

Elizabeth Simcoe Jr. Public School School Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 20, 2025 – Library | 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

Attendance:

Amanda Formentini, Amanda Young, Chantal Elward, Elizabeth Hyland, Julia Lakats, Jith Dravin, Katie Eley, Molly Christie, Raluca Kostovski, Rebecca Ho, Robyn Bluestein, Ruth Coulter, Stuart Rogers, Suganthi Suntharalingam, Tammy Hewitt, Tricia Davey, Yana Verbitskana

Regrets:

Megan Fitzpatrick

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

- Katie

- Molly moved to approve the October 23, 2025 Minutes and Elizabeth second the minutes.

3. Principal's Report

- Ruth

Student Nutrition Program

Representatives: Durward Anthony – Nutrition Officer and Kathleen – Manager, Nutrition Programme

Programme Highlights:

- Simcoe is joining the program, part of the City of Toronto's initiative to provide nutrition support in public schools. Approx. 440 schools are in program with expansion underway to include all permitted schools.
- Launch Date: Originally planned for February, now moved up to March/April to allow additional preparation time.

Programme Goals:

- Address Food Insecurity:** Tackle growing food insecurity, especially post-COVID.
- Promote Healthy Eating:** Encourage nutritious choices and reduce reliance on unhealthy options.
- Support Student Well-being:** Enhance social interaction, concentration, and classroom behaviour to boost academic success.
- Culturally Inclusive Menus:** Reflect diverse cultural preferences and promote cultural awareness.
- Foster Lifelong Habits:** Instill healthy eating practices and provide opportunities for student involvement to build ownership and engagement.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Nutrition Officer (Durward):** Provides operational, ensures compliance with TDSB policies and procedures, and oversees volunteer clearances and programme standards.
- Coordinator Role:** Oversees ordering, distribution, and bin management. Paid position with a stipend. Lunchroom supervisor, given existing police reference check.

Funding and Financial Management

- Government Support:** Backed by Federal, Provincial, and City of Toronto funding.
- Budget Impact:** Allocation is significant, often exceeding the school's regular operating budget.

- **Parental Contribution:** Partial government funding supplemented by suggested contributions of \$5–\$10 per month; no child will be denied service.
- **Community Partnerships:** Local businesses may provide additional funding or resources.
- **Centralized Financial Oversight:** All program expenses will be centrally managed, invoiced to the school, and paid upon receipt, ensuring strong accountability and avoiding siloed processes.

Programme Administration

- Establish a Local Program Committee with staff and students for engagement and ownership.
- Coordinator responsibilities include ordering food, managing deliveries, ensuring compliance with food safety standards, and completing monthly financial reports.

Operational Details

- Each classroom will have a snack bin containing fruits, vegetables, and grains (e.g., crackers).
- Older students may act as bin monitors; kindergarten bins will be delivered by staff.
- Bins will be cleaned daily and prepared for the next day.
- Meals must meet health standards (e.g., no fried foods) and partnerships with approved vendors for food delivery
- Appliances required: fridge and dishwasher (construction challenges noted; appliances will be provided and relocated as needed).
- Parents may continue sending snacks; the programme does not replace home-provided snacks.
- Uneaten packaged items can be reused later in the day; minimal waste observed in similar programmes.

Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

- No nut products will be included.
- Allergy accommodations:
 - Each classroom will have a bin with product information for transparency.
 - Substitutions will be provided for intolerances (e.g., dairy alternatives).
- Ongoing communication with families regarding daily menus.

Menu Planning

- Initial menus will be set internally; long-term goal is to provide monthly menus online for parents.
- Coordination with families to avoid duplication (e.g., if apples are served at school, parents won't pack apples).

Construction & Timeline

- Staff room renovations anticipated in Summer 2026; appliances and operations will be adjusted accordingly. Coordinator will liaise with Ruth and programme contacts to ensure smooth implementation.

Construction Updates

- **Daycare Fence Installed:** Temporary fenced area set up quickly for daycare use; may remain as extra outdoor space post-construction.
- **Upcoming Work:** Major construction, including gym and library renovations, scheduled for spring and summer.
- **Funding Status:** Ministry funding release pending, but timeline remains on track.

Upcoming Events

- **Holiday Concerts:** Primary Concert: December 9 at 6:00 PM. Junior Concert: December 11 at 6:00 PM (previously scheduled Council meeting date). Holiday concerts will be held in the school gym for ease of access for younger students.
 - Council Meeting: Suggested reschedule to January due to concert conflict.

Recent Activities

- **Parent-Teacher Interviews:** Successfully completed last week; strong participation noted.
- **Sports:** Boys' volleyball team active. Girls' basketball team preparing for upcoming tournaments.
- **Playground Activity Leaders:** Older students lead organized games for Grades 1–2 during recess. Activities announced in advance; leaders wear identifiable pinnies. Programme promotes mentorship and engagement among students.

