

November 6, 2023
Minutes SC Meeting

**November 6, 2023 – School Council Meeting Minutes
Duke of Connaught Junior and Senior Public School**

Location: School Library – in person

Last Meeting: September 27, 2023

Council Members Present: Jill Hollingsworth, Jeffrey Hackett, Natalie Chinsam, Robyn Switzer, Jason Davie, Marilyn Lacroix

Council Members Absent: Chris Hazard

Teacher Rep: Maria Oliveira

Parent Attendees: Rosalie Fine, Marie Snyder, Christina Jackson, Jennifer Huang, Norine Williamson

Community Partners: Jieun Jeong for Woodgreen

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

6:35 – 6:55 pm:

Welcome and Land Acknowledgment

(Chair: Jill Hollingsworth)

Jill welcomed everyone, read Land Acknowledgement.

Jill asked everyone to be respectful, noted we have a lot to get through by 8 pm, and reminded the group that everyone has a voice, then encouraged people to share their thoughts and ask questions if they have them. Please note: Parents can always reach SC at dukeschoolcouncil@gmail.com (and/or check info on website: dukesac.ca)

Call for any other business to discuss (with caveat at the end if time permits): Jennifer raised cuts to education / parent activism as a topic to discuss. Please note: 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 few weeks prior to the meetings.

Introduction of the 2023/24 SC: The 23/24 SC members who were present were called by name and said a quick hello.

Adoption of the Ethics Guide by SC: The SC members in attendance unanimously agreed to adopt the Ethics Guide.

Approval of September Minutes: Motion moved by Nat and seconded by Jason. Jill noted that we would provide a summary of the meeting (highlights, decisions, information from community partners) in the NTR following each SC meeting.

Announcements:

- 1. Kerr and Highfield Roads:** Residents on Kerr and Highfield Roads have complained about issues they've had during drop off and pick up times: parking on sidewalks, blocking driveways, ignoring rules of the road, and parking on the corners, etc. They've noted

concerns for pedestrians, especially children. As a result of resident complaints, bylaw enforcement will be increased and the bylaws will be reviewed and parking rules may change.

A question was raised then about parking on Woodfield during drop off and pick up. A parent noted that bylaw enforcement officers were handing out informational tickets earlier this fall (they look like tickets but are for information only), and asked what parents are supposed to do if the Kerr/Highfield parking is no longer available and they can't find a spot on Woodfield. The answer: Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of parking available in front of the school for drop off. Parents may have to park a street or two over and walk. It is most important to park legally, safely and with respect for residents.

Key takeaway: Spread the word with parents you know – keep the parking legal, drive safely, be respectful of residents, and, if someone asks you to move your car ... just do it.

- 2. Creating a kinder community:** To build an inclusive and kind community at Duke, we encourage everyone – kids and adults – to be kinder and more mindful of their words when on school property including the playground. Everyone at Duke has a right to be here and should feel welcome. Please keep your opinions about another person's body, dress, race, abilities (their everything, really) to yourself. Words hurt and should not be used carelessly.

Key takeaway: Everyone is welcome. We won't all be best friends, but we can be kinder and more thoughtful about what we say.

- 3. Parent concern protocol:** There is a process to manage questions and concerns. Start at the school level - teacher or Principal - they are on site and will know better what is going on or can investigate. If you start with the Super or Exec Super, they don't have the local knowledge. You can view it on the TDSB website (<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Contact-Us/Steps-to-Address-Questions-Concerns>).

In essence:

- Start with your classroom teacher with questions or concerns about the classroom
- Go to the school Principal or Vice-Principal if you have continuing concerns or questions about things beyond the classroom
- School superintendents can help with alternate attendance requests or suspension appeals
- Trustees can help with concerns about the community, items for the Board, questions about collective bargaining, etc.

- 4. The 2023-24 SC meetings will be held:**
Monday, December 11
Monday, January 22
Monday, February 26

Monday, March 25
Monday, April 22
Wednesday, May 22
Monday June 17

6:55 – 7:00 pm

Community Partners Update

Informational, no vote required.

Woodgreen: Woodgreen's new acting Manager Jieun Jeong joined us to say "hi" and some of Woodgreen's many services, including child care and youth programming. Currently, an estimated 127 families from the Duke community are enrolled in Woodgreen programs. Want to know more? Visit www.woodgreen.org

S.H. Armstrong: Representative was not present, but passed on an update. Winter programs go online on November 13, and registration opens December 5.

Applegrove: Representative was not present but passed on updates. Applegrove is planning a community movie night at their Glen Rhodes Campus on Saturday November 18. They are showing Elemental. Doors open at 5, movie starts at 5:30. Applegrove is also planning a toy drive. Details to come soon.

