

# WRAPSC Minutes

Jan 13, 2015 7:00 to 9:00 pm

## Forest Heights Collegiate Library



### Attendance:

- 30 School Council Representatives
- 22 guests
- 7 Members of the 2014-15 WRAPSC Steering Committee

### Agenda: Christine Gillis Bilton

- No revisions/additions. Motion to approve: Hend Shalon. Second: Joe Ortiz. Approved.

### Approval of minutes from November's meeting: Christine Gillis Bilton

- Need to add in the attendance count; otherwise okay.
- Motion to approve: Kat Pettitt. Second: \_\_\_\_\_. Approved.

### Co-Chairs report: Christine Gillis Bilton & Laurie Tremble

1. WRAPSC members are working on a project to compile information for an updated school council handbook.
  - Goal is to have available for the start of 2015-16 school year.
  - Need idea and volunteers!
2. WRAPSC Facebook page; lots of cool members. Share ideas, events! Join us!
  - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WRAPSC/>
3. WRAPSC is setting up a public Google Docs folder for all of us to share documents/ templates/ forms etc.
  - Details will be sent out under separate email shortly
4. Grant: Indigo Love of Reading applications are **due Feb 13**.
  - <http://www.loveofreading.org/code/navigate.asp?Id=10>
5. Student Voice: Minister's Student Advisory Council (Gr 7-12 **due Feb 28**)
  - Q: Can grade 6 students apply?
  - A: Students selected to participate in the Council are appointed by the Minister of Education each spring. Due to the timing of the annual appointment, applications are open to students who are currently registered in grades 7-12.
6. Various parent representatives on school board committees:

- *Research Committee* (1) Caroline Agostini
- *Calendar Committee* (1) Joe Ortiz
- *Mental Health & Wellness Advisory Committee* (2) Kelly Stewart & Joanne Weston
- *Early Years Advisory Committee* (3) Ashley Cooper, Jeff Stephens & Carl Pacey

#### 7. Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools (SCIS)

- a) Team event – **Wednesday March 11/15 from 7-9** pm in the St. Clements Room, Education Centre (51 Ardelt Avenue, Kitchener). SCIS parents and community members will come together to share best practice ideas and learn from small group facilitators. For more information please contact [wrapsc@gmail.com](mailto:wrapsc@gmail.com).
- b) SCIS electronic forum - still in the works; stay tuned!

#### 8. Next WRAPSC meeting: **Tues, Feb 3rd at 7pm** on MATH!

- Note that we have WRAPSC members who experience health issues arising from exposure to scented products. Please be considerate in your use of such products while attending our meetings.

**Great news!**

**Marty Deacon said the board would be happy to post our announcements and events on the board website!**

#### **PIC Event: Alicia Sumner**

- Save the date! **Sat, April 18, 2015** – all day parent conference FREE!
- We will be hosting "**Building Skills to Navigate the School Years**" at Bluevale Collegiate in Waterloo.
- Registration details will be available on the flyers that will be distributed to all schools and at the next WRAPSC meeting.
- Volunteers are still needed so please contact Alicia Sumner at [alicia.m.sumner@gmail.com](mailto:alicia.m.sumner@gmail.com) to see where you could share your talent in this event.

#### **Breakout for working group discussions about Communication.**

- Topics/details as follows.
- Please note that the following is information gathered/brainstormed from parents and staff...to improve communication between home and the school...with the ultimate goal of helping to improve student achievement"

## #1 How can parents make the most of the interview time with the teacher at the beginning of the year? How can telephone interviews be more productive? — Moderator: Kat Pettitt

- Organize your purpose
- Pass on info regarding child: learning style or special interest
- Encourage parents to bring questions
- Ask for what is going well and then if there are any concerns.
- Parents want to know what they can do to help at home
- Idea of FAQ sheet to send home to parents (what is typically asked i.e. is homework being completed? are they coming for extra help? are they participating in class?)
- Understanding the barriers (access, language, understanding process, comfort)
- Teachers want parents to be informed (high school feedback). Know the course outline, so that we don't waste time reviewing this
- Who to include? (Do we bring kids or not?)
- Keep the talk solution oriented
- Schedule "Meet the Teacher" event at the beginning of the school year, and keep it informal
- Have booths set up in the gym, instead of scheduling (gr 7-8)
- Could send questions in advance, via email
- Let teachers know what behaviours can be expected and what tactics work in curbing it.
- Ask about the teacher's electronic "footprint" - where can they follow what is being taught, due dates etc.
- Parents could ask what they can do to install good work ethics and attitudes within their kids.
- Offer to give the teacher your email for easier communication
- Be aware of the time constraint and have priority issue ready. There are often many other parents in line and we try to keep each chat to 5 minutes.

