

THE OTTAWA BOARD OF EDUCATION
ALTERNATE SCHOOLS SUB-COMMITTEE

(2)

Ottawa, Monday
March 17, 1986

A meeting of the Alternate Schools Sub-Committee was held on the above date in Committee Room 1, 330 Gilmour Street, with the following being present:

Trustees: A. Cullen, H. Lang, M. Loughrey, D. McGuinty

Members: S. Batstone (Chairperson)- Riverview Alternative School Adv. Cmtee.
M. Roger- Lady Evelyn Primary Alternative School Advisory Cmtee.
J. Cayley - Churchill Primary Alternative West Advisory Cmtee.
S. Currie - Ottawa Valley Association for Education Alternatives

Officials: R. Gillett, F. Wagstaff, M. Scott

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

MOVED by Trustee Loughrey that the Agenda be approved.

CARRIED

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

MOVED by Trustee Loughrey that the Minutes of the previous meeting held February 26, 1986, be approved.

MOVED in amendment by Trustee Lang that on page 2 the following words be deleted from the closing sentence of item (a), para. 2:

" for use of facilities in which to operate their programme."

CARRIED

The main motion, as amended, CARRIED.

REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP:

As some concern had been expressed at the previous meeting, Chairperson Batstone asked members to clarify their wishes with regard to expanding the membership of the Sub-Committee.

Trustee Loughrey pointed out that it was sometimes advantageous to keep a working group small and felt there was adequate representation at present.

Trustee McGuinty noted that he had had concerns expressed to him by parents and teachers on the implications of the Commission's recommendations on the public system and felt there was merit in including representation on the Sub-Committee from this sector.

Fran Wagstaff, Liaison Superintendent for the Sub-Committee and Area Superintendent of Schools, felt this forum required input from staff at the secondary level, especially since the report was recommending changes which would have some effect at that level of education.

Further to the above, Trustee Lang pointed out that the Shapiro Commission had, in fact, recommended involvement of staff at the discussion level and urged that principals be invited to the meetings.

Trustee Cullen was not in support of the suggestion that teacher federations be included in the membership of the Sub-Committee as he felt they had little experience in those options related to the philosophy and methodology of instruction in the alternative programmes by its teachers.

It was pointed out that people with a specific expertise could be sought to participate in the discussion on a particular item as it appeared on the agenda if this was the wish of the committee.

Further discussion resulted in the following:

MOVED by Trustee Loughrey that a representative from both the Elementary and Secondary Principals' Associations be invited to participate as members of the Alternate Schools Sub-Committee.

The motion CARRIED. The Chairperson will forward a letter immediately to the associations asking for their participation.

ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

(a) Discussion re Draft Response to the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario:

As agreed at the previous meeting, Fran Wagstaff distributed a framework for discussion of the above document (see Appendix "A")

Ms. Wagstaff suggested the Committee focus on its perceived mandate before proceeding further with specific recommendations contained in the report. (see "Basic Assumptions" - Appendix "A")

Several members expressed a concern with this approach. For example, Mr. Currie felt the definitions for "associated" schools, referred to in the Commission's report, and "alternate" schools, referred to in the Board Policy, required comparison and clarification before proceeding further.

Further discussion on this subject resulted in the following:

MOVED by Trustee Cullen that the Alternate Schools Sub-Committee react to those recommendations contained in the Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario that impinge upon the operation of the Ottawa Board of Education.

In speaking to his motion, Trustee Cullen reviewed those steps taken by the Trustees which led to the re-establishment of the Alternate Schools Sub-Committee for the purpose of studying alternatives to education. When the Board had approved a motion that a draft response to the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario be prepared at this forum it did so, in his estimation, with the understanding that the Board's philosophy to endeavour to meet the needs of the community would be reflected. At the same time, he felt as a public system the Board response should express a desire to continue to move in a direction whereby the best education is available for its students for the best tax dollar.

Several members expressed concern with the above as they felt this approach could narrow the focus to the Board's needs and narrow other global dimensions that needed to be addressed.

Trustee Lang pointed out that the existing associated models for alternative schools in the O.B.E. system was a workable arrangement for those presently involved and any question of its continuation should not unduly concern the alternative school representatives at this point in time. Instead, the mandate of the Sub-Committee should be to look fairly at the alternatives brought before them. She also reminded members that they would be studying the implications of the Commission not only from the perspective of the Ottawa/Carleton boards and region but also for all Boards in Ontario.

The motion CARRIED and the members proceeded with the framework addressed in Appendix "A".

