

**March 30, 2023**

**School Council Meeting Minutes**

**Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School**

Location: School Library - in person

Last Meeting: March 6, 2023

**Council Members Present:** Jill Hollingsworth, Sarah Lasch, Meghan Cox, Jeffrey Hacket, Sonya Velez, JP Casino, Chris Hazard, Natalie Chinsam

**Parent Attendees:**

Shane Gallagher, Emily Nicholas Angl, Celia Fernandes, Laura Byers, Christina Jackson, Jane Griffith, Sheri Davie, M.J. Starr, Joe Sinbandhit, Norine Williamson, Brett Lamb, Liz Lundy, Terra Dafoe, Philip Carpenter, Sian Suokonautio, Christina Jackson

**Community Partners:** Mark sent notes for SH Armstrong. Emily (SH Board) is present to answer questions.

**Staff:** Ray McIntyre (SC Teacher Rep), Delphine Rule (VP), Bill Vatzolas (P)

**Agenda Items:**

**Welcome, Land Acknowledgment 6:35pm**

**(J.Hollingsworth)** Reminds us we have a hard stop at 8pm. Would also like to remind everyone to be kind and courteous, if have multiple questions ask 1 then let someone else ask a question -try to give everyone an opportunity to speak.

**Vote on 2 items:**

6:38 - Adding two lines to budget

- \$300 for cost of bus to attend barrier free olympics for ASD classes. **Council Vote is unanimous in favour.**

- \$4000 towards chairs for the school. Foldable and includes storage unit. **Council Vote is unanimous in favour.**

**Community partners** - could not be present but SH community liaison Emily was present to answer any questions.

**Spring Programs** are starting April 3rd, and there is still room in sports, cooking, music, and arts programs.

Summer camp is open for **CampTO** - Explore arts and crafts ages 4-12 years.

Emily adds that it's worth checking in on the open gym, and is looking for ways to communicate that more broadly.

**Overview of budget process status**

(Chair Jill H) - Chair directs any interested to find more info on the board website [tdsb.on.ca](https://tdsb.on.ca) It was updated to reflect the meeting from Wednesday March 29th.

**Chair summarizes that meeting:** As TDSB is going through the budget, it must come up with staff allocation models which are tied to enrollment. Normally, in February, the government

would have announced funding for the next year. But some funds are still not announced yet (Grant for student needs). TDSB says that amount will have an impact on final allocations. Key point here - TDSB must have a balanced budget. Will have to have a number of cuts to balance the 64M deficit. The TDSB has requested additional funding from the government to cover the deficit - including reserves that were emptied during COVID, for COVID related costs. Currently 65% of the budget has been decided, but 35% is still up in the air. A final decision must be made in June.

Staff allocations were split into 2 sections this year. 485 jobs could be cut - pandemic positions added during COVID. Looking at about 525 positions total to balance the budget.

Recently, it was announced TDSB would be audited. By governor general. Value for money audit. Don't know when this will come out.

Currently, TDSB is not in a good position financially. Must report finances once a month to the government. The message from the director is that there is no way to balance the budget without cuts. From teachers, to special ed, lunch room staff, school clerical office.

The letter template dispersed last week is still applicable to this situation.

In the March 8 meeting, cuts that have already happened were discussed and motion made to revisit the staff cuts when grants come through if there is enough funding, that could impact those current VP cuts.

Staffing models will change a few times -possibly 4 - between now and when they come into effect.

For Duke - on paper - we have an allocation of 1.5 people for VP. Will lose .5 for VP. So we will lose a VP this September. If you feel strongly, you can send a letter to the Trustee and the director of the TDSB. We don't yet know who or how many staff cuts there will be or the impact at Duke.

Secondary teachers and ECEs numbers are going up, as well as increased funding for school based safety monitors. Aquatics will be losing 13 staff. Lunchroom staff cuts to 200 positions

**Question:** Do we anticipate strikes in response to cuts?

**Answer:** Can't speak to that. We don't know. No news.

**Teacher:** What criteria are they using to make these decisions?

**Answer:** It's not clear. Different criteria for different positions. For VPs, it has to do with enrollment. Other factors also go into this. Number of streams, etc. At the meeting Wednesday, this was asked, but the answer wasn't clear.

**Parent:** Criteria was discussed in the meeting. Having a french program, grade 7 and 8, having multiple streams. These are all things that Duke has.

**Chair:** Any TDSB meeting is open to anyone who wants to attend. Can deputize for your 5 minutes, and have a say.

As far as the impact at our school, we feel it is important at council to have 2 full VPs. Could never get them to budge on this previously. Positions that have gone away previously include guidance counselors. The burden on VPs is great. Lots of turnover at Duke previously. The VP and Principals at Duke are new and have just adjusted to the school. They work well together and the combination of needs at Duke is great.

**Principal:** Says VPs are indispensable, and losing one will be challenging. Do recognize and thank the work council is doing.

**Parent Question:** Special programs at school - which do we have now, and will they be impacted?

**Principal:** 6 gifted classes, 2 autism classes will remain. But losses are related to staffing, which are related to enrollment. Will lose resources. Point 5.

**Questions:** What about library?

**Chair:** 7.5 will be lost across the board.

**Principal:** We don't know if this will affect Duke. This is still TBD.

**Question:** Have they done cuts like this before?

**Answer:** Harris years. Budget problem existed before the pandemic but COVID hit like a hammer. School boards are not allowed to run at a deficit. Permissions were granted during the pandemic. But now a call to balance.

**Parent:** Only area where they could see more money is in investments. TDSB investments. But they did not know how much money that represented.

**Chair:** The trustee member Sara E. is working to have a rally at Coxwell station on April 15th. Jill wants to ask for a meeting with the executive superintendent and superintendent to reverse the decision at our school.

**Comment:** Who determines the student needs grant, how much, why?

**Chair:** The Provincial govt. A number of grants fund education, decided by province. The provincial government said would announce the fund by the end of April/early May.

**Parent:** Looking at TDSB 'developing a budget' page. Could the media help raise this issue?

**Chair -** We have discussed this with trustees. Specifically with our kids. If parents interested we can pursue this.

**Comment:** The government will say that they are spending more on education. But this is not the case. Additional funds are actually child care dollars - which inflate the budget. But don't go towards education.

### **School climate discussion:**

**Principal -** Core values discussed at school looking at what kind of community we want to have. Arrest was made last night in case of child harassment last week.

**VP Rule -**Good to note that the kids knew to come to office when this happened, and it was good that parents were willing to work with staff, students etc. The student was appreciative that we took them seriously.

**Comment:** Will there be a discussion with students about that?

**Principal:** Plan is to have speakers come in to do 'street proof' chat with community partners.

**Comment:** Good idea for parents to have those conversations with our own kids. And encourage other parents to read the letter that was sent home to parents.

**Teacher:** Regarding morale, comments that he was a teacher during Mike Harris years. Never recovered from that. We are feeling it now too. It's discouraging. Most teachers spend \$1000 of their own money. Don't have Guidance counselors, so grade 7,8 teachers are the ones to help kids make decisions about where they want to go. What it means when they cut things, is that there is less time to spend with kids to do stuff.

**Comment:** Can you share more about the plan for conflict resolution etc to help guide students and their behaviour before they get to high school?

**Principal:** We have a 6 week long program on the topic of 'healthy relationships' with CYCs - that is being done right now. Child and Youth counselors. Looks and connection between impact and intent. We are also working on a '**Positivity campaign**' - hoping to permeate throughout the school, recognizing good behavior, and setting expectations high. For grades 5 and up. Every Wednesday.

**Chair,** on behalf of **DI Committee** - says that they are looking for a bystander effect speaker. Also hoping to use the 'Thought Exchange' app. Allows for better communication within the community.

The **Safe and Caring committee** - deals with a range of issues. Key focus is kindness and respect. Says that there is concern about the middles (grades 4-8) as a result of pandemic, lots of stress, depression which can be exhibited in a variety of ways. With any initiatives the school is doing, wants people to feel comfortable coming forward.

**Comment:** The 2 kids in the knife incident, will they get help? What if they don't want it?

**Principal:** In situations where a child requires support, we need the kid and parent to both be willing. That is the position of the board.

**Comment:** Will there be merch for the positivity campaign?

**Chair:** Yes, that's part of the plan. Overall, we feel that there is a much smoother atmosphere at the school this year and the admin team is doing a great job, clearly showing they care about the kids. Want to recognise the contribution of everyone working in our environment.

### **Treasury Report 7:45pm**

Pizza lunch \$147 more dollars, pending some deposits.

\$1981 made from movie night, before expenses.

\$200 in Duke Cares expenses.

\$139 in outstanding Halloween expenses paid.

\$1000 in movie night expenses - made approx \$900-\$1000.

\$1573 costs last pizza lunch

\$200 spent on coffee mornings.

Total of \$26,000 in account.

### **Principal's report 7:45**

**Basketball court** - There have been 2 meetings and it looks like they're committed and in final portion of design. We have been told we have to make a decision very soon - and plan to use the same contractor.

Once it goes to pricing, if approved, they can continue on with their work. The TDSB must take costs into account. We are hoping to have it done before September.

Chair says she has been pushing for the various components we have asked for. Hopefully they will accept the design we asked for.

Presenter for grade 5-8 students. Charlyn Rhamey- **The ADHD project** - sharing her story of growing up with ADHD and celebrating neurodiversity.

**Dukes Got Talent** - April 13th - kids are excited and can be seen practicing in halls.

Ms. O is also doing a show with athletes.

**Fitness Club** - Mme P. - using resistance band, light weights. So far there is some interest. Would be during lunch hours.

VP Rule - swim team working really hard. Mr. H excited about relay teams. Meet is second week of April. Kids working really hard. Kids practicing 4 times a week.

**Parent:** Mr. Ford can fill in for one teacher mat leave next year, kids want him as teacher?

Principal: We are in the process now of creating a staffing model. Teachers are given a preference sheet. Admin takes a look and uses that for placements. Can't say where anyone will go at this time. But we take into account preferences, what would be best for kids, given teachers qualifications.

**Question:** How does seniority play into this?

**Answer:** We are given a seniority list by the board. For example 38 teachers .Those teachers if they qualify, are given positions they qualify for.

**Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm**

**April 26th next meeting.**