

Meeting Minutes of Virtual Blossom Park School Council Meeting Wednesday February 17, 2021 at 5pm

Prepared by: Naoko Nakamura

1. In attendance

- Susan Fattal: Chair
- Naoko Nakamura: Treasurer
- Nabi Habibi: Council Member
- Caroline Theriault: The Principal
- Colin Halsall: Vice Principal
- Kirsty Vince: Teacher's Representative
- Rebecca Cavaciutti: Teacher
- Tammy Draper: Teacher
- Andi Kinnear: Student
- Safa Basil: Student
- Two Blossom Park Parents

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Susan started the meeting by welcoming everyone.

The principal requested making a correction on page 5 of January minutes. The English Literacy Development Program ELD has been requested, but has not been approved yet! Susan took a note of that and will make the necessary changes.

Both the Agenda and Minutes were approved by everyone and seconded by Naoko.

3. Chair's Update

- Outdoor seating and shading project:

Susan sent an email to the OCDSB to get more information regarding the project. The information that we have so far is that the OCDSB can provide the design and materials; the cost will be around \$50,000. Adding the shading will cost around \$100,000.

She inquired about the cost, design flexibility, other school-approved possibilities for shades, funding, outsourcing, and possibility of having a smaller project that can suit our budget that

can be approved by the Board. She followed up with another email. She has not received any response yet.

The project is quite expensive for us. Suggested options:

1. We could commit to setting aside some money to save for the project on a yearly basis. Naoko had mentioned that it would take at least 2-3 years for us to save such an amount of money.
 2. To find smaller, more affordable projects and ask OCDSB for approval. Can we purchase some benches, have them properly installed and approved by the Board?
 3. To forget about the project for now and get portable foam pads for the students to sit on.
- 3 tarps were purchased - Mme. Ertel is happy with them.
 - Susan had asked Mrs. Vince to see if one or two teachers could attend our meeting. Mrs. Cavacuitti and Mrs. Draper volunteered to join the meeting today. Mme Storey sent a message to be read on her behalf by Mrs. Vince.
 - Susan sent out surveys to teachers and parents to find out what is really needed that we should be aware of to support.
 - Newsletter - Susan is still working on it and will finish it next week. She is thinking of working on two on the same topic; one is directed towards the parents, while the other will be sent to G7 & 8 students. The upcoming theme is "Sleep". If any of us have any idea for topics, she would like them to be shared.
 - We received a \$500 parent involvement grant from OCDSB. We now have a total of \$1,000 in grants (including last year's) in our account. We have been informed that we do not have to spend it this year if we prefer in-person over virtual events. We do not have to provide a report about that at the end of the school year.
 - PRO Grant: Funds will be used to facilitate speaker nights. Councils can choose from a centrally-consolidated speakers list. Susan had shared with the members the list from the Parent Involvement Report. More information will be shared with the Councils early March, regarding how to access the money and the application process. Susan will keep us updated.
 - Susan Contacted Scientists in School to learn more about their virtual workshops. Will discuss that later in the meeting.

4. Treasurer's Update

The current amount is \$6,435.96. However, two cheques are being processed by the bank. The actual amount should be **\$6,149.37**.

5. Principal's Update

- We had some changes recently:
 1. G1 - 3 students are now required to wear a mask at school. It is going well.
 2. Gym has opened up. Teachers are feeling safe and have the choice of running the gym classes either in the gym or outside.
- Last Friday was PA Day and teachers had a training and rich discussions focused on Equity and Indigenous Education, and health and safety matters.
- Middle French Immersion: We keep accepting students throughout the year, but we need the number now for staffing reasons.
- Report cards access is being delayed but will become available tomorrow.
- Tuesday Feb 16 was a Snow Day and we had 54 students out of 307 students. Parents are encouraged to go on Google Classroom for students to continue learning at home.
- One of the teachers has been running a sport-based social skill program by offering collaborative social skill games; the class that has been offered only for primary and junior grades is now being introduced to middle-grade classes as well.

Vince Principal's Update:

- The office administrator Mrs. Glutch has made a huge effort to collect the Chromebooks that were sent home to the students during the online learning, and she has been able to collect almost all of them: 198 Chromebooks.

6. Teacher's Update and Teachers' Perspective:

Mrs. Draper:

- COVID safety - Students have an opportunity to wash hands before lunch. Before Christmas, the challenge was that lots of students were talking to each other during lunch time without a mask. After the school resumed, students seem to be more aware and careful. They try to practice safer ways of talking at lunch time.
- Outdoor recess and activities - due to wearing mittens, hand sanitizing has become not so consistent.
- What is missing this year the most is group work, especially in science, geography, and language art classes.
- Keeping students 2m apart is extremely difficult due to the limited space and it is hard to keep students conscious about the rule.
- Students seem to be happy to be back but nervous at the same time.
- Teachers do not know what is going on with students' life as they are private about it.

Susan asked the principal if there is someone in the school that the students know they can talk to if they have any issues. Mrs. Theriault said that usually their educators (Classroom teachers) usually take that role. The relationship between the students and their teachers is

very important, so their classroom teachers are the best caring adults for students. The school also has a social worker as well as Cross Roads, which serves students up to 12 years old.

