

Blossom Park Public School
Parents School Council Meeting
On Thursday, October 21st, 2021 at 5pm

1. Attendance:

Susan Fattal: Chair

Naoko Nakamura: Secretary and Treasurer

Ayan Haji Egeh: New Parent Member

Caroline Theriault: Principal

Camelina Falcucci: Vice Principal

Seynab Hersi, Zeina Hosny, Masa Alfarawati, and Sedra Alrajab: Student Representatives

And three other parents.

2. Welcome and Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

- Susan welcomed everyone to this meeting and introduced the new members.
- Ayan introduced herself. She is a new parent member in the Council. She has two children at Blossom Park and joined school in Sept 2019.

Sedra introduced herself. She will join Seynab, Zeina and Masa as a student representative in the Council. She is in grade 8 French Immersion.

- Approval of agenda and last month's minutes.

3. Chair's Update:

- Caroline forwarded to Susan an email from one of the parents who attended last meeting, regarding the outdoor classroom project. He suggested using logs as a seating and said that would be possible to source a load of logs for a good price. Susan communicated with him and he told her he contacted a lumber person that he knows, but hasn't had much luck. He would try to contact another source.

- **Garden Towers:**

- Susan contacted **ONFE** (Ottawa Network for Education), who run classroom garden programs. They are currently in discussions with the Board to see the possibility of running the program this year. They don't have any available towers for now but will put our school on the waiting list. They expect to start growing seedlings in January.
- She also contacted **Parkdale Food Centre** and asked them about their Growing Futures Garden Tower Program. They ran the program about 5 years ago. Some schools gave up their towers due to the pandemic, so they can redistribute them on a long-term loan basis. (We will discuss that later in the meeting.)

- **Facebook Closed Group:**

Susan contacted Sawmill Creek School Council's chair and asked about their experience with their Facebook closed group.

They chose Facebook as a social media platform as their parents are more likely to use it. Parents are asked two questions to verify that they are from the school. The page has three admins.

In case our School Council decided to go ahead with the idea, it would be used for notices, reminders and important links; email would still remain our main medium of communication with the parents. It would help us keep in touch with our community. We can learn about our parents' preference through a questionnaire.

Sawmill are planning to have a fundraiser in the spring, where a metal recycling company leaves bins on the school yard for community members to drop off metal or e-cycling. Sawmill's chair requested our help to promote the drive through our school community when their fundraiser is ready to go.

- **Registered Charity:**

During last meeting, Anita asked about the possibility of registering our School Council as a charity. Susan checked the OCDSB's policies and procedures:

3.4(b). "The School Council...operating as a representative entity but may not be incorporated or be registered as a charity."

We cannot be registered as a charity, but it is possible to set up an on-going donation item on School Cash Online.

Susan contacted the Board and communicated with two senior financial analysts to find out more about the possibility. Both recommended setting up an online campaign through the online platform Charitable Impact.

It is a better option as it can automatically issue tax receipts that are approved by CRA. School Cash Online receipts are not CRA compliant. They will require a lot of work by the school administration and the Board.

The OCDSB can set up a web page for us on Charitable Impact, and we'll send the link to parents and staff for donations. The page charges 2.8% service charge. Most schools that have signed up feel the cost is totally worth it for the time and paperwork saved.

The Board will be the sole admin of all accounts; when there is a need to transfer funds, it will be done through the Board.

Susan suggested setting up the page initially as a generic donation page; we can change that later when needed and target a specific purpose.

Naoko: Probably only businesses within our community would pay a big amount, and wonder if paying the 2.8 percent fee would be worth it.

Principal: Issuing the tax receipts is a great benefit.

Susan: Some would rather pay money to the School Council directly through donation rather than buy items they don't need.

Vice Principal: She'd rather do the receipts. Open to both ways.

Naoko: It would attract someone who would like to donate a big amount and use the receipt for their tax file for sure.

Ayan: It is a good idea! And she believes that our community is generous.

Susan mentioned an example of a school that used the service. They set the target of \$7000. We shouldn't compare schools, though. Each school Community is different.

