

February 26, 2024 – School Council Meeting Minutes

Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School

Location: School Library – in person

Last Meeting: January 22, 2024

Council Members Present: Jill Hollingsworth, Jeffrey Hackett, Marilyn Lacroix, Natalie Chinsam, Chris Hazard

Council Members Absent: Jason Davie, Robyn Switzer,

Teacher Rep: Maria Oliviera

Parent Attendees: Mike Sukmanowsky, Arya Sukmanowsky, Lida Elias, Jennifer Huang, Melissa Kluger, Marie Snyder, Christina Jackson, Emily Nicholas Angl

Community Partners: May Seto and Susanne Burkhardt (Applegrove)

Admin: Delphine Rule (VP), Bill Vatzolas (P)

Highlights

We approved the notes from the January 22 meeting.

We welcomed new parent council member Jennifer Huang.

We provided updates on current and planned SC activities in the school, including the musical experiences at the TSO (and in the school for some), and Jungle Sport.

We provided an update on the SC budget for 2024.

We talked about the work of the Dismantling Inequities Committee, including a quick summary of our recent workshop on gender inclusivity and creating safes for students (and families) who identify as 2SLGBTQI+.

We discussed a number of topics affecting the community, including how we plan to use some of the excess funds raised with our Dance-a-thon (support the new student garden, provide a comfortable seat in the office for kids who are sick and awaiting pick up, and bringing in stereotype-busting Denise Wild's Sewing studio), the recent Ward meeting (TDSB Budget and Sustainability), and the challenges around "spirit" weeks.

The musical experiences for students have continued, with trips to the TSO and an in-house Cuban-Brazilian group performing for the Kindies this past week.

Meeting Minutes

6:38 pm

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and announcements

Welcome: Jill welcomed everyone and read Land Acknowledgement.

Call for any other business: None - item added before meeting.

Reminders:

Be mindful of each other. If you have multiple questions, be sure to give space to others with questions. Meetings are jammed packed and, they are working meetings for SC where we vote and put things on the record, transparency we do have to make some decisions too.

Adding items to the agenda:

Anytime you want something on the Agenda try to let SC know in advance so time can be set aside. Call for agenda items goes out in Principal Update and NTR a few weeks prior to the meetings.

Announcements:

Lots of Communications goes out - we and school provide it so please at least skim - don't want to hear no one told us - we kinda' almost communicate too much.

Newsletter from council - subscribe to NTR to keep up to date - goes out every Sunday 4pm

Email address (dukeschoolcouncil@gmail.com) - issues, please let us know - here to advocate for families

School update - more about the school on Fridays (Some overlap, but mostly separate streams of info)

Things going well:

Raised \$18,000 (will talk about it later) from the danceathon

Also - want to give kudos to Duke staff - have a chance to see how vibrant the learning atmosphere is here - want to express gratitude to the teachers at the school - see so many interesting things going on in the class when walking around the school

Past minutes: SC members voted to approve January 22 SC meeting minutes. Nat moved to accept the minutes, Chris seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved.

6:43 pm

Community Partners Update

Applegrove: May and Susanne joined us to chat about what's happening with Applegrove. Did you know that Applegrove has been operating in the school for 40 years? They are a not for profit organization, and also run programs out of Glen Rhodes Church.

Susanne invited parents to drop by their office to chat. The office is located on the lower level of the Woodfield building, across from the Woodfield gym.

May then shared the program brochures they brought with them. In terms of child-focused programs:

- Summer camp is full
- There is space in their youth leadership program
- There's space in the after school program.

S.H. Armstrong

Registration for spring programs opens at 7 am on March 5 for programs beginning the week of March 30.

Camp registration is open and is mostly full, but you can check the city site to see if there's any availability.

And the S.H. Armstrong Instagram account is going well, and asked us to keep it in the Need to

Read (yes!) Follow them @SHArmstrongCC for news and updates from the centre.

6:50 pm

Dismantling Inequities Committee (DI Comm) Update

The February 22 gender workshop with Canvas went well - a good parent group joined us for some great dialogue and good learning into how we all can create safe and supportive spaces within the school and the community.

During the workshop, facilitators from Canvas shared a formula for creating safer spaces for kids from the 2SLGBTQ+ community: V.O.I.C.E.