Discussion of Recommendation No. 21 which reads as follows:

Associated Schools - Preamble:

- * "THAT an associated school be defined in law as an independent school that has come to an agreement with a local school board to operate in association with that board and in addition to offering satisfactory instruction."

MOVED by Trustee Cullen that the preamble to Recommendation No. 21 be approved in principle.

Following a short discussion this motion CARRIED.

Discussion of Recommendation No. 21(i) which reads as follows:

- "(i) employs only Ontario certified teachers (except where letters of permission are appropriate);"

- * (Refer to page 53 of the Shapiro Report "Extract".)

The administration clarified that "Ontario certified teachers" are those teachers in possession of an Ontario Teaching Certificate. Mr. Gillett, Superintendent of Academic Affairs, explained that this definition in no way suggested that there were not other fully qualified teachers available for instruction. In fact, according to the Education Act if a public board is unable to find an "Ontario certified teacher" to teach a particular subject it can seek approval from the Ministry of Education that an uncertified but "qualified" person be allowed to do so.

In response to a further query the Administration clarified that in order to have financial support from the provincial government very specific rules must be followed. While there are exceptions to these rules, as outlined previously, the OBE as a public board must be cautious to meet the guidelines established by the Ministry of Education. Mr. Gillett pointed out, however, that the Board has found in the past it could be flexible in meeting the guidelines in consultation with the Ministry as is evident in the alternative programmes now operating under its jurisdiction.

The motion CARRIED.

Jennifer Cayley expressed a concern with the procedure being used by the Sub-Committee. She said she had anticipated further deliberation prior to voting and took exception to approval of the previous motions. Ms. Cayley felt there were too many unknowns in the wording of Recommendation 21(i) and she did not wish to risk the alternate schools losing their identify by not being able to have a voice in the choice of instructors as it does at the present time. She pointed out further that this process is one of the most important and distinct aspects of the alternative programmes and allowed the parents the flexibility they could not have in the public school system.

Ms. Wagstaff felt the format she had recommended in Appendix "A" was not a workable one and suggested the members curtail further discussion until a conclusive agreement could be reached on how the Committee wished to proceed.

Trustee Lang felt a request from the Association of Large School Boards (ALSBO) in Ontario, to extend the deadline date for responses to the end of May, would more than likely be complied with. It was suggested the Sub-Committee meet for the purpose of a thorough discussion of the broader concepts of alternate and alternative schools and programmes before proceeding with its response.

Maureen Roger agreed with the above suggestion as reflected in the following motion:

MOVED by Maureen Roger that discussion on the Shapiro Report be tabled until the next meeting and that the previous motion to approve Recommendation No. 21(i) be rescinded.

CARRIED

Following further debate it was agreed that the Sub-Committee would meet next time for the purpose of discussion only. In the interim it was suggested that the Report from the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario needed to be read in its entirety for a clearer understanding as many of the recommendations were clarified in part only and overlapping in their intent.

Trustee Lang distributed further information from ALSBO in its preparation of a reponse to the Commission which she felt might be informative. She clearly indicated that this was a "draft" response only and will keep the members up to date on the Association's progress. (See Appendix "B")

In response to a query, the members indicated they were willing to read any material offered to them by the Administration as background information.

Mr. Gillett offered several suggestions on how the Sub-Committee might wish to proceed with its deliberations including the working committee model used several times in the past by Board committees.

Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

NOTICES OF MOTION:

Nil.

ENQUIRIES:

There were no further inquiries.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The Committee will meet on April 2, 1986, at 7:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Sally Batstone, Chairperson

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON
PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ONTARIO

Framework for Discussion

BASIC ASSUMPTION #1

...That the Alternative Schools Committee sees as its mandate to react to those recommendations of the Report that impinge upon the operation of the OBE.

BASIC ASSUMPTION #2

...That the Alternative Schools Committee does not feel compelled but may wish to express an opinion on those recommendations of the Report that affect the Private Schools unilaterally.

ITEM #1 - ASSOCIATED SCHOOLS (Rec. #21-32)

1. Definition
2. Tuition vs no tuition
3. Open access
4. Non-profit status
5. Arbitration hearing
6. Per-pupil grant on a par with current grant given to Boards
7. Sharing of grant
8. School Board's contribution
9. Associated School contribution
10. Certificate of teachers
11. Termination of Agreement

ITEM 2 - ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS FOR BOARD SCHOOLS (Rec. 33-40)

1. Programmes for Pre-School Students (response to community)
2. Programmes for adults (education and retraining)
3. Reduction in the scale of both schools and classrooms
4. Third Language Schools

Many of the reasons for the existence of private schools, (e.g. low pupil-teacher ratios, residential schools, schools with a particular religious bias) are legitimate. The question is whether such schools have a right to public funds. ALSBO's answer is "no." In a state where education is compulsory, it would be grossly unfair to require parents whose children do not have access to private education, for whatever reason, to pay for such education.