4. Principal's Update:

- The IEP reports have been finalized and will be sent home tomorrow with the students who are part of the program.
- Progress reports are going home next week.
- A new teacher, Mme. Dorman was hired for Middle French Immersion G5 class. Another part-time position is being hired and the interview is taking place tomorrow.
- COVID update: We are following the rules as closely as possible. Gym will be open for use by individual classes; teachers will choose how they will utilize the space.
- An Ottawa Health nurse visited us last week. They were very happy with most things at our school. Just a few things to tighten up for improvements. It is great that there has been no positive COVID cases so far.
- Parents have to wear a mask when they visit school and when they pick up their kids at the kiss and ride area. We all have to work hard to continue to keep schools open.

Vice-Principal's Update:

Students worked on cleaning up the leaves in the front of the school as part of the Cleaning the Capital Program. It is a nice way to help our community, and kids enjoy doing it.

Masa (student): Most of us are anxious about going outside for lunch. Hope that we can do it in the next cold months just like last year.

Principal: We have not heard anything from the board regarding it yet.

Sedra (student): Do we know if we can have a picture day this year? Last year it was cancelled.

Principal: The decision will be made soon.

Zeina(student): If the students are all fully-vaccinated, can we have more advantage of doing the class pictures?

Principal: We have to have consistency from school to school at elementary level.

Susan: We can arrange to have picture composites if picture day is hard to do now. Kids who wish to participate can bring their photos, which will be assembled together along with their teachers' pictures. Pictures with the class are a beautiful memory to keep.

Zeina(student): We have started a yearbook club and we are enjoying it. There are two separate groups this year.

Naoko: Suggestion: Fairness is very important in the yearbook, and we have to make sure that every single student is covered.

Seynab(student): 10 students are working on the yearbook.

Susan: Suggestion: It might be a good idea to have one or two leaders to manage the group. Important to include everyone, not only a group of friends. Ask people to provide you with small comments and ideas to add to the yearbook.

Zeina(student): The pictures we took for the yearbook are from our school activities. Pretty sure that most of the people are in them. Four of us can ask Mr. Gibson to help us take pictures outside during the breaks.

Sedra(student): We were able to do some sports last year. If we manage to wear a mask, is there a possibility for us to try some sports?

Principal: Waiting to see.

Seynab(student): Can we have a sports team? Separate into teams for example at lunch time.

Principal: Ms. Murch used to do a sports club. It is important to keep the cohorts separate. One cohort at a time. Important to follow COVID protocol.

5. Treasurer's report:

The balance has not changed since last meeting: \$4,027.55. We are reserving \$200 for the outdoor class project, which makes the usable amount: \$3,827.55.

Principal has \$8,000 in the school account for us to use towards the outdoor class project.

Asia (a Participant): Any updates on the art club?

Sedra (student): Is the art program something done during the school hours? Or, after school?

Principal: It's not an art club or program; probably a virtual art show. It is a work in progress.

6. Matters of discussion:

A. Garden towers:

- Garden towers are hydroponic growing systems based on water and nutrients and is temp-regulated. The system allows us to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs or flowers throughout the year indoors or outdoors.
- Parkdale Food Centre has a garden tower ready for us if we want it. The tower is for free; it is going to be offered to us on a long-term loan basis. We will have to purchase the materials for the tower at our cost. A coordinator will provide us with a materials sheet. Cost for the materials is estimated to be around \$100 to cover about 6 months of use.
- We need to know how many teachers are interested in it, and how is it to be funded. Should we go ahead and get the available tower or should we wait until after the winter break?

Vice-Principal: The sooner the better. In terms of the amount of plants that grow, the sooner time is better. After the winter break, we will have some vegetables grown.

Seynab (student): Working on outdoor garden stuff might be useless now because snow is coming soon. The tower will be great for now.

Susan: Can the school cover the cost for the materials needed?

Principal: The school can pay for the materials no problem. We can go ahead and get it now. We won't have any problem finding the classes that would be interested in this program.

Susan: How about the Solutionary Workshops? They are \$150 for a single workshop, and \$300 for a series of workshops for the same group. Each workshop should accommodate less than 40 kids. Handling 40 kids was challenging for them. Topics can cover different age groups.

Principal: Older students Grade 5 and up would be more appropriate. Each class has about 20 students. 8 to 10 at most workshops would be needed. Let's try 8 workshops.

Susan: Will negotiate the price and try to get \$300 for separate workshops or even less. Can the school help with funding them?

Principal: We can share the cost on the workshops.

B. Our Input for Board's Appropriate Use of Technology Policy Revision:

The Board is seeking our School Council's input for the purpose of revising the current [Appropriate Use of Technology Policy](#).

Susan is to fill out and send a form to OCDSB with Council's suggestions in this regard. To start off the conversation, she shared a document with suggested points for discussion: [Proper Technology Use Policy Revision - Blossom Park Suggestions](#)

Susan: How is this policy usually implemented? Are there any practical measures in place to raise awareness and let the students know what they are allowed or not allowed to do when they use OCDSB accounts?

Principal: Students' use of technology is usually handled and monitored within the classroom by the teacher. There are no specific measures in place. We don't hear that we are getting a webinar or anything to teach kids how to use the technology. Staff learn about proper use of technology and online safety during one of the PD day sessions.

Seynab (student): We are not specifically taught, but we are used to using the technologies from a young age.

Vice-Principal: Cyberbullying and online safety are embedded in the health curriculum of intermediate classes.

Susan: Younger kids should learn about how to deal with cyberbullying as well. Also, there is a real need to teach all kids about their rights and responsibilities before holding them accountable.

Naoko: Good to highlight the points of Susan's concerns as a feedback, as the board's clauses are very general.

Zeina(student): Our teacher would take away our devices if we are not using them correctly. Are we allowed to use our email for personal use?

Principal: Parents and students sign an appropriate use of technology consent form at the beginning of the year. They often run into what they are using at home vs school. It does not matter where it is or who is looking and etc. Digital ethics are the same no matter where you are.

Vice-Principal: Anything done using OCDSB accounts or devices is monitored. District has the power to shut down the account, whether it is for school use or personal use. Always think of it.

Susan: The consequences for misusing technology should not be the same for adult users versus student users. The policy should address student users separately.

Ayan: Some clauses are very generic. We need to make sure to inform kids of how to use technology appropriately. Signing the form is not enough; it has to be a continuous effort. Kids need to be reminded. Could the Board install a kind of filter to handle online safety?

Susan: Will include this feedback in the form.

Naoko: Students should be informed of the Board overseeing their privacy, such as personal emails.

Sedra (student): She heard that you could derestrict the restrictions.

Seynab (student): The school has some restrictions but not a lot. They should tell students that whatever they access, the Board can see it.

Principal: There are several filters already; however, the filters seem to be working in a reactive rather than proactive mode. Some social media platforms are not filtered and are influential in

a bad way, such as some apps that encourage vandalism at school. If students find something inappropriate, they should talk to an adult about it. If there is a suspicion, the Board has the right to access personal accounts.

Susan: The Board should be very clear as to when they have the right to access the accounts or the emails.

Zeina(student): Students should watch out for it, for example on Tiktok, younger kids cannot understand what the video is saying and they copy them without knowing the meaning of it.

Ayan: A more efficient filter is needed. It has to be more proactive.

Susan: We need a persistent process at our school; digital awareness and digital ethics classes with clear instructions that correspond to different age groups. I wonder if the digital lead team at school could be involved in it.

Sedra (student): Maybe there is a way if I'm doing an assignment, it could be easier to type French letters and accents?

Ayan: If you are using Google doc, you can install Chrome extension for French accents. Once you add it to Google doc, it is easy to use.

Seynab (student): I use Easy Accents.

C. Teachers and Staff Application Day:

We usually have two Staff Appreciation events; the first one is typically planned for after the first or second council meeting and the other one is in May. We have been trying to find alternatives to the usual breakfast/lunch we used to have before COVID.

Last year it was on Dec 2. Is it OK to have it on the same day this year? - agreed.

Susan can make cards and send out emails. We could talk to some cafes to donate some items. Last year several cafes declined.

The students attending this meeting could get together and come up with something as well.

Sedra(student): Teachers could pick out the students who want to participate and those students could stay in to work on it during lunch break etc.

Zeina(student): We could prepare a slideshow.

Susan: How can you engage other students in it?

Zeina(student): We can see who is willing to corroborate in it.

Seynab (student): Each class doing a slide is a great idea. 4-5 students from each class could work on it.

Susan: We still have time and keep collecting ideas.

Sedra(student): It would be fun idea to go back to doing spirit days.

Principal: We can work on that soon.

Next meeting is scheduled on Thursday of November 18th at 5pm

The meeting adjourned at 6:33pm.