

speaking
notes

Council of School Councils Meeting

Sheila Taylor

November 27, 2013

learning | **as unique** | as every student



**Calgary Board
of Education**

In Canada, 59 per cent of parents with school aged children are active volunteers. This number struck me as interesting, considering that those without children volunteer far less (18 per cent less). It speaks to the dedication of parents and reminds me of the expression, “if you want to get something done, ask a busy person.”

Good evening everyone and thank you joining us tonight at our Council of School Councils meeting. I would like to welcome invited guests from the Alberta School Councils Association (ASCA), from the Calgary Association of Parent and School Councils (CAPSC), as well as our staff members.

And to parents, thank you so much for being here and volunteering to take time out of your very busy lives and schedules. It’s great to see a mixture of new faces and familiar faces in the room tonight.

We appreciate that you have taken the time to come out and discuss your schools and how we can all work together to ensure we have a strong education system.

I would like to begin by introducing my colleagues on the Board of Trustees. Joy Bowen-Eyre (Wards 1 and 2), Lynn Ferguson (Wards 3 and 4), Pamela King (Wards 5 and 10), Trina Hurdman (Wards 6 and 7), Judy Hehr (Wards 8 and 9) and Amber Stewart (Wards 12 and 14). I am trustee for Wards 11 and 13 in the southwest and am Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Trustees Hurdman, Stewart and Hehr are new to our Board and bring a lot of excitement and energy. It’s great to see returning members as well to give history and memory to our work. I believe that Trustee Ferguson is our longest serving board member.

As trustees we are often asked what our role is and how we fit with the school system. The Board of Trustees are the link to you, parents and all Calgarians. We are democratically elected to represent, lead and serve the citizens of Calgary. We hold ourselves accountable to you by committing to act in the best interests of the school system and ensuring the Board and organization acts consistent with law and the Board’s policies. It is our job to help ensure success for students, every single one.

To this end, the Board sets objectives through results policies and operational expectations.

What does this mean to you as parents? It’s our job to establish a vision and monitor the school system. We don’t decide the school calendar or bus stops; we guide the system through policy. It is also our purpose to advocate for our students and engage the community in dialogue to ensure your views are well understood and represented.

The municipal election took place on October 21, just over a month ago. Our Board was sworn in on October 29 so we have been on the job as a group for just under one month. It has been a busy 30 days for us and we have been hard at work getting up to speed and determining priorities.

The first priority we established was to hire a new Chief Superintendent after Ms. Naomi Johnson announced her resignation, with her employment ending five months from now. During her four and half year tenure as Chief, our system saw major successes and accomplishments, as well as challenges and transitions. The very important task of selecting a new Chief Superintendent falls to the Board, and is already underway.

The Chief Superintendent is the top educational officer and operational leader of our school system and reports directly to the Board of Trustees. She is responsible for overseeing thousands of employees and ensuring that their work directly leads to student success.

We will be updating the community on this priority regularly as we move forward with the selection process. Part of this work will be engaging the public to understand expectations around the hiring. This could mean gathering your input on necessary skills or attributes to look for in the search.

As I mentioned, one of the key roles for the Board is engaging the public in a two-way dialogue. We recently stuck a committee charged with this purpose, the Strategic Dialogue and Public Engagement Committee. This group comprised of three trustees will soon be making recommendations about how the Board can continue to engage with stakeholder groups in the public, including continuing an ongoing dialogue with this group, the Council of School Councils.

When you arrived tonight, you should have received a survey regarding involvement of student representatives at your school council. We hope you will take a moment to complete the short survey before you leave tonight so that we can get a better understanding of how you are incorporating student voice in your schools.

The Council of School Councils is a relatively new group and we hope you will appreciate our efforts to connect directly with you two times per year, as well as the chance to connect with each other.

As I mentioned, we are a new Board of Trustees a few weeks into our four year mandate. Our hope tonight is to come together with a theme of "Getting to Know Us." That means learning about our new trustees, our more seasoned members, and for

us to have a chance to get to know you by hearing your questions, ideas and successes as parents and as school councils.