

PRAIRIE ROSE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 8
SUPPORT STAFF / BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Friday, October 30, 2009
Dunmore Office

Present M. Peers, G. Dennis, R. Munroe, D. Penner, L. Hausauer, S. Karl (for C. Heidinger), D. Nicholls, B. Volkman, J. Matwe, P. Cocks.

Missing R. Scott, C. Heidinger

1. Call to Order and Introductions

M. Peers called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Minutes of the May 15, 2009 Meeting

Moved by G. Dennis that the minutes of the May 15, 2009 committee meeting be accepted as presented. **Carried**

3. System Update / Initiatives - Superintendent

D. Nicholls provided a brief review of the school-year start up activities. Overall, things are going well with a number of AISI projects underway and strong achievement test results from 2008-09. Some results have been adversely affected by lower participation rates in a few schools. There were some major construction projects in some schools over the summer.

M. Peers advised that the electoral wards for trustees are under review. There are positions for eight trustees and one position has been vacant since 2007. Revisions are being considered to have better representation of population by each trustee.

Manyberries School was closed at the end of 2008-09. Students have been directed to attend either Foremost or Seven Persons School and the transition has gone well.

4. Topics Submitted for Discussion

4.1 Review of Committee Activities to Date

P. Cocks presented a summary of the activities as a result of discussions at the previous meeting.

There was a question on concerns raised with the terms of employment letter provided to teacher assistants. B. Volkman advised that teacher assistants are not employed on continuous contracts due to the uncertainty of student placements each year and the letter of employment has to reflect that.

The schedule for replacing phones was questioned. D. Nicholls explained that additional funding was received for technology equipment and the technicians have been committed to equipment installations. Unfortunately, that has diverted attention from other priorities such as phones.

4.2 Support Staff Evaluations

B. Volkman reported that inconsistency in completing evaluations of support staff has become apparent through the School Reviews. Current Division policy requires reviews to be completed annually. Consideration is being given to changing the frequency of evaluations as well as a revised evaluation format.

A committee has been established by the Board to develop a new Support Staff Evaluation policy. An email will be sent inviting employees to volunteer for the committee. Classroom Support Teachers may also be involved. There may be a different format for various employee groups (librarian, secretary, teacher assistant) but the general policy for frequency etc. would be the same.

The Superintendent has requested that principals ensure all support staff have an evaluation by the end of June each year. Copies are to be filed in Division office personnel files, which will enable monitoring of compliance with the policy.

There is also a new requirement for letters of employment to be signed by employees confirming they have received a copy of their job description and the employment agreement. Support employees will also be asked to sign an oath of confidentiality.

Custodian evaluations have been done annually using a format J. Matwe developed that is more specific to the job duties.

4.3 H1N1 Update

J. Matwe provided an update on the situation with the H1N1 virus. Alberta is currently in second wave of the pandemic with some schools seeing absentee rates up to 35% in the Division and throughout the province. Officials are expecting a third wave in early spring which should have less impact. Information has been sent out via emails to staff / principals and is available on the Division website.

It is recommended that employers be lenient in requiring notes from doctors as testing isn't being done unless the person is showing severe respiratory symptoms. An email has been sent to all staff regarding reporting absences to illness. Those who contract the flu will be contagious for about 5 days; the recommendation is to stay home for 7 days or until the symptoms are gone and can resume normal activities.

Health nurses aren't vaccinating at schools because vaccine is free to everyone and Alberta Health Services cannot accommodate individual site vaccinations for all employer groups. School closures won't be effective in containing / controlling the virus because it is widespread in the community.

Regarding Hour Zero Emergency Preparedness . J. Matwe and an Hour Zero representative have been in schools doing site assessments. So far the analysis is very positive with some recommendations for changes. A one-day training session for principals is scheduled. Invitations were issued to municipalities to participate in the site-tours . only one has attended so far. There will be a training / information day for all area first responders to attend.

4.4 Inclement Weather Policy

The expectations for staff on inclement weather days have been discussed with principals and should be communicated to staff at staff meetings, etc. Information will be available in the email news folder.

All employees are expected to attend work when the road conditions are safe to do even if schools are closed for students. Employees are not expected to take unreasonable risks if road conditions are impassable and can attend another work site if that is feasible.

It was suggested that the Employment Agreement be amended or a policy for support staff be developed to identify the inclement weather guidelines.

4.5 2009-10 Financial Forecast

P. Cocks explained that that the provincial government will be taking \$293,000 of the Division's reserve funds to help offset the government's current year deficit. School budget allocations for 2009-10 were not affected by that decision as the loss will be covered by Division-based reserves. School divisions have been advised to prepare for a reduction in revenues from the province for 2010-2011.

There was a brief discussion on the current arbitration of wage increases between the government and the ATA.

Additions to the Agenda

R. Munroe questioned the decision to replace Trevlac with another student information system and asked that the people who use the programs be consulted about the features they would like to see in a system.

D. Nicholls explained that all school jurisdictions must comply with the provincial student reporting requirements (PASI) by September 2010. Pearson Power School is the most frequently used system in the province so it is reasonable that Prairie Rose would review it. A web-based system is also a factor to ensure that the program will serve the Division in the long term. There is still some uncertainty whether Trevlac will meet PASI requirements.

D. Nicholls committed to follow up on the process and provide further information to secretaries. (see footnote following the minutes)

5. Future Items for Discussion

- Update on Support Staff Evaluation Policy review committee
- Supervision time assigned to support staff. What is adequate / appropriate and how is it determined who is assigned to student supervision.
- Committee term length

6. Next Meeting Date

The next committee meeting will be scheduled for March or April 2010

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Re: Student Information System

L. Roberts has indicated that once users have had the opportunity to view all vendorsq products, principals and school secretaries will be surveyed for their opinion on the various options.