There are recommendations in the Shapiro Report which ALSBO believes constitute a positive response to concerns regarding not just private schools, but the education system in general. Many of these points can be viewed as fundamental to the establishment of a consistently superior standard of education, which will serve as a reference for both private and public education delivery.

General Observations

The ALSBO response to the Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario should be read in the light of the following points of reference:

1. There is a general perception that public schools boards (and thereby the Ministry of Education) are not recognizing the needs of a diverse educational clientele, and that a positive effort is required to inform people of the advantages of public system.

ALSBO RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS
IN ONTARIO
(DRAFT)

Introduction

The Association of Large School Boards in Ontario has examined the Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario prepared by Dr. Shapiro and has concluded that there are many recommendations which merit closer study and possible support.

While acknowledging the leading role of private schools in promoting new educational policies and innovations, ALSBO believes that such development should more appropriately occur within the public system - the system where the large majority of students in Ontario are educated. The public system should take the lead in the development of far-sighted education practices geared to the needs of a rapidly changing society. ALSBO cannot support any recommendations of philosophy or policy which equate private, or, for that matter, separate education with "better" education. Public expectations of the public system must continue to move in the direction of obtaining the best education available for the tax dollar.

The general goals of education, particularly in a pluralistic, multicultural society as exists in Ontario, must be anticipated and achieved within the public context. Such goals must be dedicated to the individual needs of students as they respond to the general requirements of the society in which they must emerge as productive and fulfilled contributors.

5. Alternative Schools and Programs:
 - i. Development of Board Policy;
 - ii. Weighting Factor for students enrolled at Alternative School;
 - iii. Autonomy legislated for Boards and Board Schools re:
 - a) programme offerings
 - b) programme design
 - c) staff composition
6. Open Boundaries:
 - i. within a board;
 - ii. between boards (limited use of educational vouchers).

ITEM #3 - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (Rec. #45-47)

1. Two credits in religious studies?;
2. Characteristics of a course in religious studies;
3. Religious programmes at the Elementary level.

ITEM #4 - SPECIAL EDUCATION (Rec. #48-54)

1. Limits to special education programmes within the board's resources and other responsibilities;
2. Purchase of service from independent schools;
3. Residential vs non-residential programs;
4. IPRC process for students attending independent schools.

ITEM #5 - MATTERS RELATING TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (Rec. #1-20)

1. Satisfactory instruction;
2. Certification of teachers;
3. Registration of private schools;
4. Public funding of a limited nature:
 - i. Transportation;
 - ii. Learning materials.

2. Much of the autonomy to carry out the Report's recommendations already exists within school boards. However, ALSBO is opposed to proposals in the report which would mandate practices which are now optional.

A Standard for all schools: Satisfactory instruction and qualified teachers

At present, other than requiring that a notice of intent to operate a private school be filed with the Ministry, there are no statutory or regulatory requirements governing the education program being offered in private schools, particularly in the areas of curriculum, teacher certification, textbooks, length of school year and language of instruction. Inspection in a private secondary school occurs only if the school wishes to grant an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In private elementary schools, unless a complaint is received, there is virtually no measure of accountability.

ALSBO supports the Commission's proposal to establish a common minimal standard for all elementary and secondary schools in Ontario, including a requirement that teachers in Ontario by law be properly qualified.

(Recommendation 3)

ALSBO is also in general agreement with the recommendations requiring a more formal status for private schools (4-6) and an increase in the Ministry's responsibilities for and supervision of private schools.

The Public Funding of Independent Schools

ALSDG is opposed to the provision of any public funding to private schools and commends the Minister's recent announcement in this regard.

The granting of associated status to independent schools would not solve the problems of administration, consultation, program sharing and provision of services. Rather, together with the boards, the Ministry of Education should undertake to develop the flexibility which will provide students in the public schools with the same variety of choice as exists in the private sector.

Board Schools: New Opportunities

ALSDG notes the Commission's comment that "the Province's publicly funded schools have served and continue to serve the people of Ontario extremely well - often in circumstances of unreasonable public expectation and limited public support and the call for "both greater program diversity and a more finely tuned responsiveness to local communities."

