

Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)

April 4, 2024, 6:30 - 8:00 pm (hybrid)

Attendees:

Council: Abby Dwosh, Adam Marshall (Principal), Ana Rodrigues, Anna Rutledge, Jessica Pearson (Vice-Principal), Diana Goldie, Giovanni Grasselli, Jen Ankenmann, Jessica Miklos (co-secretary), John Bakous (co-chair), Kristina Turner (recording secretary), Melissa Rosen, Natasha Sachs-Pepe, Omar Becerril (co-chair), Stephanie Koutakis (student representative), Stephanie Nacawa, Susan Woodward (staff representative), Tania Osmond

Parents: Brian M., Chris Blake, Diana R., Doron, Eunice Youhanna, Karen, Leila Sadri, Lesley Cowan, Mila, Ruth K., S. Kwon, Sarah, Tania K., Usha S., Wendy Li, Beth Lauer, S Wang

Regrets: Andy Anderson, Elena Comelli, Everton Lewis, Gaya Sathiyamoorthy.

Meeting called to order at 6:40 pm by Omar B.

- Welcome
- Land acknowledgement

Approval of agenda

- Request to add new business.
- Motion to approve: Anna Seconded: John. Carried.

Co-chair Report – John B.

- John highlighted the upcoming parenting presentation at the school on April 25, “Connecting with your Teen”.
- Extra time in exams - since all students received extra time in exams last January under the Universal Design for Learning provision, a small number of students did not feel they received the extra time that their IEPs required. Adam committed to creating a document to share more information about extra time on exams for all students before the next exam period.
- The Northern Secondary School Foundation offers a huge range of awards and scholarships for students – ranging from \$75 Indigo gift cards for poetry, to \$1,000 for the Davis Kelo Memorial Stepping Forward Award to a student leader and athlete who has organized activities to promote wellness and has decreased the stigma surrounding mental illness, to \$2,000 for the Jim. W. Davidson Scholarship for students excelling in academics and athletics! For information about awards and scholarships, please look at the NSS Foundation website <https://nssf.ca/scholarships/>

Vice Principal's Report – Jessica Pearson

Student rep introduction - Stephanie Koutakis

- Stephanie shared student concerns:
 - Students need more information about Prom, and the cost, so they can plan.
 - Students are asking for more feminine products to be provided in the bathrooms, and better locks on washroom doors on the first and second floors.

Robotics – Ms. Pearson shared the success of the Robotics club this year.

Operations update – three classrooms that are being renovated have now gone to tender.

Staffing update – staff count has increased by 10 for the upcoming school year.

Q & A from parents

- *How can parents voice concerns about academic programming?* Parents can voice questions or concerns to the course leader, who will follow the parent concern protocol.
- *How can I get involved in the Safe and Caring School Committee?* VP Tiffany Peel chairs this meeting, which meets monthly and includes the Vice Principal, a parent representative, and any other parents who wish to join.
- *Are there volunteer opportunities for parents?* There are no classroom opportunities, but the Lunch program needs parents. All volunteers are required to get a police check, and the Principal's office can give you information on this.
- *How can parents submit student volunteer job opportunities?* Please send to the Principal.
- *Given the large cohort of grade 9 students and the diverse interests among them, are there any opportunities to expand SHSM (Specialist High Skills Major) offerings in the next few years?* We are unlikely to expand the SHSM offerings at Northern in the next few years. Each SHSM is simply a package of courses. Northern already offers a wide range of business programs, so students already have the option of taking all of the courses that they would be able to take if there were a business focused SHSM.
- *Does NSS have a school improvement plan?* Yes, and parents can offer input. This will be discussed at the next meeting
- *We are hearing a lot about the TDSB budget process. How does the budget process happen at the school level? Will the school budget be presented at an NSS Council meeting? When would this typically occur?* Adam is open to discussing a budget presentation with the Chairs.
- *When will the June exam schedule be ready?* Will be ready soon and will follow the Day 1, 2, 3, 4 format, like last time. Exam days will be June 19, 20, 21 and 24 and will all start at 10am.
- *Why are there only two boys' bathrooms open?* The administration is very aware that this is not enough bathrooms. The reason the others are closed is that students are not respecting the space (eg taking doors off, vandalism) and the repairs to this damage can sometimes be slow. The more bathrooms are open, the more opportunities for vandalism and damage there are. Students are encouraged to share information with teachers or admin (can be private or anonymous) to help them identify the individuals who persist in damaging the bathrooms.
- *What is the cutoff for marks on midterm reports?* This depends on each teacher and their schedule, so students should consult with their classroom teachers.

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Council Business

- Approval of February minutes. Motion to approve: Anna; seconded Ana R.; Carried.

Treasurer's Report – Jen A.

- Treasurer reported recent grants under \$1,000: \$825 to send 4-5 students to Reach for the Top provincial tournament; \$600 for Squash club tournament entry fee and t-shirts; \$500-\$700 for refreshments for May 8 STEM alumni panel; \$TBA pizza for student helpers at the April 25 Connecting with your Teen workshop
- Grant requests over \$1,000: annual Buddies retreat – last year we granted \$1,500 and it was agreed to grant \$1,500 again this year
 - o Motion to approve: Jen.; Seconded: Omar.; Carried.
- There was discussion about how to disperse funds in a fair manner.
- Fundraising campaign for spring - it took six weeks for the test donation in Feb to show up in the SC School Cash Online account. Since any funds in School Cash Online need to be spent by July 31, it was decided that it we should not move forward with any other fundraising this year. Instead, we will just wait til September and run the campaign with tax receipts offered for donations over \$25 then.
- Financial reports for TDSB are complete and submitted on a semi-annual and annual basis.
- Complete Treasurer's report [here](#).

Subcommittee Updates

If you are interested in joining a subcommittee, please visit our website to learn more or reach out to School Council via email (nss.school.council@gmail.com).

Academic Resource Committee – Tania O.

Have a look at ongoing learning opportunities on our website- nsscouncil.com There you will find links for many resources, including the newest addition “ADHD from the inside out”, game-changing insights that explain what is happening *inside* the ADHD brain which will help you understand what your loved one is actually struggling with and how to support them more effectively. Listen to this at any time.

If you have resources to share, please send them to us at nss.school.council@gmail.com

Education Committee – John B.

There was a discussion about future gifted course offerings. Northern has historically offered a wide range of gifted courses beyond the minimums set out in the TDSB Special Education Plan https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/docs/Special_Education/TDSB_SEP.pdf In the past, several gifted courses have run that ended up having low enrollment. The TDSB is now scrutinizing Northern's gifted offerings more closely. Our trustee, Rachel Chernos Lin, is fully supportive of Northern continuing to offer a range of gifted courses beyond the minimum so long as there is sufficient student enrollment to offer full classes. Student voice and choice is valued. Northern's gifted cohort is sufficiently large that we can often offer a larger range of courses than can be offered at schools with a smaller gifted cohort.

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Gifted Advisory Committee – Jessica M.

The SEAC seat for gifted is currently empty. We are awaiting the appointment of the next representative by ABC Ontario. Thank you to our very own Melissa Rosen for her years of service in this role.

- Next events:
April 11th – games night
May 29 – planning for post-secondary.
A Grade 9 gifted cohort building event is being planned for September.

The Gifted Advisory Committee welcomes parent volunteers to help plan and organize informational events and social opportunities for families of gifted students at Northern. Gifted families are welcome to join a WhatsApp group to facilitate discussion and connection between families. To join our mailing list, please complete [this form](#).

ESL

No report as the chair was ill.

Fundraising committee – Diana G.

Wish list with input from staff and students (SAC and Buddies) is in progress, and will be shared at the next meeting to help shape the publicity for the fall fundraising campaign.

Social Committee – Tania O.

Since our last meeting, we've hosted another games night and a parent social on "All things AI" led by our own SC parent expert, Ana Rodrigues. Our Families in Crisis group - for parents whose students are not reaching typical milestones - met for dinner early March at the Granite Brewery.

Upcoming events will include Saturday walks, a May games night, another Families in Crisis dinner, and a parent social called "Speed Parenting".

The Social Committee is looking for parents who like to create opportunities for connection. If you like people and want to help organize, please email nss.school.council@gmail.com!

Website committee – Tania O.

A beautiful redesign of the council website is taking place - nsscouncil.com. The former platform, Weebly, couldn't be accessed from within TDSB so we are switching soon to Wordpress.

Council voted to approve the expense of a 3-year subscription for Wordpress (\$361), a month subscription of stock photos if needed (\$65) and the cost to transport the domain from Weekly to Wordpress (\$60).

Community Update - Melissa R.

Melissa shared her thoughts on the TDSB budget process, finishing as the SEAC representative for parents of gifted students, and the rise of anti-semitic incidents in the TDSB. Council greatly appreciates Melissa's dedication in her role as SEAC representative.

New Business

Recruitment and Elections – to enhance Council's engagement and recruiting of parents, make the Council member experience rewarding, and create a straightforward election process, a committee was formed to gather feedback from present and past Council members. The committee will learn about their experience, make a plan about how to recruit new parents for

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next year's Council, and review our election process and make suggestions as to how it can be more accessible and transparent.

Motion to adjourn at 8:39.

Next meeting – Thursday May 23 – 6.30pm – school library/MS Teams