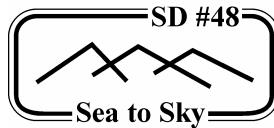


Stawamus Elementary PAC School / Program of Choice Meeting Discussion Notes



PAC MEETING

Nov. 9, 2010
Stawamus Elementary School

PARENTS: indicates question or comments from parents

- Indicates response from Board Trustee, Superintendent, District Staff

PARENTS: Is a program of choice funded differently than a regular school?

- No, it has the same funding formula as for any other school. But the Board would agree that if we embark on this course we need a certain level of commitment from both the Board and parents. However, we cannot run classes with small numbers.

PARENTS: Is the staff going to be trained or are you going to require specialized teachers for a choice school?

- We don't have all the answers, but the collective agreement gives teachers the right to seek out new opportunities, as well job postings can ask for specific expertise.

PARENTS: Right now we have two-grade splits, is there a greater chance of three-grade splits in a school of choice?

- The potential of multi-grade splits would actually decline if the student numbers go up.

PARENTS: Who will make the choice about whether it will be a program or school of choice, the parents or teachers or Board or everyone through diplomacy?

- The board will make the decision, but the board needs to make sure that it is realistic, that's why we are consulting with the Stawamus staff and parents.

PARENTS: Will the Britannia bus actually stop at the bottom of the hill, so that these students can have the option to attend Stawamus Elementary?

- We are looking into this right now, but no definitive answer has been made yet.
- BC Hydro has agreed to clear the slope and beautify the area around the trail leading up from the possible stop to the school.

PARENTS: Is the Britannia bussing still being talked about?

- Yes, we are checking into the feasibility of having a drop-off and pick-up location at Stawamus Elementary.

PARENTS: We've always felt that Stawamus Elementary was put on the back burner in this district, why do you think that this will bring students here if it becomes a School of Choice?

- In 1977, there were 175 students attending Stawamus. The decline in student numbers is a demographic reality due to fewer children in the area now.
- We need to attract parents from other attendance areas to come here to Stawamus, and a program of choice would do this.
- It would be an excellent thing for your children, but needs to be seen as an excellent opportunity for other children, too. Other parents have a high regard for their own school, so we need to lure students away from other schools. To get another 30 students here, will be a challenge for all of us.
- Real Estate agents would actually promote the school, if it is a program of choice.
- Regardless of the choice made, the standards of curriculum would remain the same, but a different lens would be used to integrate the theme into subject areas.
- The challenge at Mamquam Elementary of overcrowding is a result of the French Immersion program becoming too popular. So, now the program won't fit in the school anymore and is being relocated.

PARENTS: Would there be a direct link between an elementary school of choice and secondary?

- Not for certain, but the students would have knowledge beyond the other grade 7s entering the secondary school, whether it be in Fine Arts or Technology.
- But secondary schools need to be mindful of the elementary students entering their schools.

PARENTS: What is the staff thinking and talking about regarding a school of choice?

- As a staff, we are considering Science and Technology as a school of choice, but then we ask ourselves "how are we going to do this?" So then we've thought about a program of choice, with a different entity than the rest of the school. We found ourselves jumping back and forth between a school and program of choice. There is a lot happening in technology at Stawamus, we now have a Smart Board and professional development.
- We need to look at a program of choice being a transition that can expand and move into a school-wide choice. For example, it can start with grade 5/6 then the following year it moves to grade 7. Eventually the entire school could be involved.
- This plan still includes the bus stop for Britannia students. A little increase in student numbers is a big increase for us.

PARENTS: What is the timeline for this change?

- The timeline was discussed with the staff at yesterday's meeting. So, the staff consensus is that after the decision is made on the choice program or school this year, then another year would be needed to plan and prepare, that would be 2011-2012.

PARENTS: Can the parents and staff work together to identify the pros and cons for different choices?

- I think this is an excellent idea. The issues and ideas discussed at yesterday's staff meeting are similar to those of tonight's parent meeting.
- There is also an option which is to send a written comment to the Board. The decision is being made at the Board Meeting on December 8.
- The only decision made at this meeting would be whether we go ahead with a school or program of choice or neither. The type of choice focus would be made at a meeting sometime March to May. Then a full year, 2011-2012, to plan for implementation in September, 2012.
- The Board will have to assess the interest in the rest of the community regarding the type of choice idea that would have enough support: Montessori, Outdoor Ed, Science & Technology, or Fine Arts.
- As a Board, we planned to start talking with Stawamus first and then we planned to go out and ask the question in the broader community.

PARENTS: How many students do we need?

- About 25 students pays for a teacher, so we need numbers in the twenties to run the class.
- Technology could start with a grade 5 classroom and expand over time. This is a time to look at new and innovative ideas for school or program of choice combinations.
- As a school of choice you draw on a bigger pool of students than if you just looked at a program at the grade 4/5.

PARENTS: How important is the input of teachers in this decision?

- The teachers are looking at different ideas, but there may be some staff that at the end of the day would look elsewhere for a teaching position. We want to continue to be the school that we are right now - with what we have.

PARENTS: I am not clear on the decision being made at the December Board Meeting? You said that the decision will not include what the choice will be, but what is the decision being made?

- The decision will be on the future of Stawamus Elementary: will it become a school of choice, program of choice, or neither.

PARENTS: A school of choice would eliminate a lot of people for whom the focus isn't important.

- In an earlier survey to Stawamus families, the responses also had a lot of questions. The top three themes were Technology, Fine Arts, and Outdoor Education.
- Here is a bit of a warning about a program of choice; there is policy that protects small schools, so that it does not strip students from the regular program.
- If a school of choice, then skills and knowledge can be built through the grades overtime.

- The school staff and parents along with the Board will have to sort this out.

PARENTS: Aboriginal culture and fine arts fit together well as choice ideas.

- Yes, it is a possibility, but it would be spreading resources thin in a small school.
- The unique part of the choice school or program has to attract parents away from other schools.

PARENTS: Is there any monitoring of the program after a school of choice is set up?

- Yes there is. As well, if interest fades then enrollment declines, if it is a success then the student numbers increase.
- Another option is year-round schooling, which can be a program of choice within a school that is running a traditional school year.

PARENTS: What matters to parents is how excited their students are about what's happening at their schools.

- Outdoor leadership is an example of a program that really motivates kids.
- Thanks for coming out tonight, we certainly have benefited from this conversation.
- Please have conversations with your teachers and with your PAC reps about school or program of choice options.