

School Council Meeting Minutes
October 6, 2014

Present: Dave Fender, Ken Garringer, Sandra Smith, Robyn Henderson, Heather, Lee, Mrs. Gaskel, Kim Dyck, Jason Prebushewski, Shannon Kasko, Robert Strauss - Board Member from Vulcan area, Megan Curtis, Tanya Wurzer, Sheri Dyck

1. Welcome – Dave Fender

2. **Format of School Council** – has taken a less formal format without a School Council Chair, etc. Hope was to get parents involved and coming to meetings.

3. Enrollment numbers and class sizes. – Dave Fender

- Numbers are at 329 students.
- 4 classes of grade 5
- 3 classes in grade 6
- 3 classes in grade 7
- 4 classes in grade 8's
- class sizes are 27, 28, 30 for grade 7.
- Funded from provincial govt. Decisions are made using class size initiative. District average needs to be within the recommended class sizes. The grade 7 & 8 numbers when added up would come up at below the recommended number. Decision was made based on the needs of the grade 7 and grade 8 level. Broke up the grade 8's into four classes, and then grade 7 at 3.
- Mr. Fender had asked for a full-time position and was given a half time position. Was thankful with that.
- Mr. Fender is comfortable with the decision he made (based on the makeup of the grade 8's) to make the grade 8's classes smaller than the grade 7's
- Sandra - If we hadn't gone to the dyad model would it have changed the makeup of the classes? Is it possible to share that position between the 7 & 8's focusing on the core?
Mr. Fender: the dyad's wouldn't have affected the result of the class sizes. Could have combined grade 7 & 8 classes. Determined that this decision was best for the group.
- Heather - How did grade 7's do last year on their report cards? Mr. Fender - they did well
- Heather - when averages are made across the district, smaller classes in some schools balance out the average.
- Dave: Recommended class size is 25.
- Heather: This group of grade 7's has always been a big grade. Had a larger kindergarten class (27?), and 4 classes in grade 1, then grade 2 started with 5- reduced to 4.
- Robyn - Comment: quiet or more reluctant children may be less likely to share information in a larger group rather than a smaller class
- Dave - Dyad's provide more flexibility with classroom teaching. More time spent with a teacher and getting to know their students. Based on the needs of the children that decision was made.
- Heather - Consulting teacher position was cut. Wondering how many of those students have IPP's and have needs.
- Dave: Every child has "special" needs - every child deserves individual attention. The teacher's job is to create independence as they grow, using small groups and individuals as workers

- Ken shared his perspective: A district does an assessment of the students needs, he appreciates the perspectives brought to the table, acknowledge that the division has to stay with constraints of budget. RI Baker's overall projected student number was at 332, down one student at 331. Recognize the needs and staffing, want to meet the students needs. Want parents to advocate for their kids. Would love to have smaller classes, but based on government funding, have done the best they can with the numbers, needs and budget. The district then turns to administration who use their budget, staff and student numbers to make decisions. Ken has worked in situations that are less than ideal, in spite of that, we try to manage as best we can. Is it best for students to split classes? A juggling act, never the perfect scenario, unless can get each class to 20. Decision wasn't made lightly, based on the needs of the students overall. Trying to provide support as best we could. Other supports (e.g. FSLC) also are included in the supports for the students and included in budgets. Communication is important- make sure you have dialogue with your principal if you have concerns. Dave - saying yes, he could have clarified that better for some parents why the numbers were as they were
- Sandra – discussion with principal is important but parents still have a right to talk with their school trustee
- Ken agreed: Dialogue with Trustee is valuable. In some cases then the Board Member could say, yes, I'll get back to you and give you info on who to talk to. Sometimes our Trustees want to advocate for you, but in some situations they need to step back for a decision to be made. Robyn – feels it is helpful for Trustees to know information ahead of time so the Trustee can look into it if they aren't sure. Ken – we hope that they are knowledgeable but in some situations may need to look for the answer (given time)
- Ken wanted us to know that kids are at the forefront of their thoughts, views and the decisions they make

4. School Board Representative – Robert Strauss

- Trustee - even though elected in different region, responsible for all students within Palliser. May actually be more helpful to hear from parents & their perspective in different regions.
- they welcome your input. Keep your principals and trustees in the loop. Keep the communication open. Parents first job is to advocate for your children. Don't apologize for that.
- Overview items
 - o New Minister of Education - was former Board of Education of Calgary Chair. Waiting to confirm in the by-election
 - o New Education Act is out (provides framework) regulations aren't out yet (more the details and how that impacts parents and students) Will be shared once it is out.
- Palliser Beyond Borders - providing more choice and opportunity for all students. Is online system. Not an effort to substitute a computer for a teacher. Is a tool to use in conjunction with a teacher. In smaller schools to assist with resources. Question: for what grades? - is in high schools now
 - o Heather – The current PASS program - will it still continue? Ken & Robert: There is not a plan to replace PASS.
 - o Not a plan to Uses Google, Blackboard Collaborate - teachers can conduct courses online. Sees a need for videoconferencing as part of programming. Not a substitute. ADLC had pulled back some of their funding. Beyond Borders -

first year, is a tool, not a substitute. Will refine as we continue to use it. PASS Plus - address students needs and their unique circumstances. There is not a plan to replace the program. The more variety & diversity available to students is better.