### Specific to telephone interviews:

- Set up a mutually convenient time for interview. Let teacher know, in advance, what information you are looking for / have to offer the teacher.
- Again, have priorities in place.
- Do not blindsides teachers for interviews at inconvenient / inappropriate times. They want to help and want to be prepared so the meeting is productive for you both.
- Teachers teach 3 periods a day (out of 4) and could have lunch duty or an on-call that day so they may not be able to get back to you immediately.

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#2 What are some strategies that teachers and newcomer Canadians can use to overcome language and cultural barriers in their communication with each other? — Moderator: HEND SHALON

### Staff

- Celebration night/showcase of different cultures represented in the school
- Food – having food is a good way to make it feel like a social event
- Mother's group to bring immigrant mothers together to discuss issues they are dealing with such as language, school, groceries, finding jobs, etc.
- Homework club
- Parent leadership training
- Field trip to the school board
- Barriers: asking them about their interest, develop their confidence with the school system, settlement work offer workshop to parents about different cultural issues
- Pathways to Education is helping youth in low-income communities graduate from high school and successfully transition into post-secondary education. Pathways addresses systemic barriers to education by providing leadership, expertise and a community-based program proven to lower dropout rates. The Pathways program provides a comprehensive set of academic, financial and social supports to youth. See [pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://pathwaystoeducation.ca)
- Community partnerships can be built with multicultural organizations. You might be able to match new families with mentor families who have a common language but more experience/ familiarity with the Canadian education system
- Have ESL staff resources available for collaborating with classroom teachers
- Often siblings can be used for interpreting
- Working with peers to help translate
- Get involved in extracurricular clubs or teams to meet new friends
- Let the teacher know asap so they can help come up with a solution

### Parents

- Try to think about a welcome way for parents to introduce themselves, such as the story of their name
- Orientation to the school. Set up a special time at the beginning of the new school year for immigrant families to come into the school.
- Settlement workers
- Invite parents to talk about something they know (i.e. Science, etc.)

#3 How can parents be better informed about curriculum and what is going on in the classroom so they can help their children at home? — Moderator: Jeff Stephens

- Ministry of Education website
- Curriculum.org (more parent-friendly language & resources for teachers)
- Possible curriculum discussions at school council from principal (implementing school improvement plan)
- Parent involvement grant \$1000 for curriculum nights with parents
- Getting parents as active participants is key for continued education at home
- Sending home activities for parents to lead learning with kids
- Teacher newsletters/websites/ School Day
- Non-teacher trained proof reading of curriculum/terminology - take the eduspeak out of curriculum so parents can understand
- Twitter accounts by teachers
- Ask students to see the course outline handed out on the first day of the course. If kids not forthcoming about what is happening, contact teacher by phone, or email.
- Teacher who use Edmodo can give parents codes so they can monitor class activities
- Teachers who send out markbook printouts can include a note
- Check website, student note books, be involved in the schedule and follow up with your child and the teacher if you have concerns.
- Access online curriculum documents at curriculum.org

#4 There are special challenges staying connected at the secondary level when a student has multiple teachers. How can parents & teachers better manage communication within such a setting? **Moderator: Glenn Anderson**

- School website
- Email (best overall method!)
- Phone extensions
- Class emails
- Course outlines/curriculum
- Volunteers
- Class parents
- Twitter
- Reminders
- Parent night/BBQ
- Class websites
- Google docs
- Google Apps account
- Data verification form
- Planners
- Specific teachers i.e.: Spec Ed, Guidance
- Class dojo
- Translation services

