

Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)

April 6, 2022, 6:30 - 8:25 pm (Via Zoom)

Attendees: Andy A, Jen A, Janice B, Diane C, Rita C, Abby D, Sabina H, Karri P, Tania O, Melissa R, Rhonda S, Claire S, Adam Marshall, Jenn Marr, Leslie Usin-Rojas

Regrets: Laura M, Steve S, Diana G, Samir F

Meeting called to order at 6:35 by Janice B

- Welcome
- Land acknowledgement
- Code of Conduct reviewed

Operational Matters

- Approval of Agenda Motion to approve: Sabina; Seconded: Andy. Carried.
- Approval of Feb 23 minutes. Motion to approve: Melissa; Seconded: Sabina. Carried.

Co-chair Report – Andy

- Quiet month with March Break.
- Curious about impact of March Break on Covid results
- Nothing new in the consultations with TDSB.

Principal's Report – Adam

E-Learning. New requirement from the Ministry of Education to complete 2 e-learning credits. These are asynchronous learning credits (not a Zoom class with interaction; assignments are posted and work submitted online). Grade 9 students already have one credit as government is recognizing the last year's period of school from home. Students can opt out of this requirement with no impact to graduation. There will be a form offered in the coming weeks to opt-out, no explanation needed. If student changes their mind, they can opt-in again. At Northern, we don't have a teacher allocated for e-learning and won't have a menu of courses available for upcoming school year. Potential issue in that this allows students to have a spare in their schedule, with no staff supervision provided.

Athletics. A concern was expressed that there are more opportunities available for males than females. That isn't the case as there are the same number of athletics available for male & female students. At Northern we usually have at least a junior (grade 9-10) and senior (grade 11-12) team for each sport. In the case of Basketball, we also have a bantam team. Varsity teams are generally senior teams at Northern, but at other schools more grades can be involved

depending on the interest from the student body. This year, the only two sports that didn't run were Curling (facility issue) and Golf (no staff sponsor).

Parent/Teacher Interaction. Will there be opportunity to get meet face-to-face? School is looking at upcoming events as opposed to starting with parent/teacher interviews. Parents can come to the school to watch sports and can make appointments to meet teacher in person.

Assembly. First big assembly since start of Covid is being held on April 28. It will focus on the Holocaust and geared to Grade 10 students.

Perspective on Covid now. Adam is feeling less stress as less time is devoted to COVID management with no QR code checking in the morning and no individual letters at night. That said, cases are up board wide. It is becoming more frequent to hear of cases. Happy about students being able to restart 'normal' things.

Student Fees. A request went out earlier in the year through the weekly bulletin asking for \$50 from families to cover Student Activity Fees. So far, 652 families made a payment for a total of \$32600. Yearbook costs are just over \$32000 which means there would be no money left for other student activities. This raises the question if we should be producing yearbooks. The school is covering the cost of yearbook this year so SAC has an operating budget. The intention is that everyone gets a yearbook. For reference, \$35 of the \$50 fee is for yearbook. The minimum order for cost effectiveness is 1200 yearbooks. Discussion of a digital copy in future years to save cost.

There are 1811 students enrolled at Northern. While we don't expect everyone to contribute, having more contributions means there would be more budget for activities and SAC to work with. Will add the request back to the next few bulletins. Council suggested that a designated email with an explanation of what Student Activity Fees covers be sent to parents.

Commencement. It will be held June 29th 1pm at Convocation Hall at University of Toronto. Interested in hearing feedback on suggested cost of \$55/graduate for gowns, programs etc. This cost can be reduced if the ceremony is held at Northern but not everyone can fit in the auditorium. Is the expense warranted to hold the ceremony at U of T? Please send thoughts to the School Council chairs.

Prom. It will be held Friday May 27th at Arcadian Court. Doors will open at 6pm and it will be a personal choice to wear a mask. There will be a Smart Risk assembly held for prom in advance.

2021 Graduates – Yearbooks + Diplomas. Composite was done but virtual school students were unintentionally missed. The composite is being corrected by Edge Imaging. New versions will be available for all graduates. Students can come in and pick up now that restrictions are lifted.

Track & Field. The Athletics Head has created a website. Watch the weekly bulletin for the link, and NSSAir announcements.

Staffing Allocation. Northern will receive it April 7th. This leads to teachers being allocated to classes. There is a large Grade 9 class coming to the school. 519 kids which is higher than predicted. The largest class up till now has been 480. The gifted program has extended 90 offers and 65 have accepted so far.

