

# SAC Meeting - September 26, 2017 - 6:00pm

## **Attendees:**

School Officials: Beverly O'Brien (Principal), Carl Gambacort (VP), Kelli Helpert (VP), Tara Zwolinsky (Teacher/Librarian), Sheila Cary-Meagher (Trustee)

SAC Executive: Eilleen Buccholz, Teresita Link, Sophie Lafaille, Laurie Barnett, Sarah Jarrett, Nicolette Knight, Colin Foster

Angie Holstein, Camilla Sutton, Ameet Sengar, Dan Torrance, Jen Farr, Chantu Baier, Chad Wiseman, Margie Akens, Siobhan McMenemy, Susan Munn, Lisa Casino, Jenny Trivino, Beverley Grondin, Andrew Dybenko, Daniela Ferma, Veronica Bulger, Tanya Barrett, Rosalie Fine, Katy Dockrill, Marie Snyder, Amanda Cole, Courtney Radic, Erin Scott, Sara Tropea, Suzanne Krupchyn, Jill Hollingsworth

## **Welcome (Eilleen Buccholz)**

## **Elections (Sophie Lafaille)**

- Thanks to the outgoing SAC for their work over the last year.
- There was an influx of applications for SAC positions. The end result was every position was filled with no need for an election (all positions acclaimed).

The new council is:

Bev Grondin - Chair  
Tanya Barrett - Chair  
Chad Wiseman - Vice-chair Fundraising  
Jennifer Farr - Vice-chair Fundraising  
Daniella Fermo - Treasurer  
Veronica Bulger - Treasurer  
Colin Foster - Secretary  
Margie Akens - Secretary  
Ameet Sengar - Ward Rep  
Dan Torrance - Ward Rep  
Dawn Chapman - Parent Rep  
Jenny Trivino - Parent Rep  
Lisa Casino - Parent Rep  
Sue Munn - Parent Rep  
Elizabeth Achimah - Community Rep

## **Approval of Minutes (Colin Foster)**

- Motion to approve the posted minutes from the previous meeting. Approved.

## Treasurer's Report (Teresita Link)

- Last year SAC raised just a little under \$35,000. This was less than our target, but our experiment with QSP went poorly.
- \$19,000 is currently being held back for items that have been allocated but not yet spent. \$9,000 is set aside for a future play/musical.
- \$5,500 is currently in the reserve to start off the year's events.

## Principals' Reports

### Beverly O'Brien, Principal

- Thanks to the outgoing SAC.
- The 3 pillars the TDSB focuses on are "Achievement, Wellbeing and Equity." Each month, reports will be structured around these topics.

#### *Achievement:*

- The school has new diagnostic tools ("Leaps and Bounds") to help identify each student's challenge areas.
- Before your first parent interview, if your child has areas they are struggling in, you should receive a notification about that.
- EQAO is written by all Grades 3 and 6 students.
  - Generalized results are in showing that reading and writing has been solid. Numeracy numbers are static and need to improve. [Correction: trend was generally flat.] Full Results: [<http://bit.ly/DukeEQAO2017>]
  - We have Math Lead Teachers to help bring student abilities up provincial standards.
  - If your child wrote the EQAO, individual results will be mailed to your house shortly.
- The school's goal is to have 100% of kids in Grade 1 to be reading at grade level.
- Duke has 1.5 "Vice-Principal" positions (not 2) so both Carl Gambacort and Kelli Helpert are VP's 3/4 of the time and teach the other 1/4. Principal O'Brien also teaches a 40 minute session in the mornings.

#### *Wellbeing:*

- Need to look at how to support students in their efforts to arrive at school on time, particularly in Grades 4-8.

- We're working with the Caring & Safe Schools committee and teachers for ideas on how to improve it in a caring, not punitive, way.
- The Big Brothers program has been a huge success at Duke and they've asked to run the program here again in the coming year. The school is reaching out to Big Sisters to do the same thing.
- The Terry Fox walk is this coming Thursday.
- Cross Country meet is Friday.
- Orange Shirt Day is Monday, October 2.
- Equity is in focus. In very concrete ways, staff have been looking at bias and assumptions and developing action plans to improve equity. Plans will be written and shared.
- There is a learning coach at the school. They are focusing on the goals to be established.

