

June 19, 2023
School Council Meeting Minutes
Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School

Location: School Library - in person
Last Meeting: May 30, 2023

Council Members Present: Jill Hollingsworth, Jeffrey Hacket, Sonya Velez, J.P. Casino, Jason Davie

Parent Attendees: Melissa Kluger, Rosalie Fine

Guest: Trustee Sarah Ehrhardt

Staff: Bill Vatzolas (P), Delphine Rule (VP), Kostas Flegas (VP)

Agenda Items:

Welcome, Land Acknowledgment 6:40pm

(Chair J.Hollingsworth) Welcomes the group and reminds about the volunteer appreciation event.

Announcements/Reminder of upcoming events:

First meeting of next year will be Wednesday Sept 27th - 12 new council members will be elected.

SH Armstrong update - says some spaces still left for summer camp, and that Friday drop-ins are still going on.

Applegrove is full for summer camps.

Special Guest - Sara Ehrhardt, TDSB Trustee Toronto Danforth 6:50pm

Trustee: Is not excited about the next budget. Another round of cuts coming forth. Has been messaging and meeting with councils since March about what is happening in the budget cycle. There are a few ways the government is defunding schools this year. 1. Removal of pandemic funding - equivalent to 500 staff members across boards (about \$35M) 2. By how much was spent during the pandemic. To explain, during the pandemic the province told boards to spend their reserve funds. So the TDSB spent half its reserves one year, and the other half the following years. No reserves are now. The Board is spending more than its being given every month. All deficit money is coming out of fixed reserves - which is set aside for benefits, long term disability (things we've made pre-commitments to spend on). There is a deficit reduction plan, but can't draw from this forever.

Additionally, there are changes to statutory benefits. The province did not give boards money to count for enhancements to CPP. Must come from somewhere. These are some of the ways the TDSB is being actively defunded. The Ontario government has unspent money they have returned to the federal government. It is our view, the Ontario government should have used this for schools. The government did allow us to claim money up until this year - amounting to 5M. But there will still be cuts. Duke is very hard hit. This is because we will have about 40 fewer students next year. The LOI did get bumped up. Assessed every 3 years. But that doesn't really

impact the point system for allocations for Duke. Schools below 150 get extra points in allocation systems. In Feb of 2022, schools with lower LOI favoured. In this area, many of the schools are facing VP cuts. Duke, Morse, Blake, Jackman, Chester and Wilkinson faced cuts. As Trustees, we voted to get VPS back in the system. Reinstated 20 elementary VPs back. Did not help Duke though. 0.5 office staff and 3 lunchroom staff gone.

Principal: We are going from 11 to 8 lunchroom supervisors.

Trustee: - System is voting to keep "school based safety monitors." Duke is getting one - did not have one before. Positions being cut - 45.5 elementary, 20 secondary teachers, 35 child and youth workers, 200 lunch room supers, 5 virtual learning admin, 15 social workers, child and youth counselors (aiming to have funds for councilors from proceeds of disposition - capital funds). Board also voted to have school based safety monitors. Won't be a police officer.

Parent Question - What parameters do they have?

Principal: - Expectation is they are another set of eyes and ears, looking for safety issues. In a secondary setting, it is different. For us at Duke, using monitors to cover all access points in areas. Will work during school hours. They are not committed to the entire school year, necessarily. Assigned to us by employee services.

Question: Why are there 40 less students?

Trustee: Toronto overall is trending down, but long term will go up.

Question: What happens in the fall if there are 40 more students?

Answer: Reallocations will shift, but likely wouldn't get VP back.

Trustee: Could be worse. Every board believes they did not get enough VPs. With 522 staff cut, every ward is getting a cut. But I want to keep reporting on this. Will do a check in at some point to see how it's going. Also want to say there are changes in central teaching. 44 FTE staff cuts on way - early reading coaches. K-12 elementary coaches and secondary coaches. There is no place that is untouched by cuts. Central staffing cuts are not enough to balance the larger losses. The other thing, school councils often experience slowness in permits etc.

The Board took the decision not to cut special education funding. The auditor general is currently doing an analysis - will be released in fall. Independent review could find TDSB operating very thinly. Could potentially hurt or help outlook. Duke is not the only school experiencing cuts. All schools face multiple staff cuts, and I will continue to fight on this over the next few years. The good news is that even with cuts, we still have a great school.

Question: Where are trustees falling now, voting-wise? Voting FOR budget or against?

