

# Northern School Council Meeting

January 16, 2023, 6:30 - 8:00 pm (hybrid)

## **Attendees:**

**Council:** Abby Dwosh, Adam Marshall (Principal), Ana Rodrigues, Andy Anderson, Anna Rutledge, Diana Goldie, Elena Comelli, Gaya Sathiyamoorthy, 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), Susan Woodward (staff representative), Tania Osmond

**Parents:** Cathy, Jennifer, Mila, Nilgun, Beth Lauer, Janice Barnett, Everton Lewis, Stephanie Nacawa, Ruth Kenny

**Regrets:** Stephanie Koutakis (student representative)

## **Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm by Omar B.**

- Welcome
- Land acknowledgement

## **Approval of agenda**

- request to add community member report
- motion to approve: Tania O.; Seconded: Andy A.; Carried

## **Co-chair Report – John B.**

The coming month will include efforts to help parents get information and give feedback about the proposed changes to the commercial/technical boundaries of several high schools, including Northern.

School Statement of Needs was discussed and approved in [draft version](#). Updated statistics for student body to be provided by Adam. Motion to approve: Tania O., Seconded: Jessica M.; carried.

## **Principal's Report – Adam M.**

- Update on four room renovations: hoping for work to be done in June, ready for the start of school in September. One month delay on Room 137 (phys ed room) for ventilation system.
- Staffing update: three new teachers and a permanent Vice Principal hired, interviewing for the final four open teaching positions. Should be fully staffed for semester 2.
- Overview of the tech boundaries for Northern. There are two different boundaries for entry to Northern. We have a catchment area where students can come to Northern and enrol in mainstream, technical, and/or business courses; we also have a larger commercial and technical boundary that allows eligible students to attend Northern as long as they take one business or technical class each year. The Board is proposing that all commercial boundaries cease to exist (the need is much reduced). For the tech

- boundary, the Board is proposing that the physical boundary be erased, but Northern will remain a technical school that can be accessed by all people outside of the catchment. Extra spaces will be offered to interested students through a lottery system.
- Adam expressed concerns about the stability of the student population in this scenario, and he has great concern that students who live far away and win a lottery spot may then drop out because distance is a greater issue than anticipated. Student population determines the number of teachers on staff, which determines how many courses can be offered.
  - Adjusting the catchment area at the same time as eliminating the comm/tech boundary would help ensure stable, healthy enrolment. But the actual implementation of catchment changes usually take two years.
  - Questions:
    - What happens next? TDSB Trustees are getting feedback now. They will make the decisions about boundary changes. Comm/tech boundary change is proposed for fall 2025. Comments can be submitted by e-mail to [accommodationreviews@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:accommodationreviews@tdsb.on.ca)
    - What % of students come from outside our catchment boundary? Our current student enrolment includes 10% using the technical boundary, 10% using the commercial boundary. Most years, it has been slightly less than this. With this change and the same catchment boundary, the student population choosing technical programming would grow to 25-30% of the total enrolment.
    - What % of students come for ISP (Intensive Study Program - Learning Disabled/ Core, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Gifted)? 25% (18% gifted).
    - Impact on the school? Staffing technical courses is already facing challenges. There is also already a new requirement for a mandatory tech course next year, but staffing and curriculum are unknown. We will also be a site for F.A.S.T. (Facilitated Access to Skilled Trades) which is a pathway into a school after Grade 9 to access trades. This hinges on our enrolment. If our numbers drop, the Board would probably open Northern up. The challenge is finding suitable and qualified teachers for tech.
    - Will it impact other areas of the school? Yes, fewer students in the school would mean less adults to offer programming inside and outside of the classroom (112 teachers right now).
    - Are other programs sufficient to maintain vibrant environment? A little unpredictable but it's likely that many students will still apply to Northern (eg our football program is a big draw - not many schools offer football alone).
    - Who is affected? Current students would not be affected by boundary changes. However, siblings would not have access to Northern. Optional attendance will also no longer be an option.
    - What is your ideal school size? 1,800 lower end, 2,000 upper.
    - Would we go back to being a vocational school? No - we'd be a local school with additional space for students who come for the trades.
    - What is the rationale behind this change? It is an equity stance (equal access for all) and the goal that "all schools should be excellent schools".
    - Principal is not hearing concerns directly from prospective families.
  - Other questions:
    - Discussion about what qualifies a student to be able to get a makeup date for exams? – essentially, just emergencies, serious illness requiring a doctor's note
    - Can June exam dates be shared early to help with summer employment planning? The June dates will look like the January ones this year - four days and a makeup day.

## Meeting Minutes

### Council Business

- Approval of November minutes. Motion to approve: Diana G.; seconded Jen A.; carried.
- Filling two vacant seats on council. Two candidates were acclaimed: Stephanie Nacawa and Everton Lewis.

