



YEAR-END REPORT – 2010/2011

April 2011

2010/2011 continued to be an active year for SD73 DPAC. In adhering to our traditional 3-pronged mandate of Education, Communication, and Advisory Role, we continued to see growth both in the public profile of DPAC and in partnership arrangements with education community stakeholders.

It was the second year DPAC operated under an executive council structure, rather than the traditional Board structure. Decision-making between meetings was done consensually among Board members, and capacity has expanded at the executive level due to a wider sharing of the responsibilities of Chair. Despite the fact that the executive council structure continued to work well, considerable effort on the part of the executive went into succession planning this year. Outreach to individuals and to PACs was done with the intent of increasing active participation within DPAC. Despite some successes in this regard, a strategy for recruitment of executives must continue to be a priority for the coming year since several members plan to retire this year.

In the next year, DPAC members may want to put some thought into the relative advantages and disadvantages of the traditional board structure vs. the executive council model of the last two years. Should the members of SD73 DPAC wish to continue with an executive council structure, an amendment should be made to the Bylaws and Constitution to reflect those wishes.

In 2006, DPAC recognized that there were three roles required for the SD 73 context, which continue to be the primary focus of our work:

- *Education* (of parents, PACs, other educational partners)
- *Communication* (with and between parents, PACs, and other educational partners)
- *Advisory / Voice* (to advise the Board of Education and other educational partners of the collective voice of parents/PACs in SD 73)

The following is a summary of progress made as well as recommendations for the future on each of our core roles:

1. Education

Successes...

- “HELP, I’ve been elected to the PAC Executive” training was well attended in the fall and participant reports were positive. **It is recommended that this event be run annually in October.**

- An SPC training session was provided in partnership with SD73 administration in late November at the Henry Grube. **It is recommended that a separate additional session be conducted next year for new SPC members.**
- A full contingent of parents attended the SD73 fall conference on assessment, thanks to the generous offer of 10 spots from SD73. Contrary to our original expectations, delegate reports from the conference reflected the high interest level of parents in this topic. **It is recommended that DPAC work with SD73 to make parent participation at these fall conferences a permanent fixture.**
- The DPAC executive answered many questions on process and played a support role for many PACs dealing with internal conflicts. The importance of this guidance function and the sharing of “best practices” is not to be underestimated. **It is recommended that DPAC develop a series of short, educational articles on various topics like how to build an e-mail list, how to run a secret ballot process, how to do an executive orientation session etc. and send these out occasionally by e-mail.**
- A number of DPAC members travelled to schools to discuss the role of DPAC in the district, and were well received. **It is recommended that DPAC members once again offer to attend PAC meetings in the fall of 2011, to build awareness of DPAC and hopefully increase active membership.**
- DPAC hosted our first-ever public webinar: Bullying: What Parents Need to Know and What Can Be Done with presenter Bill Belsey at the Henry Grube Education Centre. A four person panel was on hand to offer answers to any parents. The event was well attended and provided guidance to parents in dealing with bullying issues. The topic and presenter were selected as a result of parent input. The webinar + panel format was well-received and represented a major cost saving over bringing in a presenter. SD73 DPAC provided generous technical support for this event. Although outlying schools expressed interest in attending this event via video-conferencing, this request was denied by the speaker. **It is recommended that DPAC continue to organize webinars as appropriate and continue to investigate the possibility of video-conferencing to facilitate participation by rural PACs. In order to ensure high quality presentations, it is recommended that whenever possible the actual webinar be previewed by the committee before committing to a particular speaker.**
- A PAC Networking Luncheon was held in March this year, with education and discussion on the topic of networking and building effective communication between parents. It was well attended and evaluations were positive. **It is recommended that PAC networking events like these be done twice per year in the future, one at lunchtime, and the other in the evening to provide alternatives for working parents.**
- DPAC partnered with various local groups (FRIENDS, Kamloops Literacy, etc) to spread their message to parents as appropriate. **It is recommended that we continue to build partnerships that serve the needs of SD73 parents.**
- The Parent Education Committee has done research into bringing speaker Rosalind Wiseman to speak in April 2012. This event would take a large amount of time and funds to organize and additional support would be needed by the Parent Education committee in the form of volunteers and sponsors. SD73 has offered a financial contribution towards the event. A decision on this event has not yet been made.

