

Elizabeth Simcoe Jr. Public School School Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 10, 2024 - School Library | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Attendance:

Robyn Bluestein, Beth Brooks, Kelly Caddel, Jesse Chao, Jon Cheevers, Molly Christie, Chantal Edward, Shaneka Edwards, Katie Eley, Mary Filson, Megan Fitzpatrick, Amanda Formentini, Tammy Hewitt, Rebeca Ho, Elizabeth Hyland, Raluca Kostovski, Colleen Leung, Paula Liu, Melanie McCloud, Stuart Rogers, Sharmila Sivasankaran, Carolyn Tyson, Rebecca Viapiana, Amanda Young

Regrets:

Julia Lakats, Kim Rogers, Stephan Psaros

1. Introduction of Attendees

– All

2. Welcome & Land Acknowledgement

– Katie

- The TDSB Land Acknowledgement was read: *We acknowledge we are hosted on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat. We also recognize the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples.*

3. Approval of Minutes

– Amanda F

- Amanda Formentini volunteered to take minutes.
- Elizabeth moved to approve the June 6, 2024 Minutes, seconded by Tammy, thereby passing the motion.

4. Principal's Report

– Kelly

- Acknowledged the warm welcome received. Provided a seven-day report.

Staffing:

- Noted the absence of Ms. Coulter and the transitional nature of staffing. Expressed hope for stability and a positive school culture despite the challenges of having multiple retired educators filling in. Mentioned existing staffing issues, including three teachers on leave, two of whom are in kindergarten.

Facilities:

- Met with caretakers who are working diligently to maintain cleanliness. Observed general cleanliness upon entering the school. Noted that facilities staff are addressing nesting issues and spider webs around the school. Efforts are being made to clean up the exterior of the building.

Communication:

- Expressed a commitment to communicate any updates regarding staffing and other issues as they arise. Encouraged community members to reach out with any concerns.

Budget:

- Explained the budget process, stating that the school budget is due by October 31. The current budget is approximately \$44,000, which is typical for a smaller school. Clarified that the budget primarily covers instructional supplies, not salaries.
- Acknowledged the role of the school council in raising additional funds to enhance educational programs, such as visiting authors and science programs. Emphasized the importance of these funds in supplementing the school's offerings.

Questions and Concerns:

- JK Bathroom: A parent brought up issues regarding the JK bathroom, mentioning previous complaints about odors.
 - Response: Kelly will investigate the situation and check if a work order has been submitted for cleaning.
- School Yard Lights: A parent inquired about the lack of outdoor lighting in school yard, especially during darker months.
 - Response: Kelly confirmed there is a work order for the outdoor lights.

Reading Screening Process

- Discussed ongoing changes in curriculum, particularly the implementation of a Grade 2 reading screening mandated by the Ontario government. This initiative aims to establish a benchmark for reading levels across Ontario.
- Noted that while assessments are routine, this new screening is being rolled out across all schools and requires training for teachers.
- Screening is scheduled to be completed by the end of November.

Diagnostic Assessments

- Discussion on existing assessments, including the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment), which continues to be used in Grade 1.
- Emphasized that these diagnostics are snapshots in time and help inform teachers' assessments.

EQAO Results

- Parents inquired about the individual EQAO results for their children.
- Kelly will check the availability of these results and ensure they are shared with parents.

CCAT (Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test)

- The CCAT screening for Grade 3 students will take place in November.
- Emphasis on ensuring that students do not feel anxious about the screening process.

Long Range Plans and Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

- Teachers are currently submitting long-range plans to their principals.
- IEPs will be available online starting Tuesday.

Communication Updates

- Weekly emails will be sent to parents to keep them informed about school events and updates.

Start of Year Forms

- Concerns about the transition to online forms for start-of-year documentation were discussed.
- Parents were encouraged to complete forms promptly and to reach out to the office for assistance if needed.

One-to-One Devices for Grade 5 and 6

- Parents were reminded to fill out necessary forms for their children to receive one-to-one devices.
- Special devices are available for students with special needs.

Parking Concerns

- Clarified that the staff parking lot (west lot) is for staff only and urged parents not to park there to ensure availability for all staff members.

Class Allotment

- A question was raised about class sizes and allotments for the upcoming year.
- Confirmation that there will be no reorganization of classes; all current class sizes will remain the same.
- Kelly will communicate this information to all parents via email.

Construction Updates

- Trustee Zakir Patel announced on his social media that geotechnical consultants will be conducting bore hole drilling behind school October 11th. Ongoing construction is related to plans to transform the school into an JK-8 facility.
- Project timeline: expected completion around 2027.
- Discussion included concerns about the construction's impact on the schoolyard and the need for safety during the process.

