

Northern School Council Meeting

January 26, 2021, 6:30 - 7:45 pm (Via Zoom)

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

Regrets: Rita C, Andrea F, Debbie L, Gail A

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm by Janice B, Council Co-Chair

Operational Matters:

The following items were approved by Council:

- Agenda
- November 25 Minutes

Co-Chair Report - Tania

- Thank you to Adam for his “Ask Adam” presentation which was held Dec 10. We all appreciate his efforts to keep us informed. Notes from every Ask Adam are available on the [Council website](#).
- Council hosted a Zoom Parent Chat on Dec 3. We were able to use the Breakout Room feature on Zoom, and this allowed for some good conversation with smaller groups. We look forward to hosting more of this type of chat in the coming months.
- In December, Council member Gail Agensky designed a card to put with custom-made cookies for NSS staff and teachers, as a holiday thank you to all of them from NSS families. The treats were delivered contact-free, and we once again thank everyone working so hard on behalf of our students.
- The TDSB recently emailed a survey to parents and guardians that we encourage you to fill out, especially the blank text box for your specific experiences and suggestions. The survey is to gauge how the current models are working for families during the pandemic. If you have more than one TDSB student, you may fill out one survey for each.
- Our fundraising drive is set to end February 12. You can donate at School Cash Online. Even with the pandemic, we are supporting students and staff throughout the year and are already planning for next year’s activities.
- Looking forward, we are hoping to work with the school social worker on a presentation on mental health - what we should be monitoring our students for, when to be concerned and how to get more help and/or resources. To help with understanding needs, we took a poll during the Council meeting with the following results:

Question 1 - Which topics would be of interest to you to help with your family's wellness? (Choose as many as apply). A speaker on:

Parent self-care	24%
Resilience	46%
Building family connection	46%
How do I know my child is at risk/in danger	59%
Self-harm/suicidal ideation	14%

Question 2 - What formats are of interest to you? (Choose as many as apply)

Speaker	89%
Articles	41%
Resources/activity lists	38%
Parent chat	35%

Principal's Report - Adam

- We are looking at ways to safely have students drop off course materials at the end of Quad 2, more info will be coming as we close out the Quad.
- Quad 2 ends Feb 2, with Credit Rescue days being held Feb 3 and 4. There is a PD day on Feb 5 where we will be focusing on staff wellness, sharing best practices and how to manage the Quad turnaround.
- Guidance Dept has just wrapped up a busy month prepping for Quad 3 and assisting with Grade 8 info nights etc. Also, with no itinerant guidance counselors for Grade 8 students this year, elementary school admins have been stepping up to guide students and caregivers with decisions, and our guidance counselors have been assisting those admins. With that work now complete, our counselors are now available for virtual meetings with NSS students regarding next year's courses etc.
- OSSLT: EQAO will be conducting an online field test of the OSSLT between March 23 and May 21. The online test will be available to students in grades 10-12 attending in-person classes at that time (assuming in-person instruction has resumed). Please note:
 - **The test has been waived for students graduating this year**
 - Students can still opt to take the test; if they pass they can use it on their transcript, but if they fail, it will not count against them
 - New resources will be posted to help students with the new online format
 - NSS will choose a window of time for our students who are interested to go online and complete the test (depending on the Public Health situation at the time)
 - While students taking the test do receive a mark, the test is Pass/Fail for graduation requirements.
- While nothing has been officially announced, it is unlikely there will be exams for Quads 3 and 4, and scheduled exam days will be used for credit rescue instead.
- Report Cards will be delivered electronically (as they were for Quad 1) beginning the week of February 15th. Half-courses such as Civics and Careers that would have issued a report card at the end of their first course will include it on the Quad 2 report card.

- There will be a yearbook this year, with pictures of students and photos from around the school. You can order one via School Cash Online. More information will be included in the weekly bulletin, but we are looking at ways for the kids to submit a selfie to be included in the yearbook.
- Quad 3 timetables are almost complete and will be distributed electronically beginning February 2nd. They will also be on the TDSB Connects app.

From questions submitted by parents/guardians:

Should students be making course selections based on the assumption it will be back to normal next year? When can we see what the Summer School Options will be?

- Course selection is opening up next week and closes Feb 18. At this point, we are planning to operate as a full year school under normal parameters. Any changes due to COVID (semester/quadmeester, hybrid, etc.) will be made closer to the start of the new school year in conjunction with Public Health. This may or may not affect your student's course selection. Future course changes will still be limited in September (as in a normal year) to schedule conflicts only.
- Info on summer school usually gets released later in the spring. If your student is planning on taking a course during the summer, you can leave a comment on My Blueprint at the end, right before you hit submit. This helps the guidance department know your plans. Again, there are no guarantees at this point about what can/will be offered either next fall or in the summer.

Any thoughts for those struggling right now?

- It feels like we are collectively at a low point... not hysterical panic, more of a quiet suffering, a feeling like nothing can be done. I see it in our students but also in our teachers. Online school plus no socializing is really tough on everyone.
- Bell Let's Talk Day is this week so it's a good chance to open up some discussions and talk about our mental health. See the [Northern WellNSS Let's Talk video](#).
- Teachers are the front line with high school students, so we need to be aware of how to spot a student who may be feeling especially low right now.
- Having cameras on during class helps create better communication for both teachers and students and gives teachers the ability to assess students' wellness, but we can't mandate the camera being on for either teachers or students (privacy issues on both sides).

