

**Westboro School Council
Meeting Minutes
November 22, 2017**

Welcome and Introductions:

Called to order 6:34 pm (Jacquie Surgenor).

Present:

Matthew Bissett, Stacey Bouwers, Krystal Gibson, Crystal Herbert, Annette Hubick, Debbie Klita, Peter Klita, Michael Lastiwka, Matt Matheson, Jordana Penney, Jacquie Surgenor, Heather Wieler

Approval of Agenda:

Krystal Gibson moves to approve the agenda, Matthew Bissett 2nd. All in favour: "Yes."

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:

Crystal Herbert moves to accept the minutes from October 18, 2017, Krystal Gibson 2nd. All in favour: "Yes."

New Business:

A.) Logos Report

Krystal Gibson shared the report on behalf of the Logos representative.

- Thursday, November 23 is this month's chapel.
- Fundraising is complete for the 2017 year.

B.) COSC (Committee of School Councils) Report

Jacquie Surgenor shared the following information about the latest from ASCA (Alberta School Councils' Association) as she is a member of the Board.

At the October ASCA Board meeting, Alberta Education Minister David Eggen and Assistant Deputy Minister Wendy Boje were at the table. Wendy has been in charge of the School Act Amendments as well as Bill 1 (An Act to Reduce School Fees).

Minister Eggen shared these points:

- The role of the parent is instrumental and non-negotiable.
- There have been complications and challenges with Bill 1 as it was dropped in a year earlier than planned. If you are experiencing problems, "Just give him a call."

- Stable funding for education is an issue. He was asked about the current process of a 1 year grant for ASCA (used to be a 3 year grant) and he said he would look into it since ASCA is instrumental.
- New draft Quality Standards could be expected to be signed soon. The Teacher Quality Standards relate to certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation of teachers and are currently from the late 1990's. In addition to an updated Teacher Quality Standard, they have developed a School Leader Quality Standard for Principals/Assistant Principals and a Division Leader Quality Standard for Superintendents.

Assistant Deputy Minister Boje shared these points:

- She was impressed with how well parents were represented, and how they represented themselves, at the September Alberta Education consultations.
- She was once a school council chair herself.
- Age of Access (how old students can be to still attend Grade 12): Results were inconclusive and Alberta Education is planning to work more closely with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education to meet these students' needs.
- Age of Entry (when students can enter kindergarten): She was surprised at the amount of competition that happens and how it plays into education. During consultations, they were told if they make changes to this guideline, they will need to allow plenty of time for parents to adjust and make plans around it (eg. daycare, etc.).
- Bill 1: The biggest take-away was learning that parents are willing to pay fees but are not willing to accept a reduction in services or opportunities, especially regarding choice and field trips. Wendy said the next step was a discussion around basic education and what was included – just core subjects versus options? They heard very loudly they should hit pause and let school districts catch up before implementing anything else. There is no more money for transportation and they know they need to work more with school districts on this.
- Surprises: One surprise was how prevalent competition between schools is and what is being done in policy to encourage this. Another was how parents are willing to pay for choice (other than French immersion) and for field trips, activities, and options. Thirdly, that there is a lot of worry about defining roles and responsibilities and how they can cut through that. (Traditionally, the Minister has required School Boards to have policies on various topics but has never approved them. There have now been 2 policies that the Minister has said he must approve. Additionally, with Bill 1, the Minister must now approve all fees and how much boards can charge for these fees. There is a worry about the autonomy of local boards.)

ASCA has named a new Acting Executive Director, Wendy Keiver (formerly the Director of Client Services).

ASCA has been working with Alberta Education to create a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the ASCA website in regards to Bill 24 (An Act to Protect Gay-Straight Alliances). It answers common questions, addresses some parental concerns, and has contact information for Alberta Education if parents have further questions. The FAQs can be found at:

<https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/documents/44597>.

Jacquie also shared that during this month's COSC meeting, Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) Superintendent Mark Liguori, gave an interesting presentation about how to read and interpret the results package from Alberta Education.

His presentation slides can be viewed at:

<https://www.eips.ca/download/116761>.

More information on COSC and their monthly meetings can be found at:

<https://www.eips.ca/parents/committee-of-school-councils-cosc>.

C.) Literacy Toolkit

Mike Lastiwka shared that the first entry for the Literacy Toolkit, Detective Dan, is now available on the school website and can be found at:

<http://westborelementary.ca/parent-literacy-toolkit>.

The information available here will complement report card comments parents will see about reading strategies for their children and can be used as a resource at home to help them progress.