Family Sponsorship

- TDSB Social Work Request: School asked to sponsor a family in need through a holiday hamper initiative. Matched with a family of six: five children and a single father from the Jane-Finch area.
- Family Details: Children's ages: 16, 16, 19 (teenagers), and two younger children (approx. age 6).
- Requests: clothing (sizes provided), gift cards (e.g., No Frills, Dollarama, Winners) and necessities. No specific brand or style preferences; family expressed gratitude for any support.
- Community Engagement: Proposal to involve students and families: Create flyers for local streets to encourage donations.
- Use a Google Doc to track contributions and avoid duplication.
- Suggested student involvement: Decorating hampers, writing cards or letters for families, and leadership opportunities for older students to help organize.
- Tie-in with December kindness assembly to reinforce values of empathy and giving.

Action Items:

- Ruth to follow up with TDSB social worker regarding second family.
- Create and share Google Doc for donation tracking.
- Engage students in decorating hampers and writing cards.

4. **Sunshine Childcare Report**

– Kim

- **Staffing Changes:** Miss Shirley has moved to BC; Miss Lilly has taken her place. Staff member remains on medical leave; daily coverage provided by supply staff.
- **Playground Space:** Discussed earlier in the meeting; temporary arrangements in place.
- **Fee Structure:** 2026 fee structure shared with families. Preschool and kindergarten fees remain frozen under CWELCC funding. School-age fees increased as per January adjustment.
- **Food Drive:** School will run a holiday food drive during concert week. Sunshine will contribute by placing a collection box and encouraging participation.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

– Megan (via text)

- No major changes since last month. Five teachers submitted reimbursement requests for classroom expenses. Awaiting invoice from NITWITS
- Current projected balance: \$17,328 (including planned expenses).

6. **Events and Activities Updates**

Nit Wits

– Katie

- Completed last week; six cases reported (consistent with previous numbers).
- Next session planned for March, ideally before March Break or Easter.

Theatrics Program

– Elizabeth

- Confirmed for end of March/early April.
- School needs to finalize specific dates; April appears flexible.

Holiday Outreach Initiatives

- Amanda Y

- **Winter Clothing Drive** – Eastview: Extremely successful; high volume of donations received. Items distributed immediately to families during parent-teacher interviews and after-school programmes. Drive scheduled to end December 1; consider sending a final reminder to families.
- **Holiday Food Drive:** Collect non-perishable food items and hygiene products during holiday concerts for donation to support Scarborough Centre for Public Communities.
- **Concert Seating Auction:** Plan to auction off premium seating for both concert nights: Primary Concert: December 9. Junior Concert: December 11
 - Suggested allocation: 10 seats for primary night and 20 seats for junior night
 - Process: Update bid sheets and forms from last year. Send letters home to families; bids will be collected in the office. Payment by cash.

Rocks & Rings

- Katie

- Curling activity booked for April 4th and April 5th.
- Cost: \$580 for two days (vote approved for \$600 budget allocation).

Social Media Presentation

- Megan

Megan was unable to attend; no update on social media presentation.

Sewing Program

- Robyn

- Program offered by The Sewing Studio, TDSB-approved vendor. Teaches sewing skills to students from kindergarten to Grade 8. Focus on inclusion and breaking stereotypes (e.g., sewing is for everyone). Staff includes diverse representation; promotes equity and creativity.
- Format: Two-day event held in the library or gym. Each class participates for one period (30–40 minutes). Activities tailored by age group (e.g., pouches for younger students, more complex projects for older students).
- Cost: \$16 per student; approximately 297–300 students. Total estimated cost: \$4,752 (rounded to \$5,000 for budget purposes).
- If 300+ students participate, vendor will donate a sewing machine to the school.
- Logistics: Dates secured: January 20–21. No upfront payment required; invoicing after event. Payment via purchase order to save HST; council to reimburse school.
- Budget Discussion: Current projected balance: \$17,328 (including planned expenses). Major commitments already approved: Theatrics Program: \$1,000, Rocks & Rings: \$600, Classroom enrichment and other activities already budgeted. Sewing programme noted as the largest single expense to date but considered feasible within current budget.

Olympic Speaker

- Yana

- Invite Olympic and Paralympic athletes to the school for an inspirational visit. Partnership with the Canadian Olympic Committee to arrange athlete appearances.
- Goal: Engage students ahead of the Winter Olympic Games (Feb 6) to build excitement and promote values like discipline and resilience.
- Budget: Suggested honorarium: \$1,000 total (could cover one athlete or two athletes at \$500 each).
- Concern raised about fairness to athletes given limited funding; preference for one athlete at full honorarium rather than splitting between two. Council to decide on final budget allocation.
- Tie-in with school themes such as discipline and perseverance.
- Explore synergy with other programmes (e.g., skating or curling activities) to enhance Olympic spirit.
- Options discussed: Prepared presentation (15–20 minutes) for primary and junior groups. Presentation themes: Life as a competitive athlete, training, discipline, and resilience, overcoming obstacles and personal stories, content can be tailored for different age groups.
- Ideal timing: January, prior to the Olympic Games starting February 6, to maximize excitement and engagement.

