

Elizabeth Simcoe Jr. Public School School Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 6 2024 – Staff Room | 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Attendance:

Robyn Bluestein, Jesse Chao, Ruth Coulter, Chantal Elward, Katie Eley, Mary Filson, Megan Fitzpatrick, Amanda Formentini, Elizabeth Hyland, Raluca Kostovski, Julia Lakats, Colleen Leung, Lornah Mark, Stephan Psarros, Stuart Rogers, Sharmila Sivasankaran, Rebecca Viapiana, Amanda Young

Regrets:

Beth Brooks, Tammy Hewitt, Kim Rogers

1. 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.*

2. Approval of Minutes

- Amanda F

- Amanda moved to approve the November 7, 2024 Minutes, seconded by Robyn, thereby passing the motion.

Action Items:

- Katie to add Ms. Mark to the email distribution list.

3. Principal's Report

- Ruth

Staffing:

- There are ongoing challenges with staff shortages, including caretaking and a few teachers on leave.
- Expected that both grade 6 teachers will return in January, though this is subject to change.

Event Updates:

- The junior girls' basketball team will be attending a tournament on December 9th at Woburn Collegiate, accompanied by Ms. Mark and Ms. Pauling.
- The choir, led by Ms. Di Paolo, has been rehearsing for upcoming winter concerts: primary concert on December 17th and junior concert on December 19th.
- The staff is participating in a holiday exchange, including a teacher Secret Santa and a cookie exchange.
- The student letter writing campaign is being led by Ms. Noble, Ms. Pauling. The students are excited to send letters to one another.
- The charity drive is progressing well, collecting non-perishable items, used clothing, and hygiene products. The community's generosity is deeply appreciated.
- The grade 6 students enjoyed their trip to Camp Kearney earlier in the year.

Progress Reports and Report Cards:

- The reporting cycle was recently completed. Teachers will focus on preparing report cards after returning from winter break, with the reports due in January and distributed to parents in February.

Universal Screener Results:

- Grade 3 universal screener tests advanced signs of intelligence. Results have been received and distributed to Grade 3 families and Gifted testing will begin in the new year.
- The batteries included verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal. A student must perform highly across all three batteries for further gifted screening to proceed.
- For a student to be officially deemed gifted, they must perform at the 98th percentile or higher.
- There are three gifted programs at Simcoe, with students from the top of their class in Grade 3 now in a gifted cohort, where all students share similar intellectual abilities.

CAT (Canadian Achievement Test) Results:

- The CAT 4 assesses reading and other academic areas, and the school had some data from these assessments, but more information was needed. CAT 4 results have now been received.

Early Reading Screener:

- The board introduced an early reading screener for Grade 1 students (now Grade 2) to track developmental progress in reading.
- There is a challenge in aligning current teaching methods (focused on phonemic awareness and the "science of reading") with older assessment tools, which may not fully reflect the new approach.
- Ruth to follow up on early reading screener.

EQAO Results:

- Shared that the school performed well in the EQAO assessments, particularly in math, with Grade 6 students (now Grade 7) achieving strong results.
- EQAO results were sent home with the grade 4s and grade 7 students were delivered to Jack Minor.
- Grade 6 Results:
 - Mathematics: 71% of students at Level 3 and 4.
 - Reading: 89% of students at Level 3 and 4.
 - Writing: 96% of students at Level 3 and 4.
- Primary - Grade 3 Results:
 - Mathematics: 63% of students at Level 3 and 4.
 - Reading: 79% of students at Level 3 and 4.
 - Writing: 63% of students at Level 3 and 4.
- Writing in the primary grades was identified as an area needing improvement, particularly among younger male students.

Focus on Math Achievement:

- A concern was raised about the overall decline in math achievement across the province.
- Ruth attended a math conference in Phoenix, AZ, in July to explore strategies for improving math results.
- Mathematics achievement has been a challenge in the province, and the school's stronger math scores compared to provincial standards were a positive outcome.

Outdoor Lighting:

- There are concerns about the outdoor "morality lights" and their functionality. The issue has been noted, and a work order is being put together.

Access Cards for Staff:

- A work order has also been submitted regarding access cards, but the status is still unknown.

Toilets and Cleanliness Concerns:

- There were concerns about the cleanliness of the boys' bathroom, particularly regarding unflushed toilets. The caretaker team is currently short-staffed, which may have contributed to the issue. The caretakers are working on improving the situation, and it will be addressed directly with the head caretaker.

Play Area Drainage Issue:

- There is a drainage problem in the kindergarten play area, where water is not properly draining and is causing icing. This issue is believed to be due to a cemented-over drain. It will require digging and repair, but this will be addressed after winter.

Parking Lot Line Painting:

- The parking lot by the tennis courts needs line painting. The request will be included in the email to the facilities team. Additionally, there are concerns about parking availability due to increased staff and community use of the space.

