**Duke School Council Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, November 24, 2021 | 6:30 PM

Virtual Meeting

**ATTENDANCE**

**Duke of Connaught:** Principal Carol Shea, Vice Principals Caitlin Newnham-Kanas and Lizz Landry, Teacher Rep Ray McIntyre

**School Council Members:** Catherine Miller-Mort (Chair), Miranda Indrigo (Communications Lead), Jeff Hackett (Treasurer), Parent Reps: Suhasini Date, Lauren Green, Chris Hazard, Jill Hollingsworth, Sue Munn, Cara Murphy. (Absent: Jinju Fang, Kim Robinson)

Meeting has quorum and therefore is an official meeting.

**Other Attendees:** May Seto (Applegrove Community Complex representative), Laurie Barnett, Adene Kuchera, Lisa Lebeer, Winston Ng, Warren

**Welcome, Land Acknowledgement:** Catherine Miller-Mort

**Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting:** Miranda Indrigo moved for their approval, Jeff Hackett seconded. Minutes approved.

**Other Business Added to the Agenda:**

* May Seto, representative from Applegrove CC, added to the agenda
* Laurie Barnett requested that we add Remembrance Day to the meeting agenda.

**APPROVAL OF CODE OF ETHICS: Catherine Miller-Mort**

Code of Ethics included in the updated School Council bylaw amendments that were approved last year.

The Code of Ethics govern and guide the behavior of School Council members. Full Code of Ethics can be found on the [Duke SC website.](https://dukesac.godaddysites.com/school-council-info)

A motion to vote to approve the Code of Ethics was forwarded by Jill Hollingsworth and seconded by Chris Hazard; there were no objections and the Code of Ethics was approved by School Council.

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS UPDATE: May Seto, Applegrove Community Complex**

Council has invited members from community partners Applegrove Community Complex, Pegasus Adult Day Program for physically challenged adults, SH Armstrong community centre, and Woodgreen Daycare to act as community representatives on School Council. Because of the time commitment involved and the challenges of COVID, these groups declined official membership on Council but have agreed to informally join SC meetings on a rotating basis.

**Applegrove** runs multiple programs, including afterschool care, summer day camps, prenatal to seniors, Early ON program.

Programs have been running virtually but Early ON and afterschool are also now running indoors

Applegrove will be closing from December 23 – January 3; no holiday camp due to low interest

Virtual holiday event on December 9 from 7:00 – 8: 30, including musician, Indigenous teaching and drumming session, trivia, fun door prizes

**SH Armstrong** will be providing holiday camp for two weeks over the holiday. First week is full but second week has availability at this time. Winter program registration for SH Armstrong is December 15 at 7 AM; programming will start January 8th. SH Armstrong’s Youth Council is doing very well, with approximately 30 members from ages 13 – 24 who meet on Thursdays from 3:30 – 6:00. They’ve had to turn away participants because the program is very popular.

**SCHOOL COUNCIL UPDATES**

**Committees to Date: Catherine Miller-Mort**

Three committees started this year: Fundraising, Budget and Dismantling Inequities. Initial work of Budget and Fundraising committees will be presented at this meeting but interest is welcomed at any time. Bylaw committee is up and running but has not met in the last month, so will not be providing an update. School Council Election committee will be started in the new year.

**Dismantling Inequities Committee: Jill Hollingsworth**

Dismantling Inequities Committee is a new committee enshrined in the bylaws. Intention is to come up with an action plan to dismantle systemic and individual discrimination that is resulting from white supremacy and Canada’s colonial roots.

Committee has had its first meeting and is at the beginning of their journey; they welcome anyone who would like to join at any time to email the Duke SC at [info@dukesac.ca](mailto:info@dukesac.ca) or reach out to anyone on the committee to be added to the Dismantling Inequities Slack channel.

Initial takeaways from first meeting: We need to be comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations. Committee introduced themselves and spoke about the committee’s role and goals: work with students and parents with a focus on being an anti-racist, anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic school, as well as all other forms of discrimination. Awareness and education role to have a positive impact in school and community. Want to challenge the status quo and do work that shifts attitudes

The main focus is treating everyone with respect and kindness to create an inclusive and diverse, welcoming environment at the school. Collaborate with School Improvement Plan and the work the administration is doing so that there’s a bridge between our groups. Hope to host safe space meetings for racialized parents and caregivers. Developing resource list including books, websites and podcasts around anti oppression and equity, potentially starting a book club.

