

# Upper Grand District School Board

## Parent Involvement Committee

### November Minutes (Nov. 25, 2013)

#### **In Attendance:**

**Parents:** Martha MacNeil, Katie Lamarre, Deb Drake, Heather Janes, Cindy Gibson, Axy Leighl, Jana Bell, Lloyd Phillipps, Megan Taylor, Mark MacKinnon, Maureen Oesch, Rosemond Anim-Somkah

**Board Personnel:** Martha Rogers, Brent McDonald, Marty Fairbairn

**Guest Speaker:** Bill MacKenzie

**Regrets:** Kay Elford, Ann Charles, Jan Pettigrew

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

- Welcome extended to all and introductions were made.
- Approval of agenda. October minutes approved with changes: There is no cost to schools to use the Upper Grand Learning Foundation, advertising expenses for PIC were ~\$1,000, not \$10,000.

#### **Board/Ministry Report**

##### **1. BringITin – Guest Speaker Bill MacKenzie: Program Technology Liaison for the Board**

- Technology is being used more frequently to help facilitate learning and engage students. One of the benefits to students is that resources are available anytime, anywhere.
- Recently the board focus has been to evaluate inconsistencies across schools with respect to allowing personal devices to be brought to school. The approach has varied across schools, which has been confusing for parents. The board has made a purposeful attempt to deliver a very clear message that technology is welcomed in the schools and classrooms and that BYOD (bring your own device) is encouraged and acceptable.
- BringITin is a training program but also a philosophy on using technology to assist in keeping students engaged while also being aware of the safety concerns in a digital age.
  - Workshops attended by a school team of 5 members (including administration)
  - Combination of face to face and distance learning: workshops cover BYOD, UGCloud, Blended Learning, Digital Citizenship, and a school plan (parent info, implementation). Distance learning is composed of 9 online modules through the UGDSB e-learning site – each participant is responsible for completing 3.
  - As an added incentive for schools that participate in the BringITin training, elementary schools that participate receive 5 Chromebooks and secondary schools receive 10.
  - Additional resources are also provided – access to on-line resources, posters, 4 primary level books for elementary school libraries.
  - The response to this initiative has been very positive with initial training sessions fully booked and further sessions moved to a larger venue to accommodate the high level of interest.
- Goals of the BringITin initiative: All classrooms will welcome technology; By June 2014, all schools will have participated in the BringITin BYOD training.
- Why implementation now? Time that children spend using mobile devices has tripled in the last 2 years; number of children using mobile devices has doubled in the last 2 years; 23% of students have their own tablet computer; and 93% of teens have a home computer with internet access.
- School and Teacher Concerns with respect to technology in the classroom:
  - Classroom Management – student distraction, appropriate time and place for technology use.
  - Theft, damage or loss of devices – This is a parent responsibility, but the Board will do due diligence to ensure the safest possible environment
  - Equity – low income families struggle to afford BYOD, some students have no Wi-Fi access at home. The Board will always have technology available in the classroom for these situations. The intent is not to stop purchasing technology, but to provide the environment

needed for students to bring their own if desired – BYOD is meant to supplement technology spending. This may also, in some cases, free up resources for those most needing them.

- Federations – concerned it may be more work for their members
- Resources related to E-learning: Common Sense Media (resources for teachers and parents on safe use of IT) <http://www.common Sense Media.org>; OPHEA (student resources for safe use of internet) <http://www.reallifeonline.ca/>; Media Smarts <http://mediasmarts.ca>; Family Online Safety Institute <http://www.fosi.org>
- An additional benefit noted is that the use of technology is very eco-friendly – reduces paper use.
- Question raised as to why Board sites are not openly accessible to parents. This is an issue of licensing – the Board does not have licensing agreements for parental access to their e-learning sites. However, all students will have access through the Board website (Log-in: 1<sup>st</sup> 2 letters of student's first name, 1<sup>st</sup> 3 letters of last name, last 4 digits of OEN; password chosen by student.)
- Recently Wi-Fi concerns have been noted in the media; however, Ontario's Medical Officer of Health has stated Wi-Fi poses no health risks.
- Question raised whether there is a package or a unified method in place to educate parents on the BringITin concept. The Board does have some prepared materials that will go out to parents once an individual school is ready to implement the program.

## 2. Director's Report

- Neil Orford, head of the History Department at CDDHS recently received the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching.
- Primrose Elementary School won the Farm to School Challenge through their commitment to locally grown food – updated milk program to use local suppliers, changed their Breakfast Program to solicit donations of better quality local products, planted a school garden, etc.

