

## **Minutes of CSS Parent Council**

**December 7, 2005**

**Call to Order:** The regular meeting of the Calgary Science School Parent Council was called to order at 19:09 hours in the school boardroom by Jackie Benoit.

### **Present:**

Debra Pylypiw (board rep) Latrice Lehman (board rep)

James Cameron (board rep) Jackie Benoit (president)

Karen Miller (member at large) Laurie Hirsch (co-secretary)

Ron Sweet (principal) Jim Kellner (member at large)

April Toyota (member at large)

Ann Marie Fryer (member at large)

### **Absent:**

Dave Robinson (board rep) Sherry Badior (treasurer)

Margaret Mills (vice-president) Ann Ahern (member at large)

Cathy Kurio (teacher rep) Karen Barlow (member at large)

Carol Berlin-Miller (co-secretary) Denise Kitagawa

Tammy Willerth (member at large)

### **1. Approval of Agenda**

Laurie Hirsch moved to accept the Agenda and Deb Pylypiw seconded the motion.

### **2. Approval of Minutes of November 2, 2005**

Two amendments were requested for the November 2 minutes. They should read as follows:

Action Items:

c) ii) “James Cameron suggests letting grade 8s or 9s electives to help with Web design.”

d) “Promoting Student-led Conferences” -

Karen Miller moved to accept the changes and April Toyota seconded the motion.

### **3. Guest Speakers**

a) Bussing - Southland Transportation

Thomas Schmidt, Tom Jezersek and Jay Maki presented a new system for tracking the busses called “Safe Trace”. Busses would be equipped with a GPS system. Parents can access, via the web, their children’s bus route in “real time” that has a five second time delay. Satellite mapping is used so parents can zoom into a zone to better determine when the bus will arrive at their stop. January to June, 2005, The Webber Academy tried an earlier version of this system and generally speaking, the feedback from the parents was good. The biggest concern, however, is the cost. How much are parents willing to pay for this system when bussing fees are already high?

Southland is still working on some other features like having ID cards for the children which would register when they get on and off the bus. They are also trying a telephone ring that would alert the parents when the bus is five minute away. Ron Sweet feels this programme is in tune with CSS as it is cutting edge technology so it would be a great project to pilot at CSS.

Four busses will be equipped with the technology for a trial run starting January 9, 2006. Routes 1, 5, 6 and 9 (maybe 4 instead of 9) will pilot the project. Thomas Schmidt will co-ordinate the training for parents. They will be taught how to use the system and where to go for support.

b) Louise Partridge - PAT and AERR

Staff and board members were on the Education Planning Committee. The committee is trying to summarize in 2 pages the highlights of the AERR. These highlights will be broken down into different areas. A full report is available on the CSS website.

The PATs are also available on the CSS website. The purposes of the PATs are to keep schools teaching the Alberta curriculum, to outline what areas need improvement, how children compare against the acceptable standards, monitors progress and improves the classroom. CSS keeps additional stats like gender. Cohort data is also kept with the results from year to year. Jackie asked how the assessment of problem based learning was

going. Ron replied that a committee is working on a more detailed way of reporting “inquiry”.

The teachers at CSS are continuously working on improvements. Students at CSS are better in skills than knowledge. The results that the staff reviews are much more detailed.

Jim Kellner wanted to know where we go from here since we are achieving at such a high level.

The curriculum will be changing in grades 4 and 7 next year. CSS teachers are involved in planning the new curriculum.

A discussion took place on the internet v. encyclopaedias. We need to teach children about all areas of information and how to determine the good from the not so good.

## **Reports**

### a) Chair - Jackie Benoit

Jackie brought up the student led conferences and the idea of having pizza available for families. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to organize this activity. The grade 9s would like to take this project on for the next conferences. It could be a fundraiser. The students could serve beverages, take orders for pizza. The grade 9s will be in Bamfield from March 13 to 17 but if they are organized, they could possibly be prepared for the conferences in March. Some of the suggestions were that a form could go home prior to the conferences or perhaps the pizzas could be ordered every hour. Ron thinks the grade 9s would be very capable in setting this up. Latrice and Jackie agreed. The students can work on the plan during leadership time with Mr. Tickles.

