

PRAIRIE ROSE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 8
SUPPORT STAFF / BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Monday, February 14, 2011
Dunmore Office

Present S. Angle (on behalf of M. Peers), P. Heller (on behalf of G. Dennis),
R. Munroe, L. Hausauer, L. Heitrich, L. Pitcher, D. Nicholls, B. Volkman,
P. Cocks.

Missing R. Scott, D. Penner, M. Peers, G. Dennis

1. Call to Order and Introductions

S. Angle called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. and asked for introductions. Lori Pitcher was welcomed as a new committee member representing Division office support staff.

2. Minutes of the May 28, 2010 Meeting

Moved by R. Munroe that the minutes of the May 28, 2010 committee meeting be accepted as presented. **Carried**

3. System Update / Initiatives - Superintendent

D. Nicholls provided an update on the implementation of Pearson PowerSchool student information system. Alberta Education requires all schools in a Division to submit student information on one common system. Training on Pearson PowerSchool will occur prior to the end of the school year - possibly in April / May. The Technology Department has been entering some data for schools ahead of the training. Timetables can still be done on Trevlac. The Technology Department will be issuing an implementation update and training schedule. All schools will be using Pearson PowerSchool in September – a pilot of the program by a few schools isn't likely with the short timelines.

Overall, it has been another successful year in Prairie Rose schools.

4. Topics Submitted for Discussion

4.1 Support Staff Evaluation Policy

B. Volkman reviewed the implementation of the revised support staff evaluation policy. All employees are to be reviewed by April 30. If a principal is concerned that an employee will require an action plan for improvement, an evaluation should be conducted earlier in the year to allow time for a second evaluation.

The process encourages all teachers who work with an Educational Assistant (EA) to participate in the evaluation but it is the responsibility of administration to summarize the input and meet with the employee. The final evaluation should be a summary of general observations / trends. Teachers and administration may also have a conversation about any specific issues identified in the review.

It is administration's responsibility to ensure process is complete and honest. Observations from individual teachers may be shared with EAs – that is a decision that can be made at the school level.

If an employee wishes to comment on the review, it can be written on the form and it will be kept on file as part of the evaluation. The employee should also discuss the comments with administration.

The evaluation format / templates will be posted on the Division website in the Personnel Handbook.

4.2 New Educational Assistant Induction Program

B. Volkman reported that as many as 25 Educational Assistants participated in the program this year. It is anticipated that there will be an average of 12 new EAs each year and the program will be offered later in the fall. Division personnel participated in a one-day in-service – topics included EA’s roles & responsibilities, professional learning opportunities at Medicine Hat College (on-line and evening courses available) and payroll procedures (cheque calculations, timesheets, Health Spending Accounts).

The EA Induction / PD Subcommittee is trying to implement more courses for EAs at Division PD day. At the March 2011 PD day, there will be sessions on speech therapy and ASEBP, for example.

A suggestion that a mentorship program be implemented for EAs was referred back to the subcommittee. Development of a “monthly agenda” is also under consideration so that new EAs can be prepared for the routine events. An EA Handbook has been provided to employees.

4.4 2011-12 Preliminary Budget

P. Cocks provided an update on enrollment projections for the next school year and the anticipated grants announcements. The two-year trend of deficit financial results is a concern for the Board and senior administration has been asked to present a balanced budget for 2011-12. School administrators have discussed the challenges anticipated.

4.5 Committee Term Length / Representation

R. Munroe and D. Penner will complete their three-year term in November 2011. Division Office will issue a request for volunteers to the school secretaries and library technicians prior to the next meeting in May 2011 to allow for a transition period.

Recessed for Lunch – 12:00 noon

5. Additions to the Agenda

The following items were added to the agenda. Moved by L. Hausauer that the agenda be approved as amended. **Carried**

5.1 Medicine Hat School District and CUPE

Some Prairie Rose Educational Assistants have contacted L. Hausauer regarding a recent Medicine Hat News article on the signing of a first collective agreement between Medicine Hat School District and their Educational Assistants represented by CUPE. Employees are questioning whether Prairie Rose would be moving in that direction.

P. Cocks clarified that it is solely a decision of employee groups on whether or not membership in a union would be pursued.

The current employment agreement extends to August 31, 2012 and provides an opportunity for the Board and employee representatives to meet between 60 and 120 days prior to the end of the agreement to discuss amendments. The Employment Agreement is posted on the Division website under "Documents / Employment".

5.2 Power Within for Division Office Staff

Employees who are interested in attending any professional development activity, including the "Power Within" series, should submit an application to their immediate supervisor. Each activity will be evaluated on a case by case basis with consideration given to the professional development value of the event.

5.3 Snow days

It is an expectation that if an employee cannot travel to their usual place of work, they should report to another school or Division Office should the road conditions permit. It was suggested that employees should call ahead before arriving at an alternative work site. If road conditions are hazardous, employees are not expected to risk travel.

Some colonies may not be comfortable with visitors. The matter will be raised at a meeting with the colony ministers to ensure employees are welcome to attend an alternate site on days their own school is closed.

5.4 Special Education Funding

A question was raised on the correlation between funding for a special needs student and an Educational Assistant's assignment. P. Cocks clarified that the Severe Disabilities grant is based on a "profile" of special needs in Prairie Rose and that funding is not provided on a "per student" basis for identified special needs students. The Division allocates more than three-times the amount of the Severe Disabilities grant to the Special Education program to cover the cost of Teacher Assistants, Classroom Support Teachers and program coordination.

6. Future Items for Discussion

- Introduction of new committee members
- 2011-12 Budget Update

7. Next Meeting Date

The next committee meeting will be held Friday, May 13, 2011.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.