D.) School Fees

Mike is continuing to gather input from parents in his role as principal who administers school fees affected by Bill 1. Westboro school fees are made up of 2 main items:

Noon hour supervision

- \$45 for a kindergarten student; \$90 for a single student; \$250 for families of 3 or more students
- We have 6 paid supervisor positions for 12 classrooms (1 supervisor for 2 classrooms each).
- Grade 1 classrooms also have grade 6 student supervisors for extra assistance.
- This should be a cost recovery program but at our school, it is not. Four positions are paid for through our fees, the other 2 are paid out of the school budget.

Field trips

- \$30 for kindergarten; \$60 for grades 1-6; \$50 PLACE and STEPS
- Teachers decide how to spend this money for their class and the majority are educational.
- Each class could have up to 5 or 6 fieldtrips per year. Some occur in the classroom, others outside of the school (eg. building a birdhouse is part of the fieldtrip fees).
- If not all fieldtrip fees are paid for in a classroom, the school tries to supplement the costs of a fieldtrip so no student is left behind.
- In the new fee system, the kindergarten students were asked for an extra \$22 fee to take a fieldtrip to a garden centre for a Christmas craft but the process did not work well so this fieldtrip will not occur.

It was asked if a surplus of fees from another classroom or grade could be used towards those classrooms that don't have full payments of fieldtrip fees from their families. Mike explained the accounting system is very restricted for this type of fee. When a fee is collected for a specific reason for a specific classroom, that classroom is where the money will need to be spent and accounted for at the end of the fiscal year.

It was shared that many kindergarten parents did not know about the extra \$22 garden centre fieldtrip fee so it would have helped if it was better documented and if parents had received a reminder to pay it. Mike explained the tight timeline from when the fees were issued to when they were required to be paid left very little time for the school to communicate with their kindergarten parents. It was also a new optional fee at the bottom of the page in the ACORN computer system which many parents did not know where to find. The school will need to decide if they can use the money that was collected to arrange for another fieldtrip this year or to provide refunds.

More information about Westboro Elementary School fees can be found at: <http://westboroelementary.ca/about/fees>.

E.) Fee Policy/Refund Policy Input Gathering

As part of Bill 1, the EIPS Board of Trustees needs to develop and implement a policy on fees, including a section on refunds. At a recent COSC meeting, a preliminary discussion occurred and direction was given to school council chairs to bring several questions back to their parents for discussion at their November meetings. Our parent feedback will be compiled and Jacquie will share it at the January COSC meeting.

1. What makes up fees?
At Westboro, noon hour supervision and fieldtrips are the main fees we pay. The Learning Resource Fee can no longer be charged.
2. Are you in favour of fees?
The easy answer to this is always yes. However, the reality is that if we eliminate fees in one area, the money is taken from another, so we need to ensure we always ask, “At what cost?” when talking about eliminating fees. (There was a \$1 million cut to high schools in EIPS - \$10 million across Alberta) to help fund Bill 1: An Act to Reduce School Fees). The reality of education is there will always be fees.
 - fieldtrips
 - swimming
3. What activities would you be willing to pay or give up?
 - noon hour supervision – could consider keeping the ratio of 1 supervisor for 2 classrooms in the younger grades and changing the ratio to 1 supervisor for 3 classrooms for the older grades
 - swim lessons for division 1 (grades 1-3)
4. How many field trips is enough?
 - what we are doing is currently enough
 - two would be sufficient – one in-class and one outside of the school
5. Can families afford to pay for all of these?
 - not always
6. What should the threshold be for a refund?
 - wouldn't want the division to pay more to cut a cheque than the amount of a refund (it was shared that it can cost \$25 in administrative time to administer a refund)
 - if a child is sick and misses a fieldtrip that is refundable
 - \$1 is the threshold
7. How would you like a refund (cheque or credit)?
 - both
 - if a cheque is more than \$50, allow the family the option to decide

If you have additional feedback on any or all of the questions, please e-mail it to westboroparents@gmail.com by December 15.

F.) School Council Operating Procedures

Jacquie explained that it would be helpful if we had a set of operating procedures for how to run our school council. We have a set of bylaws for Westboro Parents Group but nothing comparable for guiding our Westboro School Council. Jacquie and Debbie will prepare a draft set of procedures and bring them to a future meeting for feedback.

G.) Updated Communication Protocol

Jacquie discussed the proposed changes made in the “Westboro School Council & Westboro Parents’ Group Communication Protocol”. EIPS have revised some of their policies that our protocol refers to so these name/number changes have been incorporated. All other content remains the same. Crystal Herbert moves to accept the updated communication protocol, Krystal Gibson 2nd. All in favour: “Yes.”