### **Treasurer's Report – Jen A.**

- Treasurer reported that we have \$13,000 to spend, with \$2,500 spent so far. No new requests have been received.
- Robotics club applied for funding for expenses associated with competition - asking for \$3,500 (received \$2,500 last year). Budget committee recommends granting \$800 at this time, and could re-evaluate in March/April.
- Holiday breakfast for teachers was funded by Council at the staff meeting in December.
- Tax receipts for future donations over \$25 can be issued.
- Motion to launch another fundraising campaign to raise \$7500: Moved by Andy A.; seconded by Anna R.; carried. Suggestions include showing the price/value of different programs (Did you know it costs x for this?), telling the story behind funding grants, and giving weekly updates on how much has been raised (thermometer).
- 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](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com)).**

#### **Academic Resource Committee – Tania O.**

We are now posting free webinars to help parents support student success on our website for all parents to access. Currently, "Be Open to the Why's" and "Navigating Gaming Trends and Healthy Play" are featured under "External Resources" on our home page. These will be updated regularly, so be sure to check in often at [nsscouncil.com](http://nsscouncil.com).

Please let us know what resources are most helpful to you at [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com) so we can be sure to make them a priority.

#### **Gifted Academic Committee – Jessica M.**

Next event February 7, 8-9 pm – virtual presentation called "AI in one lesson".

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](#).

#### **Social Committee – Tania O.**

We have a nice rhythm for opportunities to connect with other parents!

- We have Walking Buddies - a hardy group of parents walking rain, snow, or shine on the second and fourth Saturdays from 9:30-10:30am in Mt Pleasant Cemetery.
- There is a parent support group for families in crisis that meets quarterly for dinner. Our next date is January 25 at the Granite Brewery.
- All parents are welcome to join us for a social time at the Granite Brewery after each Council meeting.
- For any details on any of these events, please check our website or email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com)

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The social committee is looking for parents who like to create opportunities for connection. Last year, we started Walking Buddies (on the second and fourth Saturdays each month) and Game Nights - great opportunities for parents to meet parents. This year, there is interest to add some parent socials too - for members, or all parents. If you like people and want to help organize, please email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com)!

### **Website committee – Tania O.**

The website committee is looking for parents who would like to develop our website with content that is “for parents, by parents”. This year, we’re hoping to refine our home page and curate our content to be easy-to-use, current and streamlined. Whether you have ideas, editing or technical skills - email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com) if interested! We meet online and work on a project a few weeks at a time.

### **New Business**

- Report on ESL potlucks by Nilgun - great opportunity to gather as ESL parents and students in October and February. Coordinated by Ms Boxer
- Community rep: Melissa R. provided an update on the TDSB multiyear strategic plan. TDSB Trustees met and a draft plan will come out. Melissa also provided an update of the January 15 SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) meeting: consultations are continuing on policy for SEPRCs (Special Education Program Recommendation Committee). There is great concern that students are being left out since the TDSB has restricted access to SEPRC’s for all students with special education needs. If you have concerns or would like more information, please contact Melissa at [mrosen@techs4biz.com](mailto:mrosen@techs4biz.com) and it can be anonymous.
- Nutrition program: Jessica Miklos
  - There is a student Nutrition Program at Northern. it serves healthy lunches three days a week at no cost to participants (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday).
  - Students can sign up for the program beginning in September. There is no means testing - anyone can apply. There are approximately 250 students registered in the program currently.
  - Student, parent and staff volunteers run the program with funding from the Foundation for Student Success, PC Children's Charity and the City of Toronto.
  - Students from Centennial College also help with training and menu.
  - The program runs out of the cafeteria. The cafeteria does not provide food for sale to students any longer. (The Ontario government introduced a food and beverage policy in 2010 that banned the sale of many items that students tended to choose in cafeterias [baked goods, french fries, chicken burgers etc.]. As a result, it was no longer profitable for many school cafeterias to operate.)
  - There has not been a vendor operating in the cafeteria for at least 8 years. Equipment used by these vendors is used by the student nutrition program, but not all equipment is in a good state of repair.
  - Currently, lunch options are "grab and go" salads and wraps.
- April Vibert has ideas to expand the range of offerings if they had operating ovens and a dishwasher. Much of the existing equipment is older and in need of upgrading. The ovens and dishwasher have not been used in 8 years. An inspection would be required to determine if they are functional or need to be replaced.
- The healthy eating aspect of the program could also use support. Perhaps there are dieticians in the parent community who might be willing to offer support or suggestions for a publicity poster or postcards for distribution.
- Council could be involved in highlighting the program to parents, helping to recruit volunteers and potentially fundraising for specific equipment needs in the years to come.

Motion to adjourn. Moved.

Meeting Minutes

**Next meeting - Tuesday February 22 – 6.30pm – school library/MS Teams**