

Blossom Park School Council

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday January 20, 2021

Location: Google Meet
Prepared by: Nejm Eddine DOUKKALI
Susan Fattal

Contents

1. In attendance	2
2. Opening and Welcoming	2
3. Fundraising	2
1. Treasurer's Report	3
2. Online Learning - The Second Round	4
3. Special Classes	4
4. Students' Suggestions	5
5. Outdoor Seating Project	6
6. Next meeting	7

Blossom Park Public School

3810 Sixth Street, Gloucester, ON K1T 1K6
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Email: blossomparkps@ocdsb.ca
<https://blossomparkps.ocdsb.ca/>

1. In attendance

The Meeting started at 5:00 pm.

In attendance:

- Susan Fattal - Chair
- Naoko Nakamura - Treasurer
- Nejm Eddine DOUKKALI - Secretary
- Caroline Theriault - the Principal
- Colin Halsall - the Vice principal
- Andi Kinnear - Student
- Safa Basil - Student
- Dina - Student
- Six more parents

All the participants belong to the Blossom Park Public School.

2. Opening and Welcoming

Susan started the meeting by welcoming everyone. Then she announced that a new item, “Students’ Perspective”, would be added to the Agenda, since two students were attending the meeting.

Susan invited Safa and Andi to our meeting to give our Council an idea how the students are doing at school and to bring to our attention any problems or challenges they are facing, since we have no students’ representative this year. This year there is also no Student Council, so giving students a voice in our platform can have a positive impact. They are free to attend occasionally whenever they can.

Both the Agenda and last meeting Minutes were approved.

3. Fundraising

Susan dropped off the envelopes for the pizza refunds at school to be distributed to the parents; the total for the refunds was \$20.

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Susan reported that she started researching some of the items in the teachers' wish lists that the School Council had already approved to support, which are headphones for Mrs. Hoekstra and tarps for Mme Ertel. She found reasonable deals and shared the suggested items with the parent members through email. However, she will not purchase the items until the students come back to school in person.

Susan also looked for potential online fundraisers since it seems so hard to introduce any kind of fundraisers to school this year. She contacted Indigo Chapters to inquire about their Fundraiser Program and asked whether their fundraising events could be held virtually. As for the events, where invited guests from our school can purchase items from Indigo and our Council can get 15% of the total purchases. She was told store events are on hold until they reopen. However, their e-gift cards fundraiser through FlipGive can still be used online. She will look into that.

School Council has had a confirmation from the OCDSB that we will receive the annual grant of \$500 from the Board. Last year's \$500 was planned to be spent for partly financing Scientists in School family night on April 16, but the event was cancelled.

In total the school council has \$1000 in grants, which we can spend on guest speakers, virtual social events, books or any other activities that support parent involvement and communication in the school community.

Also, we have been updated on the PRO Grant for this school year. The Province has provided the school District with about \$40,000. Funds will be used to facilitate speaker nights. Our School Council can choose from a centrally-located list, and OCDSB will procure the speaker and facilitate hosting the virtual night under the School Council's leadership. We will be responsible for promoting the night, and we will provide a report back to the district. We may choose to work collaboratively with other School Councils to host the night with a speaker that would serve both communities. The night will be broadcast on YouTube live stream.

Some of the subjects that we can apply to have speakers for are technology, mental health, equity and parenting. More details will be shared later when our Council gets more updates.

1. Treasurer's Report

Naoko reported the balance remains the same in the account as \$5797, 96.

A check of \$20 will be written to Susan to reimburse her for the pizza refunds.

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2. Online Learning - The Second Round

Colin reported that 200 kids of Blossom Park School are using Google Classrooms; everything has been good.

Before the December break, Colin had asked the students to identify who would be requiring tech material. The school got 130 Chrome Books first day back.

99% of the tech was distributed.

Students' engagement has improved significantly; educators push themselves to deliver content, as usual, in a good way.

Colin reported that most classes joined Google classroom; they have become familiar with Google Meet. Some students are struggling with connection, but educators are helping them resolve the problems. Educators are tweaking their practice to meet the demands of the new situation.

Colin recommended that parents of students who face problems or difficulties using the e-learning platform can contact the school, and the school would be ready to support them resolve the issues.

3. Special Classes

Caroline mentioned that special education students and BIP students have been allowed to have in-person learning. Both Mr. Gibson and Ms. Trotechaud have students attending in person.

Safety measures at school are in place. Only authorized staff are in the building and they are wearing the PPE; no other visitor is allowed inside the building. The staff meet the students at the doors after their parents drop them off, Caroline reported.

Caroline said the process of planning for the next year started, passing all the information about student transitioning to grade 8 via high school information sessions. Also, parents can attend the Kindergarten Information Night to learn about the program at our school.