Robotics Club. They are competing in Hamilton this weekend and then will be at Provincials next weekend. A big thank you to Stephen Wong who has given up a lot of his personal time to get this club to where it is now.

Incoming Grade 9 students. There will be a Welcome night, in person, in June.

Closing Exercises. Will get to do.

OSSLT Evaluation. To accommodate the writing of this for semester two students, the schedule will be adjusted for 4 days. Watch the bulletin for details.

Credit rescue days. These will be held on April 11th & April 20th

Elevator Project. Progress is being made with the staging process beginning. Expect to have them up and running in September.

Conversation Starters. This is a new inclusion in the weekly bulletin, stemming from the hate incident at the school. Many parents contacted the school to express they were afraid to send their child(ren) to school after this incident. Many groups were offended. Felt it wasn't enough to say we are working on it and felt a personal obligation to address it.

Masks. Mask wearing has decreased since March Break. Estimated approximately 70% of the student body was wearing them post March Break. Now a couple weeks later, that is closer to 50%. It is not a requirement to wear one.

Lauren – Model UN Club Presentation

- Northern has a Model UN (MUN) club, where each member become a delegate.
- Members have to network, engage in collaboration to find creative solutions to real world problems.
- The club is a group of passionate students who like working together to find solutions.
- Recipient of \$950 of School Council support to attend events including three conferences. The club was successful at these events. It was the first time attending the UTMUN conference and came away with awards (Best Delegates, Best Small Delegation).

- Hosted 3 crisis committees, which involves developing solutions in progressing crisis situations.
 - Halloween Graveyard
 - Winter Wonderland
 - Historical Valentine
- Why MUN?
 - Helps students learn about world events in an inclusive manner. Active mind-set to problem solve vs. being passive listeners
 - Hone public speaking
 - Team building
- Thank you for support for funding.

Next month: Robotics club to present.

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).

Treasurer's Report – Sabina

- Total cash on hand is \$21,613 after disbursing \$8,628 for the current year to date and we will likely underspend as funding requests are lower than expected
- School Council sent out communications in the fall requesting parent donations for the current 2021-22 year at a suggested gift amount of \$55. We received \$13,175 from parents:
 - 206 parent donations were received (about the same number as the prior year)
 - The average gift amount is \$64 and the range of gifts is between \$25 to \$175.
- Council plans to have a minimum cash balance of \$2000 at the end of the year and so we have approximately \$19,000 left to spend for the year.
- The current version of the budget has planned expenditures of about \$20,825 based on minimal communications with NSS club and association staff advisors. For the most part the budget is a carryover budgets from prior years.
- Planned expenditures are subject to change and should be thought of as budget placeholders only.
- No new funding requests have been received.
- There is money to spend. Andy offered to visit Senate and SAC again to see if there are any other spending requests. Janice asked about the option of helping subsidize yearbooks. Adam suggested the idea of purchasing cameras for the yearbook club while keeping the yearbook purchase with the school budget.

Discussion.

Rhonda raised a question about the wording “Current version of the budget has **planned** expenditures”. Suggested that “planned expenditures” be changed to “budgeted expenditures” for accuracy. Will ask for Steve’s input on this.

ARC – Tania

We were pleased to have had a successful presentation on March 1 titled, "What Do You Do When Learning Is Hard?". The speakers, Susan Schenk of Shift Your Thinking and Dr. Todd Cunningham of Bright Lights Psychology Clinic, spoke about the emotional and clinical impacts of learning differences and how to address them. Thank you to Monica Tynan Day for her contribution to publicize the event widely through various channels to elementary, middle, and secondary schools. We had attendance from 13 schools in total.

The recording and slides, which list many free resources within and beyond their organizations, are now posted on our website. We look forward to further developing our relationship with these organizations in the future, through speaker sessions for parents and students, as well as moderated student-only sessions on topics like, Homework and Organization, Accommodations, School and Stress, Tech Coaching, and Freedom from Shame.

We also highlighted a conference that is happening this week, "The Bright and Quirky Child". It is a free conference featuring many experts in the field of giftedness and 2e (twice exceptional) needs. To hear the final two days of speakers, click here: <https://brightandquirky.com/summit-2022/>

As part of supporting parents of students with special education needs with quality resources, we will be requesting additional School Council funding for purchasing recordings from annual summits like The Bright and Quirky Child and Shift Your Thinking to post on the website for Northern parents to access for free.

