

Essex School Council Meeting Agenda - October 12 2021 - 6:30pm

1. Welcome from Acting-Chair - Melissa

Melissa welcomed the attendees of the meeting.

2. Administration Update:

Dan shared a powerpoint presentation introducing himself and his philosophies. He shared some key ideas like his desire to help parents navigate that education system, help parents understand the lived experiences of others, engage teachers for positive outcomes, and to mobilize skills and resources in the community to benefit kids.

He shared his vision for the school including an emphasis on well being and belonging. He named a desire to challenge outdated norms in order to empower students to think critically. He noted that he sees the school as the heart of the community.

Rachel shared some updates on student wellness, school culture, and academics. She shared that the teachers across the school have developed a committee to address the health and wellness of children. She reported that kids are feeling overwhelmed and that the school/committee is engaged in taking significant steps to help the students. This includes increasing outdoor time, Zones of Regulation, OPAL, and a social/emotional skills curriculum called 2nd Steps, to name a few things.

Questions:

What is happening with sports?

TDSB is enforcing a "slow and careful" roll out of sports because of mixing cohorts. At this time it is not too possible to do much team sports, Ian Barnes the Phys Ed teacher will review TDSB policy and see what is possible.

Why do the Gr 7's only have 1 gym period per week?

This should not be the case. Each class should have 2 periods of music and 2 periods of gym. Some scheduling errors have occurred because of the many changes in teachers and classroom configurations. Dan will look into this.

What is happening with lunchtime supervision?

Concerns about bullying, child safety, and access to the school.

Children can go into the school during lunch recess with the help of admin staff Tracey. This is to ensure that children are supervised inside the school and for contact tracing.

Currently the teachers make individual decisions about eating inside or outside each day. Once their lunch is done they have recess.

There are 15 lunch supervisors who supervise the various cohorts during recess. Dan is often outside as well. Rachel is regularly outside as well.

Dan identified that being able to use the OPAL loose parts play program again will hopefully provide a creative and constructive outlet for students to be occupied during lunchtime, which will have an impact on negative behaviours.

Once OPAL is more fully rolled out we can return to the lunchtime concerns and observe if OPAL play has made any impact.

Another option would be increasing the amount of time that teachers are required to do their yard duty time.

3. Nominations/Voting:

Treasurer - Lalu was nominated for the position of Treasurer by Darci and seconded by Shawna. The council voted and approved the motion. Lalu was elected treasurer for the 2021/2022 school year.

Chair - Melissa was nominated for the position of Chair by Nicole and seconded by Darci. The council voted and approved the motion. Melissa was elected treasurer for the 2021/2022 school year.

Secretary - No one was nominated for this position.

Question:

How does the School Council generally communicate information to the parents?

Melissa shared that we have a School Council Blog - parents can sign up for updates from this blog. Generally this is where information and announcements are posted.

You can access this blog at

www.essexpublicschool.com

You can sign up for UPDATES - which will go right to your inbox - on the upper right hand side of the website.

Communication also happens on the community facebook group Essex PS Parents. This group is a parent community group - not an official School or School Council page. You can access this group at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/637220563047683>

In the future updates will also be able to come through the School Messenger system, once some IT problems are resolved.

4. Treasurer Update - Lalu

The School Council bank account currently has \$17,000 in it approx.

We estimate that the \$300 per class bursary we have offered teachers could cost up to \$6,600

We spent approx. \$11,500 last year and raised \$4,000 via a fundraising letter.

Teachers have spent their classroom \$\$ so far on things like outdoor discovery kits, supplies for the classroom, improvements for the music room, Cricut and shelving for the library, etc.

Fundraising ideas - Darci will look into what we have for Spirit wear currently.

Melissa will check and see what the TDSB regulations are about community events, and will see if Allison is interested in creating another fundraising letter.

Question:

What can we do to improve the kindie yard?

We discussed how the kindie yard is limited in its structures for engagement and play. We identified that Hawthorne has expressed similar concerns and that a joint committee to investigate options for improvement.

