

## **PAC Hot Lunch Discussion Meeting Minutes - Monday January 23, 2023**

### Attendance:

In-person: Monica Arndt, Stephen Wu, Hannah Tan, Deena Kotak, Sue-Ann Selman, Richard, Michelle Yuen, Christina Lui, Ian Cannon (vice-principal)

Online: Val Kao (Div 3), Letti Kwong (Div 3), Lei Shan (Div 11), Holly Ma (Div 21), Susan Liu (Div 21), Kristina Herder (Div 17, 12), Jacob Krarup (Div 11), Steve Wu (Div 25, 17), Linda Chen (Div 11, 17), Shelly Singh (Div 28), Stephanie (Div 21), Erin Ashenhurst (Div 15, 25), Nana, Alice (Div 17, 25), Poppy K, Stephanie Keating, Will Valley

Start: 18:02

### Introduction (Hannah)

- The mission of PAC is to work cooperatively with the parents and the school for the benefit of our children. We believe PAC consists of every parent or guardian of a student at our school. Our PAC has 3 goals: build a strong community, facilitate communications and raise funds for the school.
- With the updated equity statement we do not feel hot lunch is the best way to fundraise moving forward

Deena introduces Ian Cannon, our new vice principal

- Will be here Monday, Tues, Thurs until end of Feb
- Retired from principal position with VSB 3 years ago, has been in 10 different schools over career.

Deena

- As we move out of covid we have been advised to consider introducing things gradually with a trauma-informed lens. We don't want to say "no" to things but would like to increase access.
- We don't want our kids to get sick. When our kids get sick, staff also get sick
- Sustainability - focus to bring in things that are sustainable after the current staff are gone
- Community - are our activities accessible to all? This year we have the Student and Family Affordability Fund.
  - For example, even with Santa coming, we didn't do it in the classroom so those who are uncomfortable don't have to participate but other families can join outside.
- Safety - many families have different vulnerabilities, covid for example
- Our focus is what happens between 9am - 3pm.
- This year in comparison to previous years, we have had a 50% increase in families requesting hampers compared to pre-covid. As well the number of organizations offering support have been reduced.

- On a regular basis, families are coming in to ask for support. I have been picking up students in the morning so they can come to school.
- We are governed by administrative procedures - AP520 - which guides us in terms of fundraising.
- After talking to other schools, this issue is also coming up in other PACs - rethinking how to do hot lunch so all students have access. Every community is unique.
- Today we want to gather information so we get more voices and have a plan of how to move forward.
- We hope we can work together with a subcommittee of PAC so we can make sure as many voices as we can are heard.

Hannah: We have a very large school with a diverse demographic including a choice program which makes us unique.

Kristina Herder: Are there two facets to the discussion? One is finance, and one is diversity of choices to address allergies/food preferences?

Deena: We do know some families and staff have come forward to let us know the challenges with hot lunch. Some students, particularly primary, will go to the teacher and ask "why don't I get hot lunch". Some barriers can be finances, dietary needs, or technology. What I would like to do is information-gather to come up with solutions.

Kristina: There has been a lot of discussion trying to understand what the issue is. The technology piece isn't hard to solve. If the issue is financial, this is something that will come up at any time. I don't know how you would address it.

Deena: I agree this is a conversation that happens in life but we are a public school so we want to remove as many barriers as we can

Hannah: It takes a lot of hours, and manpower to organize/coordinate hot lunch. Does the PAC organize and we bring it in? Do we find a vendor who does most of the work? Right now it isn't about who does it. The question is how do we have a framework to be inclusive?

Stephanie (Div 21): Selkirk has a very similar demographic (similar neighborhood and also has a choice program). Can we see how they handle the hot lunch? How do they deal with the equity issue? Can we adopt the same framework?

Poppy K: They ask parents to donate. Apparently through their donations, they're able to pay for those who need support.

SueAnn: What is the real barrier to us providing hot lunch right now, create a pilot program to see how best to offer it?

Deena: The stop right now is community members coming forward to say our child is not able to receive hot lunch, coming home crying. For other activities we can pay for those kids - field trips, activities etc. But we do not have the funds to pay for hot lunch. Staff are also coming in saying they have to hold space for that conversation.

Jacob K: I would like the hot lunch program. I absolutely support the families in need. What I find frustrating is that we can't find out who these families are and how we can help them. I would like to be inclusive.