TDSB has a grant program for school councils and this year the grant is focused on working with parent communities on anti-oppression and equity; we’re going to apply for up to $1500, with funds to be used to bring a series of interactive workshops and artistic expressions around topics such as How to Raise Anti-Racist Kids; Canvas art space workshops for inclusive youth environments with a focus on the LGBTQ community; Indigenous education, including a session on the history of the powwow and Indigenous dance and drumming.

**Annual School Statement of Needs (SSON): Su Date, SC Parent Rep**

SSON is something that we put together every year; document is shared with superintendent in case we need a new principal.

Questionnaire shared with staff and parent/caregiver community. Four themes to responses: Leadership, Equity/Diversity Education, Technology, Communication. Request for feedback from parent community by email. Working document can be found [here](https://dukesac.godaddysites.com/school-council-info).

Su shared the positive feedback, including friendly, engaged community; communication from SC is good; administration is humble and helpful; teachers’ efforts with classes; diverse student body and engaged community, nutrition program. Need to publicize all the good things that happen at Duke so that everyone is aware of them.

CS asked for clarification around the comment that SEA claim needs (Special Education Allowances) are not being met. This is a central special education process and Carol would like to address whether there are students need computers for special reading/writing needs and haven’t been assigned a computer; Carol noted that students with SEA claim get designated equipment, software and training that goes through central education special process; Carol clarified that this is different from classroom technology. SSON survey was anonymous, so cannot provide specific details around this feedback.

Question: Parent Adene Kuchera felt that school communication should be increased, rather than reduced as noted in SSON, and appreciates quick, short emails from office rather than longer format; would like these to be maintained.

Answer: Su clarified that there is repetition in communication from a variety of sources (school office, school council, NTR) and goal is to streamline.

**Treasurer’s Report/ Budget 2021/2022: Jeff Hackett**

Account balance at beginning of year is $27, 020; $29 in PACE account and $6800 in school budget

$157 in payments to date this year from classroom enrichment that happened last year. Currently have $14, 789 that can be used for new expenses in 2021-2022. Carryover accounts from previous years (musical, etc.) that we’ve held onto and some proposed expenses will be used from those accounts.

Budget committee has met twice; this will be an unusual year again in terms of fundraising and extracurriculars and as a result committee will take staged approach to budget and review in the new year. Potentially hold fundraisers later in the year depending on pandemic situation. Questionnaires sent out to parents, teachers regarding items they’re looking for at this point.

**Tech enrichment**

Chromebooks approved last year but we weren’t able to purchase. We would like to order 35 Chromebooks, if approved, and kindergarten iPads to support play-based learning, coding, robots.

Carol noted that at $307 per Chromebook, the 2021-2022 budget reflects costs for about 25 Chromebooks; Jeff clarified that we have $2633 carryover from last year to cover additional costs

Order freeze has now been lifted, so we can order as soon as budget is approved. Carol has asked Jen Q to go ahead with the purchase based on the money that was slated for Council last year, and confirmed that the school is going to double that so that the school has significant investment in technology

SC budget also includes workshops for students; Dismantling Inequities committee workshops; Indigenous education lacrosse equipment requested by Ms. O; equipment for SH Armstrong pool and swimming programs; Indigenous puppet sets for Kindergarten Teachers (funds available from prior year); coffee mornings for staff (funds available from prior year); multiple sets of leveled classroom readers for group learning (funds available from prior year). Reserve fund for new initiatives or unexpected needs

**Question** (Cara Murphy): Is there a ranking for unexpected or new funds later in the year?

**Answer**: Jeff confirmed that we base the budget on the teachers’ requests or awareness of overall school’s needs (e.g. tech); if we have funds, we can use those for new initiatives. We generally come under budget so we can address specific needs. Fundraising needs to reflect specific items or goals; plan to reserve some fundraising plans for specific items that may come up in the future (for example, to raise funds for grade 8) and prioritize items that support the greatest number of students. Budget committee is going to look at how the budget and fundraising process works.