This led us to an additional conversation about the general Yard Improvement project and long terms plans for the school yard. A meeting was held in June 2021 to discuss options with the TDSB to remove the baseball gravel, add a running track, fix drainage issues, and increase accessibility. It was reported in June that a large amount of money was ear marked for this project. More information is needed.

Suggestion:

Pollinator Garden Grant

Cynthia identified a grant for starting a Pollinator Garden - she noted that the deadline is Nov 1. Cynthia and Kim identified the desire to work together to find out more about this grant - as a potential Kindie Yard improvement.

Link to grant found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmental-grants-incentives/pollinator-community-grants/>

5. Acting Chair Update - Melissa

Future meeting dates will be: Dec 7, Feb 1, April 5, June 7

Community on call shared their emails to be added to the School Council email list.

6. Discussion

Mars Memorial Fund -

Melissa shared a request from Mars' family to contribute financially to a memorial plaque that will be placed on the school grounds. The cost is \$464, which will be split with Hawthorne. The council voted and approved the spending of \$232 for the memorial plaque.

Mars' family also requested that a link be shared to an online fundraiser in memory of Mars, in support of Youth Mental Health. This link will be shared with the wider school community via school messenger.

The fundraiser can be found here

https://www.canadahelps.org/en/pages/run-myles-to-mars/?fbclid=IwAR2c9RfOb5Bm0hYwK_qPFgkQULJ5mXXDs_dI0m0zKbKIPHDHEH7d7NI-OUK

Other ideas came from discussion including locating the Buddy Bench and having it moved into a more open space in the yard. We identified that there might be some ongoing COVID reason, but that Melissa would find out. Others offered the idea to see about adding additional Buddy Benches in the school yard.

OPAL -

Jess Haber is requesting \$300 to buy new Rubbermaid bins for storage of OPAL supplies. She also is requesting donations of "loose parts" play items.

See the information about OPAL below

This year EH Schools are working to get the OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning) program up and running again. We are in the process of cleaning out and stocking our outdoor play materials shed. Over the next two weeks students will participate in an orientation to the materials with their classroom teacher to review how to participate in safe, inclusive and fun play opportunities. These materials will then be available for play on the field during school hours.

OPAL is a program that relies on upcycling and the reimagining of used materials for loose parts play. If you wish to get involved, we are currently asking for donations of the following items:

- *Milk Crates*
- *Gently used soccer, basketball and volleyballs*
- *Muffin tins, pots, cookie trays etc. that have finished their kitchen life (we are NOT accepting cast iron or heavier materials)*
- *Gently used skipping ropes or sturdy climbing ropes*
- *Gently used sand toys*
- *Clean tires that have lived out their driving life*
- *Clean tarps, hammocks, burlap sacks that you no longer need*
- *Large wooden spools that have no nails or staples attached*
- *Large tree stumps*
- *Come winter we will also be looking for gently used child sized shovels and sleds*

All donations can be left either beside the OPAL shed if they are large or in the blue donation bin outside the shed (the shed can be found just south of the parking lot on the basketball court). Teachers will check the bin daily and put away donations. Please note that donated materials must be in good condition - if they are already ripped or cracked, they will quickly break after a few days of heavy use.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact jessica.haber@tdsb.on.ca

The council voted and approved the spending of \$500 on the OPAL initiative to be used at the OPAL committee's discretion.

DD/MID Needs -

Mark one of the DD teachers identified some needs for the MID/DD program. Melissa asked him to identify some specific needs for School Council to fundraise for.

Kindie Meet and Greet -

Typically we offer an opportunity for new Essex families to get together to ask questions and learn more about the school. This year it will happen virtually on November 2nd at 8pm.

Vanja volunteered to help.

Question:

Can we have a Halloween or Spring Fling Event?

Melissa will find out what the TDSB regulations are or are projected to be for the spring to see if the Spring Fling could happen in some way.

A Halloween community event will not be able to happen.

We will return to this idea at our next meeting on Dec 7th.