### **Carl Gambacort, Vice-Principal**

- Universal screening for "gifted" program:
  - All students write a test in Grade 3 to screen for giftedness. This will happen in the first week of October. This is a multiple choice CAT test and individual scores will be reported back to families. If the student is above a certain threshold, the student moves on to further screening with the School Support Team and a more formal test is applied.
  - Q: Is admission to the gifted program achievement based? (Implied: It would be good if it wasn't strictly achievement based.)  
 A (VP Gambacort): It is partially achievement based but teachers may also identify students.  
 A (P Beverly O'Brien): More kids have moved forward to the gifted program last year than in previous years.  
 A (Nicolette Knight, SAC): It's very challenging; The TDSB has to have a specific objective guideline to identify atypical learning needs within a subjective and malleable learning environment.

### **Kelli Helpert, Vice-Principal**

- The TDSB has moved to a more inclusionary model. Special Ed. students were found to not have the same opportunities so these students are now spending more of their time in their homeroom classroom instead of being taken out for separate instruction.
  - The Home-School Program (HSP) students are those who are 2 grades below or greater than their peers. Up to 50% of their time was spent outside their homeroom classroom in smaller groups of kids.

Now educators go to the classroom to provide the needed instruction there.

- The school is bringing in "Integra" to help other students to understand what life with a learning disability is like.

- Q (Ben R.): What's the effect of this model for non-special needs students?

A (P Beverly O'Brien): Negligible. Only 1-2 students would leave for a small part of the day. You can ask your child's teacher if there are concerns about how that teacher is meeting the needs of all the students.

A (VP Kelli Helpert): This approach also helps kids who have an exceptionality, but haven't been identified. The expertise is now in the classroom to recognize that unidentified student.

- Q: So there an *extra* teacher in the class?

A (VP Kelli Helpert): Yes.

## Presentation

### Tara Zwolinsky (Librarian)

- Students have access to the Virtual Library and many other resources from home. [<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/library/>].
  - (This was an information-dense presentation. Only a fraction of the information could be captured here.)
  - Resources include Read and Write Gold, Active Inspire, WordQ, Google.
  - Access to the site is done through their student number and password. Passwords can be reset by dropping by the library.
  - Students can listen to audiobooks or read e-books.
  - Q: Who teaches the kids to read?  
A (Tara Zwolinsky): It's still teachers doing guided reading. This online service does not replace guided reading.
  - Q: What is guided reading?  
A: Reading with the child. Generally, in grades 1-3 kids are learning to read. In grades 4+, they are reading to learn.
  - Q (Teresita Link, SAC): At what grade does this start to be used?  
A: Grade 4.
- Book Fair Options:
  - A book fair can't practically be run because Duke now only has a half-time librarian.

- Two alternatives are using Scholastic for ordering books, or using the "Ella Minnow" (store on Kingston Road) to run our book fair. Generally, using Ella Minnow would have more advantages for Duke students.
- We'll likely start with an online book fair and then have a physical fair in May (probably for a week)

## **Other Business**

### **Code of Conduct / Dress Code (Morag Paton)**

- The wording has improved, but still uses troubling language.
- Major concerns include:
  - "The moral tone" is undefined as to whose morals these are, but probably middle class and probably white. We need to be aware of the biases we're bringing into policy.
  - References to "midriff". If you google for "midriff" only pictures of women come up. In a move towards equity, the wording needs to change.
  - Kelli Helpert suggested forming a subcommittee to review and revise, and bring a draft back to a future SAC meeting.
  - Kelli Helpert & Morag Paton will co-chair the committee.

### **A Student was badly hurt on a playground gate (Principal Beverly O'Brien)**

(Parent Vidya Kauri was absent, but she had sent a letter of concern to the school to address as the gate. Some parents had noticed it was problematic for some time.)