**Question** (Lisa Lebeer): In previous years, teachers were given an amount for classroom enrichment but this is not shown in this year’s budget. How are teachers reimbursed if they purchase something for their classroom?

**Answer**: In the past, only a few teachers used the enrichment funds (less than 30% last year). The money was then held in reserve. The budget committee discussed this in terms of equity, because some teachers took advantage of classroom enrichment and others did not, which raised concerns from parents who saw that some classrooms had this and others didn’t. Feedback from questionnaire showed that technology is highly needed by all students. Committee looking to find programs that are available to all students—for example, scientist in the school for all students. As well, some items that teachers request cannot be paid for by the SC; necessary items need to come from their school/classroom budget

**Question:** Can fundraising include headsets to help teachers with voice projection through masks, particularly for French Immersion students?

**Answer:** SC received requests from some teachers for headsets, speakers and these were considered tech requests from the SC. Ray McIntyre spoke as a member of the school tech committee, which manages school funds for tech; the school tech committee is discussing whether headsets are considered personal items of the teacher or are school items. Carol clarified that headsets were originally in school for teachers with medical challenges or children with hearing aids/ needs. Some amplification systems can create problems and they can be very loud, so they’re not necessarily suitable for all spaces; they were originally offered for medical accommodations

Sue Munn raised concerns regarding the inequity of fundraising; student access to technology shouldn’t depend on the ability of our school council to raise funds. While Duke is often able to raise these funds, many councils are not, and she noted that fundraising and spending at the school level contributes to systemic disadvantage within the system and does not think that we as caregivers should engage in activities that perpetuate this kind of disadvantage. Goal of student council is to enhance student achievement and well-being but noted that this goal should not be achieved at the expense of taking steps to push against systemic inequalities; focus should be on what we can do for our students and students across the TDSB.

Jill Hollingsworth noted that there has been a lot of conversation at PIAC and at the TDSB that classroom enrichment items are not shown to have a positive impact on student achievement and well-being; they are extras that some schools have and some don’t. There’s a disconnect that if we buy things or give every class a budget, improvement follows. TDSB prefers to see money spent to enrich entire school, such as the lacrosse enrichment experience that is offered to all grades, which have been shown to have greater positive impact. Lacrosse enrichment offers Indigenous education, physical movement tied to mental wellness (particularly important during covid); Budget committee took this into consideration as budget was created. Jill noted that PIAC conference is offering seminars on this topic

Catherine Miller-Mort followed to support Sue’s comments and wondered if School Council could move forward to make statement to PIAC or elsewhere to note that while we are passing this budget, we want action on inequity piece. Sue is willing to take this forward as a council member, seconded by Jill. Catherine has a friend working on this topic and will connect with Sue. Sue will bring this forward at next meeting in January.

Ray spoke on behalf of teachers regarding inequity: over 25 years of teaching he has seen the budget shrink, which creates inequity in the system. Classroom budgets only covers consumables (paper, pens, notebooks etc.); once this has been purchased, classroom budgets generally spent. Systemic issue; Ontario government has reduced the education budget and raised whether School Council would like to address this issue formally in some way.

**Budget Vote:** All Attendees

**Motion to Approve:** Catherine Miller-Mort; Second: Cara Murphy

**Result: Carried**

Full budget can be found [here](https://dukesac.godaddysites.com/school-council-info).

**FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE: Jill Hollingsworth**

Fundraising revenue goal of $18700. Letter campaign is primary focus for fundraising. Additional fundraisers include Krispy Crème fundraiser, potentially pizza lunches and Danceathon if these are feasible later in the year. Other ideas are in the works if we need additional funds or aren’t able to complete some fundraisers due to COVID.

Letter campaign is a direct appeal for virtual donations through schoolcashonline. We encourage everyone to sign up and instructions will go out shortly after meeting. Limited fundraising options this year so opted for direct outreach rather than selling items that parents may not want/need.

