

**Lisgar School Council Meeting
March 3, 2009
Minutes**

Council Members Present:

Jeremy Chitpin, Beth Doubt, Rachel Eugster, Lianhua He, Tina Hogue, Lynn Honsberger, Bob Irvine, Gertrud Jeewanjee, Paul Kronberg, Yany Luo, Liz Melanson, Sue Nishi, David Paull, Kate Preston-Thomas, Sanjay Srivastava, Ruweida Shire, Lawrence Wolofsky, Bruce Warnock.
Ex-officio: David McMahan, Mark Goebel.

Council Member Regrets:

Edward Chen, Jamie Gardiner, Pam Hopper-Coculuzzi, Hui Li, Karima Lotayef, Stephen Wang.

Parents and Guardians: Lillian Chow, B. Jane Luh, Laura Lunn, Marisa Rocha, Abdullah Suleiman, Fernando Vasconcellos, Abdirizak Warsame.

Guest Speaker: Trustee Jennifer McKenzie

Meeting Chair: Rachel Eugster

Meeting Secretary: Gertrud Jeewanjee

1. Welcoming Remarks (Rachel Eugster)

Rachel welcomed all attendees.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

The amended agenda was accepted by consensus.

3. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was

MOVED BY: David Paull

SECONDED BY: Liz Melanson

THAT the minutes be accepted with implemented changes.

CARRIED

4. Student Council Co-Presidents' Report (Jamie Gardiner)

(1) Blackout Dance: went very well; there were no incidents; roses were sold prior to the dance; \$200 were raised.

(2) Talent Show: taking place on March 6 from 7:00 to 9:30 pm; quite a lot of students showed interest in participating and not all acts were accepted.

(3) Upcoming:

- The process of electing the student council co-presidents for the next school year will start at the end of March.
- Student council constitution amendments: the question came up as to who is considered part of the 'executive', because one of the rules states that no executive should hold more than one position.

Comments:

- The consensus of the attendees was that it is not a problem to be a member of several committees as long as they have been elected to the executive.

5. Presentation (Jennifer McKenzie, Trustee)

(1) French as a Second Language Review:

- the review for the secondary schools has been completed and a report has been compiled;
- under review were the consistency of programming, trends in what tracks the students choose (students were surveyed regarding the reasoning for their choices);
- no major shifts in programming are planned;
- the goal is to achieve more consistency between schools.

(2) Transfer policy:

- this issue is up again tomorrow before chairs committee;
- a decision is planned in May, for implementation in September 2010.

(3) Gifted Secondary Review:

- the review has been completed;
- lots of feedback was received and lots of discussions took place;
- the program at Lisgar was highly regarded and was the first choice of parents for a gifted track;
- staff wanted to wait until area accommodation and secondary review is decided before continuing with this review;
- the board will be following recommendations that the number of gifted sites be reduced;

(4) Renovating/upgrading schools: the discussion is ongoing

- Jennifer is looking for input on what parents think what configuration the downtown schools should have.

Q: AP courses – in what direction does board want to go?

A: The plan for a secondary IB was defeated, but the plan is to offer more AP courses at more schools.

Q: Is there a plan in place to go forward with adding more AP courses?

A: The plan is to encourage and foster this, but it involves volunteer time from teachers, so can't be forced.

Q. Do teachers of AP courses have special training?

A: Teachers don't require special training in order to teach AP courses, but the teachers have to be very knowledgeable in the particular field. Teachers have to be capable and willing to teach the course as it requires a lot of extra time.

Q. Has the board had a discussion about the impact of the economic downturn on the education budget?

A. The reduction in taxes might have a negative impact, however, the new budget calls for more money going towards education, which might mitigate the impact of the economic situation.

Q. How are funds allocated between existing schools and new school construction?

A. Funds for maintenance are distributed across all schools; additional money goes towards areas where more schools are needed.

Q. Should LSC provide input regarding the French language review at secondary level?

A. Yes, please provide input on what program should be offered at which site and how the various programs should be differentiated.

