

Minutes of joint meeting of Poplar Ridge School Council and Fundraising

Poplar Ridge Elementary School in MPR

March 7, 2024 @9:00 am

*Indicates written report / attachments provided

Joint meeting attendees: Tina -Louise Steyn, Alyne Hoar, Mandy Aitken, Brandee Angeltvedt, Colet Grimbeek, Karen Crawford, Kimberley Cocks, Darren Pickering, Susan Lavoie, Joanna Van Duzen, Stephanie Sommerfelt and Eloise Silvernagle

Meeting shall be led by Co-Chair Colet Grimbeek

1. Call to order at 9:03
2. Agenda is approved 1st by Tina-Louise and 2nd by Eloise
3. Approval of January 18, 2024 minutes 1st by Tina-Louise and 2nd by Colet
4. Principal's Report : Kimberley Cocks

Thank you:

- All who are present

February School Events:

Mr. Pickering's news: Darren Pickering is stepping down as Vice Principal for Poplar Ridge Elementary School. His wish is to continue in a teaching role until his retirement – although depending on needs and budget -we are uncertain at this time where this placement may be in the fall. His open position will be advertised and go through an interviewing process and later announced

Community Building-Family Literacy Night was on Jan. 30. What great connection time with families

Foundational Knowledge Building- In classrooms and in fine arts, we are talking about the Poplar Ridge core values. We hosted our 1st core values assembly last week. Staff members are working on the 4 Seasons of Reconciliation which enhances our school-based knowledge.

Academic Excellence- We are continuing to meet to discuss best program plans for students. Professional Learning Day for staff on Feb. 9. All PR staff completed the CESD Inclusion Modules regarding meeting the needs of our diverse learners. Teachers attended Teacher's Convention during Winter Break.

Fieldtrips- Skiing is complete and grades 1-3 swim is winding down

Surveys - Thank you to all who completed the Alberta Assurance Survey. Thank you to all who completed my Principalship Survey. Looks like you have me for the years ahead! (6-month probationary period is complete and a 5 yr. contract is in place)

Upcoming Events:

Academic Excellence: We are welcoming families to attend our Parent Teacher Interviews on Mar. 26 and 27. (Tues/Wed) Stay tuned for sign ups.

Basketball Club is starting. Mrs. Haley Hewlett will be our lead coach and Mr. P. Children will be hosted at HJ Cody school gym on April 26 for a small tourney of basketball refed by high school students

Professional Learning Day: On Mar. 8 our staff along with all CESD schools will have a professional learning day. There will be no school for students.

Internet Safety for our Children Presentation: Ecole Fox Run is hosting an Internet Safety for our Children Presentation on Mar. 27 at 6 pm. This presentation is for parents brought to Sylvan Lake from the Alberta Internet Child Exploitation Unit. Our Poplar Ridge parents are invited to attend this very informative event. Please no younger children. Knowledge is power

Other News: Thank you to the Belich's for purchasing CP Blakely's stage for our school (\$2000) – as they are raising money for new playground equipment

We will be getting 3 RDP students in our school doing 8 weeks of practicum with us

Stay tuned for more info on "HJ Giving Back" – sometime in May

Stay tuned for more info on "Seniors/ Grandparents Day" sometime in May/June

Also, a Big Thank you to Vesta who helps fund/ supply our students Science Experiments (ea. individual receives an experiment in a bag

5. Financial Report* Brandee

We will end up over our budgeted amount on bussing as the bills coming in have increased due to rising costs of everything – we will still be ok as we do have some money in our "inclusion fund" budget

We are doing well with the PR Hot lunch program

All is balancing

6. A) Hot lunch orders for the next term of April and May orders will be coming up right away – watch for message on newsletter and notes in backpacks – no hot lunch for June

With the left-over Turkey breast meat from the Christmas meal – we are looking to make Soup and host a free lunch in June for all students

Stephanie has asked / and will purchase a new Griddle for \$40 to help with the Pancake hot lunch day and will be used in future of possibly a grilled cheese hot lunch day – looking at other options for next year as well - maybe pulled beef and buns – continue with Tuesdays and Thursdays

Kinder orientation will be coming up soon – possibly have a PC representative there to look for new volunteers for next year hot lunch helpers – or Meal Lead coordinators

B) Bottle drive will be held over the PTI on March 26,27 and 28 (Trinesh from Delburne)

7. A) Parents Matter – nothing new to report as the next meeting will be held April 24. Minutes from January 17 meeting are attached * Please come to representatives if you wish to bring something forward at the next meeting

B) in storage at the school we found Poplar Ridge shirts of various sizes – we can use these when travelling to other schools and participating in sports. No need to price out or order pennies! Colet looked into buying some Velcro arm bands for easy child/parent recognition on ski hills or other off school fieldtrips – we can purchase 8 for \$10 !