**PRINCIPAL’S REPORT: Carol Shea, Caitlin Newnham-Kanas, Lizz Landry**

**Zone bags:** each classroom has been ordered a zone bag and most are complete. Different bags for divisions (kindergarten, primary, junior, intermediates). Bags will be distributed next week; two bags per zone.

**Lunchroom supervisors**: school is in desperate need of lunchroom supervisors; with the pool potentially opening in January, two staff members who are assisting with supervision will return to their roles as aquatic instructors. When that happens there will only be coverage for six of the eight outdoor zones. Admin does not want to collapse zones because of maintaining cohorts. If there are any parents who can volunteer, please reach out to admin.

**Technology update**: School received 85 Chromebooks for Grade 5 students. These have been signed out through library system and have 8 left for any other grade 5 students who join Duke. Devices are part of a provincial program for grade 5 students only and the device goes with student if the student leaves the school.

**Student Engagement:** Last week of school (Dec 14, 15, 16), Ms. Astor will play music for students outside during lunch period. If it rains, we’ll move to Monday or Friday. Teachers will ask students what songs they’d like to hear at lunchtime.

**Intermediate Lunch Hour:** Student, staff, parent survey went out. Intermediate teachers are meeting to review to understand parent and student needs; parent requests have been wide-ranging, with requests for fully unstructured time and for structured activity. Pre-Covid, there’s usually a wide range of extra curriculars. Scheduling extracurriculars is challenging in terms of staffing and cohorts. TDSB protocols changing constantly and school is adapting protocols as a result, hoping for more openness in the new year.

Sw**imming Pool:** Pending repairs to the heat exchange system, anticipating pool will open in January.

Grade 1 – 8 students will have access over 10 day period. Larger blocks of time are needed to manage transitions, number of kids in changeroom and conditions withing changeroom to meet Covid protocols

Tentative plan in place, more info to come.

**Vaccinations:** Five rapid antigen tests to go home with each student; Admin has no additional information at this time about rollout. Admin has made a pitch for a mobile vaccination clinic at Duke. Vaccination information session for parents with Toronto Public Health tentatively scheduled for December 9 from 6:30 – 7:30; Michael Garron Hospital also reached out about running a parent information session, so admin has asked TPH and Michael Garron to coordinate and offer one session for parents with speakers from the hospital, TPH and the nurse rep appointed to Duke answer questions. Admin will work with SC to gather questions in advance so that session can run efficiently.

**School Improvement Plan (SIP):** Focus on anti-black racism and anti-oppression work as a school

Looking at data around learning skills, work habits, report cards, attendance, office referrals. First of three parts of the SIP: Commitment to student well-being and receiving students wherever they are, from their different experiences, and understanding their identities and intersectionality. Working on survey for students and parents around race, culture to better understand school community. Using surveys and data to understand where our students are achieving and underachieving and set goals for school improvement and working with SC Dismantling Inequities committee to align goals.

SIP goals are woven into all aspects of the school, staff meetings, division meetings, etc. Mentor text Deep Dive with Duke families started last year using Uncomfortable Conversations w/a Black Man by Emmanuel Acho. Using this text with staff to begin engaging and having important conversations with staff. Carol reiterated commitment to conversations, identifying bias and implicit bias, student perception and considering parent experiences in school within a lens of race and specifically anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, Truth and Reconciliation and LGBTQ+ communities.

Other component is taking the learnings and using them to inform and create meaningful, transparent classroom experiences for children. Parents hopefully are seeing some of these initiatives reflected in their conversations with their children. Anti-oppression work in our school and classroom should be clear and transparent and admin is working to ensure that they share their planning and the data they’ve collected in a future meeting.

SC agreed to make this a priority topic at next SC meeting so that Carol can share more and so that we have extended time for questions and conversations.

**Question**: Can we continue the parent discussion group around Uncomfortable Conversations w/a Black Man to discuss the final third of the book and continue with a new title?

