

Symmes and D'Arcy McGee Parent Participation Organization (PPO)

Meeting 1, Oct. 7, 2009 – Notes (first draft)

Summary

This first meeting brought together interested parents with Principal George Singfield. The group was a mix of newcomers and parents with experience on the committee from previous years. There was discussion around the general functioning of the group and choices were made for co-chairs and co-secretaries as well as meeting dates and times for the entire school year. The bulk of the meeting involved a lively brainstorm on possible activity ideas that elicited the participation of all those attending.

Participation

Nicole Bélec, Monica Thibault, Sean Mulligan, Lisa Burley, George Singfield, Julie Braun, Donna Gowling, Cheryl Martineau-Beaudoin, Kim Bédard, Colinda Dubeau, Bruce Gagnon, Lynn Rimer-Caissy.

Decisions

- Co-Chairs: Monica Thibault and Donna Gowling
- Co-Secretaries: Sean Mulligan and Lisa Burley
- Meeting times and dates: Last Wednesday of each month @ 18h30 – 20h30, specifically: Oct. 28; Nov. 25; Dec. 16; Jan. 27; Feb. 24; March 31; April 28; May 26.

Action Items

- Those proposing activity ideas to think through and discuss with the group at the next meeting, including the steps or pathway to bring their idea to fruition with a notional timeline and rough estimate of required resources.
- Co-chairs to develop a list of current participants and their emails and circulate to group.

What's Next: Initial Agenda Items for Oct. 28 meeting

Finish brainstorming

- For current ideas; present pathway to fruition
- Decide on method to prioritize, or choose among list

Notes

1. General Functioning of the Parent Committee

Open to all

The Parent Committee functions similar to an open forum; there is no membership and interested parents involve themselves to the extent their lives allow.

Articulation with the Governing Board

A representative from the Parent Committee reports to the Governing Board on issues for which it wishes to advocate, and seeks Board approval for specific initiatives. The Parent Committee itself has no authority or decision-making power, its influence lies in its ability to effectively advocate.

General Role and Goals

The main role of the Committee is to serve as a vehicle to sustain and strengthen outreach to parents and the broader community in which the school is situated. "Living the community mission". Fundraising can be part of the Parent Committee's job, and is seen as a means to a specific end. In these ways the Parent Committee shares similar goals, as the school itself, with focus specifically on enhancing the school and its linkages with the community, and advocating issues of concern. All of its supported activities aim to foster community spirit. Ways of measuring efforts towards this shared goal might include the following:

- Healthy community turn-out at Homecoming football games / events or at the Cape Breton Kitchen party for example;
- Opportunities created for students to showcase their talent and achievements to the immediate community and beyond;
- Increasing numbers of parents at parent-teacher meetings and other school events; and,
- piloting student-led conferences at cycle 2 level etc.;

Funds raised

All funding raised by the Parent Committee is kept in an account separate from the school's operational budget. This account is therefore not accessible for operational expenses, unless funds have been withdrawn and deliberately placed within the operational budget. Further, the account is not accessible to cover off school debt. Allocations from PPO raised funds are distributed to Symmes and D'Arcy McGee on a per capita basis.

2. Brainstorm of Activity Ideas

a) Arts & culture

- Discussion of holding events that would make use of the auditorium; reference to Burnt Toast café.

b) Strengthening awareness of cultures and issues near and far (international), Lisa and Sean

- Events to build awareness of global cultures and issues particularly involving linkages with Canada and developing countries; reference to the O Ambassadors (Oprah) Group at D'Arcy McGee and partnership with Canada World Youth for a two-week working trip to Ecuador. Intensive fundraising has been required.
- Idea of having an international dinner that would feature foods from around the world.
- Strengthening linkages with first nations; the school has about 34 first nations' students.
- School involved in Terry Fox run for cancer; HIV/Aids research.

c) Work ready: focus on workplace safety, Colinda and Julie

- "Passport to Safety" is an on-line course for young people entering the work force that enables them to self-assess safety conditions in the workplace. Employers are increasingly asking job candidates if they have gone through the "Passport to Safety" course.
- "P.A.R.T.Y." involving the Ottawa Hospital, focuses on accident prevention, building awareness and disability prevention. A speaker or workshop on this subject might be feasible.

d) Speaker series or a whole day Conference with different workshops, George and group

This could address cutting-edge issues of interest to parents, students and the community at large.

Brainstorm topic areas included the following:

- Dealing with difficult people & developing coping mechanisms with Rhonda Scharfe (Colinda)
- Etiquette/ "Broadcasting yourself in the best possible light" by Julie Blais-Comeau on: How you represent yourself in society; dining, speaking, behavioural norms (Monica)
- Facebook: debates on private vs. public; future implications for young people when private information becomes public knowledge.

e) Murder Mystery (Donna and Nicole)

While the upcoming (October 24th) Aylmer Community Theatre Murder Mystery is not a school event, it is being held at the school . Funds raised will be donated to the school.

The school could put on a Murder Mystery play of its own with teachers, students and parents participating (in the spring perhaps).

f) Cape Breton Kitchen Party (many from group); successful in the past, held in early spring.

g) D'Arcy alumni evening or Home Show (Cheryl)

h) Black-tie event (Bruce) **with silent auction** (Julie and Colinda)

i) Lobby philanthropists to bring in LCD projectors or other educational supports to the school (George)

j) Host a Career Fair

k) Volunteer Fair; such as the Ontario program where students provide up to forty hours of volunteer work per school year. (Colinda)

l) Hundred mile dinner (Julie)

m) Have parent committee serve as a supplier for fundraising materials (Bruce)

n) Old standards: Teachers Appreciation Day/ Week events, Symmes and Darcy grad events and the Sports banquet room set up, decorations and snacks etc.