C) \$500 grant idea : we are booking Paul Davis to meet and speak with students and parents on November 13/2024 at our school! We will invite parents as well from the Fox Run students. Paul will speak with grades 4-6 and as well with 7/8 at Fox Run, and then the evening of the 24th with parents. Cost including travel from Ontario is \$1800 – we will use money from this fiscal year as well as the next year – and hopefully combine with monetary help from Fox Run...

D) This is Colet's last year as the Vice Chair of Parent Council and we will be accepting volunteers for the position and plan to vote in by end of this year – two interested volunteers have already come forward – Alyne Hoar and Tina-Louise Steyn - Thank you – Candidates can step forward at next meeting if they still wish to volunteer

E) Spring fundraisers – possibly Spring Greenhouse gift cards again (great for Mother's Day)

F) Next meeting to be held on April 25, 2024 at 9:00 am

8. Meeting adjourned 10:34



Parents Matter Notes

January 17, 2024

Welcome and introductions

Superintendent Kurt Sacher welcomed everyone, and had everyone introduce themselves.

Superintendent Sacher then reviewed the **information items** included in the package:

- **Exclerator diploma study sessions** - are being offered to students in Math 30-1 and 30-2, Biology 30, and Chemistry 30. The sessions are the first of their kind in the division, and were provided online to students so they could stay in their home communities. The online learning was provided by expert teachers, it was aligned to the curriculum, and used a feedback loop to diagnose student strengths and learning gaps to create individualized learning plans for each student. Usually students would pay \$165 or more for a diploma review; Chinook's Edge offered it free of charge.

In preparation for June exams, we will evaluate the experience of students and staff on the January exams, to understand how the study sessions impacted student achievement and performance. Our intent is to continue supporting our students with supplementary review opportunities to ensure student success.

- **Transportation update** - The division's goal is to keep every bus ride under an hour, and we are able to do that with relatively few exceptions. Bus fees are set annually and are on a cost recovery basis; when revenue from the province increases we drop fees and vice versa. Bus fees are reviewed annually in April. Chinook's Edge continues to experience a driver shortage, and occasionally we cancel a route when a spare bus driver can't be found. If you know anyone that wants to be a bus driver, please call Transportation at 403.227.7072.
- **Board's Advocacy Plan** - The Board has developed an [advocacy document](#) summarizing the three most pressing items for Board advocacy. The Board uses this in conversations with provincial and local leaders, and with school councils. The three advocacy points include:



- Chinook's Edge recommends a cross ministry effort to address increasingly complex needs of students
- Chinook's Edge was pleased to see that in the UCP election platform, there were promises to promote career pathways and enhance opportunities related to career training for rural school divisions. We would ask the government to follow through on these
- Chinook's Edge recognizes there are limited resources. We ask that the government continue to reduce red tape, so that we can get more out of the money already being invested in education

Question box

Superintendent Kurt Sacher answered questions received from parents on a variety of topics. Here are the questions and responses:

- **Is the assumption that the increase in complex needs students is due to setbacks from COVID policies? Are there other causes being investigated?**

We have not formally investigated why there are increasing numbers of students with complex needs. Chinook's Edge began experiencing an increase in students with complex needs prior to the pandemic, although we believe the pandemic has added to the challenge. As a division we continue to respond to this challenge as a high priority.

- **Are the rising rates in complex needs going to continue and do you have plans in place to deal with it?**

While we can't predict with complete accuracy what will occur in the future, we do believe it is likely we will need to continue to prioritize the way we support students with complex needs. Superintendent Sacher said he is very pleased with the work we are doing in this key area. Chinook's Edge currently has a focus group of approximately 10 school based administrators and approximately five staff members from division office exploring solutions. As a division we are recognizing that conventional wisdom needs to be challenged; we believe that students who struggle to regulate emotionally may not lack the will to meet expectations, but instead may lack the skills. As a division we are working on continually building the capacity of our staff so that they can help students develop skills. The Board has been very supportive and continues to advocate for cross-ministry support so that we can have resources and support in this critical effort.

