

**Lisgar School Council Meeting  
December 1, 2009  
Minutes**

**Council Members Present:**

Ed Chen, Susan Der, Tina Hogue, Lynn Honsberger, Bob Irvine, Janice Isaac, Gertrud Jeewanjee, Laura Lunn, Liz Melanson, Sue Nishi, David Paull, Shirley Seward, Feng Wang, Bruce Warnock, Lawrence Wolofsky, Kathy Xu, Rina Young, Pengfei Zhang  
Ex-officio: David McMahon, Mark Goebel

**Council Member Regrets:**

Fumin Cao, Sue Derby, Beth Doubt, Rachel Eugster, Jonathan Farrow, Lianhua He, Donna Holtom, Kate Preston-Thomas, Sanjay Srivastava, Stephen Wang, Alexandra Wood,

**Parents and Guardians:**

Julie Brunet, Dragos Calitoiu, Beth Cole, Hassan, Myla Hum, Anna Stella Mangone, Susan Mersereau, Sachiko Okuda, Mary Pearson, Tim Weschler

**Meeting Chair:** David Paull

**Meeting Secretary:** Gertrud Jeewanjee

**1. Welcoming and Introductions, Call to Order, Approval of Agenda (David Paull)**

David welcomed all attendees; attendees introduced themselves.  
The agenda was accepted by consensus.

**2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting, Business Arising, Blue Folder**

It was

MOVED BY: Bruce Warnock

SECONDED BY: Laura Lunn

THAT the minutes be accepted with implemented changes.

CARRIED

The blue folder was not present and will be circulated at the next meeting.

**3. Student Council Co-Presidents' Report (Kathy Xu)**

- (1) Production of 'Night Chills' will be taking place on December 3 and 4; parents are invited to attend.
- (2) Jazz Night is scheduled at 7:00 pm on December 9; Music night on December 10; cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students.
- (3) Pancake Breakfast took place on November 20; Lisgar raised \$1,500 for United Way; this is the largest amount the school has ever achieved.
- (4) The food drive started and will run until Friday, December 18; students should bring in food; the classes are having competitions on which one brings in the most items.
- (5) The 'Live it up' club is giving out free chocolate milk this week.

**4. Staff Representative's Report (Janice Isaac)**

- (1) The grade 10 English classes have started preparation and practice for the literacy tests; students with English in the second semester will prepare at the end of February. EQAO has provided new and more

resources; interested parents can go to the EQAO.com website to access a variety of sample tests and sample answers. Additional help sessions will be available for all students. The test is scheduled for April 8.

Q: How is the grade 10 district wide math exam marked and assessed?

A: The new system makes it easier to assess the students. Students can try the highest level questions and if they succeed, they are not required to answer the questions of lower levels. However, it is not an all or nothing as students have the opportunity to try at various levels.

**Action Item:** David M. to ask Tania Asselstine to explain the new system to LSC at the January meeting.

## 5. Principal's Report (David McMahon)

- (1) 'Take our kids to work day' took place in early November; 86% of the students participated.
- (2) The Spaghetti Trivia night organized by the Reach for the Top team was very well attended.
- (3) Many thanks to Richard Arrigo for arranging the Remembrance Day ceremony
- (4) The report cards and exam schedule were distributed in mid November.
- (5) The Board is organizing a lecture series on Assessment and Evaluation; it has already been presented at Canterbury and will be presented at Glebe the second week of December.

*Comment:* The students appreciate the new extended exam time frames.

Q: Where is the absentee rate at right now?

A: It is down to normal now; Lisgar hasn't hit the 10% mark in the last couple of weeks.

Q: Are students sent home if they have flu like symptoms?

A: Yes, if they are identified as too sick as per the instructions of the Ottawa health department, they are sent home and have to remain at home until they are fever free for at least 24 hours.

## 6. New Business

- (1) French language options at Lisgar (Shirley Seward)

Shirley's daughter has French as third language; she is in core French and doing well, but is not challenged enough. She didn't have enough language knowledge to get into the Extended French program and there is no option in between since 'Enriched French' was eliminated a few years ago. Could this be reinstated?

David McMahon: The school needs a critical mass to start looking at offering additional options. There is not much flexibility to offer courses for a smaller number of students as there is a finite number of sections. The sections need to meet the needs of the majority of students. Offering many courses on the options sheet that then might have to be cut down because of low enrollment creates a lot of work as students from canceled courses have to be called back in to be rescheduled.

Lisgar has an amazingly strong French program and would like to maintain this strength. The curriculum is currently under review to further differentiate between core and extended French and to make both streams more challenging.

*Comment:*

- The language department might be willing to assess students and move them into the extended French program if the student is strong enough.
- The challenge of the Core French program increases from grade 10 onwards as only students interested in the language remain in the French stream.

