

Telopea Park School - School board meeting 9 May 2023

Parent board member meeting notes

Parent members: Lee Hayward, Stephen Bouwhuis, Kate Gauthier

Welcome to new members

- Jason Holmes, Principal welcomed new parent, student and staff members to the board. Outlined the role of the board and the structure of meetings. Noted that the TPS board operates under a disallowable Instrument, which changes our composition and quorum (it is different from other schools)
- Noted parents' request to alter the agenda, to move reports to end of agenda, and to be reported by exception (no need to discuss unless a member has a specific question). This will create greater time for substantive discussion on policy issues. Proposal was supported.
- Parents also noted the need for everyone attending board meetings to be listed by name and the capacity in which they attend.

Outcome: Conducted election of chair and deputy chair. Stephen Bouwhuis (chair) and Kate Gauthier (deputy chair) were nominated and elected unopposed.

Conflict of interest

- Discussion on what constitutes conflicts of interest, noting that staff, parents and students were elected from a specifically stakeholder group and that was not itself a conflict.
- Discussion that in previous board minutes, it was alluded that the parent community had concerns with teacher-parents participating as parents. P&C members confirmed that was not the case. The only concern was to ensure that teacher-parents disclose their conflict of interest whenever that conflict arises, e.g. in parents discussions around school performance. A one-off disclosure was not considered sufficient.

Outcome: The board discussed this in the context of board discussions and noted that people should take a cautious approach and notify early and often for board consideration. Conflicts can be addressed through a range of measures.

Board minutes

The parent members advocated strongly for board minutes to be published, noting that minutes are subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) laws, that to not publish was a breach of the ACT Government's *Open Government* policy, and that the Privacy Act only requires that no personal information of an individual is disclosed. Parents provided a table (see below) that reviews the practice of other similar school boards, noting that one published board minutes and many others hold open meetings and invite parents to attend.

The board was informed that the Education Directorate's policy is that minutes are not published. Board noted that the meeting notes being drafted by teachers/parents in recent years provided more detail than minutes and were better received by the community. It was also noted that breaching the preference of the Directorate would put staff board members in a difficult position.

Outcome: Meeting notes would be used to communicate outcomes instead of minutes. It was also decided that sensitive or confidential matters would be flagged in meetings, to ensure they are documented appropriately in meeting notes. It was further noted that anyone has a right to seek board minutes [under FOI laws](#).

Board appointed member

The board appointed member position was noted to be Deputy Principal of High School in charge of the IB program, Cymantha (Sam) Cantrill. That decision was queried as that the appointment of a staff member was not in alignment with Directorate policy that board appointments should not skew the balance between stakeholder groups. However, it was noted that the IB program requires that the IB manager is a school board member.

Outcome: There was a general understanding the IB program principle took precedence over the Directorate policy and that it was appropriate to appoint the Deputy Principal in charge of the IB program.

Enrolment review

- Jason distributed previously a timeline for enrolment review. A copy was provided to new members, along with results of the parent survey.
- Jason informed the board he had drafted a discussion paper and that is with the Directorate for approval to distribute. Jason will provide that to board after the directorate approves it.
- Parent members asked whether the group that decides on enrolments could include a parent member, as was the practice in the past. Staff disagreed with that approach, but it was agreed to find other solutions to build transparency.

Outcome It was agreed to park the discussion of enrolment decisions, and for this issue to be discussed in greater detail in the future enrolment subcommittee.

Principal report

- Flagged in the past that due to staffing pressures, there may be cases where excursions have to be cancelled, classes done online, leave requests not approved. The chance these measures might be needed are increasing.

Provisieur report

- Currently working on approval for transfer from French BAC to French-IB. Florence to alert parent-members to the working group so they can attend/join.
- Directorate recently decided all international school trips too high risk and cannot be undertaken.
- This impacts the exchange program the school was trying to set up with New Caledonia.
- AEFÉ is trying to establish a program where year 10 students can register for an exchange with another student in another AEFÉ school. Unfortunately this may be in conflict with ACT reviews of risks of international exchanges.
- School is establishing links with Alliance Francais to set up groups to support parents who cannot speak French in how to support their children in a bilingual program.
- The conseil de classes discussed the issue of homework school holidays. The Provisieur reported that parents in this forum supported homework being given during school holidays. However, a system would be developed that students could do a modified version of holiday homework. No details were given as to whether students would be marked lower for this.

SRC report

- Range of school and sports projects reported on. World Scholar Cup to be held in May.
- Student members noted that different subjects can have major due dates at the same time, which creates difficulty for students. If the assessment calendar was finalised earlier, that would give greater opportunity to negotiate for changes to clashes.

Subcommittees

- Stephen – noted that subcommittees can involve non-board members and that the parent community includes experts in a range of fields. Will seek parent interest in the following subcommittees: Finance, enrolment, curriculum. There was also some discussion on whether there should be a separate student wellbeing subcommittee or should be part of work of curriculum subcommittee. To be discussed at next board meeting.
- Was noted that the P&C was forming its own communication subcommittee, so there was no need for a board one.

Outcome: Chair to seek parent interest in subcommittees. These to be discussed and committees formed at the next board meeting.

Other business

- Parent members discussed the issue of communication, particularly around how homework is given out via multiple channels, and sometimes does not include complete instructions. Parents provided a sample template that could be used by the school to communicate all tasks to students, so that everyone is very clear on tasks. They noted that having a child's homework listed in the one place (for both English and French) saves parents having to work through the different channels and modes of communication to work out what their child was supposed to be doing each week and that this would make it easier for parents to support their children.

Outcome: Proviseur reported that in term 3, they will be providing training to new teachers on how to hand out homework. It was not clear if that training would include current teachers.