Forms and Communication

- Issues with receiving school forms were discussed; some parents have not received communication from the PowerSchool address.
- Parents experiencing difficulties are encouraged to reach out to Mary Taccone for assistance in obtaining paper copies of forms.

Lunchroom Supervisor Concerns

- A parent raised concerns regarding a lunchroom supervisor giving candy to students, including their child.
- Kelly acknowledged the issue and emphasized the importance of monitoring interactions in the lunchroom and playground.
- Follow-up actions will be taken to address the situation and ensure appropriate supervision practices are upheld.

5. Sunshine Childcare Report

– Katie, on behalf of Kim

- **Holiday Closure:** Sunshine will be closed on the following dates: December 25th, 26th, 27th, and January 1st. Early closures will occur on December 24th and 31st (half-day).
 - **Staffing Updates:** Miss Lisa, who recently joined as an assistant supervisor, had to leave unexpectedly due to a family emergency. Miss Naima will take on the role of RCE in the school-age room, starting after the long weekend. The team looks forward to her joining.
 - **Current Enrollment:** 24 students in pre-school program, 26 students afterschool, 45 out of a possible 60 students in the school-age program, indicating available spaces.

6. Treasurer's Report

– Megan

- **Overview:** Megan provided a detailed report on the financial status of the council, including a recap of last year's numbers and activities.
 - **Starting Balance:** The year began with approximately \$27,000.

- **Revenue Sources:** Main revenue sources included pizza lunches, the Fun Fair, and Movie Night. Additional funds were generated from spirit wear and the lunch lady.
- **Financial Activities and Contributions** - Notable expenditures included:
 - \$250 per classroom enrichment for teachers, and resource staff and "Scientists in School" for all 13 classrooms.
 - Funding for "Nitwits", new council website, pancake breakfast.
 - Contributions for Grade 6 graduation gifts, including hoodies and medals.
 - Repair and purchase of instruments, and funding for a new lunchroom table.
 - Support for local Cedar Drive school through donations from the Fun Fair.
- **Current Balance:** As of this year, the council has \$30,620 in the account, with \$4,760 earmarked for specific projects. After approved expenditures, the balance is projected to be around \$15,842.

Upcoming Projects and Approvals

- **Planned Activities:**
 - Approved funding for the welcome BBQ, which typically incurs a loss.
 - Planned expenses for Youth Speak and Lego robotics.
 - Additional funds set aside for Cedar Drive donations; the specific amount was not formally approved but discussed previously.

Discussion on Funding

- **Instrument Repairs and Equipment:** The council has covered expenses for music class supplies due to budget constraints in the school. There was a discussion on how such decisions are made and the necessity of approving expenses over \$100 at meetings.
- **Collaboration with Other Schools:** Ideas were shared about potential partnerships with other local schools for fundraising activities.

Scientists in School Program

- **Overview:** This program offers curriculum-based, STEM-focused workshops for various grades. Teachers can book sessions that align with their curriculum needs.

Action Items:

- Confirm the amount for the Cedar Drive donation and ensure formal approval.
- Explore potential fundraising partnerships with nearby schools.
- Finalize details for upcoming programs and expenses as discussed.

7. Nomination of Council Members

– Kelly

Executive Positions:

- **Chair:** Katie Eley
- **Vice Chair:** Stuart Rogers
- **Treasurer:** Megan Fitzpatrick
- **Secretary:** Amanda Formentini
- **Fundraising Chair:** Beth Brooks

Executive Members at Large with voting privilege:

- Robyn Bluestein, Jesse Chao, Chantel Edward, Tammy Hewitt, Elizabeth Hyland, Raluca Kostovski, Julia Lakats, Stephan Psarros, Sharmila Sivasankaran, Carolyn Tyson, Amanda Young

- **Attendance Requirement:** Members are encouraged to attend meetings consistently; missing more than three consecutive meetings may lead to a discussion about their participation.

Non-Voting Member Nominations

- Molly Christie, Shrada

Appreciation & General Participation:

- Kelly expressed gratitude for all volunteers and emphasized the importance of the parent council in advancing the school community.
- All attendees are welcome at every meeting. While voting members have the right to vote, all feedback and comments from non-voting members are encouraged and valued.

8. Events & Activities Update

Welcome BBQ Wrap Up (September 19)

– Katie

- Acknowledges it was short notice because we did not get approval to post ordering - would have gone out end of August.
- Feedback was collected regarding the event:
 - Catering Issues: Transitioned from M&M Meats to Mr. Corn due to previous challenges. However, long lines were reported (up to 45 minutes).
 - Random Giveaways: An uncoordinated giveaway caused some confusion.
 - Positive Feedback: Information tent about the school council was well-received. Some parents noted that the food was better than previous offerings.

