

**PRAIRIE ROSE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 8
TEACHER / BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, June 9, 2010 – 9:30 a.m.**

Present Paulette Heller, Marian Peers, Doug Nicholls, Brad Volkman, Pat Cocks,
Chris Kohlman, Rob Ficiur, Lenore Peers, Marilyn Skoda

1. Call to Order

Chris Kohlman called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. Minutes of the March 31, 2010 Meeting

The minutes of the March 31, 2010 Teacher / Board Advisory Committee were accepted as distributed.

3. Topics Submitted for Discussion – Board / Superintendent

3.1 System Update – D. Nicholls

The process of filling staffing positions is on-going. A question that arose at a recent ATA Local meeting on temporary and probationary contracts doesn't appear to be an issue in Prairie Rose.

P. Heller reported on the Employee Recognition Night held on Saturday, June 5. Service recognitions were presented and six retirees were honoured.

The third annual Kaleidoscope of the Arts was held on Saturday, May 29 and over 2,000 people attended. There were over 250 students adjudicated in music, singing and drama. Awards were given by grade and performance categories as well as "judges' choice" and "people's choice" awards (the Alicia Hargrave Award). There is a "Patron of the Arts" fundraising incentive with the aim to establish a \$10,000 fund. C. Kohlman indicated that the ATA may be interested in providing some sponsorship of the event next year.

M. Peers reported that trustees recently attended the PSBA conference which included a retirement function for PSBA Executive Director David King. There was also an ASBA conference with a policy decision to support the weighting of diploma exams at 50% of the overall mark. M. Peers attended a workshop on hazing – some jurisdictions have had serious incidents leading to suspensions / expulsions. There is perhaps a lack of awareness of how much hazing might be happening in Prairie Rose. Alberta Education's "Inspiring Education" report has been received.

C. Kohlman reported that David King was also recognized by the ATA with the Public Education Award. Regarding diploma exams, the ATA position is that 70% of the teacher-awarded mark and 30% diploma mark should be used for the overall grade.

C. Kohlman thanked D. Nicholls for his attendance at the recent ATA Local meeting and commented on the importance of keeping lines of communication open.

3.2 Review of committee activities to date

P. Cocks presented a summary of the committee discussions to date. Along with the actions taken as a result of the committee's deliberations, there is also the intangible benefit of having the dialogue - even if there isn't always agreement on the outcome.

3.3 Employee Use of Social Networking Websites

D. Nicholls reported that there are questions in job interviews related to information about the candidate that may be found on social networking sites. There has been at least one issue in the Division related to an employee's use of social networking. Senior administration is considering a Division inservice to provide guidance to all staff members on what is appropriate for both personal use and classroom / student use. Some discussion on social networking is already included in the New Teacher Induction program.

C. Kohlman responded that ATA member services are advising teachers to stay off of social networking sites or to ensure that privacy standards are set on high and that students are not included as "friends".

3.4 Acceptable Working Attire / Employee Dress Code

D. Nicholls questioned what the ATA Local's position would be on acceptable dress code for teachers and observed that "professional dress" seems to be becoming more casual. The intention is not to develop a written policy but rather to generate a discussion on the issue. B. Volkman advised that "professional appearance" has been part of the New Teacher Induction program to identify that perception is related to how people dress.

C. Kohlman indicated that the topic has not been discussed at the ATA Local. It probably is seen as a school-based decision with the tone set by administrators. Attire may also have to do with the working environment being different in some locations (such as space and room temperature).

C. Kohlman agreed to bring the topic forward at a future ATA Local meeting. The ATA perspective is that teachers are professionals and should be able to make a professional judgment on what is acceptable.

4. Topics Submitted for Discussion – Teachers

4.1 Personnel Policy P420 – Job Description – Principal

A question was raised by teachers on a recent change to the job description for principals that added a statement requiring the principal to "represent the Division in a positive manner and be a strong advocate of the system".

D. Nicholls explained that the expectation is that as line officers of the Board, principals will support the Board's position in public even though their personal position may not be the same. The principal may refer the matter to a teacher to provide the ATA position, if necessary.

4.2 School Evaluations

C. Kohlman advised that teachers have identified concerns with the questionnaires that are issued as well as the interviews conducted during school reviews. Teachers are aware of their responsibilities under the code of professional conduct and may be reluctant to participate fully. There may also be a concern with possible retribution by a principal.

B. Volkman questioned what else could be done to gather information from teachers on the school environment. The school review does provide teachers with an opportunity to indicate “general” issues (for example, if more than one teacher mentions it) while individual issues will be referred back to the teacher to follow code of conduct process.

School review “interviews” with teachers may be more of a concern than the survey instrument in that teachers may inadvertently respond to questions during the interview in a manner that would be in conflict with code of conduct.

D. Nicholls indicated that the intention of school reviews is to make positive change – not to find things going wrong. Employees are more aware of what’s happening at the school and their input is needed to make changes where required.

B. Volkman questioned whether involving an independent third-party would provide a process where concerns can be raised without being in conflict with the code of conduct.

D. Nicholls advised that the questionnaire instrument was developed from one used by Edmonton Public Schools. The provincial ATA has also been contacted and there seems to be an understanding that there is a need for teachers to have a way of addressing serious concerns without violating the code of conduct. Information obtained from teachers is discussed with administrators in general terms for the purpose of identifying issues and ensuring that change takes place. If school review comes out as “positive” but there are, in reality, serious issues, the review cannot be effective in making required changes.

C. Kohlman stated that the ATA Local is willing to work with the Board and senior administration on improving the school review process so that reviews are effective / accurate without inducing conflict between staff and school administration. It was acknowledged that the code of conduct makes it difficult to change conditions if teacher is unwilling to address concerns with administrators.

D. Nicholls responded that the Board would like to have dialogue with the ATA Local on how to make positive change where required with the cooperation of ATA and teachers and without getting into issues with the code of conduct.

Other recent changes such as the voluntary teacher transfer policy are improving conditions in some schools. The Board is also working toward having administrators more comfortable with purpose of school reviews so that they can accept the responses from the reviews without being concerned with some critical comments.

4.3 Edwin Parr Award

There was discussion on the “Lowell Leffler Award – Edwin Parr Nominee”. B. Volkman clarified that the award is referred to as the “Edwin Parr Award” throughout the nomination process. After that process is complete, the teacher selected as the Division’s nominee for the ASBA Zone award is also recognized locally with the “Lowell Leffler - Edwin Parr Nominee” award.

D. Nicholls advised that the Board will continue to review the process of nomination and selection of the candidates for the Edwin Parr award. Administration is also conducting an analysis of the New Teacher Induction Program for changes / improvements.

4.4 New Teacher Induction Program

C. Kohlman reported that although there is a significant time commitment at the beginning of the school year it is balanced by the usefulness of information provided to teachers. Even “veteran” teachers who participated felt it was beneficial. It was acknowledged that the Division is a leader in the province with its New Teacher Induction program.

B. Volkman indicated that some changes have been made in response to suggestions from participants. For example, the program for first year teachers has been moved to earlier in August and second and third year teachers are not required to attend in August.

5. Future Discussion Items

- School Reviews

6. Next Meeting Dates (proposed)

- Wednesday, December 8, 2010
- Wednesday, March 23, 2011
- Wednesday, June 15, 2011

7. Adjournment and Lunch

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.