

**Lisgar School Council Meeting
January 6, 2010
Minutes**

Council Members Present:

Ed Chen, Susan Der, Sue Derby, Beth Doubt, Rachel Eugster, Jonathan Farrow, Lianhua He, Tina Hogue, Lynn Honsberger, Bob Irvine, Gertrud Jeewanjee, Paul Kronberg, Laura Lunn, Liz Melanson, Sue Nishi, Shirley Seward, Sanjay Srivastava, Stephen Wang, Bruce Warnock, Alexandra Wood, Rina Young, Pengfei Zhang,
Ex-officio: David McMahon, Anne-McKillop-Ostrom,

Council Member Regrets:

Kate Preston-Thomas, David Paull, Feng Wang, Lawrence Wolofsky, Kathy Xu,

Guests:

Tania Asselstine, Head of the mathematics department

Parents and Guardians:

Dragos Calitoiu, Sylvie LaFontaine, Susan Mersereau, Laurie Pelly, Tim Werschler, Alex Young;

Meeting Chair: Rachel Eugster

Meeting Secretary: Gertrud Jeewanjee

1. Welcome and Introductions / Call to order / Approval of Agenda (Rachel Eugster)

Rachel welcomed all attendees.

The agenda was approved as circulated.

2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting / Business Arising / Blue Folder

It was

MOVED BY: Shirley S.

SECONDED BY: Steve W.

THAT the minutes be accepted as circulated.

CARRIED

3. Student Council Co-Presidents' Report (Jonathan Farrow)

- (1) The food drive initiative collected 1,500 items; spirit events took place throughout December to increase the amount of items collected; the Food Bank sent a thank you letter to Lisgar.
- (2) An 'anti-stress' week is being planned for the week before the exams with yoga classes, manicures and hot chocolate.

4. Presentation on the grade 10 district-wide mathematics exam (Tania Asselstine)

- The advantages of this new district-wide exam are standardization across the board and it is a good exercise for teachers in finding good exam questions. The teachers have an opportunity to attend additional workshops and to meet with other teachers after the exams and discuss results. The team met last summer and discussed what a math exam should look like. Typical exams don't always reflect the depth of the students' knowledge.
- The test includes questions from level 1 (no student should have any problems with) up to level 4 (students are able to demonstrate the real depth of their knowledge). The questions are designed so that students can demonstrate their ability up to a level 4.

- The topics of the test are: quadratic equations, linear equation and trigonometry.
- The new test allows students to answer only questions at the level they are comfortable with. They don't need to answer the questions on the levels below that. The teachers will talk to the students and discuss where the focus of the preparation should be.
- Stronger students won't have any problems with the exam; weaker students will have an opportunity to find out where more work needs to be applied.
- This is a 2 hour exam with 1 hour flex time; the students can leave when they are done. Other grade 9 and 10 exams are 1.5 hours of material with 3 hours of time to complete the test. Lisgar is removing the time constraints, which will benefit the large number of students who have not been identified as requiring more time in high-stakes evaluations. This also takes out the stigma for those students who have been identified as needing more time. Other specific requirements like quiet environment, access to computers, etc. will still be accommodated in addition to the flex time.

Q: Is this exam also used for diagnostic testing, i.e. are students assessed before the exam so they have an idea at what level they are?

A: This exam is also the end of semester exam, so students are aware where they stand.

Q: What happens if a student demonstrates different levels at different questions if there is only one question per topic?

A: To get a level 4 mark, a student will need a level 4 on all three questions. There might be several questions available for each topic, not just one.

Q: What percentage of students is supposed to reach level 4?

A: The provincial level is 3, i.e. that's what most students should be able to achieve. The learning outcome is targeted, not a certain percentage of students. Class averages don't have to follow a Bell curve any more. If the students can demonstrate their knowledge, then the students should receive the higher mark.

Q: What is the objective of this kind of testing in mathematics and what is the relationship between test results in this test and the students' overall assessment?

A: The goal is to demonstrate that students have reached an understanding of the material. The assessment is ongoing throughout the semester; this test constitutes 20% of the overall mark.

Q: What mark would be a level 4?