Discussion turned to the CSS website. Ron has spoken with the website person and it is being worked on. Last year’s minutes are still being looked for as they were not posted on the website. The Spectrum has not been “sterilized” so it has not been posted on the website. Only initials will appear in the version that is posted. Bus lists and vaccination lists are allowed if they are “working” documents and as long as they stay in the school community (FOIP). More input will be requested from the parents re personal info. CSS’s philosophy is that we are a caring community so we do not do security checks for our volunteers.

### b) Principal’s Report - Ron Sweet

**Professional Development Activities** - We have been seeing great progress in our work with Galileo on problem-based learning/inquiry. Presently we have a large TPGP (Teach Professional Growth Plan) group working closely with Candice from Galileo and they are

excited about the positive ways this work is affecting their practice. On Friday, Dec. 9, the whole staff is attending a Galileo Showcase at U of C.

**Outreach** - Plans are well underway for the Gender Smarts conference we are hosting on February 2 and 3. We are hoping to attract around 300 parents to the evening presentation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 200 teachers to the conference the next day. CSS parents are being given complimentary tickets for Thursday evening up to and including January 13<sup>th</sup>. After that date CSS parents will have to pay the \$10.00 admission. Around 15 groups of teachers from CSS are presenting breakout sessions to attendees on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sessions highlight our best practice and compliment the presentations by keynote speakers Barry and Therese Macdonald. Lunch will be provided to all delegates and Logos bookstore will be selling pertinent books including the recently released book Boy Smarts by Barry Macdonald.

**Student Teachers** - Last Friday was the last day of practicum for our 13 U of C student teachers. We will miss their presence around the school and in the classrooms. We hosted a complete cohort of students led by U of C professor Bonnie Shapiro from the second week of September until now. This turned out to be the most well organized students teachers round we have ever experienced. Martina Metz did a tremendous job of overseeing and inspiring. This coming Friday, Darrell and I are going to the University to meet with them one last time. We will field their questions and conduct a mock interview with one of them to build their confidence in this area.

**Technology** - Onward Computer Systems (OSI) is making tremendous progress in rebuilding our computer network and will soon be finished making the major changes they have proposed. We already are experiencing greater network stability and are confident that our login speed issues will be resolved for once and for all. Both the Apple training course and the Calgary Regional Consortium workshops that were hosted in our building during the week of November 21 went very well. The CRC has booked our facility for several evening workshops during the upcoming term.

**Facility** - Flooring upgrades for the school are slated for the two weeks of Spring Break as Winter Break was simply too short. Three storage sheds have now been ordered in preparation for our storage room (Rm. 14) becoming the new Art room in August of 2006.

**Outdoor Activity Centre** - The OAC Committee has decided to call our new playground the Outdoor Activity Centre as play is not really what this effort is all about (although play is good). We see the focus being Outdoor Activity: During Phys Ed and Daily Physical Activity (DPA) as well as during recess. The committee met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November and will be meeting again on Monday, January 16, 2006 at 7:00 p.m. We hope to expand membership from the nine we currently have to as many as want to join as this project needs all the expertise and effort as we can muster.

**Japanese Intern** - We have secured a billet within Lakeview for Japanese intern teach Mikako Nakamura from January 14 until June 14, 2006. We are now trying to secure the

donation or loan of a bedroom suite as the room is currently unfurnished. As well, another CSS family (April Toyota) has offered to host Ms. Nakamura on a number of weekends. We are all looking forward to her arrival.

**Fort Steele Apprenticeship Program** - On Friday, December 2, we met with Educational Program Director Cam Trueman from Fort Steele and put the finishing touches on this year's Apprenticeship Program. It looks even better than last year's! We have decided to abandon the shelter component that involved the use of prospector tents as we found it split the group and was not completely satisfactory during inclement weather. In order to treat our grade eights with the respect they deserve we felt that the Apprenticeship Program's accommodation should be a "cut above" not a "cut below" that of the Fort Steel History Lab. I am pleased to report that the Fort has agreed to house all 25 students, teachers and volunteers in two massive conference rooms on the second floor of the International Hotel.