We had two meetings planned for April and May, but we have decided to consolidate them into one social on May 5 at 7pm at a local pub near the school. Look for more details in Adam's bulletin and School Council emails. All parents are welcome to join that, and any of our events. We'd be glad to meet you!

Janice attended the March 1st presentation and thought it was very well run and informative. Thank you to the ARC for all the work in making it happen.

Education Committee – Melissa

As mentioned at the last meeting, SEAC is continuing to focus on 7 key areas which include: Primary IEPs (not to eliminate IEPs for Grade 1/2), delays in assessments for IEPs and IPRC's (asking for data), SEAC access to data relating to ONSIS, SEPRC's (SEPRC's have been closed by the Board; SEAC has asked for a reversal), reinstate itinerant teachers' input into DHH IEPs, ADHD (passed a motion to ask for more support officially for ADHD since ADHD is not listed in legislation), communication/information sharing between TDSB and SEAC and special education review policy.

There has been an Effective Practices Working Group formed within SEAC.

Melissa delegated at the last PSSC (Program and School Services Committee) meeting. She presented 5 minutes of comments regarding the motion from SEAC to reinstate SEPRC's (this is an IPRC for students who haven't yet entered TDSB). The topic has been referred back to staff and will see if progress is made or if it get buried.

This is Melissa's last year at Northern. She will no longer lead the Education and Gifted committees but will remain on SEAC as her seat is based on the association she represents.

Gifted Advisory Committee – Melissa

The Gifted Advisory Committee (GAC) hosted a well-received presentation on April 5th. The guest speaker was Lionila Liko, a former Northern teacher who spent 30 years at Northern, 16 years as the Gifted Curriculum leader. More than 200 people requested link.

For the next speaker, looking to focus on either Adolescent Substance Use or Mental Health. This will be open to anyone from NSS or elsewhere. Look to the weekly bulletin for details.

Through SEAC, Melissa provided a 65-page review on Northern's Gifted program. Included was feedback and suggestions. A reply was finally received and she is now working with a centrally assigned principal so begin implementing in the special education program. Hoping to have progress soon but can be slow.

Website – Tania

We have been making changes to the website throughout this year to increase readability and relevance of our content. As we consider our final upgrades next month, we'd like to have parental feedback to guide our changes.

Poll:

1) I visit the website:

weekly
monthly
as needed
never

2) What prompts you to visit the website?

Adam's email
School Council email
Mention from friend
Other

3) I look for information on:

events/speakers/recordings
schedule changes
parent tips
Northern news

academic help

4) I have found these pages helpful:

Homepage
What's On
Inside NSS
Beyond NSS
Academic Support
Wellness

5) I'd like the website to include more information on:

extra-curriculars
volunteering
contact info and guidelines for staff, admin
school policies (absences, student fees, lunch, etc)
Grade 9 Tips - how to get involved, oriented
post-secondary planning, scholarships

Meeting attendees had the option to complete this poll and a link will also be included in the weekly bulletin to offer it to the wider parent community.

New Business

Bylaws Update - Janice TDSB is standardizing Council bylaws across all schools. There are some elements that need to be inserted into our bylaws. These three new bylaws will be voted on at the May meeting for inclusion.

Website Committee Motion - Tania

- The vote at the last meeting for the guidelines presented was close 7-6. This is not decisive and imbeds division in Council.
- The committee has concerns on how workable the guidelines are and think they add confusion.
- We drafted a new version that we think is more flexible and workable which follows.

Statement of Intent for the Northern School Council Website

To add value, we believe our website should not simply be a duplicate of other TDSB websites or an impersonal spot to post our agendas, minutes, and budget. While there are many valuable TDSB links and facts that we include, we believe the School Council website should also include original material that supplements the TDSB's work and present content "for parents, by parents". As such, we welcome ideas from all parents at Northern and post material that we imagine will be helpful to a population in the school in as neutral and factual a manner as possible. At all times, we will work in a collaborative, respectful manner with TDSB staff, students and parents.