## Chair's Report

- Megan and Martha M. attended the People for Education Conference on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - School Council session headed by Jacqui Strachan – involved sharing of practices and ideas between participants, discussion of 7 steps for building an engaged community (<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/7-Steps-for-Building-an-Engaged-Community.pdf>), thinking about why councils want more parents involved, reaching parents is more successful when using multiple and frequent methods of communication.
  - Power of Partnerships – Explored how schools can reach out and find support and build relationships with their communities (arts, recreation, business, and community organizations).
- Kathy, Martha M. and Rosemond are developing a survey for PIC members to obtain feedback on how PIC is working and to gather ideas on future direction.
- **Spring Event**
  - Discussed potential speakers for the Spring Event: Bill MacKenzie, Dr. Lynn Woodford (Presentation on Mental Health – committed), Jennifer Kolari (Connected Parenting), Susan Dafoe Abbey, Michael Reist. Any suggestions for breakout session speakers and/or the keynote speaker should be sent to Martha M. by December 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - The idea of having breakout sessions that are geared towards different levels (i.e., primary, junior, intermediate, high school) was suggested to target areas of interest.
  - Initial idea was to have the breakout sessions follow the keynote speaker, but was suggested that it might be better to do the group work first in order to allow networking prior to the sessions.
- **Focus Groups**
  - 7 or 8 schools conducted focus group sessions last year. PIC members will need to go out to those schools and collect their final information, compile, evaluate and generate a report. Goal is to print the report by next July.
  - One of the common themes that arose was that communication is a barrier to being involved.
  - The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information for PIC that could be used on a board level basis; however, schools indicated that this was very helpful in identifying issues at the school level.

## **Review of UGDSB Policy on School Councils and PIC**

- Policy is typically reviewed every 3 years and is based on Ontario Regulation 612/00 of the Education Act with a few additions that are Board specific. The revision will be in a new format composed of the Policy Statement (where the policy comes from) and a Procedure Statement (implementation of the policy).
- A guide based on the legislation and written in layman's terms is available on the Ministry website <http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html>. This may be helpful to School Councils.
- Board Policy indicates that each School Council must have a minimum of 5 parent members. It was noted that some councils struggle to meet this minimum and concern was expressed that some schools would not be able to have a council at all or that those councils with less than 5 members would not be eligible for the School Based Funding Grant and other supports as a result. It was suggested that this could be re-worded to indicate that School Councils should make every reasonable effort to ensure a minimum of 5 members.
- The Education Act and Board Policy state that elections must be held annually, within the first thirty days of the start of the school year and that the term of office is one year. It was noted that the PIC website indicates that some School Councils have moved their elections to June to attempt to facilitate a smooth transition from one year to the next. It was suggested this be removed from the website since the practice does not comply with the legislation but it could be perceived that PIC is endorsing this. Alternate suggestions to ensure smooth transitions but maintain fall elections were:
  - Ensure parent community is aware in June that positions will be available in the fall.
  - Make information available to JK/SK & feeder school families, invite them to the June meeting.
  - Those interested in putting their name forward for positions could express their interest in the spring, but elections would be held in September
  - Many council members are unaware that the term of office runs from the first council meeting after their election to the first meeting after elections held the next school year (i.e. October to October). This means that outgoing members are still members for, and should attend, the first meeting of the next school year. This is particularly true for executive members. In practice this rarely happens since many believe their term ends in June, but it is important to ensure a smooth transition.

## **Budget Items**

- Opening balance on the PIC budget account has been adjusted by \$746. The allocation is initially based on the estimated students and is adjusted once actual enrollment is known.
- Recent entries include expenses for laminating games and HST rebate income.

## **Communications**

- Currently 33 followers on Twitter

## **Open Discussion**

- Susan Dafoe Abbey is speaking on Childhood Stress and Anxiety at June Avenue, March 27<sup>th</sup> 2014, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Information to be posted on the PIC website under Events.
- Holiday Vendor Sale at Edward Johnson, 10-3, Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, including crafts, bake sale, scholastic book fair, mini shoot photos with Santa.
- Fundscrip was suggested as a good fundraising tool for schools since it involves purchasing gift cards for services most families would be using (gas, groceries, clothing, etc.). A percentage of the purchase price goes back to the school.
- Question was raised as to whether the Board keeps a listing of what schools have used their \$500 Parent Involvement Funding for. There is currently no list, this information is sent to the Ministry but Brent will look to see if that information can be obtained.

## **Next Meeting**

- Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 7pm, Board Office, 500 Victoria Road, Guelph.

**Minutes prepared by D. Drake**