



ParentSpeak

(Council's monthly newsletter)

Hopewell Avenue Public School Council

www.hopewellschoolcouncil.com

E-mail: parentspeak@gmail.com

February 2010

The next Council meeting is: **Tuesday February 9 at 7 pm** in the school library.

Rob Campbell, Board of Trustees representative for Zone 9, attended the January Parent Council meeting to provide updates on a number of important topics. At the end of the newsletter you will find notes from the Q & A session and below are the highlights:

School Board Budget:

The Board is currently working on next year's budget and requires tentative staffing numbers by March 15th. As the Board needs to address a \$14M deficit in budgeting for next year, a number of possible cuts have been proposed by Board staff and are now available for consultation on the Website http://www.ocdsb.ca/au_bud_info.asp. Widespread options for possible cuts include funding for greening projects, transportation, arts and music, among others. Choices on where final cuts will be made will be based on results of the consultation. Several live public consultations were also held throughout January.

School Transfer Policy:

The Board has identified a need to tighten up the transfer policy for allowing students to move from one school to another. Previously, transfers were allowed as long as space was available. However, the policy will now incorporate needs-based criteria across two categories: compassionate and learning needs. The guiding principle is to confer more discretion on school principals to make the final decision. The overall strategy is to create "dependably excellent" schools across the Board. The new transfer policy is one in a series of changes designed to overhaul and improve the school system. The new policy is in force for the September 2010 registration process, but students

who have already transferred under the old policy will not be affected.

Curriculum Review:

A 2-year process that ended approximately 18 months ago was designed to review the French elementary curriculum. One of the outcomes was the phase-out of Late French Immersion. Additional recommendations included: minimizing streaming of students across programs as well as changes at the Intermediate level to how assessment and evaluation are conducted. Recently, an alternative education review was conducted and the Board's attention will now likely shift to secondary education.

New Music Teacher for Grades 7 and 8!

Hopewell administration is pleased to introduce Nicolas Roy, the new music teacher for grades 7-8 for the rest of this school year. He will work directly with retired music teacher Allison Woyiwada. New music teacher, Blair Smith, will start in June and will be in place over the longer term. Band practices will be offered during morning nutrition breaks in addition to some before-school practices. Formal information will be sent out to all grade 7 and 8 parents. Some band reorganization will be done to allow students at the same level to play together regardless of whether they are in grade 7 or 8.

Parent Council Chair's Report:

- Parent Council gave Hopewell's retiring music teacher, Jennifer Black, a retirement gift and she sends her thanks to all Hopewell parents.
- The Glebe Community Association has invited us to join them in meetings to discuss issues of interest to both of our communities. Council is also looking for a liaison to take on this role. If you are interested, please contact Neal Hill at nhill55@gmail.com

Help Needed!

- Volunteers are needed to organize and maintain the Literacy Room. If you are interested, please contact Kim MacDonald at Kim.MacDonald@ocdsb.ca.

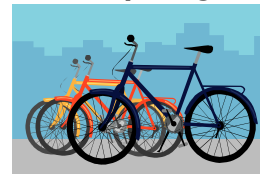
Committee Reports:

- **Space Camp:** fundraising efforts have been completed and the balance of costs are now being collected from parents. The trip is planned for April 7-8.
- **Grass Yard:** A meeting was held with the City of Ottawa to request that a tree be planted in front of the school. This was tentatively approved, but Council must demonstrate evidence that the tree can be properly maintained on an ongoing basis. There has also been discussion of Hopewell School adopting Hopewell Avenue -- students would work to clean up the street and in return, the City would provide mulch for the grass yard and all raised planters. This proposal will be tabled for consideration at a future meeting of Parent Council. There will also be a formal request to Council to allocate funds on an ongoing basis for basic maintenance. The Grass Yard committee has obtained a site plan of the school and surrounding areas. This will be copied and used for consultations with teachers and students to provide input on desired changes.
- **Technology Committee:** A number of workshops are being offered to intermediate students. An announcement will be made to invite students to attend. There are no caps

being imposed at this point, but each student can select only one course.

- Monday - Marc Rand will deliver a video production and multimedia course.
- Wednesday -- Web design
- Friday - Kirk Munroe will deliver a course on presentation skills focusing on PowerPoint and public speaking.
- **Educational Issues and Policies:** The Committee has held its first meeting. Once their plan is in place, the Committee plans to utilize the Parent Council Web forum to obtain opinions on a wide range of policy issues.
- **Knitting club on Wednesdays:** There was great interest shown in the club, which meets in the Atrium at the second nutrition break with approximately 25-30 people at the first meeting. Wool and needles were donated by a number of parents. The club is looking for a few parent volunteers to come help new knitters for the first few club meetings. If you are interested, please contact Michele Sprott at michelesprott@rogers.com.

Bikes (and anything on wheels!) Sale to be held in the Spring



- A group of Hopewell parents are organizing a fundraiser "wheels" sale in the Spring. The sale includes anything that rolls - bikes, inline skates, strollers, scooters, skateboards and any related equipment - with 75% of proceeds going back to the vendor. Details will be communicated in upcoming issues of ParentSpeak. If you are interested in volunteering for the event, please email parentspeak@gmail.com.

Hopewell 100th Anniversary

Mark your calendars for the week of May 17. It will be filled with special events for students, parents, staff and alumni to celebrate Hopewell's 100th birthday.

