

Northern School Council Meeting

November 21, 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), Stephanie Koutakis (student representative), Susan Woodward (staff representative), Tania Osmond

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

Regrets: none

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

- Welcome
- Land acknowledgement
- Code of Conduct reviewed

Co-chair Report – John B.

- November 16 Paul Davis event - attendance 185; contact information and links were sent to attendees after the event.
- School statement of needs: being reviewed.
- TDSB long-term program and accommodation strategy was referenced, which includes changes to legacy boundaries for Northern. More details are [here](#).

Operational Matters

- Approval of Agenda: an addition proposed - thank a teacher options for Dec. Motion to approve: Tania O.; Seconded: Jen A.; Carried.

Student Report – Stephanie K.

- Deferred to next meeting

Principal's Report – Adam M.

Meeting Minutes

- Principal gave an overview of matters that were covered in the recent PA day: a social worker will provide mandatory training; clarification of school constitution; discussed staff sponsor and what is involved; external speaker presentation.
- Discussed upcoming events: United Way fashion show Nov 30 and Dec 1; Grade 8 open house December 12.
- Washrooms:
 - NSS is hoping to overhaul all bathrooms to provide more all-gender stalls, fully frame all toilet stalls, and install cameras in shared areas of the washrooms. Suggested we become a pilot school to move this forward, after consultation with all stakeholders.
 - A parent asked how vaping in washrooms is being managed – for example, having vape detectors. These are not standard TDSB practice but the principal will see if we could be a pilot in this way as well.
 - Thought being given to the need for separated (male/female) washrooms versus all-gender washrooms where there is a shared space with sinks and mirrors.
- Room 137 will hopefully be ready for use in semester 2 (just waiting for HVAC system). Three more rooms will overhauled over summer to create new teaching spaces.
- Staffing – massive issue in every unit of the Board – all areas and all over the province. This is why parents may have noticed staffing changes and challenges recently. Planning is in process for semester 2 staffing - hoping to get done before January.
- Carry over of funds: this year, TDSB has changed the rules and will claw back all unspent funds that each school has received each year, except for 25%. This creates planning problems and may result in the school exhausting funds faster than in the past. (the school may ask parents for additional fundraising). NSS's TDSB operating budget is \$409,000 and must be spent on specific items – curriculum, facilities etc.
- "Ask Adam":
 - Does NSS have a Caring Adult program? Yes, mostly focuses on Grade 9. Staff contacts: April Vibert, Dan Gana
 - What kind of mental health supports are provided? We are educators, not mental health experts, so the school relies on partners – social worker, youth worker, etc. School-wide programs right now comprise the NSS Wellness group; Lumenus will be in building by the end of the month and the principal will ask them to look at providing a program that can reach more students.
 - Spectators at offsite sports – can students and parents watch? There has been a drastic reduction in sports managers in TDSB, from 15 to 3, which has changed how games have been managed. A new event management protocol means that staff from each school must be on site if there are spectators, so staff commitments mean that not all offsite games will be able to accommodate NSS spectators.
 - New date for job/volunteer fair will be announced in an upcoming bulletin.
 - Update on hate crimes and defaced washrooms: three of five washrooms have been repainted – waiting for TDSB to send painters to finish the work. Some of the newly painted washrooms will be closed in order to carefully manage access and prevent further defacing.
 - Semester 1 exam schedule will be posted soon – will be a four-day cycle.

Council Business

Meeting Minutes

- Approval of October minutes. Motion to approve: Jen A.; seconded Jessica M.; carried.
- Filling two vacant seats on council: Beth Lauer and Janice Barnett resigned. The chairs thanked them both for their contributions. Two candidates were discussed; the Elections committee will be consulted, and appointments will be announced at the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report – Jen A.

- Council aims to carry \$2,000 over from year to year – we have \$5,100 left over from last year. Fundraising campaign closed on November 17 and raised \$10,100 (28% down from last year). This year, we have about \$13,000 to spend. It was agreed to extend the current fundraising campaign by 2 weeks to raise more money.
- Recent grants include renewing the website, and academic awards - \$1,400.
- Grant requests over \$1,000 requiring council approval:
 - o \$2,500 - girls' volleyball for costs associated with exhibition games (40 students involved). \$500 was suggested - agreed.
 - o Over \$1,000 - Robotics club for expenses associated with competition. Club was asked to assess budget and come back with a request to council.
- Ideas were discussed to raise more money: extend fundraising by two weeks; do an additional campaign in spring; plan to grant smaller amounts to more clubs; plan to focus efforts on something big every few years. Discussion about offering tax receipts for donations through School Cash Online – a subcommittee will explore this possibility.
- view complete 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).

Academic Resource Committee – Tania O.

The goal of the Academic Resource Committee is to connect parents to resources beyond the TDSB. Last year, they included free speakers on learning differences, mental health challenges, and a presentation on post-secondary planning with Teo Selgado. We also purchased recordings of experts to create a free library on our website (nsscouncil.com) for Northern parents from Shift Your Thinking and Bright and Quirky (organizations that work with experts on learning differences).

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

Education and Academic Achievement Committee – John B.

The education committee focused its efforts in October on encouraging parent feedback on the Multi Year Strategic Plan, which is the document that the TDSB revises every 5 years to guide its structural and strategic decisions for all schools.

Some ideas for our future work include:

- cell phone use in classrooms/away for a day;
- a guide on our website on how to reach/give feedback to the TDSB/trustee;

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- Additional concerns that parents have about their students' learning experience

Gifted Academic Committee – Jessica M.

The Gifted Advisory Committee welcomes parent volunteers to help plan and organize informational events and social opportunities for families of gifted students at Northern. In October, we hosted a Question and Answer session with John Moyer and Adam Marshall. A summary of the session is available by contacting northernqac@gmail.com. We also organized a tour of IBM facilities in Markham for gifted students with an interest in coding. This event was held on the PD Day in November and was well attended by students and parent volunteers. We welcome other suggestions for tours on future PD Days. Our next event is an informational evening focussed on mental health at Northern. Submitted questions will be addressed by John Moyer. The event takes place on December 5th at 6:00 pm in the Library. Notes will be shared with the GAC mailing list following the event. Gifted families are also 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.

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!

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 if interested! We meet online and work on a project a few weeks at a time.

New Business

- Format for future meetings – agreed to continue the hybrid model.
 - Non-voting members will be included in list of attendees in minutes.
- Parent survey was discussed – purpose would be to gather input about fundraising priorities, and what parents would like school council to address.
- “Thank a teacher” – December email campaign will be rolled out in lieu of staff breakfast. Susan agreed it is a deeply appreciated and encouraging gesture to teachers and staff.

Motion to adjourn. Moved.

Next meeting - Tuesday January 16 – 6.30pm – school library/MS Team