NitWits Wrap-Up

– Katie

- At Sunshine big lice issue happened over summer. Voting members agreed to bring in Nitwits early this school year for support. Found 6 cases. A follow-up session is planned for March.

Cross Country Update

– Amanda Y

- Cross country events went smoothly, with positive remarks about Miss Noble's organization.
- Council distributed 220 granola bars and water. Simcoe tents set up for visibility.
- The turnout was good, and there was a high level of student engagement.

Caring Adult Workshop

– Katie

- October 24th - Planned a session with Youth Speak, a TDSB-approved vendor, focusing on mental health aiming to provide valuable insights for parents.
- Details and registration will be communicated via email.
- Consideration for childcare arrangements during the event. Plan to engage Grade 6 students for volunteering roles during the event. Discussion around utilizing teachers to help coordinate volunteer efforts. Melanie McCloud volunteered to help that evening.

Action Items:

- Send out an email with details of the Youth Speak session.
- Finalize childcare and volunteer arrangements.

9. Fundraising Updates

Pizza Lunches

- Beth

- Pizza order deadline is Sunday, October 12.
- Format changes for Pizza Lunch: Due to current staffing shortages, the traditional parent-hosted format in classrooms may be altered temporarily.
 - Discussion on possibly moving the pizza lunch back to the gym rather than classrooms.
 - Parents would still be involved but in a centralized location to help manage logistics.
 - Plans for a distribution table for parents to facilitate serving.
 - Emphasis was made on the importance of maintaining a comfortable environment for students during lunch.
- Order Management - Clarification on order processing:
 - Parents must place two separate orders if they want different types of pizza (e.g., cheese and pepperoni) and will be charged accordingly.
 - If parents wish to modify their orders (e.g., change one type), they can email Beth to manually adjust their order.
- Communication Challenges - Acknowledgment of the communication difficulties leading to the short notice:
 - Staff have been busy, which has delayed information dissemination regarding orders.
 - Only one staff member is currently able to manage online orders.

Action Items:

- Finalize the logistics for the upcoming pizza lunch and communicate details to parents.
- Continue discussions on supervision requirements and potential format changes for future events.

Spirit Wear

- Beth

- The spirit wear initiative at the start of the year is primarily for cross-country participants to avoid using standard jerseys.
- Discussion on expanding the spirit wear options to include hoodies, hats, and other items.
- Past Ordering Process: The previous ordering method involved collecting orders and delivering items directly to students in their classrooms.
- Online Vendor Consideration: Proposal to switch to an online vendor that ships directly to families:
 - This option allows for a wider variety of brands (e.g., Nike) with custom logos.
 - Shipping costs would apply unless orders exceed \$100, which would qualify for free shipping.
 - The vendor offers a 10% kickback to the school on sales.
- Last year, the spirit wear generated \$287. The group discussed tracking future sales more effectively.

Action Items:

- Plan to coordinate and finalize details for the holiday spirit wear campaign.
- Beth and Megan to collaborate on logistics and communication.

Book Fair

- Beth

- The school librarian, Ms. Marks has scheduled a Book Fair for the week of December 9th.
- Planning a parent coffee and donut event in the morning to encourage shopping while children are in class.
- Discussion on potentially hosting a second Book Fair later in the year.

2025 Fun Fair

- Robyn/Chantal

- Initial discussion on the date for the fun fair, originally set for May 23rd. Elizabeth expressed that she cannot attend on that date and suggested moving it to May 30th.
- The group noted that Guild Day is the first Saturday in June, leading to a potential schedule conflict. Acknowledged that May has an extra weekend this year, allowing for flexibility.
- Matt from the Main Event has tentatively reserved the 23rd for the fFair. Moving to the 30th may incur additional costs, as it marks the beginning of their busy season.
- Chantel has contacted five other TDSB-approved inflatable companies for price comparisons. One quote received is comparable to Main Event's pricing.
- The preference is to continue with the Main Event due to familiarity and positive past experiences, unless a better offer arises.

Volunteer Sign-Up for Fun Fair: A volunteer sign-up sheet was circulated to recruit responsible adults for the event.

- Emphasis on the need for more parental involvement, especially on the day of the Fair.
- Last year's event had challenges due to a lack of adult supervision in certain areas (e.g., face painting).
- Volunteers can engage with their families while overseeing activities, ensuring smooth operations.

Event Planning and Food Trucks:

- Early planning for the Fun Fair is encouraged, with a focus on securing food trucks before the holiday season. Some food trucks have already reached out to confirm their participation from last year.
- Importance of verifying that food vendors are TDSB-approved to ensure safety and compliance.