Ian: We have a pizza day coming up and will get a sense of how many people need the PAC support. This will be a good indicator of raw numbers.

Jacob K: I would like to know the concrete problems we can solve so we can have an equitable program. I think we need to get to the details.

Letti Kwong: When we came to the school in 2011 we had a hot lunch program through the VSB. Rotary club providing daily hot breakfast that was open to all kids. VSB hired someone who prepared it. Collingwood neighborhood house was also involved. PAC prepared breakfast for special occasions. Lunch was also made available to anyone who would join. Over the past 10 years, the VSB hot lunch was closed because we didn't have enough kids registering for it. In the past we had about 55 kids that were vulnerable identified by the teacher. Those are old numbers and it is helpful to know. We haven't had a hot lunch in years for some kid to say "why don't I get a hot lunch?" My kids really enjoyed hot lunch. We used to have a lot of parents and grandparents bring lunches to the school. Do we go back to these organizations to have them come in? In the past the entire school ate in the cafeteria. We lost the VSB hot lunch program because we didn't have the minimum 110 people enrolled. Following that we had the C'est Mon program.

Val: Daily breakfast was rotary club donations, Daily lunch was VSB hot lunch program. Later we had C'est Mon, they cooked in their own kitchen and brought it over. They had their own staff and served it with their own re-useable dishes and utensils. All vendors have to be vetted and approved by VSB. There is a long list of requirements for each vendor.

Shelly: I want to start by saying that I'm not sold on the hot lunch program. I am unclear what the "want" is. What are the goals - one off days, Monday to Friday? From my perspective, it sounds like there are different issues. 1. Food itself - nutritional. 2. Medical - allergies. 3. Religious - young kids not knowing the difference. 4. Social and economic concerns. Numerous red flags. These hurdles are not impossible to overcome, but are "quite gray". It sounds like this is a lot of effort, time and resources for a pizza day twice a year. Is this the best way to spend the resources?

Sue Ann: I don't think it is hot healthy foods we want. It is non-prepared parent lunches that my husband and I want. To what extent do we want to cater to a small group of kids?

Christina: I think what we are talking about is not about the one-off events that are community building. I think this is about parents who want the option to buy lunch so we don't have to make it. I would like to set aside the food allergies, as a parent of a child with anaphylactic allergies. I think we are talking about parents who want to purchase for convenience, and parents who cannot because of financial reasons. Can we find a way to address that? Then we can address the other concerns of dietary and religious issues.

Deena: You have framed it perfectly. There is no such thing as "no", it is about "how". Ian and I know that many families would like to have hot lunch.

Christina: I think the data we gather from pizza lunch, and whatever data we can get from you can be really important. I think there is a lot of opportunity and possibility to bring these two populations together and the issue can be resolved.

Deena: With the Student and Family Affordability Fund I have put money aside so we can run pilot programs. For the pizza day, if we are under, there is money to cover that. I would love if we can come up with a model program that other schools could follow. Ian has asked his previous PACs to see what they have done. I agree that there are ways to move forward to include as many kids as possible. I think the pizza day is a good place to start.

Steve Wu: It comes to affordability for a lot of people. We pay for convenience. Why can't we subsidize kids who need it. Why don't we do a trial once a week for 4 weeks and see where we fall short? I think pizza day is a good start but the barrier to entry is really low so I don't think it would be accurate numbers. At what point is it going to be affordable and there will be a buy in to overcome the short-falls. I think timing is important. I've seen other PACs have a check box for those who can't afford it to just select. I don't know if we ever had it. After the trial is the frequency. How do we get feed back? I think teachers will have to get the feedback.

Hannah: C'est mon was here pre-covid when kids all ate in the cafeteria. They put the food out for kids at their table

Letti: On Munch-a-Lunch we had an option to provide a lunch for others, also an option to volunteer as well. I would caution against using the data from pizza day as not everyone likes pizza, just like not everyone likes sushi. I would like to see a hot lunch once a month for variety. But it's also the fundraising PAC gathered from hot lunch, it was a significant amount of funds.

Deena: The thing with a pilot program is the start and stop of something can be really hard on the community. So even if we started and then stopped it, we could be back here with this discussion. I would like to be mindful of starting and stopping something. Not everyone reads the newsletters to understand why a change has happened. I think we should start small, and slowly. Using students as volunteers can be challenging as students have a 2 month honeymoon-period, where they commit, then ask for time off.