In support of the goal of making school boards more responsive to the needs of the local community and to avoid what it calls the "marginalization" of minority cultures, the Commission points to the advantages of providing students with instruction in a language in addition to English or French for part of the school day. ALSBO supports recommendation 35 believing that the Ministry should review its policy regarding language of instruction. A change in the present policy will necessitate greater Ministry responsibility for the supervision of courses, curricula, materials, etc.

However, with regard to the recommendations to establish advisory and school committees to "deal with local communities and the generation of consensus" (33 and 34), ALSBO is disappointed to note that no consideration has been given to the financial requirements of such committees, given both the present funding and grant concerns of school boards, and the recently released Report on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in Ontario. *

ALSBO encourages the development of a closer relationship between parent and school; for example, parents would be involved in

*NOTE: School Committees have been established by legislation in Quebec which consists entirely of parents. One parent each from the elementary and secondary panels is elected to sit on the local board. These representatives have all trustee privileges (right to introduce motions, amendments, etc.) except the right to vote.

more conferences with teachers, be welcomed into the classroom, work on a variety of projects or go on field trips. These forms of involvement are not antithetical or even uncommon to the public school system. It is important to encourage parents to take a greater role in the life of the school and the education of their children.

To this end, ALSBO supports recommendation #37 that the Ministry provide school boards with greater autonomy to respond to specific needs and issues within the local community.

Nevertheless, a well-defined line must be drawn to separate parental involvement from governance; i.e., who is hired and fired, what is taught and what methodologies are used. In the public system, governance must be subordinate to accountability, which resides with the elected trustees, who are accountable to the electorate. While parental participation is to be encouraged, parental control is not. ALSBO believes that the governance of education should become the subject of a study by a royal commission or a Select Committee of the Legislature.

It should be noted in this regard and also with reference to recommendations 22 and 25 that school boards already possess the ability to authorize and establish some new relationships between parents and schools, and public schools and independent schools. ALSBO would caution against the overly-rigorous delineation of some of the boards' prerogatives at the possible expense of those not specifically mentioned. This could produce

the result of lessening a board's flexibility in its relationships with other organizations, schools or even individuals. However, ALSBO would support the initiation of a study incorporating private schools within an "umbrella" school board.

The issue of an "open boundary concept" (recommendations 38, 39 and 40) concerns not just the provision of services, but board jurisdiction. A board offering education programs should not in the first instance suffer a financial penalty as a consequence of accepting a student from another board. Additionally, such proposals should be considered in light of adjustments in enrolment and services as a result of the establishment of a parallel separate school system arising from Bill 30. The public school system does not intend to become a repository for the "difficult-to-serve."

Special Cases

One of the more visible rationales for the provision of private education is the ability to offer alternative education programs such as the International Baccalaureate, and particular pedagogical methodologies such as the Montessori Schools, the Waldorf School, the Institute of Child Study, and other early intervention models. ALSBO supports recommendation 41 which would provide the Ministry of Education with the authority to permit school boards to lower the age at which children may legally attend school for such experimental programs. This is consistent with ALSBO's recommendation to the Ministry of Education's Early Primary Education Project.

Such a recommendation begs the question of exposure to different educational philosophies, and ALSBO believes that flexibility available to public schools (necessary for experiments) is a prerequisite for the development of advanced and innovative educational programs.

The Commission addresses the question of home schooling (recommendation 44) by emphasizing continuity of program and provision of satisfactory instruction. In accordance with Section 20(2)(a) of the Education Act at least three visits per student per year are required to ensure that the student is being educated to board standards. Each visit involves the Superintendent of Schools and the local school principal. Because home-study students are not on the board's enrolment register there is no allowance for the provision of those services, which is estimated at approximately \$2,500 per student per year.

ALSBO therefore recommends that the Ministry of Education grant permission for boards to place home-study pupils on the enrolment records so that they may attract appropriate financial grants to help offset the very substantial cost of supervision for these students.

With regard to recommendation 45, 46, and 47 at present only students attending the Roman Catholic Separate Schools can earn credits in religious studies. ALSBO supports the recommendation that all secondary students in Ontario be permitted to earn up to two credits in religious studies of a "non-confessional" nature.

With respect to specialized learning needs (special education), public schools are required by Bill 82 to provide for the needs of exceptional children. If a board is unable to provide such instruction, it is required to purchase appropriate programs from another board. ALSBO cannot support the Commission's recommendations (48-53) in this area, given that if the Government is funding the public school system to provide special education, there should be no obligation on the part of the Government to fund special education through additional private delivery systems. Parents have the right to obtain specialized instruction beyond that currently available within the public school system, but they must carry the extra cost. Nevertheless, the Ministry should make provision for the purchase by boards of such services from private schools where the particular needs of the individual student cannot be met within the public system.