**Answer**: Carol agreed that we need to keep continuing to have these conversations and that there’s no “end point”—the work is ongoing. Admin has reached out to urban Indigenous education centre who have provided 40 TDSB approved titles that would be a good starting place for discussion on truth and reconciliation and Indigenous education. Suggested texts cover heavy subject matter and we would need representation from the Indigenous community to run sessions equitably and ensure that we’re representing the community; could potentially reach out to our school community for support and will also lean on Tanya Senk (TDSB’s Indigenous System Superintendent of Indigenous Education) and the urban Indigenous education centre. The Deep Dive gives members of school community a common vocabulary and similar jumping off point.

**LUNCH HOUR AND COHORTS: Miranda Indrigo**

SC reached out to school community through School Council social channels about concerns around lunch hour. Three concerns: the early timing of the primary lunch hour, a question of whether children around allowed to eat outside, and specific questions around the grade 7/8 lunch hour. Carol noted that many of the lunch protocols come from the TDSB.

**Question**: Primary lunch hour is early and kids are hungry at the end of the day. Are there opportunities to integrate an afternoon snack?

**Answer**: Primary schedule is entry at 8:20, mid-morning meal (which includes 3 food groups) shortly after entry. Lunch starts at 10:40 -10:45 and kids have 15 – 20 minutes to eat in the classroom. Teachers have flexibility to extend that if they’re finding that kids are needing it. Lunch is followed by 55 minute outdoor break. In the afternoon there is a snack break. Parents can absolutely send more snack items if their kids are hungry and students are allowed to have a snack whenever they need it during the day if they’re hungry. Process is for students to let their teachers know they’re hungry and to ask permission to leave their workspace to get a snack. Parent Lisa Lebeer asked that teachers remind younger students who are not yet comfortable advocating for themselves to get a snack if they’re hungry. Intermediates follow a similar schedule but their lunch is from 12 – 1.

**Question**: Is eating outside allowed and if not, why?

**Answer**: TDSB has mandated eating indoors in their seats to prevent sharing of food, which is hard to manage if they’re outside without supervision. Students are also receiving instruction while they have their lunch (instructional videos, etc.). Eating under supervision also helps ensure that primary grades are actually eating during this time

**Question:** What is the policy around grade 7/8 who leave property for lunch hour? Are they expected to stay off property for the full lunch hour, and if so, why? With Ashbridges Estate off limits and local parks under construction, there are limited places where students can go and some parents felt it wasn’t welcoming that they aren’t allowed to return during the lunch hour.

**Answer**: TDSB protocol sis that students need to sanitize upon return to school and stay within their cohort. If students are returning to school by Woodfield at random times, they have to walk through other cohorts to get to their zones, which rotate at every recess. As well, in emergency circumstances the school needs a concise list of who is on the property, incase there’s a need to evacuate the school

If there’s an emergency or safety concern while students are in the community, they are welcome to return in those circumstances. Otherwise, TDSB protocols are that students who leave need to stay out for the full hour. The staff has reminded students to set a timer on their phone and return to school at the end of their lunch hour. Alternately, they can stay in their zone during lunch. Carol is hopeful that we’ll be able to offer some lunchtime activities in January.

**Question**: Are the benches on Woodfield and Vancouver considered school property? If not, why aren’t students allowed to gather there?

**Answer:** The benches on Woodfield and Vancouver are city property but the school has a responsibility based on the TDSB protocols to ensure that cohorts are not mixing, which happens when groups of kids return and spend time there

**REMEMBRANCE DAY: Laure Barnett**

Parent shared concerns her son shared with her about Remembrance Day. He felt the school did not acknowledge the day appropriately and was disappointed that the moment of silence and the Last Post were not observed as a school.

Ray McIntrye shared that his class watched a slideshow of student work and shared other resources, did a week of activities leading up to Remembrance Day and observed the moment of silence. Admin acknowledged school-wide observance at 11 am was challenging because of the strict scheduling and the early lunch hour for primary grades, who are transitioning to recess at this time. Caitlin Newnham-Kanas shared that staff and students worked on a collaborative video presentation and slide deck that included primary, intermediate, and junior elements. A committee worked on Remembrance Day; morning announcements included a message written by Mme Anastasi’s classroom, an Indigenous song and a student reading of *In Flanders Field* in French. Laurie and Jill recognized the work done by the school but reiterated the significance of the moment of silence and Last Post in honoring Remembrance Day.