

## District School Council / Parent Involvement Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 30, 2014 7 p.m.

**Lindsay Education Centre** – 300 County Road 36, Lindsay

**Haliburton County Education Centre** – 12 Vintage Crescent, Minden

**Muskoka Education Centre** – 1271 Cedar Lane, Bracebridge

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M E E T I N G N O T E S

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1. Welcome and Introductions

*Laurie Campbell – Muskoka Area Chair*

2. Update from the Director of Education

*Director of Education – Larry Hope*

- a. *Director Hope provided information about suspensions and expulsions over the last five years and showed graphs indicating a steady decline due in part to a number of programs and initiatives in place in schools (e.g. Restorative practices)*
- b. *EQAO assessment results were reviewed with scores over the past 5 years. The board is doing well in Grade 3 and Grade 6 in reading and writing but there are concerns in math that are being addressed. Students with special needs have improved in reading and writing over the last 5 years. This is a really good news story for TLDSB. In grade 9 mathematics, students in applied are scoring at 10-15% higher than the provincial level. Academic students do extremely well. Our numbers have been consistent in the OSSLT which is written in grade 10.*
- c. *The board provides opportunities for staff to apply for a Program Enhancement grant – over the last few years the number of applications and funding requests has risen each year. This school year there were 103 applications and over \$560,000 of requests. Over \$245,000 was allocated to projects and many other requests have been funded through other grants and available funding.*
- d. *The 2014-2015 strategic action plan is available on the TLDSB website at [www.tldsb.ca](http://www.tldsb.ca). There are many initiatives and programs planned for the year including strategies in place to address the mathematics concerns, initiatives to support the well-being of students, and enhanced communication opportunities for parents. Financial literacy will be looked at very closely in terms of a program or a set of supports.*
- e. *The Ministry of Education is going to embark on a large scale consultation to address concerns around the Elementary health and physical education curriculum. Every principal in Ontario is going to be asked to identify one person on their school council to participate in an online survey. One person from the DSC-PIC will be asked to participate in the survey.*

3. Parent Communication Opportunities

*Dianna Scates – Superintendent of Information Communication Technology*

*Catherine Shedden – Director's Office & Communications Manager*

- a. **SchoolConnects communications from school to home:** Superintendent Scates shared information about the new opportunity for schools to communicate with parents through a program called "SchoolConnects." The average number of messages sent by phone last year was 21. The type of notifications you will receive will include: student unexplained absences, elementary schools safe arrival – via text, school calendar notifications, field trip reminders, parent night, report card distribution announcements, event messages, homework reminders. Teachers can make contact with students and also with parents through this system – including classroom emails, exam schedules. On snow days messaging can go out. Last minute cancellations can come via text message, phone, or by email. Phone surveys can also come from SchoolConnects. If there is more than one message, even if they are from more than one school, they will all be combined into one message to the home.
- b. **Peachjar – eflyers direct to parents:** The school board will launch a new tool called "Peachjar" in January. All flyers from the community and from schools and school councils will be uploaded to Peachjar. Parents can access this information by clicking the Peachjar logo on each school website or through the board website. Parents will be encouraged to sign up for their own Peachjar account so that updated information will come straight to their email. Principals will no longer be including community information in school newsletters – this information will all be available through the Peachjar tool. School newsletter size will be reduced hopefully to one or two pages.

#### 4. Updates for School Councils

Manager of the Directors Office & Communications – Catherine Shedden

- a. **PRO Grants**
  - 14 schools received Parents Reaching Out grants this year with most receiving the maximum \$1000 amount. Topics include:
    - Building School Community
    - Healthy Relationships and well being
    - Internet Safety workshop
    - Interactive science nights for parents
    - Healthy families = happy families
    - Tools for parenting in the age of social media and technology
    - Get Active
    - Healthy Lifestyle
    - Meet you at Macaulay
    - And more
  - These funds need to be spent by the end of June
  - A report is due to the ministry with a copy to our office by August 31<sup>st</sup>
- b. **Parent Engagement Grants**
  - Each school council has \$500 available for parent engagement activities, events, projects – these funds have been placed into school accounts and must be spent by the end of June
  - A report will be due by June 15<sup>th</sup> – we do not need receipts – just a summary of what you did to help parents engage with their child's education at your school.

- c. P4E Annual Conference
- *People for Education are an independent organization working to support public education*
  - *We receive the People for Education newsletter in our office and we forward it along to school council chairs – you can certainly sign up for the newsletter yourself*
  - *There is an annual conference and each year we offer the opportunity for school council chairs to attend. This year the following school council members will be attending:*
    - *Grant Boudreault from Dr. George Hall Public School*
    - *Kerry Foreman from Monck Public School*
  - *We are pleased that these folks can attend and represent Trillium Lakelands at the event – they will be presenting information from the conference at our next meeting in December.*
- d. Resources

**Parent Resource Toolbox**

- *With funding from the Ministry of Education – the Muskoka area schools came up with a magnet that has been sent home to all elementary families in TLDSB*
- *This magnet is intended to help make parents aware of the resources that are available to parents on the board website.*

**Building Parent Engagement**

- *Last year all school councils would have received a copy of the “Building Parent Engagement” webkey. This and other resources that have been made available to school councils, has been developed by the Council of Ontario Directors of Education with funding from the Ministry of Education.*
- *All this information is available at [www.ontariodirectors.ca](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca)*

5. Site Discussion

**City of Kawartha Lakes**

- a. New communications tools for parents – discussion and some answers for questions.
- i. Will SchoolConnects be used for confidential information – no, the system is primarily a mass communication tool for information that a class or a whole student body needs to know about it. However, the system does have the capacity (not currently being used) to send marks to individual email addresses.
  - ii. Can a parent respond back through the system or click reply? - reciprocal action will go into the school’s general mailbox
- b. Open discussion
- i. Concern over the huge expense for school trips – at Leslie Frost there is a very expensive trip in Grade 7 and another one in Grade 8. They have been told that they have to use a tour company. In actual fact there are approved tour providers and there are approved bus companies. School trip destinations and costs are a school-based decision. A survey of parents at the school through SchoolConnects could happen. Parent councils could respond to a number of questions that provides more information. Send possible questions to

Catherine Shedden in the Director's Office and a survey will be developed for school councils. At the end of the school year Dianna Scates will generate a list of the types of trips that schools typically engage in. School councils can review the Field Trips policy and procedure on the board website.

- ii. Financial Literacy – happy to see that there is going to be some action to ensure that this comes to our schools. Would like to have more information on how this is developing in our schools.

### **District of Muskoka**

- a. Discussion regarding the new SchoolConnects communication technology
  - Recommended that form be re-distributed to parents with a clearer explanation of what the contact information will be used for so that more parents can opt in
  - Recommended that forms such as the sign up for SchoolConnects be made available on the TLDSB website so that parents could print off and send in to school
  - Discussed benefits of this new technology that will enable school councils to connect with parents more easily and thus enhance parent engagement
- b. Magnet distribution
  - Some variability with distribution of magnets to schools
  - Student council members encouraged to follow up at own schools to ensure magnets were distributed, and to discuss at their next student council meeting, the purpose of magnets which was to direct parents to the new website and resources found there

### **County of Haliburton**

- a. Parent Engagement Activities – the group discussed an evening event presented by the Archie Stouffer Elementary School Council. A variety of parent engagement workshops were provided at the one event which was very successful.
- b. There was a brief discussion around the new School Connects system and how it works.

#### **District Chairs 2014-2015:**

City of Kawartha Lakes	Frank Arnold	705-439-3299	frankandanke@xplornet.ca
Haliburton County	Judi Paul	705-457-2950	judi.paul@tldsb.on.ca
District of Muskoka	Laurie Campbell	705-765-7239	lakejoebuilders@rogers.com

#### **2014-2015 Meetings:**

Thursday, December 4, 2014

Thursday, February 12, 2015

Thursday, May 7, 2015