

Garden Creek Elementary
1360 Woodstock Rd., Fredericton NB
Parent School Support Committee Minutes

Date: April 26, 2022 Time 6:30-8:05

Location: Virtual TEAMS meeting

PSSC Members present

Mark Taylor
Pamela Kitchen
Alex Yaychuck
Lilly Smallwood,
Coral Shuai
Andrea Addison
Samantha Robichaud
Stephanie Babin
Paul MacIntosh (DEC rep)
Michelle Armstrong

Regrets

Cathy Elvin
Kim Sorlie

Call to Order: Mark Taylor -6:30

Approval of Agenda: Lilly/Andrea

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting as amended Pam/Andrea

DEC questions/concerns

-Amended wording around Hanwell school letters to read: ~~The whole thing has been secretive since the original letters were sent out.~~ No further information has been shared at this time.

-In discussion about FI next year, strike comment about being perplexed.

In interest of making minutes more formal under next meeting remove comment about Mark feeling better, although sentiment was appreciated.

Business arising from the minutes: none

New Business:

-Proposed changes to PSSC structure: Mark reports that the media reports of the department of education's proposed changes to the PSSC/DEC structure are accurate based on a meeting he was invited to as PSSC chair. Noteworthy points include that the restructuring essentially moves PSSCs into regional councils. The representation in these structures would be from various schools anywhere from 8-13 schools per council. Representation to these regional bodies would be the principal and one parent from each school. (There would be a revised Senior level which would include representation from the department of education and elected members for the government.)

- Concerns were made known by PSSC chairs that this would have serious implications for parent involvement

- questions about how we would make sure that individual school concerns get heard.

- Paul reports that DECS have had an opportunity to bring forward their opinions to Minister Cardy and representative from the Department of Education. The message was that these changes would make engagement stronger or more enticing. Was also informed that they were looking at drafting policy by late spring with target implementation in the fall.

- Question asked about rationale for the changes: Paul indicated that the rationale given was that there has been dwindling participation. Clarified that this “dwindling participation” means that unlike our PSSC that has strong engagement from parents that there are some PSSC’s that struggle to get people involved.

- In discussion of topic PSSC members concerns that this new model would

 - reduce insight at the local school level

 - decrease parent engagement and feedback within the system

 - lack of insight into other schools and would likely be asked to provide ideas without any context

 - harder to recruit parents who would want to serve in this fashion

 - decrease the variety of voices

- discussion that this “new” idea sounds a lot like the school boards that were replaced in 2001

 - also noted that years ago there use to be PSSC Chair meetings with DEC to talk about what was happening at different schools and to share ideas/experiences.

 - Pre-Covid it was noted that several chairs had gotten together themselves informally to share and connect.

- Alex was asked about what was the Value of PSSC from his perspective as the principal/view of school staff.

 - he noted that for big decisions he ensured that PSSC was informed to allow for consultation.

 - helpful feedback and to gage wider parental response.

- consensus is that this shift was unwanted and would have a negative impact on parent involvement and engagement. So what are next steps:

 - Looking at the pros and cons of the current PSSC structure might be a place to start to encourage reform not abolishment of PSSC.

 - Discussion of Mark writing a letter on behalf of our PSSC highlighting concerns and what we have done as a PSSC (work that would have been unlikely in the proposed structure)

 - Connect with other schools in our area in regards to the PSSC to get their feelings about the abolishment of the PSSC and then work towards a joint letter/petition against the changes.

 - Paul’s sense is that our feelings about the changes are shared by the other schools in our area.

 - Discussion that both local and group engagement should be taken. More voices and collective voices have power.

 - Target sending out a letter from our local PSSC for mid-May depending on what Paul learns Thursday. **Everyone is to send to Mark projects/engagement that PSSC had to help show support for PSSC continuing on a school-based level.**

 - Paul reported that DEC will be meeting on Thursday and will let us know about what comes of that meeting.

- PSSC Engagement Survey**

- Response that some of the questions were leading/didn't know how to answer them.
- Concerns about if it will lead the data that is needed for an informed decision about the value of PSSC's
- Comment that in the filling out of the PSSC engagement survey sent by the department of Education that it didn't give the impression that it is so radical of change proposed, there was also questions about the quality of data that it would obtain.
- Suggestion that maybe the DEC could send a survey that would not yield biased results, but also have the opportunity to highlight what PSSC's are doing.
- Paul will take suggestion to DEC
- In the meantime, members who have not done so already should fill out the survey.

Report from DEC Representative: He has been trying to get to as many PSSC's as possible with information about changes. Knows more about proposed changes now than when he attended the first PSSC, wishes that he could do that meeting over again knowing what he knows now. Other comments on this noted in above.

Report from Principal:

Highlights from the past month:

- March professional learning lead by CORE leadership looked at Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- attended provincial principal's meeting
- Hired a vice principal for 2022/2023 school year. Amy Bourgaize will be starting in fall. She comes from FHS where she was a SPR (department head) in the language department. She is extremely excited to have the opportunity to gain admin experience here at Garden Creek
- Joint Health and Safety committee has been reviewing the inside of the school and completing work orders for areas that need tweaking or repairs.
- School Spirit committee meeting – Planned theme day for this coming Friday with an SEL activity.
- Maple syrup boiling tour occurred this year. Lily and Amanda were at the school and collected sap with the grade 4/5 and then over two days engaged children at all levels in a maple boil. Engaged learning at all grade levels – it was noted children remembered many of this from previous year. Teachers thankful for the experiential learning opportunity.
- 'Garden Creek News' reporters were out again you can find interview on the school website.
- Report cards went home and parent/teacher interviews happened
- School staff participated in a half day self-directed professional learning day organized by district.
- Blue Jay Girls at bat afterschool program has started.
- Jump rope for heart happening this week
- Éclair lips fundraiser was successful.
- Earth day – Mason Jar Waste challenge. Was actively engaged with and teachers reported that their classrooms were also clean after lunch that day.
- Intramurals, choir, student led clubs are all running and students are excited about being involved in the school outside of classroom.
- More momentum towards children feeling more connected to the school and established in routines. Making progress towards what we would normally see in a non-disrupted school year.
- Outdoor learning and experiential learning has picked up – examples building birdhouses, growing plants, with better weather more opportunities to get outside

Upcoming dates/activities:

- This Friday 80's theme day. School Spirit classroom challenge (scrambled words of affirmation which students must put together after finding them in various hidden areas of the classroom)
- Grade 4/5 Provincial Assessment will be early-mid May. Change this year will be completed online this year.
- volunteer Luncheon May 4th
- Fire Drill and Schoolwide evacuation Drill May 5th
- Provincial Council day May 6th – this is organized by Teacher Association
- Branch Meeting day May 16th. Looking at motions from the collective agreement
- Track and Field day May 19th (rain day 20th)
- Home and School will be running a 50/50 fundraiser
- French Immersion Professional Learning has been developed with district support, to target oral language communication in the Late Entry program. Focus is to target in on some teaching strategies to help move oral language acquisition along a little faster, as is currently not where we would like it to be.
- Follow up from Professional Learning on March 25th will have SEL focus on what teachers/educational assistants see as their needs and interests. There are four components and plan is for members of Core Leadership Team to break into smaller groups to support all teaching staff with various supports.

Grade 4/5 Student Survey: Looks at how students experience school and learning. 85-90 students were involved in the survey

Highlights of success (High percentage of agreement with the following statements):

- I have choices in how I show what I have learned
- I feel my teacher thinks I am good at things
- What I am learning is important for my future
- I understand what is taught (most days or better) 94.2%
- I was expected to work hard in my subjects 92.9%
- I like to be with my teachers 93.2%

Areas to look at for clarification of what is meant or improvement

- The work that I am given at school is just right 46.7% (other options were the work is too hard or too easy remaining percentage was split fairly equally over spread between these two)
- I feel free to express myself at school 77.4% -would like to see this rank go higher
- There is at least one adult at school I can go to for help 87.4% - this is a good number but we think we can do better
- I get to school/class late 22.5% this matches school stats
- I have experienced verbal bullying (name calling, being made fun of, rumors spread about me) 33.7% students report this experience during school year. Deeper analysis of data to understating the details around this data piece. Including is the bullying repeated, targeted and with the intention to hurt. If yes then this would indicate serious need for work on student to student relationships.
- I stood up to a bully 29.8% next step with this is to understand what does it mean to stand up to the bully, are strategies being used helpful.

Alex Yaychuk is proposing that student focus groups be consulted to help gain more insight into what the numbers mean and how comments/results should be interpreted. Alex has some

experience in this area and is looking forward to helping give the students more of a voice in the school.

Comment was made about letting parents know about all the good things that were happening at Garden Creek – like clubs. Alex noted that there were so many and that they were small makes that difficult but noted that you can find all the information on the calendar. Calendars are posted on the front page of the school website.

Correspondence: none

Closing Comments:

That next meeting will be in person at a restaurant. Suggestion was made, with support of others, that we go somewhere with an outdoor option. Also, reminder to send along your comments to Mark about the good things about PSSC and areas that could grow.

Everyone wished a good night shortly after 8:02pm.

Date of next meeting May 24, 2022. Location to be announced.