

CHELSEA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
9th Governing Board Meeting for 2006-07
June 7, 2007, 6:00 pm

Present:

Sandra Burgess, Principal
 Michele Cusson
 Cynthia Cyr
 Carmen Griffith
 Louise Larose
 Marie Seif
 Laurie Garbutt

Tammy Martin (Chair)
 Matthew Cahoon
 Andrea Rowe (Secretary)
 Kelly Plourde
 Lori Pink
 John MacIntyre

Regrets: Joanne Joliffe

* * * * *

1. Approval of Agenda and March Minutes – Minutes approved.

Andrea moved that the discussion on After Four (Open Forum) be extended from 25 minutes to one hour to allow more time for discussion.
 All in favour - 2 all opposed – 9 Motion denied.

2. Open Forum – Brian Baskerville

Brian, whose daughter no longer attends Chelsea School, summarized the letter he had recently sent to the Governing Board (GB): he and his wife Judy feel there is unequal access to extra-curricular activities at Chelsea Elementary, since the After Four program is the main provider of these activities and not all parents can (or want to) enroll their children in it. The effects continue to be felt beyond Chelsea at middle school and high school, particularly in the area of sports. He mentioned that this problem has been raised before with the GB in years gone by, and said he felt it is time for a review of the status quo. He called on the administration of Chelsea School and the After Four staff to review the way extra-curricular activities are offered at Chelsea School and to work collaboratively with a committee whose mandate would be to study the problem and recommend solutions to the GB.

Other parents expressed their views: Nancy Cahoon said her family had adapted a lifestyle so that she could be at home for her children after school, but said there still need to be activities outside academics that encourage school spirit and make all children feel part of the school community. She noted that children may be invited to join a sports team when that team is short of A-4 players, but generally cannot participate in Track and Field Day, volleyball tournaments, etc. Sports etudiants, a sports program subsidized by the WQSB and open to all children, is only available at Chelsea Elementary to A-4 registrants. Nancy suggested parents would be willing to volunteer their time to coach extra-curricular activities, although Carmen Griffith said parents have proven unreliable

in the past. Brian mentioned that at Philemon Wright Middle School (where he sits on the GB), the teachers volunteer their time and encourage maximum participation in extra-curricular activities from the students. Kindergarten teacher Michele Cusson reported that at her children's school every extra-curricular activities has to be paid for by the parents: coaches are hired and none of the teachers is involved.

Sandra Burgess pointed out that there are three sports events throughout the year that are open to all children, but parent Stephanie expressed the opinion that it wasn't enough when compared with the on-going sports activities being offered to A-4 children. Stephanie said research shows that in order to thrive and excel, children need to be involved in extra-curricular activities. "After Four is great, but there is only limited access!" was a familiar theme in the discussions.

Lori Pink said her children didn't feel excluded at all at Chelsea, even though she purposely chose extra-curricular activities for them outside the "school bubble." She pointed out that most schools segregate A-4 activities at lunchtime, and Chelsea has been very open to admitting all children at noon. Gillian Rowlands questioned this, wondering if all kids have access to A-4 sports equipment. Stephanie acknowledged that the children can participate and play, but said they are still excluded from competing and that "hurts their hearts – they need to be part of the success," she said.

At the end of the discussion, Tammy returned to Brian's original request, and moved that a sub-committee (comprised of teachers, A-4 staff, parents with children in A-4 and parents without) be established with the mandate of identifying the issues and coming up with recommendations for the next GB meeting. All in favour: 9, Abstentions: 1, opposed: 0. Motion carried.

As further follow-up, Tammy Martin will respond to all the letters received, thanking everyone for their input.

3. Tentative Budget 2007-2008

Sandra reviewed the budget for next year, noting that the total budget for teaching materials, textbooks, computers, internet, sports, cultural and social activities, communications, etc. is just \$31,300. The enrollment for next year (upon which the allocation from the WQSB is based) is expected to be 270 students.

