

Graminia School Council Meeting Minutes
6:30pm Wednesday March 13, 2024
Graminia School Library

Attendees Angie Gehlert (Chair), Amber Darragh (Vice-Chair), Amanda Bird (Secretary), Treena Neumann (Principal), Erin Chessor (Vice-Principal), Lorraine Stewart (Trustee Board Chair), Mark Francis (PSD Deputy Superintendent), Leslie Preece, Lisa Kimmerly, Sarah Lasso, Robyn Williams, Rose Leder, Jen McVey, Sami Mesh, Mandy Lussier, Kerri Golka, Sheila Avison, Shannon Alders, Jenn King, Melanie Tonhauser, Kate LaFavor, Lisa Dyjak, Helen Steed, Daniel Carter, Darby Beesley, Stephanie Worrell, Brandon Weber

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Meeting called to order by Angie Gehlert at 6:33pm.
- 1.2. Land acknowledgement read by Angie Gehlert.

2. Adoption of Agenda

- 2.1. Angayla made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Kerri Seconded. Carried.

3. Adoption of February Minutes

- 3.1. February minutes were reviewed and approved by Amber. Seconded by Sheila. Carried.

4. Trustee Report - Lorraine Stewart, Trustee Board Chair (Ward 2)

4.1. Quality Learning, Student Success and Wellbeing:

- 4.1.1. Trustees received a Literacy Report and a Numeracy Report that highlighted the gains that have been seen across the division as a result of the targeted intervention and strong professional learning for staff.
- 4.1.2. The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent's office posted a message on the PSD website on Monday February 5, 2024 in response to the Alberta Government's recent announcement pertaining to sexual orientation and gender identity proposed legislation. PSD intends to participate in engagement opportunities hosted by the government, to the greatest extent possible. For example, Superintendent Boyce and Board Chair Lorraine Stewart will be attend a meeting on March 18, 2024 hosted by the Alberta School Boards Association with the Minister of Education. School Councils are also encouraged to let your views be known when engagement opportunities become available.
- 4.1.3. The Board received a Workplace Safety Report with information related to the Divisional Joint Health and Safety Committee with representatives from the union groups representing the employee roles in the division.
- 4.1.4. Trustees received a Student Services Report that highlighted the ways the Student Services Team supports schools and coordinated resources. In 2022-2023, 13% of our PSD student population were identified with special needs that were mild, moderate or severe; in 2023-2024, that number rose to 14.7%. The division provides specialized programs, as needed, and also provides programming in the regular classroom.
- 4.1.5. The Board received an Infrastructure Maintenance Renewal/Capital Maintenance Renewal Expenditure Plan. At Graminia, work is in progress to repair the generator at a cost of \$10,000 and work is being considered to renovate the washrooms at a cost of \$150,000 and renovate the front entrance and office at a cost of \$250,000. The PSD Facilities Department works hard to keep our facilities running smoothly.

4.2. Trustees Demonstrate Responsibility:

4.2.1. The Board reviewed the First Quarter Financial Statement and we are on track and on target. The Division received \$3.3M to support 111 students through the Jordan's Principal Grant - with individual and group support.

4.2.2. The Superintendent reported that an Emerging Technology - Artificial Intelligence (AI) Working Committee has been established to review student and staff use of AI, policies and procedures, and infrastructure. This committee will provide recommendations to the Superintendent.

4.3. Trustees Engage, Listen, and Advocate:

4.3.1. The 2024-2025 Calendar was presented to trustees. The calendar can be accessed at: <https://www.psd.ca/division/news/post/regular-board-meeting-highlights-tuesday-january-23-2024>

4.3.2. One of the Board's priorities in our 2023-2024 Advocacy Plan related to the rural, schools of Entwistle, Tomahawk, Wabamun, and Duffield. The division is planning a West End Engagement evening in April 2024 to provide the opportunity for those communities to identify their Rural Advantage and how they envision that the Rural Advantage could be enhanced in the west end communities.

4.3.3. The Board received notification that we did not receive construction funding for Spruce Grove Composite High School. We are at capacity in that school. The Board will continue to advocate to the government.

4.3.4. The Board received the Stakeholder Engagement Report. The report highlighted the varying and differing views on many topics and demonstrates, for trustees, the complexity in schools and in communities. On April 11, 2024, the Division's Education Planning Day, we hope to delve into some of these topics in more detail. The role of the trustee is to listen to all views openly as we plan for moving forward in the division.

4.4. Question from attendee: what is the advocacy plan for the high school? Letter writing campaign, asking government why the funding request was denied, involving more stakeholders (MLAs). Lorraine wonders if an FAQ about the school should go out to parents to encourage their own advocacy initiatives.

