

Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)

September 21, 2021, 6:30 - 7:45 pm (Via Zoom)

Attendees: Laura A, Andy A, Janice B, Rita C, Abby D, Samir F, Sabina H, Linda K, Karri P, Tania O, Melissa R, Steve S, Mary Ann S, Adam Marshall, Leslie Usin-Rojas, Jenn Marr

Regrets: Sohinee R, Andrea F, Debbie L, Ellie M, Gail A, Grace D, Gethin J, Diana G

Meeting called to order at 6:35 by Janice B

Operational Matters:

The following items were approved by Council:

- Agenda
- May 5 minutes

Co-chair Report - Tania O.

School Council - What do we do?

- You'll see a blurb from SC most weeks in Adam's weekly bulletin, and in the past few weeks we've had a link to a description of our work in our fundraising letter. It tells you most of what we do - support student success and add accountability to educational policies. But, we wanted to take a moment to describe more concretely how that is accomplished behind the scenes. It may help you see roles and opportunities that you might like to help with, whether as a volunteer or voting member.
- Our job is to represent "Parent Voice" in the school. We are a group of 19 parents, 1 community rep (appointed), 1 teacher rep, 1 staff rep, and 1 student rep. The Principal works with us in an advisory role.
- We meet six times a year and discuss ways we can support student success at Northern. We do that by answering questions from parents, planning speakers on relevant topics to high schoolers, funding student initiatives, representing parent concerns to school administration, and, most importantly, connecting parents.
- We have six officers: 2 co-chairs, 2 co-treasurers, and 2 co-secretaries. And we have several committees, which are a mix of Council members and volunteers. Our most active committees last year were budget (fundraising, funding requests); website (resources and news for parents- designing, updating, uploading); GAC (parent presentations on study skills, enrichment, ADHD Highlights); ARC (parent presentations on ADHD, Anxiety and Depression, Teen Brain); wellness (monthly topics with articles and resources on the website; parent presentation on supporting student mental health with a TDSB social worker and psychologist); grad (commencement video, helping with grad pick up/photo days).

Why get involved?

- High school is a dynamic and significant transition for our students, and having one another's experiences to share can be an invaluable support and encouragement. Coming to meetings and events is a great way to keep learning about the school system, hear ideas/resources, get support, and make friends. But getting involved with Council increases your engagement and impact, and it develops our role and effectiveness in the school.
- Our scheduled meetings for this school year are: Thurs Oct 14 (election), Wed Nov 24, Thurs Jan 13, Wed Feb 23, Wed April 6, Wed May 18
- Our meetings vary on the day of the week so that regular conflicts are avoided for people's schedules, but all our meetings begin at 6:30, and we aim to have our meetings last 1 hour. We know people are tired of Zoom meetings and wanting more personal interaction and community. So we will be adding a short social for parents before/after Council meetings, and hopefully organize some small in-person drop-ins for parents during the year, restrictions permitting.
- We hope you will avail yourself of our help and support- join our mailing list (nss.school.council@gmail.com), browse our website (nsscouncil.com), or come to our events anytime. And if you are interested in being a voting parent member for 21-22, look for details coming soon in Adam's weekly bulletin. There will be vacancies!

How we operate - Janice B.

- NSS Council is governed by Ministry of Education Regulations as well as TDSB policies and procedures.
- We have six Executives elected each year (2 Co-Chairs, 2 Co-Treasurers, 2 Co-Secretaries) which aligns with Regulation 612 as set out by the Ministry.
- We must uphold the rules and regulations set out by that Act. This includes holding meetings, voting, the work the subcommittees do, maintaining financial records and fundraising efforts.
- For more information on how we are structured, visit our [website](#).

Principals Report - Adam

Parent-submitted Questions:

What is the current protocol if a student tests positive for COVID and the impact on their classroom as far as quarantining? How do any students who may have to quarantine access their learning while in quarantine?

- Only virtual school students can join online classes. In-person students who have been asked to isolate can find their work on Brightspace or Google classrooms. However, if an entire class including the teacher is sent home to isolate, then they will go virtual. In terms of being sent home to isolate, it will be determined by Toronto Public Health (TPH) on a case by case basis. Things like timing, symptoms, testing and vaccination status may factor in on TPH's assessment of the risk to the cohort.

Report cards- If a parent was not very good at keeping track of emails with report cards for all the classes last year, is there a way to get a copy of them or a consolidated one for the year for their records?

- There is no process to produce a consolidated report card but you can contact guidance or your vice-principal and they will help you get last year's reports.

Lockers- why are students prohibited from using lockers when they are allowed to be in and around the building for lunch? Some students are finding it very unwieldy and problematic to have several bags with lunches, gym, books, then in winter, coats and boots. Can this policy be readdressed and modified?

- TPH guidelines are prohibiting locker use at this time. As soon as they give the green light, we will assign them.

Can you tell us what % of our staff have been vaccinated? Do you have any sense of the student vaccination rate?

- We don't have a school vaccination rate for teachers, just for TDSB as a whole, and vaccination data is not collected for students.

45 minute lunches - The shorter lunch is very difficult to manage for students. Many are unable to get back to school in time if they need to go out to purchase lunches. Is going back to a 60 minute lunch something that can be looked into now or in second semester?

- The TDSB schedule for high school is for 45 minute lunches. We agree it is not enough time for students or teachers but are unable to change it right now. For cold weather, students will have to use hallways and the cafeteria.

Masks for teachers - When I went to vote, I noticed volunteers had masks that were 3 ply medical grade and had clear mouths so you could see lips. Can we get all our teachers to wear these or offer them as an option?