Q. What mechanism should be used to provide input?

A. Email and phone are preferred.

Q. Are alternative schools included in this review?

A. A review of the alternative schools review is coming up as well as a review on consistency of programs.

Comments:

Transfers:

- The same motion is coming back unchanged and going to consultation process; this states that schools will be capped at 110% of the maximum capacity determined by the ministry's formula. This would mean that Lisgar's student community would go down to approximately 800 students.
- At the last meeting, many Lisgar parents expressed their views; which were not included in the meeting minutes and were not taken into account. Parents should attend the meeting on March 4 to question why the feedback was not reflected in the minutes.
- Staff was given a direction that was not taken into account.
- The motion was made because of concern over students leaving certain schools; it was recommended that a review should look into why students leave rather than forcing them to attend those schools.
- Staff should solicit input before they go forward with the consultation.
- Council should ask community to attend the meeting, especially those who attended the last meeting to ask why the direction given wasn't followed.
- Council should send any input on amendments to the consultation plan to Jennifer.
- Most transfers out are from schools that are under review of closing gifted program.
- 110% of capacity is not necessarily how many spots are actually needed at any particular school.
- No adjustments were done to the capacities that are determined by the ministry. It should be recommended that that be done to maximize Lisgar's capacity.
- The goal should be to provide the best possible education for schooling; it is short-sighted to cut programs at schools that provide a very popular program.
- Council should start talking to other schools in similar situation.

6. Staff Representative's Report (Paul Kronberg)

Council is invited to seek the staff's input on any issue through Paul.

Action Item: Paul K. to ask staff how much extra time the staff spends on schooling.

Q: Was the attendance of the mock time table night impacted by the visit of President Obama?

A: The turnout was mixed; some classes were well attended, some were rather empty.

Q: Would it be possible to keep the parents more informed about upcoming tests, homework, etc.

A: The board is improving technologies for teachers to keep in contact with parents; it is up to each teacher to decide the type and extent of information provided.

Comment:

- The presentations at the mock time table night were very informative. Thanks go to the teachers for providing it.

7. Principal's Report (David McMahon)

(1) Cross boundary transfers:

- The cap was at 80 transfers.
- Within 15 minutes, 800 applications were received, of which 500 were duplicates;
- Eliminating the duplicates is very work intensive; Lisgar is looking for an approach that is less time-consuming for the staff.
- The acceptance letters have gone out; about 15 families are still on waiting list in case some families decline the transfer.

- Including these 80 transfers, the Lisgar student community will be at around 1080 for the upcoming school year.

(2) Mock time table night:

- Obama's visit did cause a big disruption; some teachers were not able to reach the school in time.
- The overall attendance was lower than in previous years.
- Other models are being considered, e.g. having one mock timetable night that presents the classes for both semesters at the beginning of the year.

(3) Option sheets:

The option sheets were due last week; school is considering not scheduling 'signature days' for students to go around to collect teachers' signatures for their option sheets.

(4) Parent-teacher interviews have been moved to April 16.

(5) Literacy test:

- scheduled for April 2;
- Cancelling classes for the other grades (as has been done in the past) isn't desirable. The teaching schedule/classroom allocation will be adjusted for the day so at least shortened classes can be held for everyone else while the testing of the grade 10 students is going on.

(6) Previous action items:

- Staff appreciation luncheon - June 23 would work well;
- SRO has confirmed attendance at the May council meeting;
- Chinese language courses: waiting for a response from Barry Pickerton, the principal of Curriculum Services at the Board.

(7) Miscellaneous:

- The graduation ceremony will take place on June 26 at 11:00 am.
- The 2009/10 school year will start on September 1, the Tuesday before Labor Day.

Q. Could the course outlines be posted to the school website?

A. It is on the web, but parents might not be aware of it until they attend the mock timetable night.

Q. Synervoice currently has a long delay after phone is picked up.

A. This will be addressed with the service provider.

Comments:

- The content of Synervoice messages could be posted on the LSC website for reference.
- Synervoice also has a simultaneous email program that could be utilized.

8. New Business

(1) Cambridge play structure:

- It was decided to ask the student council if they would like to raise some funds.

(2) Calendar for council meetings, 2009/10 school year:

- Rachel has puzzled out a few options for dates that abide (as much as possible) by the parameters. These will first go to David to avoid conflicts with other school events.

(3) April council meeting:

- The meeting was moved to April 6 because Passover begins on the evening of April 8 this year.

8. Old Business:

(1) Lisgar Lecture:

- A quick survey in the room showed that about half of the parents present had received the Synervoice invitation to the lecture.
- Council might consider a lecture series in collaboration with other schools.