5. Principal's Report - Treena Neumann

5.1. Great engagement and interest for all students in K-9 - a huge thank you to the organizers for an amazing Learn A Thon!

5.2. Basketball season is over - Boys Senior Division II Champions; Girls Senior Division I Silver

5.3. Ms. Ramos has been nominated for the Edwin Parr Award. Complete details are here: <https://www.psd.ca/division/news/post/psds-edwin-parr-nominee-announced>

5.4. Celebration of Learning to take place April 9 & 11: teachers will choose if they are running Student Led Conferences or Parent Teacher Interviews. Sign up sheets will be sent out to families with a master list linking the sign ups for classes and teachers will share their links as well.

5.5. Registration is open - parents that have yet to register their children will have gotten an email reminding them as well as more to come prior to Spring Break.

5.6. Sign up for My Path and full time kindergarten is open. Those registered for those programs will be informed by May 1st if their child is in the program or if the program is viable for the 2024-2025 school year.

5.7. Reminder we have the before and after school program run by a provider.

5.8. Staffing update:

5.8.1. Danielle Roebuck is our new library technician covering while Kelly Heiser is on leave.

- 5.8.2. Victoria Nirlungyuk is a new EA hire.
- 5.8.3. Jayln Evans is a new EA hire.
- 5.8.4. Amanda Rodgers is our secretary covering for Shelley Kent while she is away on leave.
- 5.8.5. Nicolle Acevedo is a new EA hire.
- 5.9. Upcoming School Council Topics:
 - 5.9.1. April: Music Department presentation: Mrs. Tepes, Ms. Ramos, and Mr. West.
 - 5.9.2. April 25: Parent and Family Information Night: Internet and Online Safety with Constable Gord Marshall; Addiction and Drug Presentation presentation by Lisa Kimmerly, Substance Use Therapist with AHS.
 - 5.9.3. May: Health and Wellness with Mr. Lygo and Ms. Hee. This presentation is not related to the sex education curriculum.

6. Special Guest - Deputy Superintendent Mark Francis: Student Conduct & Discipline

- 6.1. Presentation entitled "Interventions into Student Behaviour"
 - 6.1.1. The presentation's focus was on building student resilience, teaching kids how to get along with the ultimate goal attaining student success and well-being.
 - 6.1.2. Superintendent Francis shared information about the Education Act and how its regulations govern the division, and influence board policy and administrative procedures.
 - 6.1.3. The Education Act includes student responsibilities (which encompass off site, outside school hours, and electronic means), parent responsibilities, and discipline including suspensions and expulsions.
 - 6.1.4. Behavioural trends throughout PSD include increases in the following: discipline hearings, inappropriate behaviour, physical aggression, suspensions, vaping incidents, cyber bullying, and physical aggression toward staff.
- 6.2. A Question Round Table took up the majority of the presentation, and questions from attendees follow:
 - 6.2.1. Q: What are we going to do about the increase in problematic behaviours? A: Community awareness, PSD asks for parent support. We need to recognize that this isn't "just kids" and is something we all need to address. We need to implement more counsellors in schools, we continue to work with principals to refine our approaches to deal with these situations. The power of the Education Act, administrators can add conditions (must see a counsellor, participate in addictions counselling). The trauma is affecting our kids in all these schools. We need proper places for kids to take a break.
 - 6.2.2. Q: do you have Graminia specific data on this? Are Graminia's stats as alarming as the main trends? A: yes, but I'm not going to share them.
 - 6.2.3. Q: my question is about technology. As parents, what can we do about phones? My son doesn't have a phone. Do our children need to be bringing their phones? A: invited to come to the Internet & Online Safety meeting in April. Our school has one of the strictest policies in PSD when it comes to cell phone use in the schools. One of the bigger cell phone use problem environments is on the busses. Regulating use and access to phones is really important. Mark's advice to everyone is to know what your kids are doing on their phones - have conversations about it. SnapChat is designed to hide what kids are sending from parents and teachers.
 - 6.2.4. Q: do you have a theory as to why these numbers are increasing? A: I believe we are having Covid hangover: we had a loss of socialization time and a decrease in extracurricular activities that have not rebounded to pre-Covid measures. We also live in incredibly polarized times where a lack of respect is normalized in our culture. We have increasing economic disparity, we have a mental health crisis in this province and those are contributing factors. Schools are a reflection of the people they serve - kids reflect violence in communities and that manifests in schools. Lisa

Kimmerly (Substance Use Therapist with AHS) has seen an increase in substance use in the tri-county region. Huge addiction and mental health crisis. Counselling is only as good as the kid is motivated to be counselled - parents need to be involved. I'm seeing an increase in mental health problems with parents. Underemployment. These aren't bad kids - these are kids that are having struggles at home. Sunrise Supports occurs monthly - there aren't enough resources and mental health services for families. Provincial funding is low - there isn't enough funding to support kids and their families.