The Communication Protocol can be found on the school website at:
<http://westborelementary.ca/council/parents-group-communication-protocol>.

H.) Executive Transition

Jacquie explained that Heather Wieler is now active as an EIPS substitute teacher so she would like to step down from the school council executive Vice-Chair position. We are very grateful for the past 4 years she has actively held positions on our executive!

Amy Churchill has volunteered to put her name forward. Anyone else interested in the position may put their name forward at the January 17, 2018, school council meeting. An election will be held if required.

I.) Open Questions

There were no questions.

School Report:

A.) Principal’s Report

Mike shared that a results review meeting is being held on Tuesday, November 28 starting at 9 a.m. at Mills Haven Elementary School. Results being presented have been compiled from financial reports, the Alberta Education Accountability Pillar Survey, EIPS surveys, and any other data. The meeting is open to any parents who wish to attend and will have data presented that is specific to our school.

B.) Trustee Report

Jacquie introduced our new school trustee representative, Annette Hubick who

presented the following report. For additional information, Annette also invited parents to visit her campaign website at: <https://www.annettehubick.ca/>.

I'm excited about my new role as trustee and as your board liaison – my presence here isn't just about sharing what's happening at a division level with you; I'm here to observe and listen about what's happening at the school level and what's important to parents. I also welcome your feedback and questions – I may not have the answers on the spot but I do promise to find and report back.

It's been "trial by fire" as November is the busiest month for the board:

- Day 1 – Board meeting
- 2-Day orientation
- Results reviews with all central office departments and I was able to attend all but one (Facilities). This is a key component of ensuring accountability. I noted how passionately committed these professionals are to their work and that the Trustees asked a lot of questions. I learned of the fantastic work being done in this division, as well as the challenges we face.
- Ed Committee meeting – There is time set aside at these meetings for sharing information with our fellow trustees and senior admin team. This is when I shared the concerns of parents who had reached out to me regarding the calendar survey.
- Superintendent's Evaluation
- Financial statements orientation
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) conference, Monday and Tuesday

Parent Input Opportunities

1. Calendar Survey – Deadline is Monday, November 27th.

As of Friday, November 17, 2017, there were 5,125 responses:

Parents*: 76.22 per cent

Students: 7.39 per cent

EIPS Staff*: 21.44 per cent

* Note: totals exceed 100 per cent as a number of EIPS are also parents (284 individuals)

Comments: 1,069

The survey results are slated to be shared with the board at its December Education Committee meeting.

2. Fees– EIPS has asked COSC members to bring forward a few questions to their school councils regarding the topic of fees. I'm looking forward to getting feedback from you and other parents throughout the district.

Government News

1. The government passed Bill 24: An Act to Support Gay-Straight Alliances. EIPS believes in providing safe and caring environments for all students and, as it does with all laws, will comply with the new law.

2. Education Minister Eggen tabled Bill 28, which seeks to make amendments to the school act including:
 - Common age of access for kindergarten – 5 by Dec 31 with implementation of September 2020 (matches EIPS’s current policy).
 - New eligibility criteria for transportation – further consultation is being planned to flush out what they will be. This will be developed into the Student Transportation Regulation. Criteria could include, age/grade, or special considerations regarding route safety.
 - Certification requirements for principals and superintendents
 - Establishing process for separate school districts
 - Make minor technical updates to ensure that the legislation is up to date.
 - Trustee Code of Conduct

We are pleased that he decided not move ahead with changes to “age of access” (currently 19 and there was some conjecture that it would be raised to 21.)

Upcoming

- Next public EIPS board meeting in on Thursday, November 23rd, at which audited financials, the 2017-18 fall budget update and the division’s Results Review report will be presented. Trustees will also officially be assigned to the board’s various committees – I’ll be co-chairing the teacher-board Consultation Committee, which meets quarterly. I’ll also be representing the board on the Partners in Education Foundation.

The EIPS Partners in Education Foundation is a not-for-profit foundation focused on improving the quality of educational experiences of the students in Elk Island School jurisdiction.

- 3-Days of School Results Reviews

Stay informed and keep me informed

I invite you to follow me on Facebook (@HubickeIPStrustee) and Twitter (@annettehubick) and to reach out to me directly with your questions and concerns. You can find my contact info on the EIPS website.

Next Meeting Date: January 17, 2018 at 6:30 pm

Adjournment: Heather Wieler moves to adjourn at 8:40 pm.