Special Hopewell 100 clothing will be available for sale in February. Watch out for the order forms for hoodies and t-shirts!

Traffic Study in Old Ottawa South:

The City is currently conducting a traffic study in Old Ottawa South. If you'd like to participate in the public consultation being held on Wednesday February 10th, 6:30-9, please contact, Neal Hill at nhill55@gmail.com.

Dates to Remember:

- Feb 5th, 11th and 19 Intermediates Skating on the canal.
- February 11 at 7PM Band Trip Info Night
- February 11, 2:30 PM Junior Talent Show
- February 12 PD Day
- February 15 Family Day
- February 16 Police Services Day
- February 16-19 Proposed Grade 7&8 Shakespeare production of Romeo and Juliet (one date to be confirmed)
- February 5 and 19 Pizza Lunch
- February 23 and 24 Dental Screening JK, SK, Gr. 2
- February 24 Rag'n'Bones Theatre Group (Primary)
- February 11 and 26 Subway Lunch

Q&A with Rob Campbell, School Board Trustee, Zone 9:

1) Which schools have been selected for the full-day kindergarten program?

None of the schools in our area are being considered for full-day kindergarten. Criteria for selection included schools with available space, limited daycare availability in the community and a community with higher needs. Broad consultations were held to determine which schools would be selected. Two schools in Zone 9 in Lowertown and Vanier (beacon schools) were selected. The first

wave of the full-day kindergarten implementation will encompass approximately 15% of students in Ontario. The following year, it will increase to 20% and the balance will follow in succeeding years. The program is being funded with new dollars from the province but do not include care during the summer, Christmas and March Break.

2) Do French Immersion teachers get paid more?

Not sure and will need to verify. French Immersion teachers are in short supply - particularly those with specialties. Ottawa as a market is doing fairly well attracting these teachers because it is a desirable area. However, search for new staff may broaden based on a new labour mobility agreement between Ontario and Quebec, if that comes into effect. [Ed.: Subsequent follow-up by the Trustee showed that there is not currently in fact a difference in teacher pay with or without FSL credentials but rather that attracting those with FSL credentials may have historically required general improvements in OCDSB teacher pay].

3) What are the Board's plans to address population and accommodations?

There are no plans at this point to deal with the burgeoning population. Numbers have stabilized in the downtown core. Populations are declining in the older suburban areas - this is where school closures are more likely to occur. There could still be some closures in the downtown core but less likely since populations are stable or increasing. The population strain is felt most acutely at Hopewell, Rockcliffe Park and First Avenue. The Board recognizes a need to rebalance schools with specific programming locations, adjusting catchment areas, grade mixes, etc. A broad understanding has been in effect to date that there would be a de facto moratorium on accommodation review mandates for this year due to many other consultations and priorities and many big strategic decisions. Big accommodation reviews generally take more than one year to occur and none are likely to start until next year.

4) Is the Board analyzing the data on boys' underachievement?

This trend has been noted and has been discussed for the past 2 or 3 years. It and other equity achievement gaps will be key area of focus for the Superintendent of Curriculum Services. In fact, a

provincial trustees' association conference is being held in January and a full morning is being devoted to this topic. We have seen important improvements in EQAO scores. I believe the gender performance gap shrunk slightly; ESL gap shrunk slightly; special education gap much better than the provincial average. This coming year, the Superintendent's recommendation is to focus on EQAO gaps, one of which is the gender gap. It will be a focus of curriculum services this coming year.

5) Is it true that the curriculum teaches to the EQAO test?

It has been true to some extent, particularly in the past. The Province has been very strong on use of EQAO to show improvements. Recent correspondence from the Province indicates a bit of a move away from the standardized testing as the main measure of improvement. There will be new responsibilities on trustees to monitor student achievement and student well-being, which has yet to be defined. Other critical correspondence from the Ministry recognizes that teaching to the test is not the best approach.

6) What are your thoughts on the usefulness of report cards? As a parent, I have not found it particularly useful in the current format.

The Toronto Board has made a few changes and loosened up some of the language that can be used. A greater focus is needed on meaningful dialogue between teachers and parents (away from marks), but I am not sure at this point how quickly or to what extent we will see this happen.

7) To what extent is there discussion about preparing students for secondary education?

There has been some discussion on this. There is an overall theme on minimizing and easing student transitions-- making sure students are well prepared for the transition into school from early childhood and then into secondary school. More specifics to come from the Board.

8) We've heard a lot about the "Community School" - what does this mean?

There is no firm Board definition of this concept at this time. It can mean different things to different people, which can create problems. The Director of

Education has committed to provide clarity on the definition during this school year. Board staff are likely to propose a two-track model: every school has core English and one of EFI, MFI or gifted. Catchment areas would be aligned to ensure students could move to the right program. At this point, it is unclear how this will be implemented, what forms it might take or what Trustees will agree to.

9) Move to the Balanced School Day: Has any consideration been given to the advantages and disadvantages of this new system - for grades 7-8 in particular?

I can't say firsthand but I am assured that there are advantages for grades 7-8 -- perhaps not as many advantages as for grades 1-6. Among professional educators, this system is endorsed and I have no reason to think otherwise. There has been some research on how longer blocks of education are beneficial, as well as some literature on reducing transitions as these can be disruptive. In general, there is a move towards minimizing transitions throughout the school career and within the school day.