September 11th, 2008, as Rainbow District School Board marks its first ever “Stand Up Against Bullying Day”. “This small gesture will go a long way in showing our collective commitment to safe schools,” said Director of Education, Jean Hanson.

“Stand Up Against Bullying Day” began in Nova Scotia where secondary school students Travis Price and David Shepherd arranged for dozens of their classmates to wear pink shirts in support of another student who had been bullied for wearing pink. The Province of Nova Scotia subsequently declared the second Thursday at the start of every school year to be “Stand Up Against Bullying Day”.

“The actions of these two young men, along with their fellow students who wore pink to school in support of another student, reverberated across Canada and here in Rainbow Schools,” said Director Hanson. Rainbow District School Board’s Parent Involvement Committee championed the cause. Trustees unanimously endorsed the following motion at their regular Board meeting held on April 21, 2008:

“That Rainbow District School Board declare the second Thursday of each new school year commencing September 11, 2008 as ‘Stand Up Against Bullying Day’. Further, we encourage all Rainbow students and staff to conduct activities that day to increase awareness and to support action and, to wear something pink to demonstrate their support and commitment to ending bullying in our schools and communities.”

The many character development programs and activities in Rainbow Schools complement the Board's Code of Conduct, which promotes responsibility, respect, civility and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment. "By nurturing a strong partnership between the school, the home and the community, Rainbow Schools ensure that students receive an education that includes personal, social and citizenship development," said Director Hanson. "As quality schools where character counts, we respect and honour each individual's right to be safe and feel safe in their school community. We invite everyone in the community to observe "Stand Up Against Bullying Day" by joining with us and wearing pink on Thursday, September 11th."

Chair Bisson said he would like Anti-Bullying Day organized in all schools, with pink ribbons. Designating a day to focus on anti-bullying is great, but we need to remind everyone of this important message year-round.

Patricia Kitching indicated that she knows a young speaker who could address the topic of bullying. It was also suggested that a secondary school student visit a neighbouring elementary school to talk about bullying. Chair Bisson said he would like someone on PIC to work on anti-bullying day to make a "bigger splash next year" and get all Boards involved.

7. Board News: Superintendent Norm Blaseg

Self-advocacy is the 2008-2009 theme for special education and the Special Education Advisory Committee in Rainbow Schools. At the onset of a disability, all students will be encouraged to advocate for themselves. This will enable the child to take ownership in ensuring that everyone is aware that they are challenged.

Two Grade 9 students participating in a laptop class project at Lasalle Secondary School will be featured in a video to be presented at the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) in November.

Superintendent Blaseg is exploring two possible presentations for PIC:

Sound Sense, a presentation for Grade 6 to 12 students about the impact of MP3 players on hearing. Incidents of hard of hearing have increased since the advent of MP3s. It's important that parents receive this important information.

Welcome to Kindergarten, a program for parents of 4 year olds who participate in special activities from February to September to prepare for school. Ten Rainbow Schools participated in the program in 2007-2008, involving 195 children. Some 200 more children will be added to the program in 2008-2009.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results for 2007-2008 will be released soon. There have been significant gains, particularly in boys' writing, special education and aboriginal education. Parents should look at the results in the following context: What does this tell us? What can we do as parents to support our children in reading, writing and math?

The Week of the Child will be celebrated from October 11th to 19th, 2008.

Superintendent Blaseg invited members of PIC to attend the Free Family Fun Day on Saturday, September 27th. There will be a parade in Memorial Park at 10 am, followed by displays at Market Square from noon to 3 pm. Members of PIC were asked to contact Nicole Charette with ideas on how they may wish to get involved. Norm Blaseg will invite special education staff to host a World Drumming demonstration.

The Community Care Access Centre will open its new office on Friday, September 12th at 40 Elm Street. CCAC provides services for parents who may require nursing care.

The Accommodation Review Committee for Wembley Public School held its fourth Public Meeting in June 2008. The Accommodation Review Committee report and Administrative Council report will be presented to the Board of Trustees on Monday, September 22, 2008 at Lockerby Composite School. The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm in the Auditorium.

The Minister of Education visited Valley View Public School on Tuesday, September 9th, 2008 for the official grand opening of Northern Ontario's first green school. PIC members were asked to view the article in Education Today (summer 2008 issue). It was also noted that Architect Tim James was interviewed on Ontario Today on CBC Radio, sharing the green features with listeners across the province.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meetings are open to the public. The meetings are held at the Gord Ewin Centre for Education at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School from noon to 2 pm on the first Wednesday of the month.

Superintendent Blaseg talked about adjustments to classes as a result of student enrolment. In the next few weeks, schools will work to ensure they meet the cap of 20 students in JK to Grade 3. He indicated there could be some reorganization of classes within schools by the end of September. Schools will notify parents of any changes.

8. Communications: Senior Advisor for Corporate Communications and Strategic Planning, Nicole Charette

Nicole Charette provided an update on the following:

The Guide for Students and Parents and Card Calendar for 2008-2009 were sent home the first week of school. Copies are also available on the Board's website. Parents were encouraged to refer to the guide as a handy reference throughout the school year.

The Transition Guide is currently in production. The guide will be unveiled, along with a video, at the Transition Evening at Cambrian College on Tuesday, November 18, 2008.

The website was enhanced over the summer. New buttons are easier to read. Dynamic content is now being posted on the homepage, enabling the Board to highlight special

events, etc. Parents were invited to subscribe to “e-news” on the Board’s website (see the home page) to receive copies of all Board news releases via email. The website is an excellent source of info throughout the school year. News releases are posted under “what’s new”.

Copies of rainbowschools.ca bookmarks were distributed.

9. Board Update

Information has been shared in items 7 and 8 above.

10. School Announcements

Tonya Marcotte of Queen Elizabeth Public School provided an update on the greening efforts at the school, winner of the 2008 Ugliest Schoolyard Contest. The Queen Elizabeth Eco Team has been assisting with the work, which has received support from the City’s Vegetation Enhancement Technical Advisory Committee (VETAC) and school/community volunteers. An outdoor classroom has been built. Lilacs, shrubs, cedars and linden trees have been planted. Playground equipment will be installed as part of Phase 2 of the project.

Superintendent Blaseg told Committee members about the Home Depot school program. Employees volunteer their time to visit schools and till soil, build garden beds and plant trees. The Evergreen Toyota Learning Grant was also cited as a possible source of funding for school greening efforts.

A committee member asked about the “escalation process” for school transportation enquiries. Who do I speak to next? Parents should always go to the Principal first. The Principal will assist parents, including any next steps that may be required.

Chair Leo Bisson asked that the remaining Rainbow Schools mugs be distributed at the PIC Orientation Session and AGM in November.

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, October 21, 2008

Valley View Public School

1840 Valleyview Road, Val Caron

Topic: Rainbow Schools Go Green

Presenters: Jean Hanson, Diane-Cayen Arnold and Sandi Ackroyd

Note: This meeting was originally scheduled for October 14, 2008 and has been re-scheduled due to the federal election.