- 6.2.5.Q: is there an age that is too young to consider suspension? A: suspensions come up in grade four and up. We are seeing problematic behaviours in younger grades. Racialized, extreme use of language that I normally see in high school I am seeing in grades 5 and 6.
- 6.2.6.Q: as a parent of a child who is in a classroom with a child displaying these behaviours, how do I talk to my child about this? How do I explain it? A: talk to the teacher and school administration. We have school counsellors (cost over 1M and taking from our education dollars to fund those services).
- 6.2.7.Q: would increasing suspensions at Graminia help to decrease the uptick in problematic behaviours? A: Increasing suspensions isn't just about us getting strict. Research shows that a suspension isn't necessarily going to change the behaviour. Sometimes we do a suspension so that learning can continue in the classroom. I don't think that increasing suspensions will solve the problem. What we're trying to do is increase supports. If I see a trend increasing in a certain area, I take a look and ask what's going on here? Do we need to have a complex needs meeting and meet with the family and AHS to look at different options?
- 6.2.8.Q: some of the kids with disruptive classmates are struggling to contain their own good behaviour. A: suspension is a last resort. If a child has behaviour problems they probably have learning problems too so when a child is taken away from the classroom, it is an incredibly emotional thing for me to say "you are no longer allowed to come to that school." I understand what you are saying - the trauma cost is significant. Taking away someone's ability to go to school is the most extreme thing we can do. I ask you parents to give us the grace as we adapt to this new reality and continue to deal with this situations.
- 6.2.9.Q: Could you include what the principal's responsibility is in your presentation? Does PSD provide hard lines on suspension protocols that principals can follow? A: there isn't a single policy like step 1, step 2 rules, but we do provide ongoing training for principals and assistant principals to take into account the complexity off the children we are dealing with. The principal is responsible for carrying out and operationalizing Education Act procedures.
- 6.2.10.Q: are there accountability protocols that exist to ensure principals are being honest in their reporting to you? A: absolutely.
- 6.2.11.Q: I am worried about the teachers. What is PSD doing to support staff? How can we as parents support teachers who are burning out? A: staff survey on mental health in the workplace is launching next week. Parent responsibilities are a collaborative effort with schools. Non-violent crisis intervention training and recertification is available for staff.
- 6.2.12.Q: the numbers are staggering and concerning and it's sad to hear you say there aren't enough resources. As parents, who can we advocate to for additional resources? A: we are a well funded education system; the supports in our health care system (addiction supports, mental health supports) are I think where advocacy efforts would be best suited. We only have them for a short period of time each day, and it is the resources that kids have access to outside of school that is very important and what we need more of.
- 6.2.13.Q: Acknowledging we have kids as young as 4 years old up to grade 9...could we have recess and lunch time better organized to keep kids at different age levels

active and engaged? A: the people that are planning recess/lunch activities are the ones doing this and they are already.

6.2.14.Q: These kids are looking for connection and may be walking into classrooms with an empty cup; teachers may also have empty cups. The One Small Thing initiative is so important. Connection before correction - these kids need to be loved on. Could we consider a kindness initiative and create more opportunities for positive praise in the classroom? We know positive praise is more effective than giving consequences. Does our division have connections with the YMCA and the alternate suspension program? (answer about YMCA is no).

6.2.15.Q: specific to our school, do we have a list of school rules that the kids are aware of that parents can know about too? We have had different experiences in different classrooms about what those expectations are and what they look like. A: your teachers would have reached out to you at the beginning of the year - there isn't a grade or classroom specific list of expectations.

6.2.16.Q: there are so many PD Days - is behavioural intervention a large part of PD days? A: huge part. We have Steps programs in three of our schools (transition back to the classroom after suspension). Additional kids are participating in Steps programming.

6.2.17. Lorraine will talk to the Ministry to see where the government lies with increasing resources and family/school support. Can we provide stats to parents about the increase in incidents in their schools to further empower their advocacy initiatives.

7. New Business

1.1. no time for new business discussions.

8. Adjournment

8.1. Angie made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23pm. Stephanie seconded. Carried.

Next council meeting date: April 10, 2004 in Graminia School Library

If you have questions or thoughts that you think the School Council should look at please speak to our Chair Angie Gehlert, Vice Chair Amber Darragh or Principal Treena Neumann.