Revised Guidelines for the Northern School Council Website

To support our statement of intent, these are our operating guidelines for what is posted:

1. To support the TDSB mandate for equity, we will seek to present resources to parents that are free or low-cost. Specifically, our website will not highlight for-profit companies individually for an extended time period, which we understand to be the intention behind the TDSB regulations for marketing. However, it is understood that there are times that individuals or non-for-profit and for-profit organizations that offer services that support students may have their contact information or websites posted on nsscouncil.com.
2. To ensure accuracy, if there is information relating to activities at Northern that are not copied from TDSB sources, we will review the information with the School Council teacher or staff representative before posting.
3. There may be times that parent voice will differ from the TDSB administration, staff, or students. In those cases, parent opinions may be expressed with the following guidelines:
 - they are clearly labelled as opinions of parents at Northern;
 - they have been presented to Council for approval/negative option. Only those with a majority of support from parent members will be posted;
 - these opinions may be presented by any parent at Northern Secondary for consideration in posting.

Motion:

Be it resolved that this Statement of Intent and Revised Guidelines be adopted as the framework and guidelines for operating the School Council website going forward, and replace the Review Process for Website Content that was approved in the February 23 meeting.

Motioned by Tania; Seconded: Diane; Carried.

Discussion

Andy. (stepped down as chair, Janice remained as chair). Presented concern about promoting certain companies or services. The TDSB Advertising guidelines prevent anything of this nature, especially services that are in competition with TDSB. Also talked about posting opinions on the website. Need to remember that council is representative of all parents, not just the elected members. When opinions are of the nature that it causes concern or conflict with community, believes have to go to full parent community for their review. Questioned who makes the decision on where they should be communicated.

Karri. Aim of the website is helpfulness. Suggested we need to back up and consider the impact of the Advertising guidelines on the whole picture. What do we do about presenters who put their names on slides? Or seminars that have a fee associated with them? Should those be included on the website?

Tania. The council is made up of elected representatives of parent body, so we do represent the community. Any parent can be elected as a rep.

Melissa. Reaching out to the entire parent body is impossible and paralyzing. Agree that posting needs to comply to guidelines but we don't want to shut down parent involvement when TDSB and Ministry of Education encourage it.

Janice. (stepped down as chair, Andy returned to chair). Can you share about using the review process brought in last meeting? How did you find it in practice?

Karri. We paused on significantly updating the website, as problems lay in areas of opinion.

Janice. Give us an example of what you mean by opinion.

Karri. Having a place on the website to share information that was previously informally passed on when the council meetings were in person and parents would interact socially. Parents are interested to learn from the experiences that other students/families have had. For example: Great idea to join a sport and a club or have a spare in Grade 11. Would like to be able to collect and share more of these thoughts to help out parents.

Janice. Just re-read the new motion and an area of concern is the statement about the parent voice differing from TDSB and administration. Don't know what that means. My concern is that if it is put in bylaws, it is there for everyone to see. It will live for years as a document in the bylaws.

Karri. The concern is if the subject matter is contentious. Perhaps there is an area of advocacy needed where parents voice does differ from the TDSB. Could that be posted under the banner of opinions, and not under banner of school council?

Janice. Still have concerns on way it is worded. Reads as parent voice that differs from other parties. We have a responsibility to convey info to parent population. Direction to find more information. Not comfortable with this. What is your opinion?

Karri. If only reason for the website is to convey information that is posted elsewhere, then it doesn't have much value. With the previous guidelines, it is hard to include any content that isn't regurgitation.

Janice. Goal of content can be interesting, new. The messaging around having a differing parent voice doesn't speak to collaboration. TDSB website is very clear on advertising. Even if other schools are in contravention, we shouldn't behave that way. We can't put something in our bylaw that is in contravention with TDSB policies.

Tania. Using TDSB policies as direction, we can't even put information on conferences or seminars of interest on website. The intent of revised bylaws is to define and protect the role of Council as being the vehicle for parent voice and helpful information to parents.

Adam. Concerned about point #2. Doesn't want teachers landing in tough spot/compromised position because they feel pressured to give a response. Suggests we have administration involved instead.

Tania. We included point #2 to make the previous version of the guidelines clearer; didn't think this point added any new direction. Given the time, what are the options to move forward?

Janice. Can withdraw this motion. Or vote on it.

Tania. Ok, let's withdraw motion and suspend the previous guidelines.

Motion to withdraw this motion and suspend previous guidelines: Rhonda. Seconded: Janice. Carried.

Andy. The summary is that both guidelines are suspended. Discussion should continue outside of this meeting.

Upcoming Events and Reminders

Motion to adjourn meeting: Janice; Seconded: Melissa; Carried.

2022 Remaining Meeting Dates

- Wed May 18