- **The increased awareness on mental health seems to have coincided with a decline in mental health. Can we expect the division will refocus on this, or can we expect more of the same? Is the focus causing an increase in difficulties?**

We don't believe that society's increased awareness, or ours, of mental health is causing an increase in the number of students who need mental health support. Chinook's Edge



has a number of resources in place to support student mental health, including Family School Wellness Workers in schools and the YES (Youth Empowerment and Support Program). Additionally, our staff are able to access additional resources for students who need the support. For a summary of resources for students, click [here](#).

- **What about the impact on staff who are working with students with higher needs?**

Thank you for your concern for our staff. Inkblot is our Employee and Family Assistance Program. Through Inkblot, staff have access to counseling and other support. Also, at the division level, we have a staff wellness coordinator and we support staff wellness champions in every one of our schools. To be clear, we also believe our focus on supporting new learning with our staff will help them feel more confident working with our complex needs students, and this may have a significant indirect impact on staff well-being.

- **What is the school division's policy on cell phones? Are students permitted to have them?**

Research is showing that cell phones can be a distraction to students at school. In Ontario, and more recently in Quebec, provincial governments have banned cell phones in schools. Ontario is also experiencing challenges with enforcement.

In Chinook's Edge we do not have a division wide policy or approach at this point. A few of our schools are experimenting with the idea of limiting cell phone access in school. While we see the great learning opportunities that this technology provides, we also see challenges. The research shows us, and we would agree, that middle school students struggle the most to manage this technology in healthy ways. It is this age group of students who are most likely to experience undesirable social consequences as a result of cell phone usage. We would strongly encourage parents to consider current research on this topic ([here](#) is one recent example in the media).

- We continue our discussions about whether a cell phone policy is something we should develop in Chinook's Edge. We are watching our schools who are limiting cell phone use, as well as schools in Quebec and Ontario, to learn what approaches will be most successful for students.
- Please feel free to email Kurt Sacher if a division wide cell phone policy is something you would like us to consider, at ksacher@cesd73.ca.

Topic of the night - Budgeting impacts on student / teacher ratios

Superintendent Sacher addressed the topic of the night which is how budgeting impacts student / teacher ratios.



Key to the division's work is the Board's direction to the Superintendent, that expenditures of the division's budget resources be fair, equitable and transparent.

Superintendent Sacher started with a theoretical example as a way of describing how the division approaches class sizes. Say, for example, there was a school with 100 Grade 1 students. Because we work to keep class sizes in this Grade typically at about 20, in this fictional school we would assign 5 teachers, each with 20 students in their class.

Let's say in that same school, 5 more students move in after school starts. In this case, we might have class sizes rise to 21 students per teacher. In the division's old model, increased funding would follow the child to the school, but what we saw was that schools spent this money on supplies and additional professional development. And then, what if that same school saw 5 students move away? In the old model, funding would have been reduced to that school, but the school would still need to maintain the same 5 classes given the 95 Grade 1 students they had. Schools in this scenario had to cope with an abrupt loss of funding in September by reducing areas like professional development or the use of supplies. We moved away from this model because of its unfairness, and also we wanted to give schools more predictability.

We would describe our current model as a needs based model. We look at student enrolments late in the spring, anticipating what enrolments will be, and begin planning our staffing based on these numbers. We look again in the fall, once students arrive at school, and make any needed adjustments. In this process, we let principals see each other's budgets. They challenge each other in healthy ways.

Another change we've made that has been helpful in ensuring an equitable approach is combining some classes. For instance, in a smaller high school, we might combine an English 10-1 and 10-2 class, knowing the teacher can adapt learning opportunities to meet the needs of their students, rather than sustaining two smaller classes pulling resources from other areas of high need. The research also tells us that combining grade levels can be effective for students, if it is arranged well and the teacher is supported. We have worked with schools that have experience combining classes and they have shared their expertise throughout the division.

There are times when an unanticipated number of students arrive in the fall. We save a small contingency fund for these circumstances. We consider classes with variances outside the hoped for class sizes, and distribute funds based on need.

At a division level, we receive money based on the number of students enrolled. When there are changes in enrollment, we don't see a full impact in funding immediately. The province reduces funding for declining enrolment gradually over a three year period, and conversely, gradually increases funding over a three year period for school divisions with growing enrolment. As you



might imagine, rural school divisions find value in this approach, while metropolitan school divisions have seen challenges especially when they are growing rapidly. In Chinook's Edge we continue to have steady student enrollment.

If you have additional questions about how your school's budget works, we would encourage you to ask your child's principal for more information.

Also, feel welcome to email Superintendent Kurt Sacher: ksacher@cesd73.ca.

Communications Update - Newsletters

Communications Coordinator, Laurette Woodward, shared results from a survey Parents Matter representatives were asked to take, and share with their school councils. Laurette plans to share the feedback with school based administrators. She asked parents attending the meeting to share if there was anything else that Chinook's Edge should know, and what were some key takeaways for us, regarding school newsletters.

Participants were invited into four groups. Highlights from what parents shared:

- Yes parents read newsletters on their phone
- It would be great if newsletters could be mobile friendly, including with the size of the text
- Clicking on an attachment to the website is inconvenient.
- It would be nice to reduce the number of clicks.
- Some parents felt it was important to keep the calendar as something that looks like a monthly calendar that could be printed
- Regarding the use of texts... parents would prefer to keep texts for emergency use only. However, they recognize that some parents don't always look at emails and that schools might be trying to reach those parents. Also, some parents like extra reminders.
- Would it be possible for parents to be able to set their preferences - that they only receive emergency texts? That way, those parents who want regular content texted to them - such as newsletters, events, etc. - could receive that content while other parents could choose not to.
- Newsletters are important because kids don't always bring information home.

Sharing and stealing ideas

Participants were divided again into four groups to share ideas from their school.

Group 1

River Valley - parents supported a middle school Western dance. There were no cell phones at the dance, and parents said they enjoyed seeing the students so happy.



Steffie Woima - Parents helped with reading Christmas stories in the school. Also, school council sold candy canes and this went well. The investment was \$200, and by charging \$1 a candy cane, school council raised \$1,000 for the school. School council is planning a spring carnival this year.

Ross Ford / Westglen - A white elephant sale before Christmas went well. Families donate gently used items, and then students go shopping and find inexpensive gifts for family members. School council raised \$1500, which was donated to the Didsbury Christmas helpers program for Christmas hampers.

Poplar Ridge - Parents are appreciating the school's use of the Facebook page. It gives parents an opportunity to talk with their children about what is going on. School council had good success with a Purdy's fundraiser before Christmas and will be doing a bottle drive in January.

Regarding inclement weather that happened recently, parents appreciate the pre-warning. They understand the school division might not be able to make a decision until morning, but knowing closures are a possibility helps them prepare. Parents also appreciate the explanation of how decisions are made.

Group 2

Reported that there are number of good things school councils have done. The group asked the division to consider a platform where Parents Matter can connect with each other, as a group, so that ideas can be shared.

Group 3

One school council hosted a school wide family movie night. They dropped the entrance fee, saying instead families could determine their own amount to pay. Some families gave more than what they would have before, so that overall revenues increased.

One school council invited students to attend, and talk about what is going on in school. Parents appreciated hearing from them.

Group 4

- Participants in this group saw school councils be involved with family dances, fundraisers and movie nights.
- One school collected shoe boxes for Christmas, aimed at local recipients instead of people who live in other countries. The school involved the leadership group.
- Olds Koinonia pointed out their school doesn't have cell phones for students or teachers
- At Fox Run / Steffie Woima students participated in a book club.



- Delburne School has a soap box derby every year for Grade 6 students. The students build their project through various subjects and over a period of time. They finish with the races in June. It is a really good community event.

Question

A question was asked about increasing engagement on school councils. Ideas that were shared:

- Get a membership at ASCA (Alberta School Councils Association). ASCA has a lot of resources on its [website](#).
- Chinook's Edge pays for a membership for all of its school councils.
- ASCA will also help school councils. For instance, at Hugh Sutherland School in Carstairs, school council has developed a vision and detailed plan moving forward.
- Turn and talk time can help make a meeting more engaging
- Student time. Spruce View School has brought in students into the school council meeting to talk about dual credit. That helps generate interest with more people.
- Make sure school councils are not a place where parents get assigned tasks.
- Have a positive and encouraging culture.

Homework to do before the next meeting

If Parents Matter members are willing, it would be appreciated if you would be "Facebook investigators" before the next meeting. The division is encouraging schools to use Facebook as a platform for celebration - where parents can see positive things happening in their child's school. What do parents think of this so far? Is our elevated focus on Facebook messaging helping our families see more clearly the amazing things that are happening in our schools? We will welcome your feedback at our next meeting.

Future meeting dates set

The next meeting of Parents Matter will be on April 24, 2024 in the evening.

Please provide your feedback

We would appreciate your feedback about the meeting so we can continue to improve your experience. Please use this anonymous [exit sheet](#) to share your comments. Thank you!