Ian: I am one day a week at another 800person school that is offering hot lunch daily. The parent organizing is getting stressed trying to organize volunteers. We hear loud and clear that parents want it and students want it. Now how do we make it happen. I see the kids do look forward to it. But 5 days a week, there is so much food and garbage waste, sushi and pizzas in the garbage. 5 days a week and the kids don't see it as special. I would be happy to sit down with a couple parents to make this happen.

Deena: To Ian's point, I think it is a good idea to have a working group with staff, parents and students so we have full transparency.

Kristina Herder: Who supplies the brown bag lunches? And Can we scale it to those who want it? Buy it?

Deena: It is provided by VSB, but they do not have the resources to scale it up for our whole school.

Ian: That food is delivered daily to the school. It is quite a basic lunch.

Hannah: How many volunteers did we need to run a hot lunch? How can we spread it out amongst parents so those volunteering don't burn out?

Val: I've been here for 11 years. I did volunteer as much as I could and it was very challenging. Each PAC chair was asking last minute for help. It is the middle of the day on a week day, most people are working and not available. We would start at 11-11:15am. We would need at least 4-5 parents, and we delivered to each classroom using the dolly. When C'est Mon cafe had the catered lunch there was an option to order it every day 5 days a week. We only had to put the menu up online. Each day there were 3-4 options with add ons. Some schools are only doing C'est Mon cafe once or twice a week. I don't know what their availability is right now. I would like to see something like that so we are not dependent on parent volunteers.

Shelly: From what I hear from parents who are really keen to have hot lunch it is to alleviate work load. I don't hear there's a lot of interest to come into the school to facilitate this.

Letti: It can be done with 5 people if everything is labelled. The VSB hot lunch had to be 5 days a week for one month.

Richard: I'm on a whatsapp parent chat, [about 50-60, fluctuates as people come and go.] What everyone is really trying to ask is when? We want a date. We understand the issues.

Deena: We have probably equally about 50 families that come in saying this is a struggle. We don't want to start something that we can't sustain.

Shelly: Have the 63 parents done some work to address some of these concerns?

SueAnn: How many brown bags are delivered to the school?

Deena: I don't know how specific I can be in giving numbers. I will check.

SueAnn: I think you're catering now to a select group - those receiving a brown bag lunch are those who come to you. Some who may not even come to you. The brown bag lunch doesn't cater to specific dietary needs. Why does the lunch program we are trying to launch have to address all these concerns when the VSB brown bag lunch doesn't?

Deena: The brown bag lunches can have options for vegetarian, pork free etc. We are not saying no, we are just saying we want to think about our entire community. Ian and I are here as administrators for a short time, but at the end of the day you as a PAC have to decide how to move forward. I receive these stories and I'm bringing these voices forward. At the end of the day you as a PAC have your mission to serve all families. My takeaway is how much I can share in those numbers; looking into Selkirk program; speaking with another administrator and another principal who is having these same conversations with their pac.

Hannah: To the "when" we need to have a committee to get this going. I think Pizza day is a very good data point for volunteers. There is a lot of work behind a pizza day. We need a committee, to plan, to look for vendors, to figure out where we go - we need people to step up and that is how we will know when we can launch this. For those who want to be part of the subcommittee please let me or the PAC know

Nana: My question and comment is about the delivery of food. Pre-covid I was able to help with the distribution of pizza and sushi. There were a lot of elderly grandparents around that maybe could help. When I was in grade 6 and 7 we were actively involved in school traffic and there was a lot of pride. Could we not have the senior students help in distribution of food? It could be rotational. Then we don't have to rely on the few parents. This is a question for admin.

Deena: We do have the grade 7s to support the buddies at lunch. Our thought is to start including grade 6s. With the pizza day the Grade 7s will be helping the parents. The lunch monitors have been saying very positive things.

We appreciate everyone's honesty and forthrightness. And re-iterating Ian we want to work together to create a plan that will last beyond us.

Hannah: We need to wrap up tonight. We had some good discussion. Our next action is to form the committee.

→ what is available

→ who is available

→ when can we start

Email [norquaypacteam@gmail.com](mailto:norquaypacteam@gmail.com)

Meeting adjourned ~19:40