- The masks the teachers use are mandated by the TDSB. We do have some clear ones for the DHH department but can't supply that option to the rest of the staff at this point.

Is there an option in the second semester to alternate a day one/day two schedule instead of week one/week two?

- It is up to the TDSB to move us to a 2 day or 4 day cycle. There are many issues to be sorted, such as TPH allowing more blending of cohorts, before that can happen but we would love to go back to that kind of schedule.

What about the re-introduction of extra-curricular activities and sports?

- The TDSB has approved extra-curricular activities but we still need to work out many logistics... some sports/activities can be done quicker because they require less safety requirements. For example, we are still looking for clarification on musical instruments. We also need staff sponsors, permission forms etc before things can officially start. We are excited to get these going but need to be safe and can't jeopardize the rest of the school day in the process.

What is happening with exams? How will kids be prepared for post-secondary if they are not writing exams in high school?

- No exams are planned, this is a TDSB decision and it is probably equity related. However, while we can't have big exams, teachers will be creative in getting students exposed to exam-type questions. It's unclear to us at this point how post-secondary institutions will deal with this situation but we would hope there would again be a variety of types of examinations at that level.

Other news:

Chromebook Rollout: Grade 9 students are being offered Chromebooks this year, which they will keep for as long as they remain with the TDSB. We are working on getting to the last of the students who haven't responded and will give them out next week to be taken home.

Student photos: Photos are scheduled for Sept 23 and 24 in the afternoon. If a student is in the virtual school or has a spare in the afternoon that week, they can come in if they are able to, or they can take one at home and submit it.

Morning check in: We are much more efficient at the front doors this year and all students are double checked by teachers in both the a.m. and p.m. classes.

Vandalism: We've experienced some vandalism in the soap dispensers of the male washrooms, apparently due to a TikTok challenge. Information or anonymous tips about this vandalism is welcome.

Teacher changes: We will be sending out a summary soon of the teacher changes that have taken place. We still have a few minor adjustments and are hoping for minimal disruptions to classes, but are excited to have some new faces in the building this year.

Subcommittees:

Treasurer's Report - Steve S

At the start of every school year, the subcommittee prepares a budget. Last year we carried forward \$12K from 19-20, fundraised about \$10K, and planned to spend about \$17k, a bit less than a typical year. Due to the restrictions, we did not have a lot of funding requests and only spent \$4740, leaving about \$17k available to be carried forward to this academic year.

A few requests that were not paid out last year will be dispersed this year.

The committee will be setting the 2021-22 budget over the next month.

[Click here to see the budget report.](#)

Motion to approve the budget by Sabina, seconded by Linda. Budget was approved.

Grad committee Report - Tania O

- Thank you to the grad committee, headed by Catherine Wong, for their work over many months to help make graduation a memorable occasion for the Class of 2020.
- We were pleased to be able to fund and help create a special commencement video with the Student Affairs Council. In addition to the traditional speeches from dignitaries, principal and valedictorian, it included short videos of students, photos from all four years, words of encouragement from staff, and video footage from around the school (including our bagpiper on the Northern roof!).
- As well, School Council sent a custom card to all the grads congratulating them (thank you, Gail Agensky!) and provided all-day refreshments and helping hands for the students, parents, and staff on the four days of grad pickups and photos in our back parking lot.
- After a very tiring and lonely year, it was an encouraging and positive way to affirm students for finishing, express appreciation to the staff, and best of all, engage in many face-to-face conversations for all.

Bylaw Committee - Janice B

The committee submitted two bylaws for approval.

The first motion was to address that we have been conducting meetings virtually and may wish to continue to do so in the future:

Be it resolved that upon return to regular on-site school council meetings, council may at times choose to instead conduct a virtual school council meeting, and thus conduct business including voting, virtually and by e-mail in the manner currently employed. The decision to do so will be at the discretion of the chairs.

The motion was moved by Janice, seconded by Melissa and approved by council.

The second motion was to reduce the number of voting members. The current number of voting parent members on council is 19. To make council more streamlined and make it easier to achieve quorum for monthly meetings and voting requirements it is proposed that the number of voting parent members be reduced to 15. As per Article 3 (h) of the NSS Constitution, quorum for meetings is 50%, with the majority of members present being Parent Members. By regulation, no council business or vote can take place unless quorum is reached.

Be it resolved that the number of parent members on School Council be reduced from 19 to 15, beginning October 2021.

After a discussion, the motion was moved by Janice, seconded by Linda and approved by council, with one nay and one abstention.

Upcoming Events - Tania

- Last year, our goals were to connect parents to relevant information for navigating COVID school, and to build community. We did that mainly through our mailing list and website, but we also had Zoom meetings called “Ask Adam” which was a Q and A time with Adam and “Parent Chats”. In upcoming weeks, we will be hosting a “Grade 9 Parent Chat” to welcome incoming parents and get them familiarized with how Northern works- an orientation “for parents, by parents”- and also offer an opportunity to meet other parents. We have a very diverse student body and a school with varied, rich offerings. Let us help you navigate your choices and make the most of your years here! More details will be in Adam’s bulletin and our email updates. Format may be virtual or in-person.
- We’d also like to invite any parent or guardian of a Northern student to consider running to be a School Council parent member. Our election will be October 14, and we will be putting details in Adam’s weekly bulletin. No previous experience is necessary, and besides being able to come to a majority of our meetings, members are asked to engage with ideas and concerns on committees. We know everyone has a lot on the go, but we will make the most of whatever time you can give. Many hands make light work!

2021 Meeting Dates:

- Thurs, Oct 14 (election)
- Wed, Nov 24
- Thurs Jan 13
- Wed Feb 23
- Wed, April 6
- Wed May 18