Caroline mentioned that the registration for middle-French immersion program which start in grade 4.

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Caroline said that no transfer from another school is currently accepted because Blossom Park School is full this year, but people can always apply and there is a process to follow.

Caroline also talked about ELD, a program that she has requested for our school. It is an English Literacy Development Program intended to support students who have missed all or some of their schooling or who cannot yet read and write in their first language at an age-appropriate level. Many refugee families whose children have had limited prior schooling will benefit from this program. The administration usually recommends sending kids who need to follow ELD to Sawmill Creek school. Seven students were qualified from Blossom Park School to join the program; after completion, five students will return to our school.

Caroline added that starting February 11, 2021, report cards will be accessible on the Parent's Portal; no hard copy will be printed unless requested by the parents. For more information, parents can still contact the administration.

Susan recommended resending the instructions on how to register in the portal in both English and Arabic. It needs to be clear for the parents that printed copies will be distributed only upon request.

4. Students' Suggestions

Safa reported that this year is not like any other year, of course. It is hard because everyone has to stay at home. Educators are doing a great job either working one on one with the students or in groups.

Andi from Grade 8 added that online classes are not that different from in-person learning and they are a good alternative that does not take a way from education. He reported that educators are always there to support students.

Andi added that Gym session is a miss. It would be a good idea to find a way to engage in some exercises online during classroom program.

Colin added that he will work on the idea; next week he'll send an email to Andi to get older students involved in leading an active workout time online.

Susan asked whether it would be possible to engage more than one classroom in the workout time slot at once (usually falling between 1:40 pm and 2:20 pm).

Andi pointed out that the schedule sometimes changed and sent late to the students, which could be confusing to students; sometimes he joined the class late as a result. He asked if it would be possible to get the schedule posted on Google Classroom (Monday to Friday).

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Safa commented that she doesn't like independent work; she prefers group work in in-person learning.

Dina, a student, asked if the school is going to be back in-person or not, because she didn't get the confirmation yet. Caroline responded that tomorrow she would get the communication from the Ministry of Education Ottawa.

Andi highlighted the problem of the need to find a way to provide access to books for students who would like to read. He asked if it would be possible to go to school during the e-Learning to pick up a book from the school library. Caroline responded that unfortunately it's not possible, and suggested that Ottawa Public Library has good variety of books that can be accessed online.

Dina suggested Epic app.

Dina reported that some students use chat to talk outside the topic. That is sometimes distracting to other students.

5. Outdoor Seating Project

Based on our previous discussion regarding the teachers' requests, it was important to address the need for an outdoor seating arrangement and shade structure plan.

Our school had a similar large-scale project for a school yard play structure in the past. To learn more about how our Council tackled that project, Susan contacted previous members in the School Council. The project was in 2018, and it cost about \$55,000. \$10,000 was provided by the Council, and the rest was money from the school Board that was probably earmarked for schools in high need areas.

Caroline had contacted the OCDSB to learn more about what would be required to accomplish such a project, and she was told that the Board would provide us with the design which includes boulders, mulch, logs and picnic tables. The project will cost around \$50,000. Adding a shade structure would cost \$100,000.

All agreed that the project is too expensive to be covered financially by the School Council.

One suggestion was to consider it a long-term project, and to commit to setting aside some money every year to save for it.

Naoko estimated it might take us two or three years or even more before we may be able to have the money needed.

Susan suggested we need to think of a practical substitute that can be used by kids as soon as possible once they go back to in-person learning. We can have portable foam seats as a

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temporary solution. She will contact the OCDSB to have more information, as a lot of points are not clear to us.

To support the well-being of the students, Susan will work on a newsletter/article that will be distributed monthly to parents. Each newsletter will focus on a specific topic. The first one will focus on Sleep and its importance, as a lot of kids come to school tired a result of not getting enough sleep. Some stay up late to play video games, for example. Parents need to be aware of the importance of the issue. She wondered if grade 7 and 8 students might be interested in one!

Susan contacted FundScrip www.fundscrip.com as another way to do online fundraising. Last year we started a Paper Program FundScrip group and we closed it shortly afterwards as it was difficult to distribute and collect forms as a result of the teachers' strike. This year she was told that our supporters (parents and staff) needed to commit to buying \$500-\$1000 a month of groceries, gas and household items. This seems to be too hard to commit to right now.

Naoko suggested Amazon Associate Program that also provides a similar service as Fundscrip but their policy is different. The main challenge is to keep advertising the program and reminding the parents to buy from Amazon through our link.

Susan will be sending out two surveys, one to the parents and the other to the staff and teachers. The surveys can give the School Council an idea about what is needed and how to support.

6. Next meeting

Susan suggested the date of the next meeting on Wednesday February 17 at 5:00 pm. It will be confirmed by email.

The meeting was adjourned around 6:33 pm.