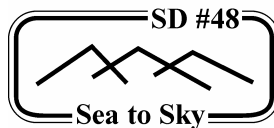


## Stawamus Elementary Staff School / Program of Choice Meeting Discussion Notes



### **STAFF MEETING**

**Nov. 8, 2010**

**Stawamus Elementary School**

**STAFF:** indicates question or comments from staff

- Indicates response from Board Trustee, Superintendent or District Staff

**STAFF:** We have done a lot of thinking around the Britannia Beach students who are now being bussed to Squamish Elementary. We would like to advertise that there is another option available here at Stawamus Elementary.

- We have asked district staff what it would take to have the bus stop here at Stawamus to drop off and pick up these Britannia students. We have asked staff to research this and at this time it looks possible, we are waiting for the definitive answer.
- Students who are interested in French Immersion at Squamish Elementary can also catch the bus here and go to school there.

**STAFF:** The options of school of choice and program of choice have banged into each other during our staff discussions.

We have talked about the options in the PowerPoint presentation; we are swaying between program and school of choice. Is the school of choice too big an option? Could we start as a program of choice, so that we can develop into a school of choice?

When we looked at the possibilities we also looked at the resources available. Success is what we want. Starting with a program of choice might be more successful at this time.

- We have policy around program of choice. It talks about not stripping the current school of its student population and talks about what happens if the kids don't come to the new school of choice.

**STAFF:** If only 12 students come to a program of choice grade 4/5 class, how would our school support this small class?

- Perhaps the extra 12 kids could be part of the program that is the grade 4/5 class.
- In its first year, late immersion in Whistler opened as a 5/6 immersion class. We need to 'prime the pump' to build the program over time.

- How does this school feel about postponing the decision for another year to September 2012 and moving with the Britannia Beach bus next fall 2011?

**STAFF:** The staff is concerned about having less than a year to prepare. We need time to look for grants and get our head around the possibilities. We are also sprucing up the school. Hydro has been contacted about removing the alders on the slope and we are looking at improved signage. The Chief newspaper is coming up to interview us about our school and our food bank. We appreciate the additional year so we can do the best we can.

- Another model is to move a program into your school by time increments instead of by grade.
- Parents may not see the difference in a percent of time program, but it would give the staff the opportunity to implement.
- The change needs to be significant enough for parents to drop off their kids here.
- Market 'Personalized Learning' as part of what the school is already doing. The potential to be a lead school in this area. It fits with who you are here at Stawamus Elementary.

**STAFF:** Personalization, supportive, family-feel is what we are about here at Stawamus Elementary.

- You do have a challenge in making your school stand out from the others. The one thing that struck us in our public meetings over the last year is that parents think their school is fabulous and they don't want us to mess with it. But you need something else beyond those attributes which parents may feel like they're already getting at their home school. That's our challenge. However, it's good news that everyone likes their school so much.

**STAFF:** Marketing Stawamus as a community-based school, tied to the community in some way. On Earth Day, for example, have students pick up garbage in the community, as well as downtown. Being more visible in the local community downtown is important. We don't want to lose what we have here.

We do need to attract more people. Here are some of the choice programs we have been talking about:

- Aboriginal
- Montessori
- Science Technology
- Early French Immersion is a new idea

However, we don't think there would be sufficient student numbers to make an Aboriginal School Choice would work.

- Aboriginal Students in the Squamish area would be limiting in numbers. Other themes cut across all boundaries.
- As Stawamus considered providing Montessori in a public school as opposed to a pay-fee Montessori which is now at Squamish Elementary as a private school program?

**STAFF:** We have already dived into technology, fine-arts. Our staff has skills in these areas and hasn't yet thought about how to move forward.

Outdoor Ed, how would that look? Parents would know that they will be raising monies for that program.

Stawamus has an image as a tough high-needs school and because of this some parents won't consider sending their kids here. Real estate agents in fact share this view. We don't defend what we are not, but who we are.

We need to get the communities attention in a major way so that it trumps this image.

We need to have spokespeople out there, to dramatically increase enrolment; this will also attract teachers with that specific interest.

- Montessori at Squamish Elementary has 2 classrooms, pre-school and K. If offered free, parents would really appreciate it. Think about the foundation that has already been established.

**STAFF:** We are swinging to becoming a school of choice with a focus on technology.

So what about a program of choice within a school of choice?

We have recently thought about an early French immersion. Starting with immersion Kindergarten, then following year a K/1 and moving up to grade 4. But once in grade 5, what would the late immersion program at Squamish elementary be an option for them?

- If enough students, another enriched immersion grade 5 class could be available. Students from the Federal French School have transferred to the late immersion program at Mamquam Elementary in the past.
- The French immersion has been running for 20 years at Mamquam Elementary and has been quite successful.
- One of the challenges of doing this in a small school, there would be attrition 10-15% students per year. We would need two full classes of primary immersion to carry on into secondary.

**STAFF:** The notion of early immersion would be unique and we could still continue to move forward with technology. The early immersion would give us the number of students that we need while we continue to develop the technology focus.

To summarize the discussion:

1. Starting September 2011, Britannia Bus will stop at Stawamus Elementary.
  2. A decision on Program/School Choice focus will be made this school year
  3. The 2011-2012 school year will provide time to plan and prepare for implementation of the school/program of choice.
  4. Implement the school/program of choice in September 2012.
- If the long-term plans are for a school of choice, you can have a short-term single class program of choice in the meantime.

**STAFF:** Can we submit Program/School of Choice options to the board?

- Include in your list of ideas for Choice School/Programs, the pros and cons, as well as your needs or concerns for each.

**STAFF:** We really haven't considered the theme idea. Kettle Valley Trip had parents come from outside our catchment area, is an example.

**STAFF:** How would we find out what kind of interest there is out there for early immersion?

- Registration for early immersion is really the only way to determine the actual numbers of students who are interested in K French Immersion.

**STAFF:** Thanks for taking the time to come and talk with us.

- This is valuable conversation and thank-you on behalf of the Board for all the work you do on behalf of our students.