

Alternative Schools Advisory Committee Year End Report 2012

Sheri Zelle, Co-chair
Richard Deadman, Co-Chair

Executive Summary

The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee is a committee of the board with a mandate to:

1. Advise the board of trustees on matters related to the Alternative Program
2. Support parents and the community in setting up new Alternative sites
3. Support the Alternative community and encourage sharing of best practices and ideas

ASAC consists of members from the five Alternative Schools, as well as a board liaison and trustee members.

In past years ASAC has highlighted areas in its Year End Report that the committee felt needed to be addressed to properly support the program. For several of these years there has been some uncertainty about the future of the program within the board, culminating in the Alternative Elementary Program Review of 2009-2010. That review ended with a commitment on the part of the board to support the program.

ASAC is pleased to report that this clarification of the program's future place in the board has lead to improved support for the program and improved relationships between school councils and senior staff.

This is not to say that there are not still issues confronting the Alternative Program that need work:

- Anecdotal Reporting
- Standardized Testing
- Staff Accreditation
- Better program communication to parents
- Equal access to the program across the whole district

ASAC will continue to work with schools, senior administration and trustees on these issues in the coming months and years. We feel confident, however, that with the current relationship and common goals, we can make substantive progress on these issues in the near and medium future.

The rest of this report outlines what ASAC has done this year in the five following areas:

1. Alternative Tenet Review
2. Meetings
3. Community Building
4. Planning
5. Budget

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Alternative Tenet Review	3
Meetings	4
Members	4
Meetings.....	5
Community Building	6
Alternative Staff Event	6
Alternative Activities Day	6
Planning.....	7
Plans and Priorities.....	7
Board Motions	8
Budget	9

Alternative Tenet Review

In the Spring and Fall of 2011 each Elementary school site worked independently on a document that would capture their school and its representation of the foundational seven tenets. The documents were shared with ASAC and a sub-committee working group. The school's work was included in a single framework that provides and outline of the guiding principals of the Alternative Program.

The framework outlines definitions for each of the seven tenets along with explanations of what you will see and would not see with respect to the tenet's representation at our Alternative Elementary Program sites. More specific examples were also provided to provide a better understanding of how these tenets manifest within the school – drawn from past activities within some of the sites.

The intention of the document was to provide a better overall picture and understanding for OCDSB Staff so that we can work towards a consistent way to talk about the Alternative Elementary Program. It was also a major milestone that was required in order to work towards the development of a Market Demand Survey.

Subsequent work that has taken place in May 2012 with respect to the Tenets includes the mapping of the School Effectiveness Framework to the Tenets to identify alignment and understanding. Initial pass done by OCDSB staff with discussion and review with school principals, staff and ASAC. The intention is to have a final draft of this alignment completed by end of school year, with a secondary meeting with school principals, staff and ASAC to outline next steps and timing to start in September 2012.

Meetings

The Alternative Schools Advisory Committee holds six regular meetings during the school year as well as one “Joint Meeting” of ASAC, principals and council co-chairs. Meetings are held in a rotation at the five Alternative sites and are open to the public. In addition to committee members from each of the Alternative schools, ASAC also consists of principals of the five schools, a trustee representative and a board liaison.

Members

ASAC meetings are open to the public and operate on a consensus basis. Given that the program requires students, parents and teachers to work together, principals and staff are always encouraged to attend. That said, each Alternative School has identified members with varying level or responsibility to attend meetings or follow ASAC issues.

- Churchill
 - Principal: Megan Egerton
 - Co-chairs: Pam Dilworth-Christie, David Fortier
 - Members: Sheri Zelle (ASAC Co-chair)
- Grant
 - Principal: Erin Linnen
 - Chair: Shelley Rivier
 - Members: Shelley Rivier
- Lady Evelyn
 - Principal: Paula Slesar
 - Co-chairs: Joey Gunn, Patty Barrera
 - Members: Richard Deadman (ASAC Co-chair)
- Riverview
 - Principal: Amber Skillings-Nicholson
 - Co-chairs: Robyne Leslie, Lindsay Bell
 - Members: Karen Buckshi
- Summit
 - Principal: Alice Donachy
 - Co-chairs: Al Webb, Sheila Whyte
 - Members: Maria Hunter
- Board Liaison: Superintendent Frank Wiley
- Trustee Representatives: Rob Campbell, Pam Fitzgerald

Meetings

ASAC held seven meetings during the year. All meeting agenda's and minutes are publically posted to the ASAC web site at <http://www.asac-ottawa.org> :

1. Monday October 3rd, 2011. Churchill Alternative School
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
2. **Joint ASAC/Principals/Council Chairs Meeting.** Thursday, November 3rd, 2011. Lady Evelyn Alternative School.
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
3. November 21st, 2011. Summit Alternative School.
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
4. January 23th, 2012. Grant Alternative School.
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
5. February 27th, 2012. Riverview Alternative School.
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
6. April 16th, 2012. Churchill Alternative School.
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)
7. May 28th, 2012. Summit Alternative School
 - [Agenda](#)
 - [Minutes](#)

Community Building

Alternative Staff Event

One of the goals of ASAC is to support the Alternative program through the sharing of best practices and the building of community. In the past this has involved either cross-school family events such as “Global Village” or joint student activities such as the “Alternative Activities Day”. In 2010-2012 staff from the five Alternative Schools got together at Churchill Alternative School over dinner to share best practices and build community. The feedback from the event was that it was very useful and should become a regular event.

ASAC became involved in helping to organize and finance the event in 2011-2012. Grant offered to host this year’s event and the principal at Grant, Erin Linnen, worked with ASAC to co-ordinate the date, plan the agenda, and organize the food.

The event took part in May 2012 and consisted of:

- Tours of Grant as staff members and ASAC members arrived
- Break-outs into smaller groups for sharing of best practices among teachers
- Shared dinner with group discussion

Feedback at the June 2012 ASAC meeting indicated that the event was considered very useful by staff and administrators.

Alternative Activities Day

For several years now ASAC has funded an Alternative Activities Day at Summit in late May or early June. The purpose of the event is to help bring the Alternative community together, share best Alternative practices among schools and give students a chance to take on cross-level leadership skills. As in previous years, the event would not have been possible without the hard work of staff at all five schools, and in particular David Farley at Summit.

ASAC contributed not only in helping co-ordinate the event, but also paid for transportation to Summit for the three farthest schools: Grant, Lady Evelyn and Riverview.

The event was well-received by students, parent volunteers and staff.

Planning

ASAC undertakes a number of projects every year in order to support the program and respond to requests from the board. Given the resources available, some of these items can take more than one year to finish.

Plans and Priorities

The following is a list of outstanding items that ASAC is working on, grouped into priority sets:

1. Alternative Tenet Review. *See previous discussion in this report.*
2. ERIS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station) program. This program links schools up with the International Space Station. This is an opportunity for other schools. The program runs 12 – 18 months. David Fortier has applied to the program on behalf of all the alternative schools.
3. Program Awareness. This will come out of the tenet review and will be focused on raising program awareness across the city. It may include preparing the areas outside the greenbelt for a demand survey, as proposed by trustee Rob Campbell. It may also have a goal of preparing an Alternative presentation (slideshow) for various groups, such as OCASC.
1. Joint Resources. A place to gather common material that can be shared between schools, such as Summit's Supply Teacher primer.
2. Lecture Series. As a possible follow-up or alternate to the Alternative Activities Day, ASAC may want to plan a lecture or lecture series to be shared across the community. Possibly held in the Summit Auditorium.
4. Secondary Schools Review Ad-hoc Committee membership. ASAC was invited to participate in the Secondary Schools Review Ad-hoc Committee. Joey Gunn, ASAC member and co-chair of Lady Evelyn School Council, has taken on the position and attended several meetings of the Ad-hoc committee this year.
5. Development of an Alternative presentation. This would be a visual presentation outlining the goals, tenets and availability of the program and would be ready to be presenting to interested groups such as board committees and community groups. Some work on this is pending the completion of the current tenet review.
6. Intake Process. ASAC has provided a template "Intake Process" that addresses some of the concerns about disruptions during the year due to transfers and also concerns that some families shop for a program without understanding its tenets or expectations.
7. Supply Teacher Primer. Since there is currently no accreditation for teaching in an Alternative Program, there have been issues with supply teachers coming in and teaching in a manner in conflict with the Alternative tenets. A sample primer has been provided to schools that can quickly give supply teachers an accessible and easily understood introduction to the tenets of the program and how it should be expressed in the classroom.
8. Letter of Understanding. Several years ago trustees passed a motion requiring all schools to send all families a "Letter of Understanding" each year. ASAC continues to monitor the delivery of this letter and will work with board staff to update its contents once the ongoing "Alternative Tenets" work is completed.
9. Teacher release time. Work was undertaken this year to secure release time for staff to visit other Alternative sites and share best practices.

10. EQAO. This remains an ongoing concern of ASAC members. A sample letter to parents detailing the Alternative program's concerns and parental options was provided to schools as a template.
11. Anecdotal Reporting. Some work is still ongoing concerning what the parental reporting default can be (anecdotal or provincial). The committee decided to continue with its investigation, differentiating between the political (board motion) and technical (software capabilities) options, and how other school boards are handling this.

Board Motions

ASAC had meetings with OCDSB staff regarding the sequencing, timing and requirements for the outstanding motions passed during the Alternative Program Review and subsequently by the board of trustees.

Motion	Date	Status
<p>THAT staff work with the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee to identify what opportunities there are for Alternative schools to showcase "current best alternative practices" for the other elementary schools in the board.</p>	<p>February 2010</p>	<p>Once the Alternative Tenets Review is complete, ASAC will be working with board staff to identify ways in which Alternative Practices can be demonstrated and shared.</p>
<p>THAT the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee be asked to contribute to an investigation through a detailed review of the School Effectiveness Framework of, the scope of the alternative practices that could be recommended for implementation/trial/piloting in any elementary school in the district and for improving the quality of alternative practices in designated Alternative schools.</p>	<p>February 2010</p>	<p>As part of the current Alternative Tenet Review, ASAC is working with board staff to outline how the Alternative Practices align with the provincial "School Effectiveness Framework" Two meetings were held with staff, principals, teachers and ASAC members this year to advance this work.</p>
<p>THAT staff work with the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee to determine what other process, in addition to the creation and review of the existing "Principal Profile", might be used in choosing principals who truly embrace the 7 tenets of the current alternative philosophy for appointment to alternative schools.</p>	<p>February 2010</p>	<p>Initial work begun but not completed.</p>
<p>That the board develop a demand survey for the Alternative Program outside the Greenbelt.</p>	<p>Trustee Campbell, November 2010</p>	<p>This was to be conducted in September 2012. ASAC was concerned that the current Tenet review would not be finished in time to develop a communication plan prior to the survey. The program's definition and clarity of</p>

		<p>how it is offered is required prior to engaging in a market demand survey. Consequently ASAC worked with board staff to request a one year delay at Education Committee to the implementation of the Market Demand survey. This was passed in the winter of 2012. The Market Demand Survey is intended to be executed during the 2012/2013 school year.</p>
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Budget

Date	Item	Amount
2012-04-17	Staff Workshop Dinner	\$708.22
2012-04-22	Website costs	\$71.20
2012-06-01	Busing for Alternative Activities Day	400.00