- School (and/or teacher and/or class) websites offer the best way of communication from school to parents, and to provide parents with starting contact points to various teachers (i.e. voice mail, email addresses, etc.). Can be used for announcements, course outlines, activities at school, resources available.
- This is the key to many of the issues especially as most teachers have (or should have) some kind of calendar/daily record on their website so parents can see what is being covered and could use it to start a conversation by asking their child "how was that video on XYZ".
- In elementary schools parents tend to have more chances of contact and communication with the same teacher over the course of the school years, which can mean better communications between such teachers.
- Parents are not as involved as they are at the elementary school level, thus fewer chances for contact with teachers and such. Some such activities would be field trips, volunteering, even dropping/picking up their children allows for interaction with various teachers.
- Understand that daily interactions can be more difficult to sustain than in Grade 8.
- Get teacher's email address to use for future concerns. It's a lot easier than connecting by phone when teachers are teaching for most of the day. Group emails or individual emails work well, especially to get a conversation started which might lead to a phone call or meeting.
- Call phone blasts can work well, as can other communication software packages.
- Parents need to know how to connect specific people/staff as applicable to their child's needs and situation: special education, guidance, coaches, Principal, office staff as appropriate.
- it is critical that parents make sure their contact information is up to date for the school and that they have given permission for the school/teachers/etc. to contact them.
- One parent, who recently moved to Canada, commented that in their prior schools contact information was far more freely distributed by the schools. Class contact lists were given out, as were team contact lists, etc. But here this is not something that happens, nor is it something that the school even offers parents to opt into. The reason for this is our privacy laws and such.
- High School students need to start to take on communication responsibilities themselves as they will need this skill.
- Parents need to understand what the response expectations are for the various means for contacting schools:
  - If a parent sends an email to the school/teacher, they should know roughly how long they should have to wait to receive a response. Do the teachers read and respond to email at least once a day? Do they do it in the morning or evening (this likely depends upon the teacher).
  - Voicemail is similar, how often do or are teachers expected to listen to their voice mail and respond to it.
  - The expected response times of the parents need to be reasonable ones. A parent can't expect a teacher to be responding to a voice mail or email always within minutes or hours, next day might be a more realistic time frame.
  - Parents need to understand that the work environment and such of teachers means that their communication response and availability very well might be quite different than the parents. In their work environments, parents might be use to expecting email responses within a very short time ( almost at the point of instant messaging ) and that phone messages are received and returned quickly, that people live on their smart phones, and so forth. But none of this is the

situation with teachers; they are busy with the students most of their time in one way or another. They aren't continuously checking their smart phone messages and such during the day, and so forth.



How do teachers determine when and how to approach parents with concerns? What route should parents take if they have concerns about something happening in the classroom, at school or on a field trip? — Moderator: Jill Magazine, PIC

- There is no rule-book for when or how teachers will approach parents with concerns and good intentions can be greatly influenced by reality in terms of what else is going on in the classroom to take the teacher's attention and how well the teacher knows the child.
- Ideally parents will come to the meet the teacher night because that serves as an icebreaker and makes it easier for either side to make contact after that.
- If parents do not come then ideally the teacher will call and make that first connection. Not all teachers do this, but many would.
- Parents like to know how to best contact their child's teacher. Some teachers prefer email, some prefer phone calls while others prefer a note in the planner. Parents will appreciate always being told this information at the start of the year.
- Teachers spend up to the first 6 weeks of the year developing a baseline for each child in the class so that they know what is normal academic performance and typical behaviour for that child. For some children it might be clear in a day or two, for some it will take closer to the 6 weeks. It also depends on the grade and how much of the day the child spends with the teacher.
- Once that baseline is established then a teacher is more likely to contact the parents when there is a pattern of behaviour or performance that strays from that baseline.
- There is a big difference in the amount of communication home when children get older. By grade 7 they are expecting the children to do a lot more without involving parents.
- Even after a teacher sees something of concern, she might not contact home right away because she might want to speak with the special ed department or the previous year's teacher. Even when a child has transitioned to a new school teachers will email previous year's teachers with questions.
- If the parent does have anything in particular that she wants to hear about, then it's important to let the teacher know - even at the meet the teacher night.
- It could be unrealistic for a teacher to manage if every parent wanted a communication home in the case of everything a teacher could do this for, but generally there are only 1 or 2 parents with these higher expectations and teachers can manage that.
- With respect to parents having concerns, they should always start with the source, typically the classroom teacher. This is suggested even in situations where there is a safety concern. If parents go to the principal first then the principal generally doesn't know the details of the situation.
- There is information for parents on the WRDSB website about communicating with the school. This information addresses the proper process which involves going first to the teacher, then if the issue is unresolved to the principal and then to the Superintendent for your family of schools. There should be no negative repercussions for going to the Superintendent, but parents do still have concerns about this from time to time. If the matter is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction with the Superintendent then the parent can go next to the Executive Superintendent of Education/Director of Education. If the parent remains unsatisfied then she can make an appointment to make an in camera delegation to the Board of Trustees. This means she would have a private meeting with Trustees to present her concerns. The Manager of Corporate Services would help with setting up this meeting and with providing information about bringing this type of delegation. <http://www.wrdsb.ca/our-schools/communicating-with-your-school/>