A: Level 4 minus would be in the low 80s; level 4++ would be in the high 90s.

Q: Does the differentiated instruction start in grade 9?

A: It should start in grade 1.

Q: Do the teachers mark exams from other schools?

A: The teachers will pick a weak student, a medium student and a strong student, mark their tests and then have it marked by a second teacher to see if the marking is appropriate.

Q: If the school expects students to reach a level 3, are students instructed on how to reach a level 4?

A: The instructions are done so the students know what it takes to reach a level 4, but province wide, the majority of students will achieve a level 3. The goal of this exam is to provide opportunities to students to show their understanding of the material. This is not always the case with traditional math tests.

Q: Is the expectation that the overall marks are going up because of this?

A: We do hope so. It would be surprising if they didn't go up.

Q: Will students be encouraged to try the highest level?

A: The students will have time to do more than one level. So they should start with a level 3 question and then give the level 4 question a try.

Q: How is it marked if a student gets a level 3 question right but gets a level 4 question only partially right?

A: The teachers have guidelines on how to mark.

5. Principal's Report (David McMahon)

- (1) December was a quiet month with spirit events and the Christmas assembly taking place.
- (2) Interviews are currently taking place to replace five teachers who have left.
- (3) The grade 8 information night will take place on January 14.
- (4) January is a busy time for teachers and students as the school is getting ready for exams.
- (5) A school operations meeting took place on January 6 with the superintendent.
- (6) The gifted review will not be decided until the February meeting, so it might not be implemented until the fall of 2010 because it affects the transfer cap.
- (7) The first day of the second semester is on February 1.
- (8) The report cards will be distributed on February 11.
- (9) There will no longer be a Turnaround Day.
- (10) There is construction going on to create a washroom for the handicapped on the second floor; the auditorium platform for wheelchairs is next. Both projects need to be finalized by February 1.

Q: Is the tunnel operational?

A: Students had been pulling the fire alarm multiple times. There has been a reduction in ability to supervise the tunnel, so it is closed for now.

Q: Will there be a mock time table night in the second semester?

A: Yes, on February 18.

Q: Is there a separate grade 8 information night for the gifted program?

A: Both nights are now combined into one on January 14.

6. Staff Representative's Report (Paul Kronberg)

(1) Update on Assessment and Evaluation:

- The previous policy did not have a solid division of exam marks and marks obtained throughout the semester. Another issue not included in the previous policy was the separation between academics and behavioral issues. The marking categories were established board wide.
- One resulting difficulty was that behavioral issues were removed from the marks, i.e. handing assignments in late or plagiarizing was not punished.
- In June last year teachers and principals met to discuss the challenges of implementing the new policy. All schools submitted their assessment policies to the board for approval. The new policy is working quite well. The curriculum, especially at the senior level, is quite intense; it is not manageable for teachers if work is handed in more than a couple of days late. Teachers now have a better understanding of how to deal with these issues. On the last PD day, teachers discussed various approaches. The assessment policy is posted on the Lisgar web site.
- Four teachers attended a board organized presentation at Canterbury relating to assessment and evaluation; the speaker was Professor Garfield Gini-Newman.

Q: Does the policy determine how far the students can push the envelope?

A: Teachers let students know that they have to hand in their work if they want the higher marks. At some point, they will receive a 'zero' if they don't hand it in. The goal is for the students to hand in their

work. Students are now expected to hand in every piece of work that's been assigned. The teachers' approach has become more structured, i.e. students have to hand in intermediate work, not just the final result; this keeps students on track. Concerned parents should contact the teachers and if they don't receive a response, parents should contact the VPs or the Principal.

7. New Business

(1) Transfer policy:

- The new transfer policy was passed on January 5. The Citizen reported on it, but didn't get all the facts right. The new policy is based on the educational needs of students and no longer on the available space in a particular school.
- The schools' capacities will be set at 100%; portables are excluded. "School capacity" has not been defined. The superintendent indicated that there should not be a lot of change to the current capacity. The principal and the superintendent will discuss at which capacity the school operates best, i.e., it should be more a matter of functional capacity than Ministry Capacity. The Board is looking for principals' input to create the new procedures; David M. volunteered to participate.
- The eligible transfer criteria have been reduced to learning ability, course package, and exceptional personal circumstances. No details have been provided yet as to what this entails. Child care at the elementary level, non-semestered schools at the secondary level, and the sibling criteria have been eliminated, but could still be considered as "exceptional personal circumstances".
- The receiving principal will have more autonomy, but will also be questioned more. There will be no more online requests, and no more first-come-first-serve; all applications are assessed individually by the principal, based on the needs of the students. The students will have to demonstrate why the transfer is important to them. The principal has the right to request supporting documentation.
- The number of transfers will depend on the transfer cap. This new procedure will be communicated to the grade 8 students during the info night. Students whose applications have been rejected will still have the option to appeal. The Board's intention is to monitor whether students actually take the courses they mentioned in their transfer request.
- The new policy doesn't apply to new students and not to students already in the system. Students who have completed grade 9 and 10 and move outside the boundaries will not be asked to go back to their designated school. However, the window during which students must stay in a program or course they've requested has been increased to two years.

Comments:

- SEAC passed a motion to discontinue the current practice that SpecEd kids that have been sent to a specific elementary school are divided up into different schools when they switch to high school. These students will now need to request a transfer to stay with their friends and explain the issue in detail.
- It is hoped that the procedure will explain to parents what they need to do in order to receive a transfer and what are considered valid reasons.
- There might not be as many transfers because of more families moving into the boundaries.
- In the past, transfers were based on space, not on criteria. Criteria were only used if there were more transfer requests than spaces. A new clause in the policy allows the Board to change the transfer cap if "circumstances demand it". Some trustees and the superintendents didn't expect much impact as a result of this new policy; others expect significant impact. Jennifer McKenzie asked that the motion include a need to monitor rejected transfers to see whether students are leaving the Board if they are rejected.

Q: What is the functional capacity of Lisgar as far as the principal is considered?

A: 1070 would be the upper end, therefore 1050 would be a good number to aim at in case there are some students enrolling after the transfer period has ended.

Q: What course packages are specific to Lisgar?

A: Strings, Latin, Spanish, university courses, potentially AP courses.

Q: When will the transfer cap be set and will the Board extend the transfer window?

A: The transfer period has been set from February 16 to 26, 2010.

Q: There is a large grade 8 gifted cohort, which could have an impact on enrolment and transfers. How will Lisgar deal with this?

A: The superintendent needs to provide the principal with more information on what will happen with the number of gifted centers so the principal can assess the transfer capacity more accurately.

Q: How many gifted students are currently at Lisgar?

A: About 75 to 100 per grade.

8. Other Business / Info items:

(1) Gifted review:

- Staff's initial recommendation was to close the gifted programs at Merivale HS and keep the program at Gloucester HS open. This seemed to make little sense, because Gloucester HS has only 14 gifted students right now, and those students are not well served because the program is so small. So staff was asked to come back with new recommendations. These new recommendations will become available to the public on February 6. LSC will be on the list to delegate at the February meeting. LSC's presentation will be discussed at the next council meeting.

9. Committee Reports

(1) SSC / Board Watch (Liz Melanson) - - no update

(2) LSC Alumni (David Paull) - - no update

(3) Zone 10 Meeting (David Paull) – no update

(4) OCASC (Kate Preston-Thomas) - no update

(5) SEAC (Beth Doubt)

- Jennifer McKenzie and the other two downtown trustees have organized a public meeting on January 14 regarding the budget. Parents are encouraged to attend. Sue will forward the information to Rachel, who will pass it along to the parents.
- Some SpecEd elementary classes might be discontinued and some secondary classes opened to adjust to the current demand. A consultation meeting is scheduled for January 7 regarding changes to grade 8 at Broadview. Parents should get involved in the Board budget discussions; there are continuous cuts coming up in the next few years. The district-wide meeting on January 25 at the Confederation Centre is open to the public. Beth's term as chair of SEAC has ended. She is now vice-chair.

Action Item: Beth to send an update of this meeting to Rachel to forward to parents.

Comment:

- Many thanks to council members for all the work on the ARC, the cross-boundary transfer and the gifted reviews.

10. Round Table

no comments

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 pm.