### **CSS's Indoor/Outdoor Experiment**

As you are aware, we are on a mission to give students as much freedom as we can as it gives them a chance to practice being responsible. We remain committed to this. We have been experimenting with the concept of letting students decide where they spend their recesses. Most want to go outside except during the most inclement weather, and even then there are those who want to challenge the elements. We realize there are many other healthy ways to spend recess time and so have granted our students the freedom of deciding how and where they spend it (please keep in mind that we are a closed campus and no one leaves the school ground unless they walk home for lunch or are signed out by a parent). When students start to forget that there is a difference between inside and outside behaviours, we have to remind them that they are expected to act responsibly. We do this through morning announcements and when this does not work, we will require all students not involved in scheduled activities or teacher assigned work to be outside for a few recesses (we will not do this when the temperature dips below -20 degrees Celsius). We are generally pleased with the way our students accept responsibility and are very pleased with the way they respond when a privilege is temporarily taken away.

Deb P. asked if going outside for recess would be a day by day thing. Ron said the behaviour of the kids in the hall was improved but not enough. The kids have been warned. The parents would like more info as to what the problems are exactly. If a change is made to the policy, it will be posted in the newsletter. The students have responded well to this change.

Jackie was concerned about the language coming home. Ron said they have had meeting with staff to talk about it. Ron feels the internet is feeding the poor language.

### c) Teachers Report - Cathy Kurio

Cathy was unable to attend the meeting, but she sent the following e-mail to Ron:

I sent out your comments regarding Student-led Conferences to the staff after our last meeting, but we were unable to get together to implement any of your suggestions. I will try to address these issues in a more timely manner before our next set of conferences in March. The classes that Mr. Neufeld and I teach had good attendance, especially on Thursday night. Altogether we had 28 out of 50 families that came to the school to participate in the conferences. We were happy with the turn out considering we are now teaching Grade 7.

In response to a request from Margaret Mills I have photocopied the descriptors from the report card folder so you can have them at home to refer to as the year goes along. When reading a magazine called Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School I came across a really good article which was written in response to the question: Isn't it more efficient for children just to learn rules and have understanding come later when they are more mature? I have photocopied this article if you are interested in reading the response which supports our school's methods of teaching math through problem solving. If there is anything you would like me to tell the teachers, please include it in the minutes and I will include them in my report to the teachers. Thanks, Cathy Kurio.

c) Board Report - Deb Pylypiw

The Board's retreat went well and the new Board Members were introduced. They are: Latrice Lehman, Jackie Stewart and James Cameron. The returning members are Dave Robinson and Debra Pylypiw.

## **5. Committees**

a) Playground - Ron Sweet

The first meeting went well. The group brainstormed about fundraising methods, as well as the need for specific talents, which hopefully we can draw from our school community. It was agreed that the committee would be called the OAC (Outdoor Activity Centre). The committee is still looking for more volunteers and will be meeting again on January 16, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

b) Transportation - Deb Pylypiw

Deb spoke briefly about the new tracking system being introduced by Southland. There are still some issues that Southland has to fix re: when busses are switched to different routes. After the Webber Academy had a trial run with this system, the parent survey showed that most parents are not willing to pay more for this service.

All the transportation committees of the charter schools have met together and the meeting was good. Westmount will have a huge increase in fees next year. Almandine uses money from the instructional budget so they only pay \$75.00 per year.

c) Student Assessment - Ron Sweet

Ron stated that it is much better using the 4 point system. There still needs to be a better way of accessing “inquiry”.

d) New Committees - nothing to report

## **6. Discussion**

Since we will be on break the first Wednesday in January, it was decided that we would skip the January meeting. Jim K. brought the motion to skip the meeting and Deb P. seconded.

## **7. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.