## 7. Other Business, Info Items

### (1) Cross Boundary Transfers (Lynn Honsberger, Liz Melanson)

- Liz wrote a submission to the Board; from this submission, Liz, Lynn and Tim Weschler created a presentation for the Strategic Planning Meeting on December 2. Tim created a report about the mobility of Ottawa's population: 28% of households moved in the 5-year time frame leading up to the 2006 census; indicating that (a) there is a natural decline in high school enrolment in certain parts of town and (b) parents will be very willing to move for the purpose of education. Based on these statistics, it is even more important to allow transfers to balance future changes to enrolment.
- Since the first submission of their recommendations, the Staff made additional changes to the recommendations, e.g. zero transfer caps; all decision making is shifted to sending principal without clearly defined criteria to base decisions on. The way the recommendations read now, sibling criteria is no longer valid and the sending principal can refuse transfer even if the course package the student is looking for is not available at the sending school.
- LSC is supporting the notion that academic reasons should be a criteria and that it should be the receiving principal who makes the decision.

#### *Comments:*

- Many thanks to Liz, Lynn and Tim for all the work that went into this presentation.
- Students should be encouraged to attend the Board meeting when secondary gifted review is discussed.
- The Board be asked what the purpose of the review is since all input has been disregarded so far.
- At any given time 13,000 students are in schools that are not their designated schools. Most parents are not aware that there are restrictions on transfers already in place and that the Board is considering tightening them up.
- LSC wants to demonstrate that restricting transfers will not solve the problem of a few schools that are struggling to offer a comprehensive course package because of declining enrolment. Staff has not really explored other solutions for the struggling schools.
- It is very frustrating for parents to have a constant change to boundaries and policies.
- LSC's position is to have the receiving principal on transfers in based on capacity.
- It is unfair to make courses available to families that have the financial means to adjust.
- Students will move because there is space in schools; the Board should consider consolidating schools, moving programs and adjust to the changing demographics.
- Core priority for the Board is 'community schools', which is not necessarily the approach that most serves the needs of the students.

### (2) Beaconhill/Ottawa-East ARC Recommendations (David Paull)

- There was consent across the presenters at the Board meeting on the negative impact on students if Rideau HS was closed.
- A student was asked WHY students don't go to Rideau and the student responded that if there are constant rumors of the school closures of course parents won't send their children there.
- Jennifer McKenzie was very well prepared and asked very pertinent questions.
- Paul spoke on behalf of LSC, pointing out that once a policy starts affecting a school, there should be a procedure in place to include the affected school in the discussion and research transitional solutions before a decision is made.
- The Board will vote on December 15 to accept or restrict the Staff recommendations. It is not clear whether the implementation of the decision could be completed by September 2010.

### (3) Secondary Gifted Programming Review (Liz Melanson)

- The report came to the Education Committee on November 17, before it went to SEAC; the Education Committee had deferred it to SEAC.

- The recommendations are: (a) close Merivale and send students to Bell next year; (b) programs at Lisgar, Gloucester and Glebe remain open. The Board was puzzled by this recommendation because it had been established that there should be a critical mass of 300 students to make a gifted center viable. Currently, there are 14 students at Gloucester and less than 100 at Glebe.
- Some trustees would like to see new recommendations to be brought forward. The superintendent noted that this report had been very contentious.
- There is no information in the recommendations regarding catchment areas and no indication whether this information will be forthcoming.
- There was a shift in the discussion towards the viability of gifted programs. Some trustees expressed their concern that there is no real differentiation between enriched and gifted classes and that all gifted centers run combined enriched/gifted classes. However, this is extremely rare at Lisgar.
- The number of students attending gifted classes at Lisgar are somewhat inaccurate as senior gifted students might be taking AP courses instead, which are not counted as gifted. Gifted students have to evaluate the courses they need to take in the final two years that best prepare them for university, disregarding whether those courses are gifted or not. Students should not have to lock into the gifted program.
- Another issue brought up at the SEAC meeting was that every Board should have a ‘gifted certificate’ in order to offer gifted programming. One parent asked whether the Board would also issue ‘autism certificates’ and ‘special needs certificates’, bringing back the issue that ‘gifted’ is a special learning needs program and not used for social streaming; therefore, there should not be a certificate issued for this.
- Superintendent Paxton will most likely defer this to the Education Committee meeting in January.
- LSC still has to get a presentation submitted this week just in case it does not get deferred.

*Comments:*

- All three reviews are very closely linked as far as Lisgar is concerned as they all have impact on Lisgar’s enrolment. LSC should continue stating that these reviews cannot be looked at in isolation.
- The community school model is a good model, but it should not be the only model; specialized programs in arts, athletics and academics help students reach their potential. A critical mass is needed to make the programs viable. The students enrich each other’s learning.
- The focus should be on helping struggling schools without negatively impacting on successful schools.
- The Board does not understand how the gifted program is differentiated.
- It seems that the unexpected bump in enrolment this fall was caused by moves into the catchment area; a surprisingly high number were from out of province and out of country.

Q: Where do gifted students from the Ridgemont catchment area go?

A: Until now, Ridgemont gifted students were allowed to go to any gifted center they wanted to go to.

Q: Is there a correlation between gifted students and the marks achievements? Is there a way to demonstrate that the gifted program at Lisgar is effective?

A: The goal is to keep gifted students in school, increase their self-esteem, etc. The issue is whether these gifted students should have the opportunity to study alongside other gifted students. Ability grouping the gifted students in congregated programs provides broader and deeper teaching.

## **8. Committee Reports**

Due to time restraints, no updates were presented.

## **9. Round Table**

David was asked to please extend the council’s appreciation for all their hard work to the staff.

**10. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.