7:00 – 7:05 pm

Dismantling Inequities Committee Update

There has not yet been a formal meeting of the committee this year, as they are still looking for a place to meet regularly that can accommodate us (all parents can come.) The SC did take one action in the past month towards supporting the Committee's work: we applied for the TDSB's School Council Innovation Grant. The Grant provides School Councils in the TDSB up to \$1,500 to use towards projects or activities that engage parents and caregivers. (Find out more about the grant:

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/Grants-for-Student-Need/School-Council-Innovation-Grant>)

We have applied to get support for two workshops:

- Gender Diversity: A workshop from [Canvas](#), and
- Four Strategies to Mitigate Implicit Bias: A workshop from [Right to Be](#)

The workshops will cost more than the grant, have funds set aside in budget for DI Comm initiatives, but the grant will go a long way to offsetting the costs and make it possible to do both. We are hoping to hear about the grant by the end of November so we can book the workshops. Want to cover the cost of workshops to encourage attendance, engagement and remove barriers to participation.

7:05 – 7:25 pm

Treasurer’s report

Jeff presented the SC’s proposed budget, which was created with a focus on supporting the whole community. The budget was developed with input from teachers and admin staff, and the community. A form was sent to obtain feedback on items that the School Council could help fund for the students. Requests are based on items that can help multiple classes in the school, and not to help for individual requests or items that can be funded through the school.

Proposed budget			
Item	Income	Expense	Balance
Carry over from 22-23	12,500		
Funds already allocated by 22-23 SC	11,900		
Proposed income (with projected or actual income):			
Halloween (est.)	1,250		
Pizza lunches (est.)	9,000		
Mabel’s Labels	65.79		
PCEO	500		
School Council Supply	950		
TDSB Grant (\$1,500 but we assume no grant)	0		
Dance-a-thon	5,000		
Movie nights x 2	500		
Funds allocated by 22-23 SC Several items were approved in the 22-23 school year, but did not happen in time. The 22-23 SC agreed to cover these costs at the Sept 27/23 meeting:		11,900	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Participatory Budget – Recess Bags and Books (\$1500) • Dismantling Inequities Committee (\$2500) • Robotics program (\$1500) • Digital Subscriptions (\$4000) • Kindergarten supplies (\$2400) 			
School Council expenses		700	
School Council events		2,000	
Community events (engagements)		1,500	
Grade 8 graduation		2,500	
Future ideas		1,000	
Workshops		2,000	
Year-end event		1,500	
Movie license (split cost with school)		350	
Toronto Symphony Orchestra (Music teachers to take all children to the TSO)		7,200	
Ice machine for the gym (so kids don’t have to go to the office)		230	
Buses (two events)		600	

Proposed budget			
Item	Income	Expense	Balance
Carry over from 22-23	12,500		
Funds already allocated by 22-23 SC	11,900		
Proposed income (with projected or actual income):			
Halloween (est.)	1,250		
Pizza lunches (est.)	9,000		
Bulletin board (cork roll)		200	
Sensory walk (for the main hallway)		1,000	
Portable sound system (split cost with school)		750	
Circuit boards		400	
Primary house league and PALS program (ASD)		1,000	
Break out room for Special Ed. Resources		500	
Drama masks		300	
DukeCares		1,000	
JungleSports		4,250	
Total proposed income / expenses / balance:	\$40,900	\$40,880	\$20

Please note: The goal is to spend almost all of the money in any year (October 1 – September 30), with a nominal amount (e.g. \$20) left.

Questions:

1. Why are we aiming to have only \$20 left? In previous years, there was quite a bit of money left. Answer: We are supposed to spend the money, not hold onto it, unless earmarked for specific use. We have transferred large surpluses over the past few years. We did aim to spend it all, but of course things don't always go as planned and we had activities and purchases fall through or be delayed (like the \$11,900 in money / expenses we've transferred to this year's budget.) We also discovered there was a surplus in the School Line account. So although it is our goal to spend all but a nominal amount, it doesn't always happen.
2. Do we want to do JungleSports again? (Jill) Discussion: We had no complaints and it got everyone involved. Did teachers like it? Maria Oliveira said it was her initiative and she thought teachers loved it: it helped kids with their confidence and physical skill and all grades could be engaged. One parent suggested more communication about what each grade / level would do: she found her younger kids were jealous about the activities their older sibling got to do. Jill thought that would be possible.

Vote to approve the budget: Typically only SC Members have an official vote at the meeting - two years ago - changed bylaws around the budget to allow everyone in attendance at the budget meeting (Council members and parents) to vote.

At 7:24, all who were in attendance voted unanimously to accept the budget.

To close the budget discussion, Jill encouraged the parents in attendance to bring ideas – activities, events, etc. – that come up throughout the year to council. While the TDSB expects us to do a budget now, we want to be flexible if new ideas come up.

