

Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)

February 25, 2021, 6:30 - 8:10 pm (Via Zoom)

Attendees: Laura A, Janice B, Abby D, Samir F, Linda K, Ellie M, Karri P, Sohinee R, Melissa R, Mary Ann S, Adam Marshall, Leslie Usin-Rojas, Jenn Marr, Gethin J

Regrets: Rita C, Andrea F, Debbie L, Gail A, Tania O, Andy A, Grace D, Diana G, Sabina H, Steve S

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm by Janice B, Council Co-Chair

The meeting began with a presentation on a new course being offered next year at NSS, Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism in Canadian and North American Context.

- Kiersten Wynter, Remy Basu and D. Tyler Robinson are TDSB teachers currently teaching the course at Newtonbrook
- They believe the course is relevant for all schools, and important for living in a diverse city like Toronto
- Because students themselves are experiencing racism in their own lives, the learning in the course is personal and contextual
- 16 TDSB schools are offering the course next year, with another 30 in the queue
- The course includes
 - Exploring language and discourse
 - How should I understand blackness?
 - Connecting Black oppression to other movements
 - What am I going to do with what I learned?
- Of the students who have taken the course this year at Newtonbrook, reactions have been very positive
- Trustee Rachel Chernos-Lin, who was also on the call, said the TDSB is also looking into setting up workshops for parents to also take part in this learning
- Ron Felson (Superintendent) and Gethin James (NSS Council Student Rep) also confirmed their support for this new course

Operational Matters:

The following items were approved by Council:

- Agenda
- January 26 Minutes

Chair Update - Janice

- Council thanks all parents who contributed to our fundraising campaign, which closed Feb 12. More details on amounts raised are in the Treasurer's Update.

- Council and our subcommittees have been busy with informative seminars for parents - see Wellness, ARC and GAC updates for details.
- We will have more information to share at the next meeting but are pleased to announce that Catherine Wong has agreed to head up a parent committee on Graduation. Parents who would like to be on the committee should send an email to nss.school.council@gmail.com to indicate their interest.

Principal's Update - Adam

- Adam noted that currently the Anti-Black racism course for next year is an IDC course and that while students may take more than one IDC course, only one IDC credit may count towards university. This hopefully will change in future years.
- A special shout-out to the NSS students who started the year with action to bring focus to racism, and who have helped deliver presentations to other schools. Today, two of them, Biana Chisholm and Nkele Martin were on the TDSB presentation with over 10,000 attendees! The school is very, very proud of them and the work they are doing.
- U of T has pulled the permit for the NSS commencement ceremony. While it is very difficult at this point to say what the situation will be later this school year, it appears that no large gatherings will be permitted. The school will need to figure out how to send off the Grade 12 students so that there is closure for them, something that last year's grads did not all get.
- Feedback from both students and parents will be sought.
- The TDSB survey results were released this week and one of the findings was about the high levels of stress felt by teachers and staff. Adam recognized this but said everyone has some level of stress during the pandemic. Overall, even though there are challenges, everyone is happy to be back in the school again.
- One thing helping keep us in school is the compliance with Covid rules - the students have been amazing at adhering to the Covid protocols and this is why there has been relatively little in-school transmission to date.
- We are still very unsure what Fall 2021 will look like, but it will very much depend on what Toronto Public Health guidelines are in place at the time. Very real possibility of having a semestered/quadmastered system again but the Ministry will make the final decision. Not knowing how it will work is leading to frustrations figuring out staffing requirements for September.
- Optional attendance forms were due Feb 26, the elementary numbers come in next week, and those numbers plus the course requests help determine the staffing. Important to note that while student numbers have been flat the past five years, staff numbers have dropped.
- The provincial government is going ahead with the mandatory online course requirements.
- HEPA filters will be put in every classroom by the TDSB. The schedule is for elementary schools first, then the worst buildings for filtration afterwards. The deadline is the end of March.
- There has been no discussion of mandatory vaccination at student level, at this point.

Treasurer's Report - Abby

- Total cash on hand is just over \$20k, with \$1550 disbursed to date
- We received \$9575 from the fundraising campaign and 207 total donations. Average gift amount was \$47 and the range was \$25 to \$207. Usually about 30% of the parent population donates.
- We plan to have a minimum cash balance of \$2k at the end of the year which would give us approximately \$18k to spend for the year. Current planned expenditures are about \$15k, but these are placeholders and are subject to change.
- A funding request for \$1500 for t-shirts for the Buddies program was voted on and approved by Council.

GAC - Melissa

- Our “ Advanced Placement, Post-Secondary Planning, and Enrichment Information Evening” on Feb 9 was such a huge success we ran it again a few nights later. Please send an email to northerngifted@gmail.com to obtain the links for the resources and info offered during the presentation.
- On Tuesday March 2, GAC will be featuring a special presentation, “ADHD Highlights: What You Need to Know about ADHD”. The speaker for this event is Heidi Bernhardt, founder of the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada. Heidi will debunk the myths surrounding ADHD, and explain what it actually is, while focusing on how it impacts an adolescent's functioning at home and in school, and [much more](#). While links to resources after the event will be available, we encourage you to join live on March 2 to hear Heidi in person. Please send an email to northerngifted@gmail.com to obtain the meeting link, which will be sent on the afternoon of March 2.
- ABC Ontario is an association representing gifted students across Ontario. They will be holding their Annual General Meeting Sunday March 7, 4:30-6 pm and the keynote speaker is Dr. Louise Porter. Dr Porter is a child psychologist based in Australia, who specializes in supporting children's emotional, social and developmental needs. She holds a Masters degree in Gifted Education and a Doctorate in children's behaviour, and she brings 40 years of experience to the topic of supporting bright and gifted learners. For more info please email northerngifted@gmail.com or visit the [ABC website](#).

ARC - Laura

- ARC will be hosting an information evening on March 25th on the Teenaged Brain.
- We are also planning to host a chat for LD parents, date TBD.
- More info on both these events will be available in Council emails and our website.

Safe and Caring Schools - Julia

- No changes to Covid protocols for new variants.
- Pop up testing is determined by Toronto Public Health, not up to NSS to decide to participate.

- The Resource Room is not available this year but the school is willing to discuss options for next year.
- There are no new concerns about the Roehampton Shelter
- The roof is complete, the lawn is fenced at the moment to protect it for new grass in the spring.

Wellness - Linda

- The Wellness committee was pleased to present Dayna Morris and Aimee Gomez speaking on the mental health and well-being of teens during the pandemic. They presented strategies and best practices for teens and parents. [Slides](#) and resources are on the [Council website](#).
- Each month Wellness is focusing on a new pillar - this month's is HOPE.

Other Business - Janice

- If you would be interested in working with Council on a committee looking at the Council by-laws, please send an email to nss.school.council@gmail.com

Next Meeting: April 8