Trustee: The first budget vote is Thursday at 4:30pm. If it doesn't pass, more meetings next week, extension into July. The Ministry of Education would find a supervisor to take over management of TDSB. Could cut special education.

Parent: What's your sense of how Duke has been cut compared to other schools?

Trustee: Points are allocated for every stream (FI, Gifted, MI) - I can say with confidence that everything at Toronto Danforth was allocated.

Student Participatory Budget Update 7:15pm

(Chair)

Students presented on this last week. Top choices were sports or recess equipment, art murals, more book selection, pool equipment. Council will earmark \$1500 for this, and the school will be matching this. Will aim to spend this by Oct 1st.

Treasury Report Jeff Hackett 7:25pm

\$1500 brought in since last meeting.

Grant money came through amounting to \$1500.

Outgoing money - \$266 for coffee mornings, \$1600 end of year celebration slide (deferred).

\$700 pizza expenses.

\$4000 - library request, \$500 gym uniforms, \$1200 grad buses to boat cruise

Overall budget outlook

Halloween - Profiting \$1843 . Pizza lunches made \$10,600 in profit. Did raise prices this year.

2 Movie nights made \$1211, (about \$600 profit per night) License runs out Dec 1.

Letter writing campaign raised over \$7000.

We can carry some over to the beginning of the year, but must allocate.

(All money spent for grad - \$2100 but more expenses still coming through. Volunteer and Staff appreciation still coming through.)

\$22,567 in account. Some outstanding payments and about \$5000 in the school account.

(Also spent about \$4500 on library books)

Chair: Money for the year-end event. Aiming to reschedule for early Sept.

Principals Report. Bill Vatzolas 7:45pm

The grade 8 boat cruise took place last week, with great weather. Next day was grad ceremony at Riverdale. Parent grad committee did an amazing job setting it up. Parents were really happy with the event.

Grad is always a highlight. Yearbook sent for final print - had 300 orders. Hoping to continue that for next year. Thanks to the teachers who took the lead on that. Great way to end the year.

Delphine Rule (VP)

Report cards going home June 27th, hard copy.

Trustee: Board voted down adding PA day at end of year - so next year will also go to end of year.

Principal: Play days happened last week - good positive energy. Was nice to have a change of pace. Kids enjoyed themselves. Staff appreciation was really nice - felt appreciated. Volunteer appreciation tea - coming up. Looking forward to that.

Kostas Flegas (VP) - June 2nd was a pancake community breakfast, where the new lunch logo was revealed. Ordered 2 banners. Was great to see so many families attending. Nutrition program ending - June 26th is the last day for hot lunch. Wednesday June 28th is the last day for breakfast. But if needed, kids who still need snacks can still get some.

Principal: Will be finalizing class rosters in September. We will provide info to families in late August via email. Will send class emails out where parents will find out who their homeroom teacher is at that point. To balance the classes, we will look at academics, social dynamics, look at relationships in classrooms, number of IEPs - look at all this in totality to see what is best.

Question: French Immersion - how do you get the English and French Immersion stream kids to get along?

Principal: We try to do activities together - kids do stick together.

Construction: Have a deck in front. Project manager says they are not going anywhere - design cleared for basketball courts and hoping to do this work in the summer.

Question: How do we order Duke sweatshirts? Is that through the gym?

Answer: Ms. O organized this. It's over for this year.

Meeting adjourned: 7:57pm

June 8 - BYOE event in back yard. 'The Loving Cup' Duke Staff band will perform. Older kids will help younger kids in games. DJ will be present.

June 13 - staff appreciation date

Email about TDSB Budget town hall June 7th (1pm and 7pm) - encourages others to attend and speak up.

Trustee will be hosting a budget meeting on another date

There was a vote last week - 20 VPs are now back on the table - unknown if this will impact our staff.

-Fridays at Armstrong gym drop in available for ages 8 and up.

-Parents going to Queens Park tomorrow in conjunction with east end parents petition to call for more support for schools. All the petitions our parents signed will be presented with all East End Schools.

Next meeting date:

Wed Sept 27th - first meeting of next school year, and election of next council (12 parent members).

New term begins Oct 1st.

Previous meeting, approval of March minutes

Approved by Natalie Seconded by JP

Previous meeting, approval of April minutes

Approved by Natalie Seconded by JP

Previous meeting, approval of May minutes

Approved by Natalie Seconded by JP

Student reps presentation 6:40pm

Eve and Penny

Participatory Budget recap:

Success criteria was to create age appropriate presentations, create a list of ideas, make a list of most popular ideas. The students collected data from the different categories.

Results:

Primary - Class toys and sports equipment won most votes

Junior - Art murals, sports equipment won

Intermediate results - Game day and sport equipment won.

Top results - more sports equipment, art murals, books of diverse themes.

The students made a case for why more sports equipment has many benefits, not just for athletics but for emotional, mental, and academic well-being.

Art murals inspire creativity. The students made the case for hiring different artists from different backgrounds to lead some murals.

Books of diverse themes - helps teach students how to be global citizens

Parent question: Would the books bought be more on equity OR academic?

Answer - Our thinking was about books that kids want to read. Important to get books that kids see themselves in and actually want to read.

Treasury Report 6:50 am ET

Jeffrey H.

-Raised more money than anticipated. We likely have a surplus of approximately \$10,000 after our last pizza lunch expenses.

-Need to vote on new initiatives.

\$500 more towards duke cares - unanimous
\$500 for volunteer appreciation event - unanimous
Adding \$1300 for year end event June 8 - unanimous
Parent question: Is Duke Cares still being used?
Answer: Yes - used on a monthly basis.
Parent question: Can people access it over the summer?
Answer: Yes - school council is still technically active over summer.

MYSP: 6:55am

Jill H

Key thing is to address both academic and business practices. March - Oct is about collecting input.

Chair attended a session about this project. Analysis will be the next phase in Oct. Then they will develop a plan.

Question Chair asks - is anything missing? Chair will send feedback to MYSP group.

Pillar 1 - Student Learning. Most strongly agree

Comment - Includes very broad elements. Also that relational skills are very foundational.

Pillar 2 - Student and Staff Well-Being - Most feel they strongly agree.

One comment - that social media literacy is important. It is a real issue.

Pillar 3 - Access to Learning - Most strongly agree

Comment - questions how these are being enacted.

Comments and discussion on purpose or goals of survey among parents - Parents felt being asked to prioritize these pillars seems pointless since parents are likely to want all these things. There was concern that we needed more detail. This led some to feel this consulting of parents' process was a bit of a sham. Parents would also like to have a sense of how they plan to measure success. What point we are at now and what the goals are, even if just a snapshot, for example. Parents would also like more of a meaningful seat at the table.

Pillar 4 - Allocation of resources to support student needs. Most strongly agree.

Pillar 5 - Partnerships. Most strongly agree. With particular attention to point 3 'Open access to tdsb data'

Chair asks if there are any other issues missing from this?

-Everything cut from the Harris days - home economics, guidance counselors, nurses, etc.

Would like this to be reinstated.

-Many students feel depressed about the future due to climate change.

-Safety in schools, conflict resolution specifically.

-Would like to also see creating LGBTQ+ positive cultures within school at large.

-Principal indicates there is language at operations level but that doesn't indicate across the board.

-Language of survey lumping special needs and inclusion on one point is concerning. Blanket approach where individual approach needed.

Chair - says she is open to discussing this more if more want to say stuff

Principals Report 7:50pm

Class plan for next year

English - jk/sk, sk classes

2 english 1/2s, 3, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7, 7/8, 7/8

French : jk/sk, jk/sk, . 1/2, 1/2, 2/3, 3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7, 7/8, 7/8, 7/8

Middle immersion - 4/5, 6,

Extended 7/8

Gifted: 4/5, 4/5, 5/6, 6, 7/8, 7/8

If enrollment changes, staffing may change.

Roots of Empathy Program Megan 8:00

Megan works with Roots of Empathy - but started as a volunteer at Duke.

Showed video of organization which emphasized the attachment relationship with parents, and how babies can be an effective learning tool.

Excited to say they have support of the administration to bring Roots of Empathy back to school.

Program decreases bullying, increases empathy.

In TDSB, the program relies on volunteer instructors. Megan came to school once a week, and found it transformative. Says this connects well with mental health goals initiatives. Wants all present to think about whether they might be interested in this program. Would be trained by the program, with a mentor. If you or know anyone, reach out to Megan.

Time commitment is about 3 days of training in fall, then full day in Feb. Ongoing, is 2 hours a week of 45 mins, then 45 mins of prep. Also works with family. Instructor goes in 27 times, family visits 9 times. Across TDSB, looking for lots of instructors, 2 for Duke ideally. Could also instruct at other schools.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm

Next meeting set for June 19th 6:30pm