

Blossom Park School Council
Minutes of Meeting-December 21, 2022, at 5:00 P.M.

Present:

Susan Fattal: Chair
Tracy-Ann Johnson-Myers: Secretary
Caroline Rassi: Principal
Carmelina Falcucci: Vice Principal
Fatma Mahmoud: Parent Member

Absent: Dina Edrees Said; Phebe Oyetoran; Fatema Al-Hasan; Malak Saleh; Tammy Draper; Nabi Habibi

1. Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at **5:02 PM** by the Chair.

2. Approval of agenda and minutes.

- The agenda and minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Chair's Report

• **Makerspace Bins:**

- Susan shared the bin count and size suggestions with the council members. The principal suggested the Council pay for the bins; the school could later help if more bins were needed.
- A payment of \$200 - \$250 was approved in our previous meeting.
- The total payment for the purchased bins was \$207.60.
- We asked our families for a donation of items; a link to the suggested items in English and Arabic was shared with the parents in the weekly update.

• **School Council Insurance:**

- We received the annual liability insurance from the OCDSB Board, covering the period between November 1, 2022, and October 31, 2023.
- The insurance covers only sanctioned events.
- For more information about the insurance, the following link has been shared with the members: [School Council Liability Insurance](#)

• **Honey fundraiser:**

- The School Council had a quick honey fundraiser in the month of December. Parents paid via School Cash Online and staff paid in cash and cheques.
- Thirteen parents and eight members of staff participated in the honey fundraiser.
- After considering the 3% School Cash Online transaction fee, we (the Council) made a profit of \$127.83 (45%).
- At the time of our Council meeting, most parents had picked up their honey. Only three parents had not collected theirs.

- Susan received positive feedback regarding the honey fundraiser.
- In communication with parents, some expressed an interest in a maple syrup fundraiser, which we might consider for March of 2023.
- **Pizza Program:**
 - Pizza forms were sent out to parents in November. Because of the winter break, we accepted forms and payments for both December and January.
 - We had fewer orders (6 boxes less), but it has yet to be determined whether this is a result of the double order (December and January).
 - At least one student expressed to Susan that it would be difficult for her parents to commit to two months of pizza payment in December. Some students missed the deadline for submission of the pizza forms, so they will now miss pizzas for two months rather than one month.
 - Based on the number of pizza orders received in the month of December, and the feedback from students, Susan is of the opinion that the pizza payments should be done monthly instead of per term.
 - Tracy raised the question of whether there can be some flexibility regarding the deadline for pizza form submission.
 - Susan responded to say that provisions have been made in the past, based on recommendations from the teachers, to accommodate students who would have missed the pizza form submission deadline. Exceptions are also made for parents who reach out to the School Council for assistance through email or by contacting the office administrator. These provisions are made on a one-to-one basis. Exceptions cannot be made for all students.
 - Carmelina suggested that we communicate to parents that they can reach out to the School Council should they miss a pizza form submission deadline or need assistance with the pizza program.

- **Luv2Groove Funding Request:**

We received a funding request in the amount of \$739 from Caroline for the *Luv2Groove* event. The School Council members approved the amount via email communication but asked that future requests be made in advance so the Council can appropriately plan or determine whether it can cover the amount.

- Susan attended the identity showcase and lauded the students for their efforts and hard work in both the execution and presentation of their projects.
- Caroline questioned whether the School Council could include in its communications, a telephone number by which parents could contact us. This could make

communication easier between parents and Council and lessen the pressure on the front office staff.

- Parents often reach out to the school's front office and Sara usually assists or facilitates communication.
- Susan confirmed that she sometimes communicates with parents through the front office, and though she does not want to increase Sara's workload, this might be the most suitable form of direct communication with parents.
- Caroline asked if it would be okay for parents to leave a number with Sara so Susan can contact them. She believes that parents might be more comfortable if they can communicate directly with someone from the School Council. This will help to break down some of the communication barriers. Susan will contact Sara and inform her of the suggestion.
- Fatma asked about having a cash payment option instead of School Cash Online for fundraisers, as some parents are more comfortable paying in cash. Susan explained that payment for the honey fundraiser was collected via School Cash Online because it was a quick fundraiser and she wanted to make the process as simplified as possible. She also did not want to add pressure on teachers to collect money for the fundraiser, especially so close to the end of the school term.

4. Financial Report:

- Susan shared the financial report document with the members: [Financial Report December 21,2022](#)

5. Principal and Vice Principal's Report

Activities Debrief

- Scholastic Book Fair
 - Students and families very excited about their purchases
- Interests Showcase involving 10 classes
 - Students were very proud to share their interests/passions
 - Families and guests were very proud and impressed with the exhibits
 - Teachers learned a lot about the students
- Fire Safety Presentation to Kinders
 - A very informative presentation and engaging for that age group
- Song writing Workshop for Intermediates
 - Very engaging creative activity with local artist Craig Cardiff
- Ottawa Technical Secondary School presented to grade 8 students
- Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services Presentations

- As part of the grade 8 Health curriculum, they provided engaging and informative presentations to intermediates about social media and technology addictions
- Tutors in the classroom - Literacy and Numeracy
 - Funding for this program is provided by the Ministry
 - 2 wonderful tutors are currently working with select gr 1-8 students during the school day
- Big Brother program - supporting select students
- Volley Ball for Intermediate girls - Ms Jehan
- Floor Hockey for Junior and Intermediates - Mr Parsons and Mr Ruth
- Glee Club and Band continue with Ms Dineen
- Winter Concert today was fabulous

Upcoming Engaging Activities at BPPS

- Spirit week Dec 19-23 has generated lots of excitement
- Winter Ball tomorrow
- Secret Santa happening in select classes
- YOCISO will continue in January
- Artshine will begin in the new year for select grades 1-3 students
- Ridgemont HS will present to grade 8 students in January
- All Grade 8 students will select course for Grade 9 via Xello
- Winter Carnival in February
- Girls on the Run will start again in the Spring

6. Matters for Discussion

- **School's Communication with the Parents: Best Practices and Important Points to Consider:**
 - Susan acknowledged that the school is doing a very good job in communicating with the parent body and school community. She further explained that there are two forms of communication from the school to parents: news/updates and messages that require action (such as payments, consent forms or sending an item to school).
 - The school uses different forms of communication: Online, paper-form, oral and when teachers engage in written communication with parents through a note tote, journal or google classroom.

- Some parents prefer online communication while others prefer to receive information in paper format.
- She noted, however, that there are times when the message sent out to parents might be ambiguous. She cited the example of the *Love to Groove* communication that was sent to parents in November. Parents were encouraged to send a toonie with their child to help defer the cost of the sessions. Some parents received the communication while others did not. It was also not clear from the message if the toonie contribution was mandatory or optional. Ultimately, only a few students contributed towards the event.

She recommended the following protocols for communication with parents:

- News and updates can continue to be sent via email, but communication requiring action from parents should be sent via email and in paper form.
- The school could send a reminder to parents before the deadline and date of each event.
- All communication and statements must be clearly worded and free from any ambiguity. Susan offered to translate important messages to Arabic when needed, as this can help us reach more parents in our community.
- Urgent messages/updates should be sent as separate emails, and not part of the principal's weekly update.

Carmelina added that the school also uses daily announcements to communicate with students about events that are happening in the school. She further noted that we cannot force parents to pay for any fundraising events. We are a RAISE school—a school with many families from low socio-economic status. We can encourage parents to contribute, but we should also make it clear that if they cannot contribute, that is okay too. For any initiative that includes a cost, we can look to fundraising, sponsorship or the school's education funds to reduce the cost.

Caroline added that while it is important to utilize different forms of communication with parents, the school tries to limit the use of paper. The paper cost for the school is already very high, so while the school administration wants to accommodate those who do not have the technology or who aren't comfortable with technology, we have to limit the number of paper-based communication sent out by the school to parents.

Tracy agreed with Caroline that the use of paper communication is like a double-edged sword: we want to reach the parents, but we also want to protect the environment. She wondered, however, if, at the beginning of each term, the School Council could send home one set of paper invitations to parents, introducing them to the School Council and inviting them to join our monthly meetings. This would be done only at the beginning of the term and would not be our regular means of communication with the parent body.

Bullying in School: Understanding, addressing and Responding to Bullying in School

- Susan explained that discussing this topic today is not intended to imply that we have a major bullying problem at Blossom Park; however, like other schools in the district, we do have issues with bullying.
- She highlighted a few incidents at Blossom Park and asked Caroline to explain the school's approach to bullying and whether students at Blossom Park are aware of what to do should they become a victim of bullying. At the beginning of the school year, teachers dedicate time in their classrooms to speak to the children about bullying. She further noted that based on observation, the students they address are the bullied students who are usually taught what to do when they are being bullied. There are fewer consequences or messages directed towards bullies or potential bullies.
- She inquired of Caroline whether students at Blossom Park are aware of how to report bullying, and when to report it. How do students know, for example, when an incident is bullying or just someone being mean?
- Susan also articulated that there needs to be communication with parents about how the school handles bullying, and how they can respond should their child fall prey to bullying.
- She also suggested a session at the school to shed light on how to handle bullying. An expert on the topic could come in and speak with parents, teachers and students.

Both parent members, Fatma and Tracy, welcomed the discussion on bullying and explained that their children have experienced bullying at school. Tracy further explained that she was hesitant about addressing the matter with the school, mainly because she wasn't aware of the proper channels to take in reporting the matter.

Caroline explained that the school takes bullying and incidents very seriously because they want all students to feel happy and safe at school.

The lines of communication are always open, and parents are welcome to contact their child's teacher and also the Principal or Vice Principal, but the first line of contact is the child's teacher. The teachers need to understand and know how the child is feeling.

The teachers will communicate with the Principal and Vice Principal if they feel the matter is above what they can handle or easily solve.

Caroline noted that bullying happens often, and bullies know what to do and how not to get caught, hence why it is important to empower the bullied to come forward so that they can receive help. The aim is to empower the affected students to come forward.

There are approximately twelve teachers and staff supervising students in the yard during recess. Students, both the bullied and also the bystanders are encouraged to say something if they witness acts of bullying while at school. Caroline made a presentation to the Council on bullying and the school's approach to bullying:

Progressive Discipline

- What is bullying:
 - https://www.ocdsb.ca/news/bullying_awareness_and_prevention_wiek_in_ontario

- Our (Blossom Park's) process **when we become aware of an incident:**
 - Connect with the affected student to ensure that they feel safe;
 - Inform their parent that we have been made aware and that we will investigate, with the reassurance of a follow-up once more information is available.
 - Investigate the incident by interviewing all students involved and witnesses.
 - Bring the students for a restorative discussion around the following impactful questions
 - What happened?
 - What were you thinking at the time?
 - Who is impacted by these actions?
 - What will you do to repair the harm?
 - The parents of all involved are updated.
 - The incident is documented in our Progressive discipline binder.

- **Ongoing Education/Awareness efforts**
 - Students are always encouraged to inform teachers and any other adult in the school when they see or notice something wrong.
 - Our consistent messaging on the announcements and as we interact with students is: "if you see something, say something".
 - All staff on duty wear their vest/sash and Carmelina is outside every day at every recess as well as before and after school.
 - Students typically hesitate to come forward - this is why we provide daily reminders and provide safe spaces for students to share their concerns.
 - When the staff or a member of the administration becomes aware of any incident, it is addressed right away, and parents are always called.

At the end of Caroline's presentation, Susan suggested the school sends out a message at the beginning of the term, to parents, on how to handle bullying.

Susan thanked Caroline and Carmelina for their information on bullying and the good job they are doing with the children at school.

Caroline will include the information on progressive discipline in the January 2023 update.

7. Questions/Concerns/Suggestions

8. Suggested date for the next meeting: The suggested date for our next meeting is **January 18, 2023, at 5:00 pm** via Google Meet.

The Chair ended the meeting by wishing everyone success, joy and peace of mind. She also thanked members of the Council for their time and input.

9. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm.