

Jan 18th, 2023
School Council Meeting Minutes,
6:30pm
Duke of Connaught Junior and
Senior Public School

Location: School Library - in person

Last Meeting: Nov 23rd 2022

Council Members Present: Jill Hollingsworth, Sarah Lasch, Jason Davie, Jeffrey Hacket, Sonya Velez, Meghan Cox, Itzel Alonso, JP Casino, Chris Hazard

Parent Attendees: Bob Sexton, Laura Byers, Melissa Kluger

Student Attendees: Kylie Riettie, Penny Robinson (left 6:45 pm approx)

Community Partners: Not available

Staff: Konstantinos Flegas (VP), Ray McIntyre (SC Rep), Maria Oliveira (SC Rep), Delphine Rule (VP), Bill Vatzolas (P)

Agenda Items:

Welcome, Land Acknowledgment 6:30pm

(Chair: Jill Hollingsworth)

The Chair started with a land acknowledgement and notes on recent discovery of child remains at the Former Lebret Saskatchewan Residential school, and many anomalies found in the ground which are presumed to be unmarked graves. Also in Northern Ontario 171 unmarked graves found. Discussed as a good reminder of the work needed to be done in the education and awareness of these issues.

Student Council Update 6:40pm

(Students Kylie & Penny) Informational chat.

The students presented to parents about the work of student council. Indicated the student council has 21 students in grade 7 and 8, and that they meet once a week. The student council is open to any student willing to commit. Some of the initiatives the students have worked on include a land acknowledgement specific to Duke. In late October, the students planned and executed a Halloween dance with the aim of allowing students to socialize. They also participated in Remembrance Day presentations. As part of a budgeting initiative, the students are working with a student budget and deciding how to use those funds. They expressed a desire to make the process democratic, including all Duke members. The budget will be made by the council and principal and used to promote joy, achievement and learning at the school. The students aim to be involved as much as possible, gathering ideas from every class, with a student vote used to fund the top selections. This process teaches collaboration, problem solving, presentation skills, and creativity. All students involved will participate in the decision, and group votes will be based on divisional groups.

Question - Have you already gone into the primary classes?

Answer - Not as yet.

Comment: Very happy to see kids part of the process, love to hear thoughts, and want kids to have a strong voice. Thanks kids for coming to meeting today.

Comment (Principal): Says the students are great representatives of council and thanks them for their participation.

Other Business - None at this time.

Chair (Jill) reminds group that we have a hard stop at 8pm. Asks that if you have more than a few questions, to let someone else have their questions heard as well.

Announcements:

Natalie C. is a parent in the community and has indicated she would like to join SC. The process has begun (public notification, opportunity to object or other parents to indicate their interest) and she will be appointed at the next meeting.

**Previous meeting, Approval of November minutes
Moved to February.**

Community Partners News 6:40pm (Partners absent, messages shared with Chair)

S.H. Armstong - Centre has opened up one of their spaces -a dance studio as a stretching studio.

Applegrove - SummSH Armstrong and Applegrove information will be shared in the NTR. er camp registration starts Feb 1st, and includes before and after care.

Ms. Teves, a JK/SK class teacher, is looking to make a **calming zone** in her classroom, and looking for input on suggestions for this. She can be reached at: penny.teves@tdsb.on.ca

New app - **Thought Exchange** - is designed to allow for open ended questions and allow participants to weigh in on each others comments, helps gauge interest. Jill would like to do a test of this - with a test question to work out any kinks. TDSB is rolling it out to School Council, and could prove useful as a feedback tool.

**Treasurer's Report, 6:50pm
(Jeffrey H.)**

Outlines successful letter writing campaign - raised \$7315 (goal \$5000)

Movie night raised \$650 raised. Hoping to do another movie night in the spring.

Pizza Lunch on track to make more than budgeted for, costs are approx \$1500-\$1600 per lunch, most parents pre-pay for pizza. (Question how you do make money with pizza lunch? School buys pizza with school lunch discount.)

\$200 towards Duke Cares.

Coffee morning costs \$207.

Total balance of \$34,000 - but many expenses coming in next while including library requests, puppet sets.

Also notes that \$1500 Grant was awarded by TDSB to Duke School Council for work on Equity and will go towards workshop costs.

**Dismantling Inequities Committee update 7pm
(Chair Jill, as a DI Comm Member)**

The Chair wanted to discuss WHY we do Equity work. Background: TDSB has a focus on Anti-racism and Anti-Oppression. Year ago TDSB did a human rights report for the first time. We gleaned info from this beyond what was already know (Black and Indigenous students experience discrimination)- specifically - that Latinx students, students with disabilities, non-binary students and those that identify in LGBTQ group are targeted.

The topics are reality not just theory - students in our school experience discrimination - there are incidents. Have a very diverse population - race, religion, economics, etc. There is a mix of socio-economic backgrounds at Duke. Last time data obtained, found 18% of the school population lives below the poverty line. Wants to focus on what's happening at our school, understanding how kids feel about belonging and how this ties to success within the school environment. Going to make mistakes, apologize and keep going.