- Priority goes to students at risk or who show a change.
- Parents who engage are more likely to develop a relationship with the teacher.
- A phone call is a good start. Also, usually by the time the parent is contacted there have been multiple interventions attempted.
- Special Education Teacher SERT for kids with IEPs or IPRCs"
- Sometimes it's personal tolerance levels for certain behaviours (i.e. late, missing tests, skipping class)
- When there is a severe behaviour issue or a sudden change in work habits
- Attendance is often the root cause of many academic issues. When the Automatic Phoner calls to say "A student in YOUR house missed periods...today." Follow up with a call to the teacher. Even if your child says they were in class, or the teacher made a mistake. We will let you know and gladly fix any mistakes. P.S. Believe it or not...some kids don't always tell their parents the whole story...just the part that makes the student look good...so they can have the car tonight!
- General academic concerns - classroom teacher.
- Student Success teacher where Missing Assignment Recovery (MARS) proving ineffective.
- VPs involved in severe behaviour or repetitive behaviour that is not improving.

#6 How can technology be better leveraged to help teachers and parents stay connected, especially given the restriction of CASL? — Moderator: Christine Gillis Bilton

- Give people a choice of paper, email or website
- Consider a survey to find out which medium they want
- Give people time to transition! Those that you think will never switch may surprise you!
- The fewer people that want a paper copy, the more it becomes an effort to produce the paper so once the transition begins, continue to cultivate the transition.
- Figure out who are the exceptions? How can we help them to transition?
- In schools where the decision was forced as “technology only”, communication decreased and there was a gap because of those who were not online. Having no paper did not mean they will automatically go online to read it; they just did without.
- Board is trying to reduce paper consumption by 75% in 5 years
- Edmodo, online education app that connects students, teachers and parents, has a parent access code
- Email – many teachers send out regular email updates, academic achievement etc.
- Classroom website and/or school website
- Synervoice (phoner system). There is a cost for this service.

### School Day

- Were surprised that some families we thought would never join were the first to do so!
- Some concerns from families about the service charges. There is a cost to the school to use this.
- If people do not have home internet, they may have a smart phone or be able to access the information online from work or another source
- Huge advantage is that it can easily be translated.

New parents - their only exposure to schools or the education system may be whatever their own previous childhood experience was. They are bringing those biases.

### How to create more transparency?

- Online calendars for each class. This is a tool for parents so they are in the loop and can help plan a child's time better as well as a tool (reminder/task list) for the students.
- School websites: can sign up for automatic updates via email
- Remember, not all teachers use or are willing to use technology. Principals can share the best practices that are recommended but cannot force teachers to use it!
- Does it cause more stress for teachers? Do they know how to use it? Have time to do so?
- It is generally felt that if a teacher takes on something new, it reduces something else. Example: increased awareness via Twitter; shared information etc. .... Phone calls from parents decreases. There is also WordPress training available at the Educ. Ctr.

## CASL

- Comes down to giving permission and being able to revoke that permission.
- The new parent form for Trillium is almost complete. However, note that even when it will be available, it will still be difficult for teachers to get and keep current information.
- Much easier to direct parents to websites.
- What about our parent councils? Council chair will be able to go to the principal for a one-time use list of those that have given permission. The best solution is to put everything on your school website! Or create a Facebook page.
- Any questions, contact Lorie Hough.

## What is being pushed from the board to the individual school websites?

- Badges: My Way (high school registration), bus cancellations, Kindergarten information, School year information, WEFI donations and Staff Information

7. Report cards can be difficult for parents to understand. What are the key things parents should look for in report cards? What are the key things parents want to know? How do teachers make use of EQAO data and what use can parents make of their child's EQAO data? **Moderator: Alicia Sumner**