Challenges...

- The main challenge in our Education role is a shortage of volunteers. The committee consisted of 3 people this year, and they agreed that number is insufficient to put on major events like Rosalind Wiseman. **It is recommended that DPAC make building strong committees a focus for 2011/2012.**
- DPAC needs to continue to work with SD73 to identify opportunities for partnership (e.g. bringing in a speaker for a Pro-D day and adding on a parent night), especially where the opportunity for DPAC to earn operating revenue. **It is recommended that DPAC limit public parent education nights which require a great deal of preparation (i.e. ticket sales) to one per year in order to reduce volunteer burnout. The 2009/2010 Barry MacDonald event could serve as a template for similar activities in the future.**
- PACs continue to need help in managing fundamental governance/organizational challenges. Training can be provided via events like “Help!”, via e-mail articles, or via resources on the website. **It is recommended that providing training in this area continue to be a priority for DPAC.**
- Student assessment continues to be an area where parents often feel out of their depth. This may become even more critical under the 21st Century Learning initiatives under discussion. **It is recommended that DPAC work with SD73 to find ongoing ways of informing parents how assessment takes place in our schools.**
- There is much uncertainty around the 21st Century Learning initiative. It is hoped that many parents will be able to take advantage of the fall SD73 conference which will hopefully provide some clarity on that topic. **It is recommended that DPAC continue discussions on an ongoing basis with SD73 regarding potential changes to parental roles.**

2. Communication:

Successes...

- Our sd73dpac@gmail.com account is very well used, and has become the main contact point for DPAC. Over 195 parents currently are included in the DPAC email distribution list, receiving regular updates, information, and ideas. Through regular monitoring and prompt contact, this is turning into an effective 2-way communication platform between PACs, DPAC and other education stakeholders. **It is recommended that DPAC continue to use and build this tool.**
- The DPAC website at www.dpac.sd73.bc.ca is up and running, and content is being added on a regular basis. Many members have found this to be an effective form of gathering information. Our website now includes a resource repository for PAC executives and a list of DPAC library resources. **It is recommended that DPAC continue the development of the website & actively promote its use via links in e-mails, etc.**
- PAC registration form asks parents for an email address component and this information is shared by SD73 with DPAC, simplifying the maintenance of our contact list. **It is recommended that this practice continue & be expanded.**

- DPAC Notes continues to be an effective tool for sharing information in a timely way after DPAC meetings. **It is recommended that the Notes continue to be sent out within a week of DPAC meetings.**
- School principals / secretaries regularly include DPAC information in newsletters and communiqués. **It is recommended that we continue to build our relationship with school administrators through the Board office.**
- The Synrevoice simultaneous-dialing phone tool is being used in various ways by PACs around the district. **It is recommended that Synrevoice be a topic for an upcoming educational article to be sent out via e-mail, along with the SD73 Administrative Bulletin governing the use of the system.**

Challenges...

- Although the gmail contact list has grown, it is still not comprehensive. A central system of all parent e-mail addresses in the district would be more effective. SD73 has endeavoured to work on making this a priority for DPAC. **It is recommended that DPAC work with SD73 to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve communication with all parents, whether through a complete e-mail database or other means.**
- Contact information for PAC executives / DPAC representatives does not come to DPAC until December or January. **It is recommended that DPAC investigate the possibility of shortening this timeframe.**
- PACs do not currently have a way to communicate directly with each other. **It is recommended that DPAC investigate the viability of including a list-serve or forum function on our website (or another list-serve be developed/implemented)**
- The discrepancy in Synrevoice usage from school to school continues to be an issue with parents. **It is hoped that more PACs will be able to take advantage of this tool as the administrative comfort level with it increases over time.**

3. Advisory Mandate:

Successes...

- Input received from DPAC meeting attendees and via e-mail continues to increase. DPAC reps are getting in the habit of using the *DPACRep Accountabilities* to liaise and gather input from their PACs. *DPAC RepAccountabilities* are featured on the front page of our website for easy reference. **It is recommended that this practice be continued.**
- DPAC continues to provide SD73 staff and trustees with input at our regular monthly meetings and forwards collated feedback on specific issues, e.g. grad commencement ceremonies, exam week classes, etc. **Recommendation: Continue this practice.**
- Policy input provided by PACs and DPAC has been welcomed by SD73 Policy Committee. Policies of note during 2010/2011 include #1121.1 – Corporate Sponsorship & Donations, #506.4 – School Fees: Textbook Deposits, and a newly drafted Exchange

Student policy. **Recommendation: Continue to work with partners to provide input on policies as they are drafted (preferably before going to Notice of Motion).**

- DPAC execs continue to meet monthly SD73 administration for frank discussion of issues and information-sharing. These meetings are valuable for both sides, and **it is recommended that a regular schedule for them be set up with the Superintendent's office.**
- DPAC executives met with the newly formed Team 73. Jack Buckham and Kevin Carswell were on hand to provide a progress report and answer a number of questions. **Recommendation: DPAC continue to monitor the progress of Team 73.**
- Press releases are put out regularly on emerging issues and parent education events. DPAC is often asked for comments by local media. **Recommendation: Ensure that media contacts are kept up to date as to the contact info for SD73 media liaison.**
- DPAC sent a letter to the Ministry of Education requesting urgent action be taken in response to the Avison Report on the BC College of Teachers, recognizing the importance to public education of the BCCT, as identified in section 4 of the Teaching Profession Act. **Recommendation: Continue to provide input on parent issues at local and provincial levels.**
- DPAC met with both local MLA's at once and sent a letter to the MLA's and the Ministry regarding chronic underfunding of education. DPAC will continue to keep up pressure of inadequate funding in the coming year. A variety of topics were covered during the meeting including the executive's desire to have parents included in developing a plan for the 21st Century Learning Project. **It is recommended that the DPAC exec schedule two meetings per year with local MLAs.**
- At SD73's request, DPAC provided 2 representatives to sit on the Superintendent's Committee on Math Achievement. To assist with the communication SD73 had provided video-conferencing for both parents to be able to participate in the meetings, since they live in the outlying community and have had difficulty attending meetings in unfavourable weather. This opportunity is a valuable method to ensure that our parents in rural areas have the chance to be a voice for DPAC. **Recommendation: Continue with the process of posting opportunities to the e-mail list with desired criteria & deadline date, then selecting and informing applicants. Establish more formal reporting criteria and follow up with committee reps on a regular basis.**
- DPAC provided reps for the planning committee for the fall 2011 SD73 conference. The reps report back regularly to DPAC.
- Several parents, including a representative from the DPAC executive, are sitting on the Parent Leadership Task Force, expected to issue a report by June 2011.

Challenges...

- DPAC meetings continue to be long and full. Sending more work to committees for recommendations would streamline processes. **It is recommended that DPAC work to build more committees that include both DPAC execs and regular DPAC reps to further share the workload.**
- BCCPAC membership fell to 17 members and only a small amount of proxies are expected to go to the BCCPAC AGM later this month. **It is recommended that DPAC continue to encourage PACs regarding BCCPAC engagement.**

- DPAC attendance at SD73 Board meetings has been sporadic this year. **It is recommended that the executive take more advantage of the opportunity to speak directly to and hear from trustees at Board meetings.**
- Liaison meetings with KTTA executives fell off during the year. **It is recommended that the executive discuss the value of these meetings and take steps to re-establish a schedule if appropriate.**
- Timelines for gathering voice are often short – leading to difficulties gathering representative opinions from members, and ad hoc input to the Board and administration. More time would allow for better quality input. **It is recommended that DPAC continue to educate partner groups about our need for a 2 month timeline required to gather, discuss and draft a representative response to policies and emerging issues.**
- SD 73 PACs are not certain which issues to bring to DPAC and there is still confusion about the process. **It is recommended that DPAC write a guide to what might constitute an issue for the DPAC table, and make it available on our website.**
- DPAC is frustrated by the lack of solid information regarding the 21st Century Learning initiative. This appears to be a large scale change to our education system, and we feel unable to provide input or help educate our members. **Recommendation: DPAC continue to ask for information and share it with parents as it becomes available.**