Louise moved that the GB accept the budget as presented. Unanimously supported. Motion passed.

4. School Success Plan

Every few years, the School has to produce what is called a Success Plan and Sandra Burgess is already thinking about the next version, due in the spring of 2008. Although she said she feels everything the School does is very important, Sandra said she finally settled on mathematics as the top priority of the School in the next Success Plan, particularly on spending the time it takes to have the new math program understood by teachers and students alike and to deliver it well. Having said that, Sandra said she also

wants to see the overall academic program better balanced and more well rounded, and to make it more fun for the kids and teachers alike. “It needs to be a little bit lighter,” she said, so that it continues to be “a place where the kids and teachers want to be.” She was asked when the Success Plan becomes a focus of the Governing Board, and Sandra responded that she needs a sub-committee of parents and teachers to help her with the Plan. SANDRA: WHO VOLUNTEERED TO HELP YOU ON THIS COMMITTEE? Was it Matthew?

When the discussion turned to finding ways to boost the number of students at the School, Andrea suggested that one sure way would be to introduce a French immersion program. Sandra quoted a survey that the WQSB had taken, that indicated it was not clear that the community wants a 50-50 split (the only way Chelsea Elementary could offer French immersion is to offer two parallel streams, one French and one English, the latter for those who would not thrive in a second-language environment). However, the survey had only a 20% response rate so its results may be inaccurate. Sandra added that have a dual track school creates “haves” and “have nots” which she witnessed at another school -- children in the English-only program tend to lose self-esteem as they progress through the grades beside their peers in the more challenging and enriched academically challenging program. She said she was open to further discussion on this idea, however.

5. Environmental Final Report

The report was to arrive that day on Colin O’Shea’s desk (WQSB Director), but has not yet been received by Sandra. Sandra has been briefed, however, to expect nothing of concern in the report.

6. Entente

Sandra met Colin O’Shea (WQSB) and Bruce (?) of the Municipality of Chelsea to discuss the latest draft. The municipality has agreed to the exchange of services the School wants: if it opts to use the School for the March or summer breaks, for example, a cost for that service shall be calculated and “banked” – in time, the School wants Graduation Lane paved. John MacIntyre suggested we try to do it the other way around: we borrow on the services we provide to the Municipality by having the road paved now, then we pay it off over the years to come. Sandra said she would suggest it to see if it’s a possibility.

7. Annual Governing Board Report

Tammy is writing the annual GB report that summarizes in broad strokes the actions of the GB over the last year. It will be reviewed and approved by the GB by e-mail over the coming weeks.

8. Scanner: Dollars and Cents

Tammy’s work on the School Scanner was commended. The draft issue is a call to action: asking parents to financially support all manner of activities at the school so that activities can be enriched. It asks for donations to pay for a teachers’ “wish list” – capital costs ranging from a video camera to dictionaries and everything in between (totaling approximately \$5,000). John Macintyre suggested it could even go further to “excite and

alarm” – many parents still assume the school has plenty of money (“resting on the laurels of what the School once was” – the days when the enrollment was up around 400 students).

As the discussion turned to other ways the parents could be reached, Kelly Plourde said she’d really appreciated the “pitch” given to the parents of kindergarten students one year ago when her younger daughter had entered the School. Other suggestions were that we collect testimonials on what increased funding could do for the School. Matthew pointed out that one way of reaching people is at the School’s Annual General Meeting – to which only about a dozen people showed up last year. He suggested giving the date of the AGM far in advance, and also finding a way to occupy children during the meeting so parents could bring them, making it somewhat “lighter” in approach.

Andrea volunteered to prepare the next draft of The Scanner, incorporating the advice of the GB for circulation to the GB before the end of School. It is to be distributed in the Information Package that goes out to all parents at the end of August. The hope is that as they write a cheque to cover the mandatory school fees, they will be more likely to donate to the School as well.

9. Teachers’ Report

Michele Cusson – Kindergarten students are preparing for student-led conferences, studying the pond of the wetland, and making birdhouses. Grade 1 is studying insects through the books of Eric Carle.