- The gate in question was the gate to the pre-school area which is to be used only by 18mo-30mo. The area is only supposed to be used for daycare and no children are supposed to be in the area unsupervised.
- The student who was injured went in unsupervised. They kicked the gate and it bounced back, hitting them in the face.
- The parent was satisfied with how the issue was being investigated and handled.
- The gate was not in disrepair but for further safety, the brackets that hold the gate will be welded to avoid slippage.
- Q: Should the gate open fully?  
A: No, it's not meant to do that.
- Q: Had problems with the gates been reported previously?  
A: No, no reports had been received.
- Q (Sophie Lafaille, SAC): What's Supervision like on the playground?  
A (VP Kelli Helpert): The yard-supervision schedule is posted in the office and

they are always wearing vests.

5-6 staff are outside during each period.

- Sheila Cary-Meagher: The latch has small but sharp pieces of metal on the surface left over from when it was cast. When the student was hit by the gate, these caused much worse damage than it would have otherwise. The school will have someone come in to grind these smooth.
- All playground safety issues should always be brought to the office.

[NOTE: This account of the incident relayed at the meeting has been contested by the parent.]

### "Artification" of the school (Dawn Hurley Chapman, SAC)

- There has been some discussion among parents to "artify" parts of the school, in particular adding murals in the bathrooms.
- Sheila Cary-Meagher: Historically, when this type of initiative is taken on in a school, graffiti goes down for a while, then as the art gets older you have to re-do it. Planned maintenance should be part of the plan.
- If you would like to get in touch to help out with this project please contact:

### Additional STEM (and other) Activities

- Q: Are there additional STEM programs for kids? Can Maker Kids come in and run a program?  
A (VP Kelli Helpert): We have staff with a lot of experience in this area; People who built the current STEM lab.  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): Because Duke is a big school, each month at the SAC meetings she'd like to focus on one area of the school to help parents feel more connected. Maybe next month we'll try to look at the STEM labs.
- Q: Are there any extracurricular STEM activities?  
A: Lego robotics club is starting up. More information to come.  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): There was also a lego club last year but we're not sure about this year yet.  
A: Hour of code is run every year. [<http://www.thinkduke.com/>]
- Q: How does a new program start up?  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): A teacher has to express an interest and decide to help run it.
- Q (Sophie Lafaille, SAC): Can parents run a program they are interested in?  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): Only with a teacher also running it.  
A (VP Kelli Helpert): For example, Pokemon club was run with Mr. Newhouse and parent Kelli Ackerman.

### Pool Update

- There have been 500 program registrations which is great, but we need to get to 100% for all programs if we can.
- The pool really is 28'C.
- Information about what programming is available and other information is on the Pool FaceBook Group. [\[www.facebook.com/groups/1774531576143436/\]](http://www.facebook.com/groups/1774531576143436/)

### **Classrooms are too hot**

- Q. Can windows just be left open to let the heat out at night.  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): No, the school must be secured. All windows must be closed at the end of the day.
- Q (Laurie Barnett): Is there anything better we can do?  
A (Sheila Cary-Meagher): Not much was offered to be done. There can be cooling stations. She's disappointed that more isn't done. Parent council should raise the issue to the TDSB for a solution better than moving kids around the school. The school could have a plan for days when there is high heat in the school. Create an alternative lesson plan with other classes.

### **Lead in the water at the school (Kelli Ackerman, SAC)**

- Q: I've been contacted by the Toronto Star about a story they are doing on the lead in the water at schools. What should I be telling them?  
A (P Beverly O'Brien): They can be directed to TDSB media relations to get answers to any questions regarding water safety.  
A (Sheila Cary-Meagher): Every school has to run water for 30 minutes to flush any lead out. There are new requirements coming in to test all fountains but there are 12,500 of them. As a result the TDSB is now moving to remove water fountains from classrooms (to reduce the number needing to be tested).