

WESTERN SCHOOL BOARD
of Prince Edward Island

SEP 24 2010

September 9, 2010

PEI Home & School Federation
Box 1012, Charlottetown, PE
C1A 7M4

Dear President Owen Parkhouse:

Further to the resolutions approved by your Federation at the April Annual General Meeting, I would provide the following responses on behalf of our trustees.

Resolution 1/10: PROCEDURES...PARENT COMMUNICATION...

Procedures for developing and implementing school communications with parents are the responsibility of individual schools so as to respond to local needs and circumstances. Whether it be a school handbook, a regular newsletter, a web page, the establishment of Parent Councils/Home & School Associations or the opportunities for individual parents as partners in the delivery of educational services to children, each school undertakes to establish its own processes and vehicles for promoting effective two-way communication with its parents and local community. In our opinion, this delegation of authority and autonomy to each school has worked well in our schools and thus we do not see a need for establishing 'system' protocols.

I would note that we do have a Board protocol for addressing issues identified by parents with respect to our schools or personnel that would see parents first approaching the classroom teacher and, if no resolution, the principal, the Director responsible for that school, the Superintendent, and, if still unresolved, the Board.

As a Board, we initiated a formal dialogue in October 2009 with Home & School/Parent Council representatives invited from every school to attend a 'sharing' session with provincial HSF reps, principals, trustees, and Senior Management staff. This session proved very successful in allowing joint discussions of a number of relevant topics of mutual interest with our parent community and we are looking forward to this Saturday session becoming an annual event within our Board with tentative plans for the next session - *Talking & Sharing Too* - scheduled for

December 4, 2010. We also have trustees who annually attend the H&S AGM as well as a number who attend local association meetings (usually upon request of the specific association). Similarly, members of our Senior Management team have been invited to local H&S meetings and this is a welcome opportunity to share views and have discussions with parents.

Resolution 2/10: AIR QUALITY TESTING

This resolution has been referred to Joan Moore, the staff person responsible for Occupational Health & Safety in all Island schools, for a formal response on behalf of the three school boards.

Resolution 3/09: STUDENTS ACHIEVE

The value of such administrative software to our staffs, students and parents is obvious. It is the rate of implementation across all schools that has been problematic. While staff training may be one area of concern, I believe it is less so than the technological issues of Internet speed and appropriate hardware to support a dependable, stable web-based environment in which to use the software. Despite best intentions of many schools and individual teachers to fully use Students Achieve, the ongoing issues of response time caused by either the Internet and/or the hardware have served to discourage many initiatives over the past few years. Given a robust, dependable system which would provide the features to teachers and parents offered by Students Achieve, we would be able to advance this service in a timely, responsible manner to the collective benefit of all partners.

Resolution 4/10: ...REZONING AND SCHOOL CLOSURES

While we are satisfied our current policy and procedures are transparent and meet the needs of all parties in terms of consultation and evidence-based decision-making, we would be most willing to work with the Eastern School District and Department of Education & Early Childhood Development to review current practises. The inclusion of parent representatives throughout this process and their ability to have a voice in these discussions has been a critical component of our procedures and the successes we have enjoyed.

Resolution 5/10: EQUAL ACCESS TO EXTRA-CURRICULAR...

There is no dispute that educational experiences may occur outside the classroom and occur in a variety of venues and through a variety of activities. In fact, all schools regularly include such experiences as an integral component of their programs.

The issue is not one of access based on geographic location of the school and the proposed event as much as the type of activity and its relative worth in comparison to the amount of time missing from classroom instruction. In terms of approving participation by students and staff in such events and activities, the Superintendent/Director/Principal is expected to make his/her decision on the educational value of said activity, the amount of instructional time lost to allow participation in the event, and, as part of this decision, an assessment of whether it is an educational experience connected to learning outcomes or merely entertainment.


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We have schools that would be geographically distant from a number of activities within our own Board or in other parts of the Province; for example, we routinely see schools from all areas of the board participating in events and activities at many locations both near and far (ex. Tignish, Summerside, Charlottetown, Eastern PEI, and including off-Island). These trips occur on a regular basis. The approval is based on their educational merit, not distance.

Resolution 6/10: ...REFEREEING CLINICS

Although the resolution is asking PEIHSF to make recommendations to PEISAA and not the seeking Board action directly, we would support this resolution and believe that clinics should be scheduled in all parts of the Island so as to train 'local' officials and thus help to reduce the significant travel costs for obtaining officials. We will advise our PEISAA representatives of this resolution and our support.

Yours truly,


Gary Doucette
Chair

Copy: WSB Trustees
Chair, Eastern School District
Chair, La Commission scolaire de langue française de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard