

# Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)

## May 5, 2021, 6:30 - 7:45 pm (Via Zoom)

**Attendees:** Laura A, Andy A, Janice B, Abby D, Samir F, Diana G, Sabina H, Linda K, Karri P, Tania O, Sohinee R, Melissa R, Steve S, Mary Ann S, Adam Marshall, Leslie Usin-Rojas, Jenn Marr,

**Regrets:** Rita C, Andrea F, Debbie L, Ellie M, Gail A, Grace D, Gethin J

**Meeting called to order at 6:35 by Janice B**

### **Operational Matters:**

The following items were approved by Council:

- Agenda
- April 8 minutes

### **Co-Chairs Report - Tania O.**

- We are relieved to reach the last official meeting of the school year and pleased that we have been able to accomplish many things together. It has been incredibly challenging to learn a new way to do practically everything and figure out the best way to serve our students and parents, despite the continually changing terrain.
- Our goals this year were to build community and connect parents to important information to support students throughout the year. The addition of Zoom as a platform for holding meetings and webinars has been very effective and increased accessibility and involvement noticeably. Our website, communication and information between many departments have all improved significantly.
- We believe these are all tools we can use in the future, restrictions or not, to continue to encourage participation and connect Northern families to helpful information. However, there is no substitution for informal chats and face-to-face time, and we look forward to when we can safely resume that as well.
- We have covered a wide range of topics in presentations this year, featuring speakers, as well as some new efforts like “Ask Adam” and “Parent Chats”. We are always open to new ideas, so we hope you will be thinking about topics that would help you and your family and send them to us at [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com).
- To help us plan that, two polls were presented to attendees to gather feedback on our work:

1) What School Council initiatives were helpful to you this year? (multiple answers allowed)

Speakers	50%
Ask Adam	94%
Weekly updates	72%
Parent Chat	13%
Website	44%
SC Meetings	59%

2) Where do you look for information? (multiple answers allowed)

Adam's Weekly bulletin	94%
SC Weekly updates	69%
Northern website	16%
SC website	25%

3) Do you find School Council programming:

Too much	5%
Too little	5%
Just right	89%

4) What time is best to start School Council events?

6:30	32%
7:00	41%
7:30	27%

- We typically have a parent social in June to wrap up the year...depending on our schedules, we may try to still plan one on Zoom. And, Janice and Tania will still be meeting with Adam regularly to discuss parent concerns and changes as decisions are made for June and the fall. If there is a need to share important information, we will figure out the best forum for that in coming weeks.
- The final meeting of this Council will be next September, where we'll announce the October election date and details for new members. There will be vacancies on the council, so we hope you will consider your involvement and encourage friends to run as well, as this group benefits from fresh faces and ideas. Dates for next year's meetings will be posted by June on our website.

### **Principals Report - Adam**

- We have been going through a rough stretch this past week with the death of Desi Pena. While we are never fully prepared for these moments, the staff have been great dealing with this tough topic where we have no playbook. Unfortunately, our Covid restrictions have made dealing with the grief all the more difficult. The school will be looking for a

way to properly remember Desi, in time and after Covid restrictions ease, but in the interim there is a Go Fund Me set up for the family here.

- We are happy to be in the last Quad despite still dealing with the stress of the unknown ahead of us. Right now we are hoping for stability in the fall, and hopefully the ability to make plans and follow through.
- In Q3 there were only 40 credit failures; a huge thank you to April Vibert, our student success teacher, and all staff who helped our students get their credits this year.
- Looking ahead, some things of concern are:
  - Book and device distribution and collection
  - Scheduling for next year
  - Virtual school next year
  - There are still day to day challenges to provide the help that is needed while adhering to Covid protocols/restrictions
- Some positives:
  - The credit accumulation mentioned above
  - We have a concrete plan for virtual graduation (see below)
  - Teachers are through the difficult Q2/Q3 stretch
  - Proud of what we have all accomplished together this year... parents, teachers and students. NSS is the biggest school operating in TDSB and we are doing a great job

#### **Parent Submitted Questions for Adam:**

##### **Will we be continuing with Quadesters next fall?**

- This is a TDSB decision, not a school decision and no official announcement has been made as of this meeting. There are scheduling meetings over the next two days and the board should let us know more then. One possibility would be two quads followed by one longer semester.

##### **Is it possible to balance schedules to meet certain needs of students (e.g Grade 12 students applying to post secondary).**

- It's very difficult at this point to balance the teacher's schedules and our large class sizes while meeting every student's schedule preferences. For example, while we recognize that having math in Q1 of this school year and having it the last part of next year is not ideal, we can't make any promises at this point that we can address that imbalance.
- Likewise, we can't guarantee that students "reaching ahead" will be able to get the courses they'd like this fall. For example a student taking grade 10 math over the summer and wishing to take Gr 11 math in the fall would only be allowed to take that course once all the Gr 11 and 12 students requiring it for graduation are accommodated.

##### **Any plans to support students who have missed writing exams with workshops?**

- Yes, we will have something but we are not sure at this point what the format will be - could be after school, could be an assembly.

##### **What do we need to know about the end of the school year?**

- We are still working out how we will deal with returning books and devices, safely. We need to hear from TPH first but it could be drop off bins.
- Last day of full classes is June 23. Credit rescue days will be June 24, 25 and 28th. June 29th is a PD day.
- Summer school will be virtual.

### **What are the grad plans? (See the Grad Committee section for more info)**

- June 28th we will have a recorded ceremony featuring speakers (guests, valedictorian etc), graduating student's names on the screen and some fun stuff too. The link will be able to be shared with family so grandparents etc can watch at home too.
- We will also have an in person grad kit pick up arranged, where students can pick up a gown, cap etc and have a photo taken. We'll use these photos in the class photo for the hallway and the grad book we will send them.

### **Will the Covid vaccine be required for teachers and students?**

- Teachers are all eligible. As of today, kids aged 12-15 are approved for Pfizer but we do not yet have any indication from the Ministry or the board on if there will be any vaccine requirements for next year or beyond for Covid vaccines.

### **Education**

- IPRC proceeding at a normal rate, there's been no slowdown of referrals.
- We expect about 16 Core students next year.
- We have made 130 offers for Gifted, about 75 have accepted with many others choosing to move to private school.
- 446 grade 9 students are projected for September with 30 Optional attendance offers.

### **Roehampton Shelter**

- We will be keeping an eye on the property over the summer holiday to ensure the residents of the shelter (who don't like living there) don't move into our grounds as they did last year.

### **Treasurer's Report - Steve S**

- Total cash on hand is \$18,128, after disbursing \$3,678 for current year disbursement to date.
- There have been no cash disbursements since the last School Council meeting.
- The School Council may spend another \$3,000 this year leaving about \$15,000.
- Normally we would have a draft budget drawn up for next year but the committee has decided to roll this year's budget forward to the September meeting.

### **GAC Report - Melissa**

- As mentioned in previous meetings, SEAC has been working on gathering feedback from parents and caregivers on issues affecting the SpecEd exceptionalities (LD, Gifted, ADHD, DHH). There has been a lot of great feedback including the SpecEd teachers

and the document is now being finalized. If you'd like to see highlights of the recommendations (full report is 70 pages!) please email Melissa at [northerngifted@gmail.com](mailto:northerngifted@gmail.com).

- GAC will hold its final meeting of the year on Thursday May 13th. Email [northerngifted@gmail.com](mailto:northerngifted@gmail.com) for the time and link.

### **Education Committee Report - Melissa**

- It appears the TDSB system review of special programs (STEM, Arts etc) has been put on hold due to the pandemic. The board recently confirmed they are waiting until next year to hold public consultations.
- The Secondary School Review, which was initiated last year, seems to be mostly on hold other than they have reduced optional attendance numbers and moved to a centralized process for next year. The goal is to have attendance at all schools at 90% of capacity, with a 5-10 year plan of closing under-utilized schools so they can offer more courses at the higher demand schools.
- Adam commented that the Minister of Education's announcement this week that Virtual School will be continued to be offered could have an impact on SSR as well. For example, a family may choose Virtual School over the local school.

### **Grad Committee Report - Tania**

- This month we have met several times with the student and staff reps and Adam to discuss plans for grad and it has been a positive, collaborative process, where we discuss many ideas and think of creative ways to work around regulations.
- A major concern and priority is getting consistent grad photos finished before the end of the year.
- Because of TPH limitations, we are focussing our efforts on things that we know can proceed and require advance planning: an art legacy project, the commencement video, and Graduation Central.
- The art legacy will be a photo collage of Grade 12 students as a creative composite of the graduating class. The final design is yet to be determined, but it will likely be a 3' x 4' Red Knight with "Class of 2021" incorporated. It will be printed on metal as a durable and attractive art piece that will be hung in the school.
- The commencement video will be a combination of speeches by Adam, the valedictorian, and dignitaries, as well as photos and video clips of the school, students, faculty, alumna, and awards. We are working with a videographer who has done work previously for Northern (Grade 8 Information Night video) and has great suggestions and interest to support Samantha Reiken, the External Social Director from SAC, who is leading the project creatively.
- For both, we are relying on students to engage with their own submissions of photos and videos...we hope it will be a positive and memorable experience for all!
- Our third project is a page on our website ([nsscouncil.com](http://nsscouncil.com)) called "Grad Central". We are compiling links and ideas to help parents plan their own celebrations at home. The

list includes decorations, food, play lists, gift ideas, and more. We encourage all parents to send us ideas to add, and Grade 12 parents to check it out often for new ideas!

- There are more things we hope to do at the end of June, but we are going to wait for a clearer understanding of the limitations we'll need to work around before proceeding. Stay tuned!

### **Wellness Committee - Linda K**

- As you know, the Wellness Committee has had a wellness goal to focus on each month - we are currently working on Self Care and have tips and ideas posted on the [School Council website](#). Next month will be our final area of focus.
- A big thank you to Karri Parradi for all the help with the website!

### **ByLaw Committee - Janice**

- We are still looking at updating a few areas of our bylaws that can or should be adjusted to reflect our new reality (e.g. number of members required for quorum, being able to vote electronically etc).
- We've been delayed sending out information on this project and are now looking at June as a new date.
- If you would be interested in discussing this please send an email to [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com)

### **Other business - Janice**

- Hodgson has been approved for a building extension. There will be a meeting on May 17th - click here and scroll to the end of the page for more info. <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AccommodationReviews>

### **Co-chair Year End Thank You - Tania and Janice**

Tania:

- We thank everyone for being willing to serve and participate as they can to make the most of this year. But, we'd like to recognize the specific efforts of our committees and executive team: Mary Ann Stewart and Sohinee Ray for doing an extraordinary job managing online meetings and keeping us organized with minutes and links for meetings; Rita Czarnecki, Laura Aguilar and ARC for its presentations on ADHD, Anxiety and Depression and The Teenage Brain; Melissa Rosen and GAC for its presentations on Study Skills, AP/Enrichment, and ADHD Highlights; Karri Paradi and Website Committee for coordinating website updates and upgrades; Steve Sims, Abby Dwosh and Budget Committee for keeping our financial planning and reporting in order; Linda Kennedy and Wellness Committee for our weekly Word on Wellness and monthly resources; Catherine Wong and Grad Committee for helping us make the most of graduation in a virtual world; Mary Ann Stewart and Outreach Committee for hosting two parent chats, Diana Goldie for representing Northern parents in the Roehampton

Residence Committee; Gail Agensky for designing our logo and custom cards for teachers and grads; Julia Schindeler for representing parents on the Caring and Safe Committee.

- We'd also like to thank Northern staff for their roles in these helpful presentations: Post-Secondary Planning, Course Selection, Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of our Teens, and Interesting Programs at NSS.
- Finally, a heartfelt thanks to Adam for lending his personal and professional voice and perspective to help us navigate a very difficult year. We appreciate his dedication to supporting us all and being creative and open minded about finding solutions. We cannot imagine all the layers of complexity that he has faced- we encourage all of you to consider sending a thank-a- principal (and thank-a-teacher) note anytime to help cheer him and all our staff on to the finish line!

Janice:

- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your co-council chair this year and for being patient while I learned, and am still learning, how to be a proficient Zoom and virtual host!
- It has been a difficult year no doubt, for some even more than others, but I believe we have a school community that is able to care and support one another. As a parent group we are in a unique position to help create, along with our educators, a positive academic and social experience for our children.
- Being engaged with your child's school is so important for achieving this. Give yourselves a pat on the back and a virtual high 5. Without your support, school council could not happen. Thank you for supporting your children!
- Tania has already made mention of the efforts and energy freely given by our council members and I will second that motion. It's been a pleasure working with everyone!
- Also, a big shout out to our teacher reps Leslie and Jenn and to all your colleagues for keeping our kids engaged and learning every day! The effort and stamina you and your colleagues exhibit is outstanding. Northern is the second largest School in the largest School board in the country and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest in North America. We are a leader in education for sure and this is no small feat on your part, so a big thank you from all of us.
- And finally, Adam Marshall our fearless leader. Thank you for your guidance and collaboration this year. Your updates are truly the highlight of every council meeting.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Let's Talk Vaccines: May 6 @ 7:30 pm - link on [NSS Council website](#).
- GAC: May 13th, 7:30 pm, email [northerngifted@gmail.com](mailto:northerngifted@gmail.com) for the zoom link.