



Points 2 Ponder

November 1, 2017

From the October 24th meeting:

The October general meeting was another good opportunity to discuss the current issues in Victoria. We received a report from Nicole about the **Inclusion discussion** at the One Learning Community Committee (it is attached) **next meeting open to all November 29 4PM**, and a report from Marketa on Emergency Preparedness, (you would have received her documents in a separate email). We had some round table discussions about lunch monitors and dress codes and included the feedback our reps brought as well as the feedback received from you via email. We also discussed ways to gather and include the broader parent perspective on emerging issues when the Board of education is seeking a quicker response and it is not policy change. I hope the notes below are helpful as you talk to your school community members about these current issues to give VCPAC feedback to help represent our parents. All past issues of Points 2 Ponder are available on our website <http://www.vcpac.ca> for your convenience.

From the October 5th PAC 101 Partnership Building event:

This was a well attended meeting. We will look to holding it annually. We had nearly half of our schools represented and of those many had both parents and administrators working together. We hope the work started there will continue for the rest of the year and the community will be richer for this partnership exercise. Our host school PAC president spoke to the group of the benefits of a strong respectful partnership and gave some real life experiences of success to help us catch the vision. It is not all about fundraising lets find a focus that may have a fundraising component but is not focused on fundraising. Our children will be better off when we are part of the village raising them. We will work to share the report from our host PAC so all can catch the vision.

Round Table discussions:

Dress Code.

The motion to suspend the enforcement of dress codes until their committee can conclude their work was defeated. That was a good thing from the feedback we received. The motion to adopt the recommended statement was defeated and it was sent back to the committee. On October 25, the committee discussed a revised statement, it no longer has the phrase "*That the Board of Education of School District No. 61 (Greater Victoria) direct that the School Code of Conduct will not include any other statements regarding expectations of dress, save for the following:*". The committee will present the revised statement "must demonstrate support" will be replaced with something less demanding.

*Our school is committed to creating a learning community that values diversity and is free of all forms of discrimination. In line with the BC Human Rights Code which prohibits discrimination on the basis of an individual's race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and age, (insert school name) promotes a climate of understanding and mutual respect where all are equal in dignity and rights. Actions through verbal and non-verbal communication including clothing) **must demonstrate support** for the BC Human Rights Code.*

The parents present at the meeting had no argument against the statement but we could see now action required by it either. Interesting discovery; Cloverdale Traditional's uniform requirement is not seen as a dress code. It is a part of the school culture and not at risk.

The committee recommendation will include that a new ad hoc committee be formed to work out the guidelines and regulations to go with this philosophy statement. VCPAC was assured there would be parent representation on this committee and it would not be left to administration alone to work out the details recognizing the parent concerns involved.

Lunch Monitors:

It looks like the majority of parents giving feedback would like a more formal review of the practice of grade 5 students doing the lunch monitor service. The Board of education has asked the Superintendent do a review of the "guideline, training, student/supervisor ratio and cost for alternatives" and to report at the November meeting. We will decide after that report what action VCPAC may take to further understand the concerns beyond what the report will cover. There are PACs and parents giving positive statements of the practice as well as those expressing concerns. If you have ideas on how to gain the information about each school and their experience with grade 5 lunch monitors please share it with the executive info@vcpac.ca.

Emerging issue 2-way communication ideas:

We made a list from our discussion of ways to get parents feedback quickly. What would you add? What will work for your school community?

Phone tree/email tree

Paper/backpack mail system with follow up calls

Email bulletin system that is subscribed to with VCPAC and District like Saanich has

Communication specialists at PAC and VCPAC

Pathways District>VCPAC>PAC & Principal>parents>VCPAC/District

Remember to include multiple languages to reach all parents



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Summary of ONE-learning committee

Sept. 27th 2017

Topic: Inclusion

VCPAC member: Nicole Strong

Intro to meeting

- The meeting began with intro to the document entitled: "what is inclusion in sd61?" There was discussion over the term inclusion, and it was clarified that this term will more often refer to children with designations such as autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, down syndrome, chronic health, behaviour issues; as well as vulnerable learners in the Aboriginal community.
- The district is promoting flexible learning environments, and programs that are set up to tailor to the individual needs of the learner
- The strategies to support inclusion according to the district include: offer ongoing learning opportunities for staff; involve students and parents in planning for meaningful learning opportunities; build relationships with community partners to support inclusion Discussion
- Present at this meeting were 3 trustees, chair of one-learning committee Deb Whiten, 2 superintendents; principals; 3 parents; speech pathologists; district psychologist; Dana Marchant from sp ed department; union reps for GVTA and Educational Assistants; occupational therapist.
- 2 parents raised the concerns of BI programs at Arbutus and Esquimalt High losing their programs. They stressed the importance of having a space within the school where their child feels comfortable, less stressed, and a part of a group in a meaningful way.
- Specialists raised concerns over massive case loads preventing them for working with children in a meaningful way, and the lack of collaborative time they get with other professionals including teachers, learning support and admin
- EA union rep raised concerns that Educational Assistants are stretched, divided among 1-6 kids per day. They feel a lack of training in dealing with chronic health issues, and severe behaviours. They feel a lack of collaborative time with teachers to plan
- Principal of Lambrick said that he is piloting a 'flex room' where any student in the school who is having a rough day, needs a break from the class, or an alternative space to learn is welcome. He says there are many things to work out with this room that he's working on this year and will report his progress as this is a potential model for other schools to follow.
- VCPAC rep (me) addressed following concerns based on my notes from our VCPAC meeting the night before: lack of transparency with parents regarding designations in the district; lack of learning support for children with learning disabilities despite a designation; lack of consistent communication from schools special ed team on child's progress (most families are receiving 1 IEP per year with no transitional meeting at the end of year or September); lack of follow up with specialists such as SLP and OT; the need for access to resources for parents of children with various disabilities including translators, and community connections
- 2 trustees were vocal about a meeting being needed to talk about the 'how' of fixing the vast number of issues in special ed, reiterating that all the improvements needed cost money and if there isn't any, how can we be resourceful: find out what schools have excellent models and send out teams to support schools who are struggling to meet the needs of children

Closing remarks

- I asked for clarification from the chair as to when this discussion would continue as clearly there were issues coming up from every professional and parental body in the room. I asked for a time line and if parents can contact the board with stories in person or at the next meeting.
- Trustee Anne Whiteker requested that I ask VCPAC to invite heads of special ed to come talk to parents around designations, funding and supports in the school.

The result: next meeting will be October 25th at 4pm at the District Board Room topic will be dress code ;

- **November 29th at 4pm** will be the next meeting to **re-visit inclusion** I am hoping to send out communication to all PACs urging parents to attend and share their stories, or email me with their story at nstrong77@hotmail.com