

**speaking  
notes**

COSC – Update on Trustee-hosted Meetings  
(Trustee Bowen-Eyre)

April 17, 2013

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



**Calgary Board  
of Education**

welcome

Hello. My name is Joy Bowen-Eyre and I am the trustee that represents Wards 1 & 2 in the City of Calgary. It is my pleasure to share with you some the learnings that we as trustees had, during and following the five Trustee Hosted Meetings that occurred in February of this year. I also want to talk about some of the common themes that we heard at these meetings.

The first thing that we learned is that we were not prepared for how successful the attendance at these meetings would be. We did not realize that in some cases almost half the people that attended a meeting would not have pre-registered. When we expected 25, we got over 40. Now this is a wonderful problem to have, however it did leave us scrambling to come up with Plan B. Thank you for being so gracious and accommodating. We are truly sorry for any frustration that we created. We will do better next time!

meeting logistics

We learned that having both morning and evening meetings worked. In fact, people told us that they appreciated the choice. People were also happy to have an option to attend a meeting that was **not** in their area, but that worked better with their own personal calendar. You also told us that you like your weekends, and that we should not schedule a meeting for Saturday!

The accumulated survey results from the five trustee hosted meetings told trustees that over 80% of you feel that the Board of Trustees is improving communication with School Councils. We are committed to this work, and will continue to look for any opportunity we can to improve and enhance our work with School Councils. As trustees, we were concerned that 60% of you are either uncertain or not confident that our discussion will influence decision making. Clearly we have a great deal of work in this area to do.

And of course we learned that we will always be a challenge to try and meet everyone's needs – One person would tell us to put everything in print, one would say to do it electronically and not use paper; someone said don't spend money on refreshments, someone asked for better beverages.

Most important, was that trustees learned about your passion for your children, your school and your community.

strong grasp of the basics, but what are the basics?

At every meeting, we heard numerous times that parents want to make sure that their child has a strong grasp of the basics. When we did some probing, we discovered that again, the basics meant different things to

different people. For some it meant having a strong grasp of reading, writing and arithmetic, for some it meant having a strong understanding of the arts, for some it meant being able to adapt to an ever changing world, when we really don't know what will be required for future success. Everyone wanted success for their child.

Thankfully, we did not hear one parent say they would be happy if their child did not complete grade 12. Being prepared for a future beyond grade 12 was extremely important. Parents articulated clearly that for some this meant being prepared to attend the best university available, for some it meant completing an apprenticeship program, for some it meant being flexible and adaptable and for others it meant being able to be a contributing citizen.

The comments related to technology were truly fascinating. Some of you indicated that your children get enough screen time at home, and that learning should be from books and worksheets. You were concerned about poor penmanship. Others of you told us that you strongly value the digital component of learning and want to see more.

Can you see how the balance that must be created by the CBE is complex? We want to ensure that each student, with individual abilities and gifts, will graduate high school with a foundation needed to thrive in life, work and continued learning.

And, of course you talked to us about the importance of the teacher in the classroom. "Excellence in Teaching" is what you said! We agree. You want there to be supports for teachers. We agree. You want there to be a process for teacher evaluation and to ensure that all teachers are up to date with the skills that are required. We agree.

We are proud of the employees that we have. We are proud of our school system. Is everything as perfect as it could be? I wish it was. But trust that we are continuously improving and trying very hard to ensure that every child receives the very best education.

In our conversations with you, you told us that how you were educated and prepared for your future is very different from what is occurring in our schools. For some of you the changes in teaching methods and resources are very exciting. For some of you, you have questioned why things need to be different – after all, you turned out great! You acknowledged that today there is a much greater diversity in the classroom than ever before and the needs of students can vary. You also acknowledged with excitement, the opportunities that are available

Prepared for success  
after gr. 12

finding a balance is  
complex

your child's education  
is different from yours

tough financial  
decisions

to students, that were unheard of a number of years ago – opportunities such learning Spanish, German or Mandarin, going to a school that specializes in science, the arts, or sports, attending a traditional learning centre, or developing a program that focusses on personalized learning. We need to continue our conversations. About how school has changed, is changing and will continue to change. Regardless, we as trustees, and you as parents each want the same thing – to have successful students that are prepared and adaptable for life beyond the CBE.

At our meetings when we asked you how we as trustees make tough choices when faced with financial restraints, you acknowledged that this was complex and difficult work. You told us, that regardless of what is decided, very likely not everyone will agree, but you asked that we remain strong in the decisions that we make. You asked that we look in areas other than the classroom if we need to make cuts. You offered ideas about facilities – and sometimes they contradicted each other. For example, some people said we should build new schools, some said don't build, only maintain current buildings.

You asked great questions such as “who else could build a school”; why don't the two school boards share facilities; what is a developer's responsibility in a new community? You asked how school councils could work together with schools to find efficiencies.

If you have not had a chance to review the notes from all five of the trustee hosted meetings, please try and do so. We received some very interesting and creative suggestions of what to consider.

Last night at the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, a report was received by the Board regarding the information from the 5 trustee hosted meetings. A full copy of this report is available on our website. I would encourage you to share this document with school council, parents and community members.

Before I call on Trustee Pat Cochrane to speak to you about the 2013-14 budget, I want to thank you once again for your support to students, to schools, to your community and to us as trustees. We have appreciated our conversations with you and look forward to more in the future. Please continue to share with us. Help us continue to make the Calgary Board of Education one of the best public school systems in the world.

Now, I would now like to call on Trustee Pat Cochrane.

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report is posted online,  
please share