- Here is a link to the Board's website that has a pretty cool explanation of the report card;  
<http://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/Parent-Documents/PRC-2014-15-FINAL-SEM.pdf>
- Sometimes comments are formulaic or too specific.
- Comments are written by teachers and are not selected from a bank of preformatted phrases.
- Next steps: crucial thing to look at in comments section
- Don't just say how they are doing, but how they are doing compared to where they should be (the norm)
- Report cards should not be a surprise to the parent. The parent(s) need to be contacted earlier if the student is struggling or has not handed work in yet. This is true even in high school.
- Pay attention to the number of absences and lates!
- Learning skills portion: these are just as important as marks because in the workplace, high school marks won't count but organization, attendance, responsibility etc. will matter a lot! These will let you know if students are managing their time well
- Learning skills are just as important as marks because in the workplace your high school marks won't count but organization, attendance, responsibility etc. will matter a lot!
- The "Learning Skills" is a section on the high school report card that deals with: Responsibility, Organization, Independent Work, Collaboration, Initiative and Self-Regulation. Students get an "E, G, S, or N" in these areas.
- A student may earn an 85% but they could also have poor Collaboration Skills and earn an "S or N" and still pass the course. Alternatively a student could earn a 55% and have all "G or E's" in Learning Skills... thus stating the student is working to their full potential.
- The new Assessment Evaluating and Reporting (AER) policy may be confusing for some parents. It is the same for Grades 9/10 and then different for Grades 11/12.
  - In Gr 9/10 the lowest numeric grade a student will receive "on the report card" is 45%. The concept is that if a student is not passing...why are we quantifying failure and putting a mark of 27% on it? This new policy is very important for parents to understand as they may see a 45% and feel their child is only 5% away from passing, when in reality their mark could be a lot lower. That's where Learning Skills (E, G, S, N) become important as well as comments that the teacher writes in.
  - Also in Gr 9/10 a student may earn an "I" = "Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence". For example, if there are 5 major strands/topics in the course and a student has not completed one of them (as opposed to completing them and not passing them) then they have not demonstrated all the essential learnings for the course and they are given an "I". This makes sense when you compare it to passing your Driver's License. If you ace all the parts but do not pass parallel parking...you do not get your license. The good news is that students are to be given more than one opportunity in a course to demonstrate each essential learning.
  - For Gr 11/12 the lowest mark "on the report card" is a 35%....if they have done some of the work. If they have gone to class and done absolutely no assessments then they may earn a zero. So in Grade 11/12 a student will only see the following possible grades: 0, 35-45, or a passing grade.

AER information on the WRDSB site:

- Policy 2010: Assessment Evaluation and Reporting: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/BP2010-Assessment-Evaluation-and-Reporting-Policy.pdf>
- Admin Procedure 1660: Assessment, Evaluation, Reporting Grades 7-12: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/AP1660-AssessmentEvaluation-Reporting-Gr.7-12.pdf>
- Handbook: <http://www.wrdsb.ca/learning/report-cards/about-report-cards-grades-7-12/assessment-evaluation-reporting-handbook/>

Specific to EQAO:

How do teachers make use of EQAO data and what use can parents make of their child's EQAO data?

- If specific schools score lower on tests, additional resources are available to those schools from the Ministry of Education .([www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com)). Previous tests are also available.
- Teachers can only use data as a snapshot of a kid on a particular day, and under stress. It may give a general impression of the areas that a child might be struggling. Unfortunately, the data is returned long after it can be used in helping the child at the point when the challenge areas are fresh in the minds of child and teacher.
- Administrators and department heads may use the data to see where grade 9 programs are lacking in essential skills, etc.
- I think it relates to correct placement in academic or applied levels.
- The data parents get is pretty much useless since it has no specifics. Teachers who have contact with students have far greater evaluation tools for parents than a standardized test.

8. The transition between grades 6-7 and 8-9 can be difficult and confusing for students and parents. What information do parents need to help ease this transition? How can schools and teachers help provide that? — Moderator: Joe Ortiz, PIC

- High school Open house: dates need to be widely publicized
- Explain more about the magnet programs
- Eastwood provided food to attract students from feeder schools
- Small cards, invitations to these events
- Educating parents
- Explain about “choices” in terms of courses
- Expand communication
- Look for new opportunities to engage parents by going to them through other community groups (i.e. Pathways)
- Listen to your Gr. 8 teachers when they recommend academic or applied levels. Students become frustrated by being in the wrong level, frustration leads to behaviour issues and/or disengagement. If a student who takes an applied course finds they should be in academic that is easier to fix (summer school etc.) than an applied student in an academic class who may not be able to switch mid semester.
- Supports such as Student Success exist for early intervention
- Go to the Welcome Back Day in August. Students connect with Link Crew is a great resource. They may also get their lockers, timetables, tour of the school, introduced to all the clubs/teams.
- Get connected with the school (i.e. clubs and sports)
- Encouraging / assisting their kids to be more self-reliant / better able to think for themselves and advocate for themselves.
- Consider asking students who have gone through that situation to speak to parents of gr. 8 students (maybe a gr 11 or 12)
- Encourage kids to come up with their own solutions / think of multiple alternatives for challenges that arise. Teachers should resist the temptation to rescue the kids at the first sign of frustration. Let them use the resources and training that they have been given to come up with the answers instead of being an on demand resource.