V - Validate the experiences lived by 2SLGBTQI+ people—and respect their right to identify the way that best suits them, to use the pronouns they want, and to wear the clothes they want, without judgment.

O - Open spaces ... update basic infrastructure to make safe spaces that don't force kids to out themselves before they're ready—think bathrooms and change rooms. Where each of us plays a role, however, is ensuring the spaces are truly safe: using chosen pronouns, not commenting on people's clothing or hair, for example, or not using slurs about 2SLGBTQI+people.

I - Intervene. Stand up to people who make unkind comments. Remind kids to use kinder language, and explain why. While we can (and should) assume people are doing their best ... we must support 2SLGBTQI+ kids who are being bullied and feeling unsafe. This includes opening up conversations at home about what it means to be different, what it means to be safe to be yourself, and what it means to stand up for friends.

C - Challenge assumptions—boys CAN wear pink, girls CAN play hockey, not every kid needs to say they are a boy OR a girl.

E - Educate yourself. As in all personal growth work, we need to take on the labour of understanding, the work of addressing our own biases.

6:58 pm

Treasurer's Report — Budget update

Incoming Funds:

- The dance-a-thon was extremely successful, raising \$18,139.95. The goal was only \$5,000 so there is a surplus of funds to use which we will discuss after the budget update on how best to allocate.
- \$908 was also raised during the movie night.
- Pizza lunch brought in another \$945.50.

Expenses from School Council:

- \$214.70 was paid out for the cork board.
- \$100.00 for the deposit for the dance-a-thon DJ.
- \$10,414.19 was expensed for pizza lunches as a result of purchasing gift cards through Flipgive which will provide additional funds to use for pizza lunches.
- \$360.62 was expensed for SC Engagements events.
- \$47.18 was expensed for SC supplies.
- \$20.34 was expensed for Skate Library supplies.

Also, a total of \$700 was expensed related to the purchase of Gift Cards for families as part of Duke Cares.

Since there has been an increase in Duke Cares needs, council discussed the need to transfer some additional funds to be used for Duke Cares. Jeffrey suggested that we transfer \$579, to top up the account back to \$1,000. It was a unanimous vote by all school members in attendance.

7:05 pm

SC Members and Community Discussion

Topics: Dance-a-thon funds

Updates from the Ward Meeting (TDSB Budget & Sustainability)

Spirit Days

Dance-a-thon - raised a lot more than the \$5000 Goal (purpose to pay for Junglesport) - total just over \$18,000

Jungle Sports (all students): all students get through twice in the last week of school (Cost \$4250 - need to check if that includes HST or not, think all in)

Denise Wild sewing project:

The students participate, start to finish, on a sewing project. The real purpose is to challenge stereotypes, as muscled humans teach the kids how to sew. We can't get all students through on available days, so we'll focus on older grades and work with the Principal and Vice Principal. It's \$16 a student (400 students over two days, \$6,400) and will be split 80/20 (with approx \$5K coming from Council).

Vote: Council members voted unanimously to do and pay for the Sewing Initiative.

Remaining funds:

Other ideas for funds:

- fun for the whole school and will provide information at an upcoming Council meeting. \$2,000.00
- Purchase a comfortable "sick" chair (or two) for the office to create a spot for kids who aren't well to sit when they are waiting for parents. \$1,000.00
- Support an Indigenous learning garden - garden and murals. We could set aside \$2000.00 for start-up. Students would work in the gardens and we would have an Indigenous teacher to guide them. Students will also participate with an Indigenous leader for the Mural

Council members voted unanimously to support these three initiatives and costs (Fun up to \$2000, Chair(s) \$1000, Indigenous learning \$2,000)

Topic: TDSB Budget & Sustainability (notes from the Ward Meeting where Richard Christie made a presentation - reviewed quickly as time was running out).

The recent Government budget survey has provided the Ontario government with input from families. The TDSB is moving forward with their climate action plan — adding solar panels, etc.— in efforts to be cost effective and sustainable.

They are focused on “getting our house in order”

However, it’s difficult to get projects done ... how do we move forward with a playground projects, waste management and organics / compost at school, and getting more trees planted as possible (through an arrangement with the provincial government.)

We’ll share updates from Sara Ehrhardt via the Need to Read, as well as the link to the information on the TDSB website.

Topic: Spirit week

School Council has heard from concerned parents on this topic and it was requested to be on the Agenda:

Communication was poor - No one knew about it. If these kinds of activities ARE happening, the school needs to get the word out to adult members of the community, because most kids didn’t know or share the information. (Note: the Principal confirmed there was a miss with the Parent Update emails.)

There are issues with the types of Spirit Days - pajama day and twin being most mentioned. Not everyone has pj they can wear to school, or a friend to twin with. There was no mention of using items at home - students asking parents to buy items for them, feels like this is missing something. Really feels like very privileged and makes lots of families feel bad, students are left out, made fun of.

Strong feelings that Spirit Week needs to be re-thought - Student Council trying to do something but Adults in the building should have been asking more questions and run the types of days through some additional filters. (E.g. what are you trying to do? How does Spirit day do that? Is there another way to achieve goal? What is Spirit anyways? Feels American Sports)

Spirit week had been stopped in the school because of these issues, to ensure kids did not feel left out. Many other schools have also moved away from spirit days/weeks. If we’re going to do this again, it HAS to include things kids can participate in with no cost, or cultural conflict. Specifically, PJ day, twin day, and anything but a backpack are problematic — and the staff who are managing this activity need to keep this in mind as they guide students in planning activities.

If we are embarking on a Kindness Initiative, need to follow through and Spirit Week seems contradictory and not inline with current discussions.

Disappointingly, this has been discussed in the past and families input had been disregarded.

Bottom line of discussion: Spirit Days shine a light on issues of privilege, inclusion, and the diversity (cultural and economic) of our population. Spirit Week should stop or should change significantly to be as inclusive as possible. Have just a single Spirit Day and make it something everyone can do.

7:40 pm

Appointment of new school council member Jennifer Huang

The full School Council in attendance introduced themselves.

We reviewed the basics of the role, including reviewing and meeting the expectations and ethical requirements of the Council (17 points that essentially mean a Council member promises to keep the best interests of students at the forefront and to remember you are a representative for the whole community), staying connected through the Slack workspace, participating in meetings and in committees (if you are available), and

Then, when there were no questions or objections, Jill welcomed Jennifer Huang to Council as a Parent Member.

7:43 pm

Principal's Report

There are a LOT of activities happening in school:

The Grade 6 students were off to the Island Nature School this week (Feb 28 - Mar 1)

Sports teams continue to be doing well - the school is winning lots of banners this year! Lots of different sports running in the school.

Planning for graduation (June 24) is underway, as well as for the Grade 8 trip to Camp Wahanowin (June 11-14) and the cruise (June 21) in June. Planning for Grade 8 sweatshirt and T-shirts are underway. Note: SC will support graduating students who may not have the funds to cover all graduation activities.

The musical experiences for students have continued, with trips to the TSO and an in-house Cuban-Brazilian group performing for the Kindies this past week.

Work on the school musical continues daily. The musical runs April 30-May 2.

The band program is going well for Grades 6-8.

Heritage Fair is coming up (Grades 7-8, do projects on an array of topics and then swap classes and present to one another)

Chess Club is coming.

The pool - A new pool schedule will begin shortly.

Construction - There continues to be a lot of repair and maintenance work around the school.

The brick work has been completed and the pre-work activities to prepare for the steam-to-water boiler conversion continue.

There is no news about when work on the basketball courts, wooden fences and benches will be completed. We're waiting on the plan for the tree deck issue of stones around the.

Track & Field - students doing events in regular gym class - run, jump, throw

Questions:

What grades will be covered by the sewing initiative? At least 5 to 8, but that is to be determined with the Principal.

As per the discussion around Spirit Days, these questions of inclusion and ability to participate affect other things too, such as pink shirt / orange shirt days. Could we do stickers for the kids to wear? Or something easy and affordable? Every student given one. (When school did t-shirts for whole school for Orange shirt day cost \$10,000) Discussion around this.

Could the sewing initiative include a pink headband or bandana? Sewing Company has already planned the projects - different grades do various items.

Do the Grade 2 and 3 kids also do track and field? (Yes, in limited ways.) And track and field starts in April.)

8 pm Closed meeting

Jill asked the group if there were any additional questions (none) then thanked the group for joining. Want to know more or get involved? Share the information you hear here. Read the need to read. Share the things you know.

Our next coffee morning is March 7.

The next meeting is Monday, March 25.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:03 pm