Pest Control:

- There was a pest control truck seen outside the school, but it was confirmed that this was a routine preventive measure with baits around the school. No active pest problem has been reported.

Preschool Washroom:

- There are ongoing concerns about the smell in the washrooms. The school will continue monitoring the situation and ensure caretaking staff is keeping the area clean.

Action Items:

- Ruth to follow up with caretaking staff regarding the cleanliness and maintenance of the bathrooms.
- The facilities team will be contacted about the drainage issue in the play area and the possibility of having the parking lot lines repainted.

4. Sunshine Childcare Report

– Katie, on behalf of Kim

- No major updates were provided regarding the aftercare program. Reminder for parents who have children attending before or aftercare need to submit the necessary forms for the upcoming period (January to June 2025).

5. Treasurer's Report

– Megan

Incoming Funds:

- The school received \$52.97 from Mabel's Labels.

Outgoing Funds:

- Several staff members submitted requests for classroom enrichment.
- 11 staff members submitted requests for classroom enrichment. Items purchased include book reader sets, sensory and fidget items, pretend play costumes, headphones, lap trays, art supplies and classroom organization items.

Banking Issues:

- Access to Cash: The bank has eliminated the ability to withdraw cash from the account. If a float is needed, the solution provided to write checks and then cash them at the bank.
- Cash Deposits: There is now a \$27 fee to send cash from the school account, though in-person deposits may be a possible workaround. Working on confirming the process.
- E-transfers: The school cannot receive e-transfers, so there are still some challenges moving funds, particularly with payments from pizza lunches and barbecue.

Nitwits Update:

- Nitwits were present at the beginning of September. Recently, another class had Nitwits come to the class. Council is unaware who arranged for this.

Current Balance:

- The school has \$6,190 left in the budget as of the end of the year, assuming no further expenditures or income.

Action Items:

- A reminder will be sent out to staff to submit their requests for classroom enrichment funds by the end of December.
- Megan to confirm with the bank about in-person deposits and the handling of cash.

Fundraising Opportunities:

- **Mabel's Labels:** Discussion about introducing as a recurring fundraiser. Although it doesn't generate large amounts of money, it contributes to covering administrative costs.
- **Mini Mioche Fundraiser:** Company offers kids' basics and has a program that partners with schools. Fundraiser wouldn't cost anything to run and could be useful for school outreach.
- **Flipkit Fundraiser:** Platform where gift cards can be purchased online, with the school earning a portion of the sales. It was suggested that this be another easy, year-round fundraiser that doesn't require ongoing promotion but helps generate small amounts of income.

Action Items:

- Promote Mabel's Labels on Simcoe council social media pages.
- Further review of Mini Mioche and Flipkit.

6. Staff Expense Requests

- Lornah

Charging Carts for Chromebooks

- Need for additional charging carts for Chromebooks . One charging cart is already provided, but it is not sufficient and one is required for up upstairs classrooms. The cost for a charging cart is \$3,689. There was concern about the delivery fee of \$150, with suggestions to carry the cart upstairs without incurring the cost.
- Vote Results:
 - 5 Votes – Council should fundraise for the funds to support initiative before Fun Fair.
 - **7 Votes - Council to consider this purchase as a goal of 2025 Fun Fair.**
 - 1 Vote – Council should not support this purchase.

iPads for Primary Grades

- Need for iPads, particularly for the grade 1/2 classes, to support specialized activities and ensure technology access for all students. The cost for a set of 10 iPads is \$4,120. It was noted that TDSB provides 5 iPads for special education programs, but additional iPads are required for primary grades. The importance of iPads for multimedia and coding activities was highlighted, with the recognition that iPads are preferred for younger students due to their intuitive use.
- Vote Results:
 - 3 Votes – Council should fundraise for the funds to support initiative before Fun Fair.
 - **10 Votes - Council to consider this purchase as a goal of 2025 Fun Fair.**
 - 0 Votes – Council should not support this purchase.

Light Bulb Replacement

- A request was made for a light bulb replacement in a classroom, with the cost of each bulb being approximately \$145. The school budget will be used for light bulb replacements rather than the parent council.

Fundraising Discussion

- **Krispy Kreme Fundraiser:** Discussion about whether the funds raised should be earmarked for specific technology purchases such as Chromebooks or iPads. It was decided that the Krispy Kreme fundraiser could be used as an opportunity to raise funds for technology. It was agreed that the goal should be communicated clearly, possibly focusing on technology for the entire school.

School Budget and Fundraising Strategy

- The school's budget allocation is \$42,000 for the year. The school budget is primarily allocated to student enrollment and is used for things like library resources, teacher release time, and consumables like paper, books, and supplies. Technology purchases are a significant part of the budget, with up to \$10,000 dedicated to technology.
- Ruth highlighted the importance of technology for students and emphasized that it is difficult to meet all needs within the budget. Council has agreed to explore fundraising opportunities to cover this cost.

7. School Statement of Need

-Katie

- This document would be used if there were a change in leadership (such as a retirement or transfer) and is shared with the Superintendent and the school trustee. It helps guide the process of hiring a new principal.
- Parents are asked to rank important categories like academic excellence, equity and inclusion, community partnerships, and contributions to the community.
- Last year's focus was on improving student achievement, with a clear vision for education to achieve outcome, advocate for special education, visible and engaging, communicates with school community, diversity and inclusion, leadership, leads by example.
- Key priorities identified by school council members:
 - **Academic Excellence:** Ensuring that children achieve high academic success.
 - **Equity and Inclusion:** Addressing any barriers and creating an inclusive environment for all students.
 - **Technology Focus:** There was a focus on the importance of keeping up with technology and pushing students to grow academically using digital literacy.
 - **Community Engagement:** The community is described as strong and engaged with the school, and it's important that the principal fosters this connection.
 - **Leadership Style:** Leadership should also involve being approachable, transparent, and able to manage all areas of the school effectively.
 - **Long-Term Commitment:** The importance of a principal with a long-term commitment to the school and its community was emphasized.
 - **Special Education Needs:** It was noted that the school has students with special education needs, including gifted students, and the principal should advocate for these students and their needs.

Academic Needs and Board's Strategic Direction

- **Mathematics Focus:** The board's strategic direction is focused on improving mathematics, especially problem-solving in real-world applications like financial literacy and coding.
- **Science of Reading:** An emphasis on literacy and understanding the relationship between sounds and symbols in reading.
- **Writing Skills:** Writing skills, particularly for primary grades, have been identified as a focus area for improvement. The impact of COVID on writing skills was noted, with a specific interest in enhancing logical thinking for organizing written content.
- **EQAO Testing:** Discussion about the EQAO testing process, noting concerns about the shift to an entirely online format, and its impact on students' test-taking skills.

8. Events and Activities Updates

Little Yogis

- Raluca

- The group discussed available dates for this event. Final Decision: Tuesday, February 4th to avoid higher absenteeism on the Monday.

Action Items:

1. Promo Finalize the scheduling of the yoga event for February 4th, 2024.
2. Prepare an announcement to share with the school community.

Puppets Cool

- Rebecca

- The group discussed potential programs involving puppetry for the school, comparing options and costs.
 - Apple Fun: Offers a one-hour puppetry program for \$350 per class.
 - Puppets Cool: Charges \$20 per student, which would amount to about \$440 per class (for approximately 22-25 students).
- Several ideas were proposed for making the program more accessible: Asking parents to subsidize the cost of the program, perhaps through a small fee per student (e.g., \$5 per student). Considering options for voluntary participation, ensuring that no student is excluded from the program due to financial constraints.
- Discussed other program ideas, such as a sewing program that could be a way to break stereotypes and engage students in creative activities. More details will be researched for future discussion.

Action Items:

3. Confirm costs for the puppetry program and assess the feasibility of funding through parent contributions.
4. Lornah to gauge interest from teachers and determine which grade levels would participate in the program.
5. Research alternative programs (like the sewing program) and bring more details to the next meeting.

Additional Programs

Guitar Program Update

- Ruth confirmed the guitar program will be brought back and that the company, Little Jammers, has already been contacted.
- The program will be like previous sessions, which ran for six weeks at a cost of \$96 per student.
- It will be held at lunchtime in the library, and Ruth will help supervise.
- Over 60 students participated previously, and the program was well received.

Action Items:

- Ruth to finalize the dates with the guitar program, aiming for the first week of April.

Rocks and Rings

- Katie

- Ms. Navratil is booking first week in April. Waiting to hear back from Egg Farmers of Ontario on finalized date.

News and Views

- Robyn

- Will include Fun Fair information, request for sponsors, and what we want to fun raise for (technology and school enhancements).

Holiday Initiative

- Amanda Y

- Shared updates on the holiday initiative for donations, which is targeting local Scarborough-based community support organizations.
- Suggested partnering with Scarborough Center for Community Support and Eastview Public School, which needs donations for families in need, especially gently used clothing.
- The idea of Hamper Helpers through TDSB social workers was discussed, but this program has earlier deadlines and needs principal involvement.
- Donations need to be collected by December 13th to ensure that food and hygiene products reach the Scarborough Centre in time for distribution during the holiday season.

Action Items:

- Amanda to coordinate the donation drop-off and ensure items are provided to Eastview as soon as possible.
- Further exploration of Hamper Helpers and possible involvement next year.
- Megan to do a Social media post

Fundraising for Sister School

- Katie

- Last year, the idea was discussed to donate a portion of the funds raised for the sister school. However, the new idea is to organize a separate fundraiser specifically for the sister school instead of donating a portion from other funds. Discussion on updating the plan for fundraising.
- Julia volunteered to lead for the initiative.

Action Items:

- Julia to provide ideas for the fundraising event at the next council meeting.

Fundraising Events and Parent Engagement

- Katie mentioned that the mental health session for students did not have the desired turnout. It was concluded that events with more direct involvement from children, like a math night or concerts, tend to engage parents better.
- Ruth proposed the idea of a Cooperative Game Night for parents and kids to promote community engagement and fun. The event would include tasks and games that involve both parents and kids, providing an interactive experience.

Action Items:

- Katie to explore organizing a game night in the future to encourage parent involvement.
- Confirm teacher interest and involvement before finalizing any new programs.

Santa Letter Mailbox Initiative

- Due to the Canada Post strike, children are unable to mail their letters to Santa. Julia has kindly set up a mailbox in her front yard to act as a "portal to the North Pole" for children to send their letters. Julia will be delivering responses back to the children, ensuring they still receive Santa's replies despite postal disruptions.
- The community initiative was praised for its thoughtful approach, with one participant sharing an example of a post featuring a child with the mailbox.

9. Fundraising Updates

Book Fair

- Katie/Lornah

- The book fair preparations are almost complete and ready to go. Wish lists are being sent home with children. Teachers will assist in promoting the event and ensuring all is set up properly.
- The event will begin next week, with an option for parents to purchase books.

- Payment options include credit/debit.
- The Book Fair tea will run on Monday, December 9th from 9:00 AM to 11:15 AM. Some flyers initially had incorrect dates but will be corrected and sent out again.
- Volunteers are needed for some shifts. Email to be sent out for request for additional volunteers.
- A "Guess the Snowballs" or "Guess the Candy" jar contest will be part of the book fair to raise additional funds. Sharmila volunteered to arrange.

Spirit Wear

- Megan

- The initial goal was to have Spirit Wear available before Christmas, but it appears this may not be possible.
- The new plan is to set up an online shop for Spirit Wear, which will be open year-round. This allows people to place orders at their convenience and have items shipped directly to their door.
- The online store should be ready by next week, and promotion will begin once the shop is live.

Action Items:

- Katie to send reminder email request for volunteers up for Book Fair
- Sharmila to finalize arrangements for the "Guess the Snowballs" contest.

2025 Fun Fair

- Robyn/Chantal

Event Goals and Budget:

- Sponsors will be approached with a broad description of the fundraising objectives, including school enhancements and technology needs.
- Discussed the goal of raising approximately \$10,000–12,000, similar to last year.

Volunteers and Roles:

- A call for volunteers to help coordinate the auction was made. The auction involves overseeing donated items, ensuring proper forms are filled out, and collecting payments at the end of the event. Stuart is willing to train someone to take on this role.
- The group agreed to circulate a list of volunteer roles to the school community for sign-up.

Permits and Regulations:

- Council discussed whether a permit would be required for raffles. It was noted that raffles are categorized similarly to bake sales, meaning they do not require a city permit. Further clarification will be sought from the finance office regarding any sales-related permits.

Event Set-Up:

- The team reviewed the event's layout and planned attractions, including obstacle courses, bouncy castles, and jousting. There was a proposal to replace the popcorn machine with a cotton candy machine, which was well-received at the previous event.
- The cost for inflatables and other attractions was discussed, with a suggestion to remain within last year's budget of approximately \$5,000.
- Ruth willing to participate if Dunk tank is rented.

Action Items:

- Robyn to share information with Ruth about raffles. Ruth to ask Financing department for clarity.
- Chantal to send vendor documents to Ruth to sign.

Krispy Kreme

- Robyn

- Council discussed finalizing the order, with the need to confirm quantities and dates for delivery. It was noted that the company requires at least 20 days' notice for any changes to the order.
- Council decided to finalize the number of boxes for sale by January 6th, with delivery scheduled for January 16th.
- Looking to sell each box for \$12. Regular price is \$16.

- Incentives were discussed for the class that sells the most boxes, with a suggestion for a pizza party or similar reward for the winning class.

Action Items:

- Robyn to address holiday timing concerns with Krispy Kreme.

Winter Concert - Fundraising and Tickets

- Council discussed raffling tickets for winter concert seats to support a local charity.
- Confirmed that raffle tickets for concert seats will be distributed via school bags, with collection due by Friday, December 13. These will be tracked by teachers and returned to the office for processing.
- Access Needs: Council noted the need to reserve an aisle seat for a grandparent who requires wheelchair access. This will be coordinated closer to the event date.

Next Council Meeting: January 16, 2025.