- Online tool - Accountability Pillar - one for every school division. Compared between school divisions & then Palliser over time. Division has shown growth over time to a point where most areas are "blue". 16 different areas. Is a comprehensive tool. Robert gave credit to staff and central office staff and their leadership. Have achieved this with parents working together with staff

5. Fountas & Pinnell – Dave Fender

- Is an assessment tool that is highly respected in North America for teachers to use with students one on one to get a detailed picture of the child's reading level.
- Looks for areas that are challenging as well as areas of strength (e.g. comprehension, vocabulary) to help teachers hone in on their instruction. Results are reviewed with the teachers as a large group, as well as each grade level.
- Dave - if what them to improve their reading then we need to get them reading, Basically - need books at their level (& their interest). At this level may see issues with vocabulary and comprehension, may be due to a number of factors. Continue to expose them to verbal communication, importance of children seeing reading as important
- Robyn - One School One Book was a successful venture at Elementary - could it be possible at middle school? Food for thought
- Conferences lately have had Palliser staff teaching other Palliser staff about literacy instruction. Many schools have been involved in that improvement of literacy
- We have some in house "experts" - workshop by Kaylene Beers & Robert Probst, wa attended by Mrs. Gaskel, Mrs. Netzel and Mr. Prebushewski and they will present it to staff in October.
- Literacy has far reaching impact into all aspects of life and academics. We are "Teaching them to Fish"

6. Marine Biology trip – Jason Prebushewski

- Occurs every second year – will be May 3-9, 2015.
- Drive overnight by bus to Vancouver, spaces for 43 students currently, 5 on wait list. Registration procedure was smooth. Fundraising will start soon.
- Nov.3 is last day to get deposit back.
- Miss Boulton was initially coming, but that has changed. Will be arranging for another teacher to go
- Website will be most current communication with any updates.

7. School goals and review – Dave Fender

- 3 main goals are submitted from the school to Central Office and then they discuss how they will be met and assessed
- Goals are:
 1. Literacy - part of that is assessment
 - There are 3 ways to get feedback (a. teacher gives a grade, b.grade with comment, c. teacher only writes comments). Which way results in the most learning for the student? The most growth is "c", if just the feedback then they

can focus on what they can improve in as well as what they've done well. If a grade and feedback are given the student tends to focus still on the grade.

2. Communication
3. Safe and Caring

8. **School Review** – occurs at least every 5 years or in a Principal's 2nd year at the school. Central office admin & school admin come to the school, visit classrooms, interview staff and parents, students. Look for what is working well and what areas of improvement. Mr. Fender has been part of several school reviews. There is always a goal to have better communication. RI Baker will undergo a school review this year. As part of that we were asked to have a brief discussion with your neighbor about what is working well and areas to improve. See comments below:

Positives	Areas to improve
Newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter needs to be prompt, especially at beginning of the year • Information needs to be provided by staff to be put into the newsletter – and promptly • Staff needs to be aware of importance of newsletter info for parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind App • Emails from teachers • Prefer emails to agendas • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas aren't used much, however, kids need to learn that independence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several students are selected a day to see if they have their agendas and if so, are given a couple Baker bucks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haven't been checking to see if they actually are writing in their agendas or if they just have them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter is directly emailed to parents, rather than having to look at website first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge with balancing use of electronic device and paper agendas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synervoice – the human voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of call is challenging. If later in the day parents get it late, or student may hear it and not relay the message • Could be sent early in afternoon (to record on answering machine) and then at supper time • Could synervoice go to all the parents contact numbers (home, cell) as Kate Andrews does with student absence?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging independence – bringing information home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting with amount of information brought home from elementary school to middle

	school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep it up to date • Sometimes difficult to navigate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind app – can embed it into your website, so when you send out a “remind” it will appear on your website as well. Keeps previous reminders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could use social media more • Could use Twitter/Facebook (Challenges associated with that)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus app 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard to look up each individual teacher’s info regularly. Hard to keep track of who your child’s teachers are in older grades and check each teacher’s site
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the Teacher Night – great to meet teachers and connect with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to have update in 6 weeks about how things are going with your child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Teacher Interviews – booking times • Dyads may reduce the number of teachers to see, but may make each meeting longer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Teacher Interviews in grade 7 & 8. Standing in line to wait to talk to multiple teachers. • Is there a system we could use where parents could register for times online (or by phone) • Importance of parent contact with teachers, want to encourage parents to attend. With busy lives may get more parents to attend if they have a time to come, rather than waiting ** Dave will contact County Central Principal to find out the name of the program. There may be a cost • On-line Google Community may also have a free version

9. Next meeting date - December 8, 2014

- Other dates: February 2, April 13, June 1, 2015