- Potential to incorporate Olympic viewing events (e.g., opening ceremony) during school hours.
- Athlete Selection: Flexibility in requests: Winter or summer athletes. Current, retired, or Olympic hopefuls. Canadian Olympic Committee will match athletes based on budget and availability.

Voting Results

- **Rocks & Rings Programme:** Approved unanimously (10 votes for yes).
- **Sewing Programme:** 6 votes for all students at \$5,000:
 - 2 votes for no.
 - 1 vote for junior only.
 - 1 vote for primary only.
 o Decision: Approved for all students.
- **Olympic Athlete Visit:**
 - o Votes split:
 - 5 votes for \$1,000.
 - 5 votes for \$2,000.
 - o Decision: \$1500.

Action Items:

- **Nitwits:** Finalize Nitwits March date and Theatrics April schedule.
- **Clothing Drive:** Katie to send final reminder for clothing drive before December 1.
- **Sewing Program:** Robyn to confirm vendor details and scheduling.
- **Olympic Athlete Visit:** Confirm date and details via email before Jan 15 meeting. Provide options for activities and finalize quickly.

News & Views Submission

- Robyn

- Robyn to finalize and send article for school newsletter. First call for sponsors and volunteers.
- Planned communication will include: New Chromebooks for classrooms, sports jerseys, scientist-in-the-School programming.
- Announcement of Fun Fair event date.

7. Fundraising Update

Pizza Lunch Update

- Elizabeth

- Lower than usual volunteer turnout for upcoming pizza lunch. Some classes will have only one volunteer; adjustments made to cover gaps.
- Ordering strategy adjusted to reduce leftover pizza and freezer overflow.

Book Fair Planning

- Fundraising Leads

- **Scheduling:** Determine number of morning and after-school sessions based on volunteer availability.
 - o Morning sessions: Friday (8:00–9:00 AM).
 - o After-school sessions: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (3:30–4:00 PM).
 - o Additional evening sessions during concert nights for parent access.
- **Volunteer Coordination:** Google Form will be updated and circulated for sign-ups.
- **Donation Box Discussion:** Last year included a donation box for books for neighbouring school; consensus leaning toward not doing it this year due to multiple parent requests for contribution already.
- Teachers will maintain wish lists for classroom needs.
- **Payment Methods:** Council members to assist with managing payments and cash float. Scholastic accepts cash and credit cards; council to provide float for cash transactions.
- **Poster Giveaway:** posters displayed during fair can be distributed to students. Random draw per class.

Action Items:

- Finalize schedule and send volunteer sign-up form. Ensure council presence at all sessions for financial oversight.

Fun Fair Planning**- Robyn/Chantal**

- Planning to begin in January. Email to be sent in January to recruit volunteers and assign roles.
- Ideas Discussed:
 - Signature dish partnership with local culinary program at Sir Wildred Laurier (pending confirmation).
 - Plant sale fundraiser (donated plants from community gardens).
- Volunteer Roles: Council members encouraged to take leadership roles in specific areas: Kindie: Yana, Food Trucks: Elizabeth and Tammy

PollinateTO Grant**- Amanda F**

- Grant opportunity for school beautification project at the front of the building. Up to \$5,000 available for pollinator-friendly landscaping.
- Application Status: Amanda has started the application; will finalize by weekend and share for review.
- Ruth to review submission for alignment with curriculum integration (e.g., greenhouse education).
- Plan for ongoing maintenance involving teachers, students, council, and community members.

Code of Behaviour Initiative**- Raluca**

- Previously discussed idea to involve students in creating a Code of Behaviour for the school. Activity to begin after current leadership sessions conclude. Update expected at next meeting.

Jays Care Baseball Program

- Opportunity to apply for free baseball programming through Jays Care Foundation.
- Focus on girls' participation; requires teacher involvement and parent volunteers.
- Application deadline likely in January. Amanda and Raluca offered to collaborate on submission.

Bathroom Maintenance Concern:

- Persistent odor due to uric acid on tiles in student bathrooms.
- Suggestion: Use natural enzymatic cleaning products (parent offered to donate). Marco (custodian) to review product suitability and cleaning protocols.

Action Items:

- Amanda to finalize application and circulate for feedback.
- Explore adding bat houses as part of the project (Amanda to research feasibility).
- Begin planning for Code of Behaviour activity; update at next meeting.
- Amanda and Raluca to gather details and submit Jays Care application before January.