Payment Methods for Event:

- Discussion on the need for flexible payment options (e.g., Square) to accommodate attendees who may not carry cash.
- Current banking limitations prevent the school from accepting E-transfers, but efforts are being made to explore solutions.
- Concerns raised about transaction fees associated with electronic payments.

Action Items:

- Chantel to confirm the price differences for both dates and report back for the next meeting.
- Gather all quotes and present at the next meeting for final decision.
- Encourage volunteer sign-ups and engagement in planning meetings, ideally starting by January.
- Confirm food truck vendor approvals prior to the event.

10. 2024/2025 Event Schedule

- Katie

- Introduced a draft activities proposal outlining planned events for the year.
- Activities categorized into four pillars: 1. Shared Pillars. 2. Curriculum-Related Pillars. 3. Arts and Culture Pillars. 4. Health and Wellness Pillars
- The goal is to implement a few activities from each pillar throughout the year.
- Council members were asked to sign up for specific activities to coordinate and gather more information before the next meeting. Participants will report back on their assigned activities and costs.

Listed Activities and Coordinators:

- **Pizza Lunch:** Lead: Beth
 - **Back to School BBQ:** Megan, Amanda Y, Katie, Amanda F (Complete)
 - **NitWits:** Lead: Katie
 - **Spirit Wear:** Lead: Megan / Beth
 - **Movie Night:** Lead: Raluca. Support: Megan / Katie
 - **Scholastic Book Fair:** Lead: Beth
 - **Youth Speak Workshop:** Lead: Katie
 - **Little Yogis:** Lead: Raluca
 - **Rocks and Rings (Curling Initiative):** TBD
 - **Puppet Making Workshop:** Lead: Rebecca
 - **Pancake Breakfast:** Lead: Elizabeth. Support: Amanda F, Katie, Raluca
 - **Everblast Play (Indoor Activity):** Lead: Megan
 - **Act on Litter Clean-Up:** Lead: Amanda Y / Amanda F
 - **Fun Fair:** Lead: Robyn / Chantel
 - **Staff Appreciation:** Lead: Elizabeth / Tammy
 - **Money School Canada (Parent Workshop):** Lead: TBD
 - **Krispy Kreme Fundraising:** Lead: Robyn
 - **Freezie Friday:** Lead: Tammy
 - **Drag Queen Storytime:** Lead: Amanda Y - will check with Ruth for approval
 - **Dance-a-thon Fundraiser:** TBD – will discuss later
 - **Guildwood News & Views:** Lead: Robyn – to speak with Ms. Marks
 - **Guildwood Day Parade:** Amanda F
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- Additional Suggestions: Proposal to organize a Spirit Wear Resale event to recycle old shirts and provide affordable options for parents and students.

Action Items:

- Coordinators to gather information and report back at the next meeting for discussions and votes on the proposed activities.
- Continue exploring potential fundraising opportunities to support planned events.

Vote: Wheelchair Basketball

- Overview of a proposed wheelchair basketball program, which has changed from previous years. The new format includes a 60-minute assembly with an ambassador discussing the importance of physical activity for all abilities. Cost: \$300. The session is non-interactive.
- Discussion on whether this format meets the community's expectations. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of a one-hour lecture for younger students.
- **Voting Results: 0/14 – Motion did not pass**

11. Teacher Appreciation Initiatives

- Elizabeth & Tammy

- Proposal to continue initiatives from last year to support teachers with small gestures throughout the year, not just during teacher appreciation week.
- Plans for providing coffee, tea, and bagels to staff, aiming to foster community support.
- Open invitation for parents to donate or participate in organizing appreciation events.
- Future Ideas and Suggestions: Consideration of workshops (e.g.: Chantel mentioned Little Yogis – will look into) for teachers.
- Encouragement for ongoing dialogue about how to support teachers creatively beyond food items.

12. Other Business

Spirit Wear Inquiry

- Questions were raised about the availability of spirit wear throughout the year.
- Discussion about moving to an online shop model for continuous ordering rather than a single fall event.

Upcoming Events

- Plans to finalize dates for a Movie Night and discuss fundraising strategies for the upcoming Fun Fair.
- Updates on the Pumpkin Event. Julia Lakats now managing. Noting that while it's not a council event, someone from the council will keep the group informed.

Administrative Updates

- Ongoing updates to the council website to include past meeting minutes and information.
- Upcoming discussion on council bylaws at the next meeting, with an invitation for members to review and prepare questions.
- Megan has been updating Facebook account and website to match social media. Visit Council social media:
 - **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Simcoe.TDSB>
 - **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/esjpscouncil/>
- Next Meeting: November 7, 2024

Action Items:

- Distribute updated spreadsheets with coordinator names.
 - Prepare for discussions on fall activities and upcoming events.
- At the next meeting, we will align on what to raise money for the school Fun Fair.