Website Report - Karri

- The website was updated again in December, to help make navigating the site and finding information easier. Updates include:
 - Simplified tool bar across the top
 - Created "At NSS" and "Beyond NSS" buttons
 - Added a Wellness Button and moved Covid info to its own page

- Academic Support button includes help for all learners: Guidance, Tech Help, and Spec Ed pages/links
- Money Matters and Contact Us moved to the About Us button
- Miscellaneous new links on the home page including “Up Next” and “What Did I Miss?”

Treasurer's Report - Steve

- No funding requests were received in time for a vote at this meeting.
- Total cash on hand is just over \$15K
- We have received just over \$4K in donations since the fundraising campaign began (it closes Feb 12) and 86 total donations. 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 \$14,250 to spend for the year

GAC - Melissa

- We are pleased to present an “Advanced Placement, Post-Secondary Planning, and Enrichment Information Evening” which will take place on Tuesday Feb 9 at 7:30 pm. This is an annual program, normally split between three different areas of the school. The format this year will be one session with an overview of each area and where you can get more information. More details are on the [GAC site](#). Please send an email to northerngifted@gmail.com to obtain the meeting link, which will be sent on the afternoon of Feb 9.
- On Tuesday March 2, we 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.

Education - Melissa

- SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) is a TDSB committee focusing on special education. The committee is currently looking for feedback from anyone with a special ed student at any school, any grade. In particular, we are looking for things that are working and concrete suggestions for improvements. Ideas will be pooled and shared confidentially. Please email Melissa at northerngifted@gmail.com with any comments or suggestions.

- TDSB is implementing a new Primary IEP strategy that will result in reducing or eliminating IEPs for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students, with a view to extending this to higher grades at a later date. If you have any input on this strategy that you would like shared with SEAC, please email Melissa at northerngifted@gmail.com.
- Melissa also proposed that we reinvigorate the previous School Council (SC) Bylaws Committee, to review and tweak our SC bylaws and constitution, which are really more like guidelines that aren't currently fully aligned with how SC actually operates. Since most other usual activities aren't happening now, this is a good time to resume this unfinished business from a few years ago. Volunteers are welcome; please contact Melissa at northerngifted@gmail.com if you are interested.

Safe and Caring Schools - Julia

- Please see the attached Safe and Caring Schools report. The next meeting is Feb 23; any concerns or issues about physical plant or safety can be sent to nss.school.council@gmail.com and she can put them forward at the meeting.

Wellness - Linda

- The Wellness Committee is dedicated to providing resources to help and support parents and students at NSS.
- This year we are focusing on the TDSB's 6 Pillars of Wellness. The focus for January was Resilience while December was Gratitude.
- We will be exploring working with the student WellNSS committee to see if there are any synergies going forward.

ARC - Laura

- The ARC speaker on ADHD, Anxiety, and Depression on January 11 was very well received. The slides and resources from the presentation are on the [ARC site](#).
- The site is also updated with ongoing resources and conferences to help support families with learning differences.
- Our next meeting is Monday Feb 22 at 6 pm.

Upcoming Events:

- NSS Council Meeting - Feb 25 6:30 pm
- ARC Meeting - Feb 22 at 6:00 pm
- GAC Meeting - Feb 9 at 7:30 pm

NSS Caring and Safe Schools Committee Meeting - Notes November 24, 2020 (by zoom)

Attendance:

- Vice-Principal Halling (Facilitator)
- Vinusha Uthayakumar (Safe Schools Student Senator)
- Julia Schindeler (School Council Representative)
- A teacher & staff representative was not available

Q. Vinusha asked about soap dispensers running out in the washrooms and what the protocol is for checking them.

A. The caretakers follow daily procedures for cleaning and maintaining the washrooms; students can report any problems to the school office.

Q. Vinusha asked about how the desks are sanitized in the classrooms.

A. The caretaking staff clean every desk with a sanitizing spray, they do not wipe down the desks.

Q. Julia asked if hall monitors are able to connect with students in order to mitigate bullying.

A. Yes, hall monitors are encouraged to befriend students and build trusting relationships with them which would help in a situation where students are being bullied. Of course, this is not so easy to do while Covid pandemic restrictions are being followed. Every adult has a legal responsibility to report cases of bullying.

Q. Julia asked if there was a way for students to report incidences of bullying anonymously.

A. Yes, all reports of bullying, even those made anonymously, are dealt with appropriately. However, an anonymous report makes the investigation difficult if there are no witnesses and no evidence. Also, anonymous reports can themselves be an act of bullying if they are not substantiated. In general, it is better not to make anonymous reports because it is usually easy for others to figure out who made the report.

Q. Julia asked if teachers always arrange mid-class “walk-about”.

A. There is no mandated expectation that teachers will allow their students to have a mid-class walk around the school. However, if the teacher chooses to have a walk-about then the time needs to be booked ahead so that the classes don’t all leave the building at the same time and it enables the office to keep track of where the students are.

Mr. Halling reported:

- he is pleased with how the students are complying with the safety protocols
- the fire drills went well
- pest control will be called in to deal with mice
- timing of the lights in the parking lot will be adjusted so there is light in the early morning - Toronto Public Health inspected Northern and were “very impressed” with the school