7:25 – 7:45 pm

Principal's Report

Vice Principal Rule presented the school's cell phone policy, which was implemented last January. In essence:

- Kids cannot take pictures or videos on property.
- Kids cannot text during the day.
- Outdoor times (recess) are tech free times.
- During lunch, school administrators and teachers don't monitor phones and laptops from home, but school laptops cannot go outside.
- It's up to each teacher to decide where phones are kept during class. During instructional time, phones and other devices must be off and away, unless the teacher has given clear permission to use devices. EarPods and headphones cannot be used.
- If a kid needs to talk to or text their parents, they need to go to the office to do it.

There are actions taken for non-compliance

- First request: if a student is asked to put it away their phone, and does it, then there's no further action at that
- Second request: if that student is asked to put their phone away again, they must hand it to the teacher for safe-keeping until the end of the school day
- Third request: the student has to take their phone to the office and there's a sign in/sign out process to follow

Teachers monitor and manage cell phone use and enforce the policy, with the support of the VP and Principal. Note: the policy was shared with kids from Grade 4 to 8 in two separate assemblies, so the kids are aware of it.

The SC agreed we should share the information again, to refresh people's memories

Principal Vatzolas:

- We've had a good start to the year
- Lots of extra-curricular activities going now: choirs are running, writers are at work building a musical, origami club is underway, and many more. The girls football team won the championship and the boys team went to the finals.
- Progress reports go home on November 14th
- Parent-teacher conferences will be held on November 16-17
- A TTC representative will be at the school on November 14 for a transit safety presentation to students in grade 5-8
- Picture retake day is November 20

- Island Natural Science School trip (facilitated by TDSB) – the first trip to the Island school for Grade 6 students is Nov 22-24. The next group will head to the school in February. (grade 6 students)
- The winter concert is December 5
- Remembrance Day will be observed Friday November 10 with two assemblies (primary and junior/senior)
- The Scholastic Book Fair started today (November 6) and will run for the next two-and-a-half weeks.
- The contractors have replaced the Romex at the tree deck – hopefully it will hold together this time.
- There's no update about the basketball court, but it is still on the books for this year.

Questions:

1. Will the new gender inclusive club be starting soon? Will it include all grades? Answer: Yes, the Board social worker is providing support to ensure the club is truly inclusive. The students who are starting the club will go around to all the classes – primary, junior and intermediate – to talk about the club.

7:45 – 8:10 pm

Open floor discussion

Cuts to education: Duke parent, Jennifer asked to discuss cuts to education and what we (as parents) can do about it. She provided an article from The Monitor that suggests that recent cuts to education equal \$1200 per child per year. The year-over-year impact of cuts (with the realistic expectation that they will continue over the next few years) has been significant. We are feeling the pinch at Duke: reduced teaching and administrative staff, less funding for school activities, etc. Jennifer believes the cuts that were not rolled back last year affected our school community

The main request: how do we further activate our community, how do we talk about the cuts realistically, find common ground and take action?

Our conversation was more questions than answers:

- Can it be a standing item in the Council minutes? (Not sure at this point)
- Can we do something to get media coverage? Do we even want that, since we cannot control how the story plays? (Issues in the past with this tactic.)
- How do we activate the community without alienating anyone? (Mindful that families have different opinions and political leanings) Jill raised the need to ensure all feel welcome, to keep our on-school-property activities friendly and inclusive, which means the coffee mornings are not a place for political conversations. Need to think about this and how we can move forward.
- Robyn asked what were the cuts to staff and impact on school – many families new to Duke this year will not know what the cuts were/are and the kind of advocacy we took on

in past years. Jill suggested we pull out the past NTRs and revisit them for information to share again. Cuts were .5 VP. .5 Office Staff, 3 Lunchroom Supervisors. Gained a Safety Monitor.

- Can any of this advocacy be an official part of the SC? While the SC cannot have a political subcommittee per se, we can help to take the pulse of the community (polls) and support many advocacy actions. Interested parent group possible - advocacy panel kind of idea.
- One parent asked: what's our endgame, what outcome are we looking for? Letter writing? Going to the media? How will we set goals and objectives?
- Can we connect to the PIAC rep? Yes, we were very involved with her, Jennifer Volk, last year.
- Possible hurdle to getting parents involved is that last year we did a lot of advocacy and all the schools in the Ward but Duke got their VP back. There could be let down from that. We can keep trying.

Next steps:

- Jill / Marilyn to pull out last year's NTRs and web content related to advocacy (we've done petitions, letter writing, etc.) We can share out more information, we can update the website and we can connect people who may be able to work together.
- May need to do some polling/survey to get community input on direction for this topic
- Create conversations where possible.
- Jennifer will put together something with ideas

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm