

PRAIRIE ROSE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 8
TEACHER / BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, December 2, 2009 – 9:30 a.m.

Present: Paulette Heller, Marian Peers, Doug Nicholls, Pat Cocks, Brian Andjelic
 Chris Kohlman, Rob Ficiur, Lenore Peers and Marilyn Skoda

1. Call to Order – Chris Kohlman

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

2. Minutes of the June 10, 2009 Meeting

2.1 Review and approval

The minutes of the June 10, 2009 committee meeting were reviewed and accepted as presented.

3. Topics Submitted for Discussion – Board / Superintendent

3.1 System Update

The Board has approved a revised budget for 2009-10 that projects a deficit of \$581,287. There was some discussion on the pending arbitration of the rate of increase for teachers salaries and the impact the decision might have on the Division. D. Nicholls and M. Peers reported on various meetings attended with Alberta Education officials, MLAs and the Minister of Education at which the potential for reductions in provincial funding was discussed. There also have been discussions with principals at a recent Administrators / Board joint meeting.

The Superintendent has met with parents at Bindloss School to discuss future programming at the school.

Alberta Education recognized Prairie Rose for Very High Achievement in eight measures and Significant Improvement in two areas of the provincial Accountability Pillar results. The Board is very proud of the efforts of staff and students.

D. Nicholls summarized other activities underway in the school including AISI projects, student information system changes and various committee projects.

3.2 Provincial Testing Program . Participation Rates

The Division's participation rates on some PATs declined last year which is in contradiction to the increasing participation rates in the province. The lower rates impacted the overall Division results since the cohort statistics are the ones reported. The Board's position is to encourage all students to write PATs until Alberta Education changes the requirements. On-going analysis of the test results has helped improve learning for students.

There was some discussion on the original intent of provincial achievement testing and the opportunity for an improved testing program to be developed out of the provincial ATA strategy.

C. Kohlman advised that while the ATA Local supports the Real Learning First+ initiative, it will not be actively promoting the campaign. Trustees and central office administration will be invited to the TeachersqConvention to listen to the keynote speaker address this topic.

B. Andjelic expressed appreciation to the ATA Local for raising its concerns with PATs for discussion with the Prairie Rose Board - not all jurisdictions have had that opportunity.

3.3 Teacher Assistant Induction Program

A Teacher Assistant Induction Program is in the early development / planning stages. It has been a long term goal of the Division to provide more professional development for teacher assistants. The initial program will focus on the role of teacher assistants and communication models and may be offered as a one-day inservice, three times during the year. The planning group includes principals and classroom support teachers.

Committee members commented on the benefit of developing a support network for teacher assistants and the success of regular meetings throughout the year for colony school teacher assistants.

A separate committee is working on improving the evaluation model for all support staff.

3.4 Student / Board Advisory Committee

Alberta Education has implemented a student input program called %Speak Out+ <http://www.speakout.alberta.ca/> A presentation will be held in March 2010 at Eagle Butte High School. Prairie Rose is in the process of forming a %Student / Board Advisory Committee+that completes the circle of %advisory+committees in the Division and is modeled around the %Speak Out+initiative. Terms of Reference have been drafted and the selection of student representatives from Grades 9 to 11 is underway.

The current AISI theme from Alberta Education is on %student engagement+. A Division project under AISI includes conducting a comprehensive survey to get local data on student issues. The survey instrument that will be used is a web-based tool from %The Learning Bar+that has been endorsed by the Canadian Education Association.

4. Topics Submitted for Discussion – Teacher

4.2 Calendar Committee Formation

C. Kohlman submitted a suggestion that a committee of teachers, trustees and parents be assigned to develop the annual school calendar for recommendation to the Board for approval. Issues such as the number of professional development days and common vacation days with neighbouring jurisdictions would be part of the discussions.

The current process around the annual school calendar development was clarified. Draft calendars are shared with neighbouring school jurisdictions, school council representatives and school administration prior to formal Board approval.

D. Nicholls observed that the real issue for teachers was the number of paid professional development days in the school year and that is unlikely to be resolved through a calendar committee structure.

There followed some discussion on the variety of professional development activities that occur within the current school calendar (AISI, SAPDC, Classroom Support Teachers meetings, New Teacher Induction) and the Board's commitment to maximizing the number of instructional days. There are also a number of learning opportunities for teachers throughout the summer.

Teachers have identified increasing the number of professional development days as a high priority item. D. Nicholls suggested that the ATA Local submit a letter to the Board asking for a review of the number of professional development days in the school year calendar in comparison to other school jurisdictions. Once the Board has made a final determination on the number of PD days that will be made available, a committee could look at the options for building those dates into the school year calendar. B. Andjelic suggested that the Professional Learning Council could also look at the cost / benefit of alternative ways of providing professional development.

4.1 PD Time / PD Time for Elementary Teachers

Further to the previous discussion on professional development days in the school calendar, a concern was raised on the variance between the number of planning / development days available for different grade-level teachers. Junior and senior high school teachers have non-classroom time during exam weeks to spend on planning and curriculum review. Elementary grade teachers do not have the same opportunity.

D. Nicholls indicated that parents and trustees have mentioned concerns with the number of instructional days lost for exam writing. Other systems have policies on establishing a maximum number of days for non-diploma exams (i.e. 4 days) or having a common semester break day that elementary teachers would also receive.

A question was raised on inservice for school secretaries for the implementation of a new student information system. It was agreed that an inservice program has to be developed as part of the implementation schedule and that it should take place prior to the end of August 2010.

4.3 Booking of Substitute Teachers

There is inconsistency between the schools on the process for contacting substitute teachers. In some schools, the vice principal makes the phone calls and in others, the school secretary has the responsibility. Concern was expressed on the number of hours spent in trying to book substitute teachers. It was suggested individual schools could look at alternatives including increasing teacher assistant hours to perform the task. There was also some discussion on the use of a central booking system for substitutes although many schools would rather call their own preferred list of substitutes. Considering the context of the Division, administration does not see central booking as a viable option at this time.

The issue of contacting substitute teachers will be discussed at a future Administrators meeting.

R. Ficiur asked if email addresses for substitute teachers could be provided to assist with call-outs. The substitute teacher application form will be amended to collect email addresses.

B. Andjelic left the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

C. Kohlman indicated an invitation will be issued for trustees and school council chairs to attend the Teachers Convention keynote address by Dr. Berliner on February 18, 2010.

Trustees and senior administration were thanked for their attendance at the ATA Teacher Induction evening.

C. Kohlman reported on a process at Irvine School that allocated the equivalent of 0.1 fte teacher to release time for teachers to participate in the preparation of IPPs for their special needs students. Teachers have responded positively to the process.

In response to a question on current issues identified by teachers, C. Kohlman indicated that the number of PD days was the main issue along with concerns about the end of the current collective agreement in 2012.

The Teacher / Board Advisory Committee is seen by both teachers and trustees to provide a positive opportunity for improved communication and relationships.

6. Future Discussion Items

Topics for discussion will be submitted following the January 2010 ATA Local meeting.

7. Next Meeting Dates

Wednesday, March 24, 2010
Wednesday, June 9, 2010 (tentative)

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.