Action Item: Laura L. to ask the speaker if he is okay with having the lecture taped.

Comments:

- Attendance at the event Hillcrest organized with several psychology presentations was very good.
- Paul K. will extend the invitation to our lecture to teachers.

(2) Constitution update:

- The review committee has worked on the updated constitution;
- The document should be ready for council review within a week.

9. Committee Reports

(1) OCASC (Kate Preston-Thomas)

- Any attendee can bring up items at the beginning of the meeting.
- Superintendent Peter Gamwell talked about character development of senior staff, incl. principals and VPs.
- A representative from the Board Transportation Authority spoke about the collaboration with the Catholic School board in amalgamating some of the school bus routes.
- OCASC has been known for being fairly pro-active, almost like a watch dog. As of late, it is leaning towards not addressing anything that might be controversial.

(2) Cross Boundary Transfer Process (Lynn Honsberger)

- History: until two years ago, parents would camp out in the field before transfer date; the board had concerns about this process; Lynn conducted a research on the policies of other North American English language schools; from March to June 2007 the principals of Lisgar and Nepean HS were interviewed; recommendations (supporting families; strengthen schools and their programs; expand pilots to include more on-line applications and introduce exchanges) were submitted to the Board in the spring of 2007; in December 2007, a recommendation was made to allow for more schools to participate in the online applications by staggering the times for each school; in February 2008, 42% of transfers to Lisgar were for the gifted program, 100 in grade 9, 24 students from Merivale and 13 from Ridgemont because both schools are under review of having their gifted program closed; in May 2008, Trustee Shea moved to restrict school transfer to increase ability to predict and control enrolments.
- Each year, 80 to 110 students transfer to Lisgar, mostly in grade 9; approximately 50% are gifted.
- A reduction in transfers could drop the Lisgar student community by 25% over four years, which would have a dramatic impact on the programs offered at Lisgar.
- At the Education Committee meeting in November 2008, the concerns of parents were not taken into account and were not recorded in the meeting minutes.

Comments:

- Parents of a student new to the Board had to fight the Board in order to have their child attend Lisgar, even though they moved into the catchment area of Lisgar.
- A win/win solution should be found instead of forcing students to attend certain schools.

- Proposed recommendations for the Committee: a mechanism for email input should be provided; the gifted review should be completed before the transfer policy review; review of Ministry maximum capacity calculations.
- The focus should be on community schools offering the widest range of programs.

Action Item: Lynn will organize people to attend the meeting tomorrow and ask questions.

Action Item: Lynn, Kate P.-T. and David P. will look into how the capacity is calculated and how it can be increased.

(3) SEAC (Beth Doubt)

- At the meeting last week, most of the time was taken up by a training session by a representative of the Peel District School Board, focusing less on defending things and looking more at the bigger picture on how things are done in general.
- The Board has been working on an electronic template for IEPs, so the IEPs are generated in a more timely fashion and more consistently. On the Board website, several sample IEPs for exceptionalities are available for review.

(4) SSC / Board Watch (Liz Melanson)

- Presentation took place about the substance abuse program:
OCRI, the Board and the Ministry are providing additional funds so all schools have access to the program. The program was more active when it was inaugurated in 1980. Each year, they were working with approx. 1,000 children; it is a treatment program, not a prevention program. Principal has to request for them to come in and work with the students; the program is quite successful; 1\$ spent in treatment saves the tax payer about \$5 in costs (crime fighting, lost productivity, etc)
- Accommodation Review:
The options presented on February 24 were brought forward, they are now available on the Board web site; it is a very systematic review; there are six formal options, some of them might have impact on Lisgar; the next meeting will take place on March 10; Lisgar should start attending these meetings although Lisgar and Glebe are not directly part of the review; option 6 is being favored right now (closing Rideau HS, dividing Rideau English program between Gloucester and Lisgar in 2010; as a result, 57 students would transfer to Lisgar, which would restrict transfers and gifted capacity); the final decision by the Board is set for December 15.

Action item: Liz M. to prepare a paragraph that will be sent out to the parent community.

10. Other Business

(1) Christmas donations:

- \$2,435 was collected and the request for receipts has gone to the Board.
- Trustee elections are coming up – consider friends who might be willing to stand for election.
- Volunteers have started to record Board meetings for future reference; volunteers are needed to run the device during these meetings.

11. Round Table

no comments

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.