

PRAIRIE ROSE SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 8
TEACHER BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monday, June 9, 2008 – 1:30 p.m.

Present Paulette Heller, Marian Peers, Doug Nicholls, Pat Cocks
Chris Kohlman, Rob Ficiur, Lenore Peers and Marilyn Skoda

Joined Brian Andjelic

1. Call to Order

C. Kohlman called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. Topics Submitted for Discussion - Teachers

2.1 School Calendar / Number of Instructional Days

2.2 IPP and Special Needs Work for Teachers (Release time and support)

C. Kohlman distributed a comparison of the number of instructional days in other southern school jurisdictions. Copies of school year calendars were also provided. Some school jurisdictions provide days in the school calendar for Individual Program Plans (IPP) and teacher planning.

There was discussion on the amount of time required for IPP meetings with parents and classroom teachers in addition to development of the IPP. D. Nicholls indicated that he has received some comments on the number of instructional days set aside for final exams each semester. P. Heller mentioned the importance the Board places on the number of days for teacher contact with students.

B. Andjelic joined the meeting.

The Board has approved School Year Calendars for 2008-09 and 2009-2010. The Board agreed to reduce the number of instructional days from 190 to 189 in 2009-10 to provide a second division-wide professional development day.

C. Kohlman mentioned that teachers are concerned with increasing class sizes along with increased expectations and possibly less prep time. D. Nicholls suggested that a summary of actual class sizes at September 30, 2008 would be useful as well as verification of the average number of days teachers are absent for extra and co-curricular events, inclement weather days and other absences. He stated that Prairie Rose students are best served when the regular teacher interacts with students as frequently as possible.

2.3 Special Education and Instructional Staff Allocations

B. Andjelic clarified that the decision to centralize the allocation of special education lead teachers was to insure schools set aside time for special needs planning, meetings, etc. The new ~~Interventionist~~ interventionist+special education position is intended to assist school staff with an emphasis programming as well as some Level B testing.

C. Kohlman stated that the perception among teachers is there will be more testing of special needs students and then more meetings outside of the regular school day for

planning. B. Andjelic responded that principals are aware of the expectations for next year and the need to timetable classroom support teachers with some flexibility to accommodate more meetings. The changing special education model has generated excellent discussions on the need for increased supports for special education programs and teachers.

L. Peers questioned whether special needs programs were for code 50 students as well as code 40s. B. Andjelic clarified that only the files for code 40 students were reviewed by Alberta Education but the support for special education programs also includes code 50 students.

L. Peers suggested that a regular schedule for training the interventionist / classroom support teachers may help schools in adjusting timetables. B. Andjelic agreed and indicated that the special needs group would work toward standard dates.

B. Andjelic left the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

2.4 ATA Group RRSP program

The provincial ATA has endorsed a retirement savings plan through Capital Estate Planning. Prairie Rose provides a voluntary savings plan through Investors Group with 18 participants at this time. There would have to be sufficient numbers interested in a second savings plan to be effective administratively. C. Kohlman indicated the ATA Local will survey members to determine the level of interest.

3. Topics Submitted for Discussion – Board / Superintendent

3.1 Employee Recognition (June / August 2008)

The Board is looking for suggestions on ways to improve employee recognition activities - such as timing, program and acknowledgments. When employees are surveyed during school reviews, the responses to a question on whether the Division's recognition of staff efforts is appropriate are generally not as favourable as responses to other questions.

D. Nicholls will email a few specific questions on staff recognition to C. Kohlman to generate feedback from teachers.

3.2 Satisfaction Surveys

D. Nicholls advised that employees will be seeing more surveys in the schools. The intention is to accumulate data with a focus on what is working well and where growth may be needed.

3.3 Community Travel Clubs (Teacher involvement)

School Board endorsement of school trips is currently limited to excursions within North America. The ATA has posted a letter on its website advising teachers of the risks of accompanying young people on overseas trips organized by Community Travel Clubs. The Board wants to ensure that teachers and parents are aware that these Travel Club trips are not supported by the Board and therefore not covered by the Division's liability insurance policy.

3.4 Policy Input Process

It was clarified that the %Teacher/Board Advisory Committee+replaces the %Policy Coordinating Committee+mentioned in the ATA Collective Agreement until the TBAC is no longer viable.

3.5 Job Postings / Staff and Administrative Transfers

There was some discussion on the posting of teacher and administrative vacancies versus transfers. Overall, teachers prefer greater transparency and, ideally, to have all vacancies advertised at one time. Realistically, vacancies are posted as soon as possible to attract the best candidates and filling vacancies with current employees creates more vacancies. While a letter to first-year teachers may have been perceived to be somewhat unsupportive, D. Nicholls identified the need to address the reality of future job prospects with the Division as early as possible.

3.6 Early Dismissal Days (Wednesday vs. Friday)

The committee discussed the benefits and intentions of early dismissal days - whether Wednesday or Friday. The Board position is to maintain the status quo for the 2008-09 school year.

3.7 Update on Teacherages

P. Cocks provided a brief update on the status of the plan to sell the teacherages. The Board will be considering keeping a small number of the teacherages (7 or 8) in response to feedback from staff and communities.

Other Items

There was some discussion on the activities surrounding %Grade 9 Farewell+parties. There was one example of parents allowing alcohol at parties following the school activities. There was also concern expressed on the expensive nature of some of the events (dresses and suits) and the time missed by students in preparation for the evening.

The Board will raise the issue at the next joint meeting with parent council representatives in October 2008.

4. Next Meeting Date

The following dates were tentatively set for 2008-09:

Monday, October 27, 2008 . morning

Monday, March 23, 2009 . afternoon

Monday, June 8, 2009 . afternoon

5. Adjournment

D. Nicholls thanked the teachers for their work on the committee and encouraged the current members to continue for the next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.