

Blossom Park School Council
Minutes of Meeting
Wednesday November 15, 2023

Present

Susan Fattal: Chair and Treasurer

Fatma Mahmoud: Parent Member

Caroline Rassi: Principal

Carmelina Falcucci: Vice Principal

Tammy Draper: Teacher Representative

Absent

Mohammad Rasool Nasrat: Parent Member

1. Welcome

- The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by the Chair.
- Susan welcomed everyone.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda and minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Chair's Report

- **Pizza Program**
 - Pizza days started, as planned, on November 2nd.
 - All is going well! We have had less orders than anticipated.
 - Just a reminder that on Snow Days there is no pizza; pizza will be rescheduled to be on the next school day.

- **Family Pizza Dinner**
 - Meet the Teacher Night was successful, and we received positive feedback from some parents about the Family Pizza Dinner.
 - The School Council served free drinks to the participating families. The total amount paid is \$35.64.

- **Principal Profile**
 - The parent members in the council reviewed and approved this year's principal profile.
 - The approved document was shared with the families in the weekly update.

- **Ottawa 67's Game**
 - Last month we approved allocating up to \$410 to cover part of the cost for the trip.
 - The trip has been cancelled. Our school did not receive the subsidy, and the price went up from \$5 per student to \$20 per student.

- **Remembrance Day Ceremony**
 - Susan represented the council on November 10th ceremony and laid the wreath.
 - The Remembrance Day school assembly was well-organized.

- **PRO Grant Information**
 - We have received information regarding this year's PRO Grant (Parents Reaching Out Grant).
 - School Councils can apply to receive up to \$750 to fund a project or activity that engages parents and builds their capability based on specified criteria.
 - Last year we did not participate due to criteria and time limitation. This year, we have enough time to come up with ideas. The deadline is January 12th.
 - Susan encouraged all the members to share their ideas and suggestions. The topic will be discussed in our next meeting.

- **Luv2Grove Dance Workshops**
 - We have heard positive feedback about the workshops.

- We have allocated the amount of \$500 to support the activity. We are still waiting to know the exact amount needed before we prepare the cheque.

4. Financial Report

Susan shared November financial report with the council: [November Financial Report](#)

5. Principal and Vice Principal's Report

- **November 3rd PA Day Debrief**

The day was filled with rich discussion, hands-on learning, and collaboration. Here is what we focused on:

Mathematics

- We explored the continuum of expectations from kindergarten to grade 9.
- We worked in mixed division groups on solving math problems in an effort to enhance our math content knowledge.
- We collaborated to create math blocks to create a learning environment where students are excited to learn math

Centering Indigenous Perspectives Across the Curriculum

- The learning for K-6 teachers focused on appropriately incorporating Indigenous allies, methods, knowledge and perspectives across all subjects.
- This is in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action numbers 62 and 63 in Education for Reconciliation.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being for Intermediates

- We introduced the mental health literacy modules to grade 7 & 8 educators to ensure clear links to current practices and curriculum requirements.
- Resources and helpful information were provided to support the delivery of the mental health literacy modules to students.
- Intermediate educators explored opportunities to integrate student mental health activities and resources into everyday classroom learning.

Literacy for FSL

- FSL teachers explored effective teaching routines in FSL.
- They gained a better understanding of assessment tools in reading and explored possible next steps.

- They also explored resources that align with student needs.
- **Activities debrief**
 - Canterbury HS gave a fabulous Arts program presentation to our intermediate classes on October 19 and we all enjoyed attending their Art Showcase on October 24th.
 - Luv2Groove for all classes was a big hit. The students were really engaged and the instructors were very dynamic!
 - The amount that the School Council will pay for the workshops has not been calculated yet, since students are still bringing in the toonies. The final tally will probably be shared with the council by the end of the week.
 - The Intermediate Student Council is under way. The council members have been meeting regularly and they are currently working on establishing a Spirit Day theme for the school year. The council is composed of 24 grade 7 and 8 students and they meet every 2 weeks.
 - Ottawa Technical Secondary School (OTSS) presented their program to our grade 8 students on Nov 14
 - Ridgemont HS will present to grade 8 students on November 23
 - Ms Falcucci has launched a “30 day of Kindness” project where students are praised for random acts of kindness. When caught being kind, students get to write their name on a leaf and post it on their classroom tree. The class with the fullest tree will win a pizza party. 2nd prize is an extra gym period and the 3rd prize is an extra recess.

EQAO and School Climate Survey Data

A. EQAO:

- [Primary and Junior EQAO Assessment Reports](#)
- Caroline defined EQAO as an assessment that covers student learning and the knowledge and skills that are defined in the expectations of The Ontario Curriculum. This is a division assessment not a grade 3 or grade 6 assessment; it is intended to reflect student learning from grades 1 to 3 and from grade 4 to 6.
- All grade 3 and grade 6 students are expected to participate in this assessment, regardless of their language proficiency.

- Out of 319 students, we have 201 students who have the ESL designation.
 - 141 of those students are at ESL STEPs 1 and 2.
 - There are limited circumstances for students to be exempted from this assessment when approved by parents
 - Results are not reflective of teacher practice. They are intended to reflect the student's knowledge in relation to the Ontario curriculum.
 - We know that not all students took this assessment seriously. After COVID, the assessment has become an online user-friendly one; it has not been taken seriously by some students.
 - The results in Blossom Park do not represent the true ability of the students.
 - We are working with a Math coach and with a Reading Intervention teacher to help close gaps for students.
- Fatma commented on the nature of some EQAO questions that came in last year's assessment. Some questions were new and not familiar to the students; the students had not practiced them nor had any idea about them.
 - Caroline clarified that EQAO comes around every year and no one knows what to expect. Students do practice tests in the class using EQAO websites. Parents can also help their children at home by having access to those practice tests.
 - Caroline added that we cannot teach to the test. Teachers teach questions similar to those that will be in the test. Students create their own accounts before taking the actual tests. Some new questions might seem new and unfamiliar in the assessment; the format, however, is familiar.
 - Tammy said they did the practice tests a couple of times. Some questions are worded differently and come as a surprise to us. Also, the test comes at a time when the teachers have not completed all the math curriculum, so some students are not able to answer all the questions. That is part of the nature of the EQAO assessment. It is the same test for all students across Ontario; it is based on the curriculum with some variables.
 - Caroline pointed out that practicing for the test within the class is a personal perspective. Each teacher has their own way of preparing their students for EQAO. Teachers are professional, and they use their own judgement to meet those expectations in the curriculum. Every teacher (grades 1-8) has to have one hour of math every day.

- There are links to practice different goals, lessons and activities.
- The EQAO results are not only an assessment of the students' abilities but also an assessment of the validity of the curriculum; the data determines budgets to resources and reviews of the previous curriculum.
- Tammy explained that one of the things that we cannot ignore is the effect of the pandemic; there are still some gaps within the students.
- Carmelina said that EQAO has changed in the last two years and is now done using technology; every year they tweak it a bit. Help is offered to grade 3 and grade 6 students through a support group. Also, all needed accommodation is offered to students who have IEP Plans regarding using the devices.

B. Student School Climate (Spring 2022)

- 204 students participated (Junior and Intermediate grades 4 - 8)
- [Student School Climate \(Spring 2022\) / Key Insights](#)
- Caroline explained that the percentages in the survey provide important information to help the school address those issues in order to better understand what the needs of our students are. The survey results were explored during the last staff meeting; since then, plans have been discussed to address the issues.
- The survey is anonymous, but it still does not provide accurate information. It is hard to tell if the students who participated took it seriously or not. Also, not every student answered all the questions.
- Fatma asked if the elements of the survey were created by the school or the Board.
- Caroline replied that both student and parent surveys are created by a Board committee consisting of a data team. Surveys are then pushed out to schools in the entire school board.

C. Parent/Caregiver School Climate Survey (March 2023)

- 23 parents participated
- [Parent/Caregiver School Climate Survey \(March 2023\) / Key Highlights](#)
- Caroline said that the margin of error in the survey depends on how some questions were worded. She was not sure if a translated version was offered to our diverse parent community.

- In addition, it is hard to figure out the perspective through which our parents answered. For example, “School Discipline” is 16% in the survey; it is not clear what the perspective is. Another example is “Representation (Diversity)”, which is %26; it is not clear how accurate the result is; we are a very diverse school (staff and students)!
- The school is working on creating a Safe and Caring Committee to address the needs identified in the key highlights in both the Student and the Parent School Climate surveys.

6. Teacher Representative’s Update

- Ms. Dykes thanked the council for offering to cover part of the cost for the Ottawa 67’s Game trip. Unfortunately, the trip has been cancelled.
- Blossom Park online merch sale is still on until Sunday. T-shirts and sweatshirts are available for purchase. Sales, however, are not as much as previous years.
- Tammy received an email from Ms. Trotechaud regarding the council’s pizza program. Some families have more than one child at school and cannot cover the monthly cost of the pizza order. She suggested holding a one-day school-wide pizza sale.
- Susan explained that this year we have four pizza orders due to the logistics of pizza form and payment collection, the winter break timing and the need to have a separate pizza order during Ramadan. In the past, we used to do it monthly, but we changed that after we discussed it in previous meetings.
- We help our families and students in several ways. For example, the council covers the payment for the pizza orders of some students who cannot afford it. Also, we purchase some extra pizzas on pizza day and sell them to the students who want to buy them per slice.
- Tammy also received an email from Ms. Sow. She is working with her students on a financial literacy project and is asking for donated arts and crafts items to create a little store in the classroom.
- Susan will contact Ms. Sow to learn more about the project. We will ask for donated items from our families in the weekly update message.

7. Matters for Discussion

Helping the Students Get Ready for the EQAO Test

- Susan asked about when and how parents are informed about EQAO, and said it is not too early to provide this information to grade 3 and grade 6 parents. This way

they can learn about the nature of the assessment, which they might not be familiar with in order to help their children practice and get ready for the test.

- Caroline replied that choosing the timing of sending this communication is key in order to avoid generating stress or anxiety. The letter explaining everything is usually sent one month ahead of the test.
- Susan suggested writing the letter in a simplified straight-forward language and offered to translate it to Arabic to help our Arabic-speaking parents.
- Caroline will send Susan the English version of the letter for translation about a month before the EQAO assessment.

8. Questions/Suggestions

Susan suggested postponing the second topic for discussion for another meeting, and reminded the members to share their suggestions for the PRO Grant before our next meeting. She will share the PRO Grant info document with the members after the meeting.

9. Next Meeting:

Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday December 20th at 5 PM.**

Susan thanked everyone for their time and participation.

The meeting was adjourned at **6:16 PM.**