Mrs. Draper mentioned that she uses Zones of Regulation; students can discuss their feelings by colours depending on how they feel. Some teachers use this method to check on how their students are emotionally doing every morning.

Teacher's Representative Mrs. Vince:

- She has received two requests from teachers:
 - Mme. Storey - Headphones for her class
 - Mrs. Dineen - NoteFlight - an online tool for teaching music which has not been currently approved by the board. Susan mentioned that Canterbury High School has been using it and it is good. We have to find out the price of the subscription.

- She read a letter from Mme. Storey talking about her class of MFIG4:
 - Using Zones of Regulation
 - Gives students a chance to express their feeling
 - Concerned about students' social/emotional well-being and challenges at home
 - Discussing how we could make a difference such as going for a walk rather than focusing on something that is out of our control

Mrs. Draper:

She talked about Roots of Empathy, which is a 40-minute program that develops empathy in children. She will use it during her science class to let everyone have a chance to share their feelings.

Teachers are worried about not being able to cover all the curriculum for this year. However, it seems that students' mental health is more important than that. We sometimes have to slow down for what is needed right now.

Mrs. Vince mentioned that Mrs. Erin Jehan has invited some guest speakers. Two weeks ago, she invited a speaker to talk about race and equality.

Andi commented that it was a great workshop and his classmates were 100% focused and they all learned a lot on the topics.

Mrs. Jehan is having another speaker, an author, this Friday.

Mrs. Vince said that exercises have really helped the students.

Teachers are trying to check in how students are doing at home. It may be helpful to use Zones of Regulations at home, too.

Mrs. Cavaciutti:

- We are happy to be back at school.
- Her class is a group of movers. Some of them did not seem to be themselves during online learning.
- During the virtual school, she noticed that some of her students had just got out of bed and were not being completely ready to come into class.
- Back to the routine is a good thing for everyone
- Number one priority is students' mental well-being. Mental health comes from students' being with their friends. She also agrees that sometimes curriculum cannot take priority.
- Opening the gym has been great.
- She noticed that class to class relationships are disconnected this year. For some students, it has been difficult not to be able to see their friends in another class.

Mrs. Vince:

There are some great things happening even through the Internet.

Andi (a student):

- All of his classmates are following guidelines.
- Before the winter break, they were sad about the splits of yard during the outdoor recess. But they are now back together and very happy about it.
- Ms. Merch has started a new gym class and it has been fun. Everyone wears a mask and hand sanitizes in the gym class.

Susan presented the results of the surveys she sent out to teachers and parents last week:

- 10 teachers/staff and 13 parents participated.
- The challenge that the parent participants are facing the most is helping their child keep healthy routines.
- The challenge that their children are facing the most at school is lack of motivation.
- The challenge that most teachers/staff are facing the most at school this year is dealing with students' behavioural issues.

Susan will send the results to the members and the school administration, and will make a summary of the results and send it to parents at school.

Feedback

Naoko commented that some parents may not realize that their children are also stressed out and let them have their home as an outlet for their stress although we, the parents, want to be strict with our children.

Mrs. Cavaciutti:

- Her 5-year-old child cannot handle virtual learning at home. A huge thing is missing this year, which is corroboration with their peers. They learn so much from other children.
- Communication between her and students' parents was cut off this year and she does not hear much from them by email. She wants families to know what they have been doing at school.
- Parent-Teacher virtual meeting worked so well in the fall.

Safa (a student):

- Google Meet (virtual classes) was helpful, but it is much more helpful to go in person to learn and organize work.
- Outdoor recess implementation (mixing different senior classes) is great and she can be with her friends now.

Susan mentioned that different cultures may have different ways of dealing with behavioural issues at home. Some parents may not be able to detect the signs of issues or may not know how to deal with these issues.

7. Scientists In School

We were supposed to have them and hold a family science night in April, 2020 but it got cancelled due to COVID. They moved their workshops to virtual. In person workshop was offered last year for \$1,360 (we were planning to use last year's \$500 grant for it).

New virtual workshop:

- Kids are in classroom and number of attendees are capped up to 27.
- They use Microsoft Team as their platform.
- 60-minute long workshops.
- Science kit bags are shipped to school.
- \$220 / class no matter how many students in the class (up to 27).

They also have another program called Virtual Family Science Night:

- 15 house holds + the principal
- 60 mins long workshop
- \$1,280 (calculated to \$320/class)

We need to coordinate with the school if we decided to go ahead with the workshops.

Feedback:

Mrs. Draper:

It is supposed to be related to the science curriculum. What part do they cover and when are we offering this workshop? ELS students may not have enough level of comprehension in English to follow the steps in the workshop.

Naoko:

Although there will be an instructor on the screen, students will definitely need their teachers to ask for hands-on help. This type of workshop is likely more beneficial to older students. The cost for 14 classes (G1 - 8) will be around \$3,080. We have to discuss the budget as well.

Principal:

It would be great to have a workshop like this at school. Teachers will be able to give their students a hand during the workshop if needed as they wear protective equipment. However, we would have to ask all teachers if they would feel comfortable or are willing to have this workshop or not first.

Next Meeting is suggested to be on March 17 at 5pm. The date will be confirmed by email.

Meeting adjourned around 6:30 PM.