At the DI committee meeting, discussed how to address these large issues. Tonight, focus is on language - everyone have same understanding of key terms and think about the language we use. This is a learning moment. We want people to feel comfortable having uncomfortable conversations. We have to learn to talk to each other.

Chair showed 2 video clips so that we can start with a common understanding of what all this means. Videos were from Paradigm Reach, Microlearnings - corporate videos, apply to school too 1) Defining Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and 2) Understanding Privilege.

Chair wants to highlight terms - **privilege** and **unconscious bias** (something that automatically happens, quick judgements influenced by our experiences - often run contrary to our conscious beliefs). When speaking of white privilege, chair wants to point out that just because you are white, it doesn't mean you get everything you want, that life is easy and no challenges. However, you do have silent privilege - the benefit of the doubt. Highlight the story of a black pastor, a member of the school, who was arrested while locking the door of his church. He relayed this story a few years ago to Parents at book club. Point being, if he had been white, police would likely have driven right on by. Point of this is that this happens in Toronto, in our own community and not just what we sees on the news in American cities. This affects parents, staff, students. White privilege term was coined in 1988 - based on article called 'Unpacking the invisible knapsack' by Peggy McIntosh and encourages group to read it.

Chair ended by saying we all know the pain of when something happens to our children, visceral gut punch. When you are at the school, on field trips, participating in events this is where you can have an impact. She wants each of us to imagine the black kid is yours, the trans kids is yours, the disabled kid is yours, etc. And to think about treating all kids as if they are your own kids.

Workshop with Rania is next week, Wed Jan 25 (Shut up Uncle Bob! Speaking with racist family, friends and loved ones).

Hope to get DEI Resources (google doc) up and running again (books, podcasts, etc). Good podcast "Nice white parents".

Open to comments: Robust discussion was had, few parents shared their different perspectives.

Principal's Report, 7:35pm

(Principal Bill Vatzolas) -Thanks everyone for coming to the meeting. Thanks staff involved with the successful ski trips.

Ms. Oliveira says over 100 students attended in the first week, and 150 students in the second week participated in the **ski trip**. Says students were very well behaved, and that it was nice to see all streams come together.

Extracurriculars are up and running - chess, origami, swim, drama and choir for this year are underway. Junglesport begins next week (thanks SC for bringing it to Duke).

Hockey, ball hockey, swim team, swim club, intra-murals for 1-3s may get started back up.

Term report cards will be out Feb 14th, with parent conferences on the 17th.

Tech purchases - a large order including chrome books, cart, headphones, mics and peripherals was fulfilled. Hoping to do another order later in the year as well.

Recently announced **personal device policy** with the students. Students did follow through and classrooms followed through. It was a hard change for them. Principal spoke with other schools, and they are running into issues with phones in hallways, bathrooms etc despite existing policy.

Question: At the last meeting, council was taken through the specific rules of the new policy. Was this the same policy shared with students?

Answer (Ms. Rule) Reports it stayed the same, and was not changed. Students were told what the plan was so they are all aware. No changes in any individual classrooms. But that said, still open to some changes, if needed.

Construction update: The senior project manager has agreed to move forward with resurfacing. Just need official word and funding. The pit is a more elaborate project. If we want to examine that, it will delay the court. So the decision was made to do the pit first, then court. One advantage - with construction at front of school, they would be able to do a change order, which means current workers already working at front can proceed to next part via this method. Currently on hold due to weather, but 60% complete. Waiting for the next phase.

Questions: Can we see plans?

Answer: Plans provided to the admin are hard to understand. Admin asked for clarification, but did not receive a response as yet. Currently, some windows are being replaced on the ground level, basement. Removal of columns involved. This is ongoing.

Yearbook committee: (Ms. Rule) - Four teachers are on board, and some parents interested in helping. Mr. Ford is spearheading. Will be using the same photographer as printing contact.

Signage (Mr. Flegas): Says new books were recently purchased, signage for bathrooms,

posters to create welcoming space for everyone. Chair shared image of new signs:



Class Library: Connecting with equity dept., Urban Indigenous Education Centre, and libraries themselves should reflect identities of students in the class. Classes were allocated a portion of the budget, teachers can provide recommendations.

Question (Parent): In the fall, we discussed a day when we can measure front areas. Has this happened?

Answer (Principal): Not yet. Workers have acknowledged this area is in poor shape and needs fixing. We want to get this done this summer.

(Chair) Jill: Principal and I had a meeting on the Basketball court and reviewed the suggestions/ideas from the Community Meeting prior to his meeting with Facilities (Dec 1).

(Parent): Are there safety issues involved?

(Principal): When discussing pit, it was said this was an elaborate project, and the need for a liability report was raised. They said they would have to do this grouped with courts. Or do courts first, We are opting to do courts first.

Other Business

Closing comments: Jill thanks everyone for coming. Snacks and drinks available - stay & mingle.

Feb 27th is next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:57pm