Cindy Cyr – Cycle 2 will visit the Museum of Civilization on National Aboriginal Day (January 21). The students are preparing for their DRA’s (again some comments on the new approach to math and how teachers and students both need more practice in it), continuing with the Six Traits of Writing program, and building birdhouses with Alan Earwaker.

Cindy Cyr – (Reporting for Joanne Joliffe) Cycle 3 had Paulie Green (?) in to speak with the kids on how to prepare for the challenges of life at Hadley next year, including how to resist drugs and alcohol. A nurse also came in to speak to the kids about hitting puberty. After a visit to Hadley, the students reported that they feel calmer about going on to middle school next year.

Marie Seif – Recent French studies over the three cycles have included the study of insects and butterflies in the first cycle, “C’est la fete” – a French play -- in Cycle 2 year 2, and a hands-on study of bridges that prepares the children for the switch-over to the study of Science in French next year (replacing Social Studies). Cycle 3 has prepared a healthy eating booklet with the wellness grant the School received, and it was passed around to the GB to much acclaim. As well, Cycle 3 went through a “prototype exam” in preparation for next year’s implementation of formal French testing.

10. After Four

Carmen Griffith spoke of the achievements of the After Four program over the past year, particularly the Leadership Program for the Cycle 2 Year 2 students. She had circulated the latest After Four report earlier in the week to all students.

11. Committee Reports

Parents Committee - Matthew Cahoon reported on a dispute involving the FCPQ (?) that as a result boycotts the Montreal meetings of the Quebec School Boards. As there are only nine English school boards in Quebec (compared to 62 French), the loss of representation of the English side at these provincial meetings is regretful.

He also noted that money is available to train Governing Boards through the FCPQ and he suggested it be mandatory as a way of bringing new members up to speed much faster.

SEAC - As the School rep for SEAC, Kelly Plourde reported that a document entitled "Individual Education Plan – A Guide for Parents" has been published and she recommends it be distributed to ALL parents. The AGM for SEAC takes place September 17th.

12. Varia

Environmental Awareness Project -

Sandra was thrilled to report that the program, designed and implemented by Alan Earwaker this year has received funding again for 2007-2008 through the WQSB and Alan will be working full-time for the three schools. The program reached 43% of the students at Chelsea Elementary this year and will reach even more next year. Alan has produced a booklet that includes lesson plans for all the teachers that will provide much support in continuing to deliver this excellent program.

Choir –

Andrea Rowe reported that over 400 people had attended the Music Stand fundraiser the weekend before at the Black Sheep to support music in the schools. The Chelsea Choir performed twice, and the money raised from the event (\$450) will support music programs at Chelsea School, Wakefield School and the Peggy Brewin Cooperative Nursery School. Sandra Burgess said the number of students involved in the choir has dwindled as the weather has improved, but she still supports Brian Sanderson's efforts to work with the children. She said she is committed to bringing more arts programming into the School, but explained that after meeting the government's requirements for curriculum, there are not enough hours left to support choir or music classes as part of the school day. They must continue to be offered as an extra-curricular activity and she welcomed Gillian Rowland's offer to explore fundraising possibilities. She also

suggested that the choir could be fee driven, although she emphasized that a child would never be refused an activity like this for a lack of funds. Sandra is looking into ways that music can be incorporated into the curriculum as the vehicle to teach mathematics, for example, or language arts. She will be discussing this possibility with Brian for next year. Meanwhile, the choir will perform at the picnic on the last day of school. Parents will be asked to donate at the latter – perhaps with an open guitar case in front of the performance area.

Wrap-Up of the Year -

On behalf of the GB, John Macintyre thanked Tammy Martin for all her work as Chair of the Governing Board this year. Tammy told the group that her family is moving out of the area to Orleans this summer, and everyone wished her well.

Meeting Adjourned – Next Meeting in October 2007 (dates yet to be finalized).