

**BLACK WALNUT PUBLIC SCHOOL – Council Minutes**

November 20, 2023

**Meeting Format: Hybrid**

**In Attendance (in person):**

Parents: Jennifer Reitsma, Stephanie Whittamore, Lang Vu, Daniel Martin-Weaver, Thanusha Jeganathan, Anna Leung, Kirsty Lutley, Amanda Ryan, Renee Chang, Thasan Yogarajah, Michelle Hale, Andrea Chin

Teachers: N/A

Vice Principal: Chunha Park

**In Attendance (virtual):**

Parents: Reshma Khan, Sadaf Brar

Principal: Vivienne Baines

**Regrets:**

Parents: Arslan Ghani, Olivia Chu Yau

**Land Acknowledgment** – Jennifer Reitsma read the YRDSB Land Acknowledgement

**Approval of today's agenda** – Jennifer Reitsma, seconded by Kirsty Lutley

**Approval of October 2, 2023 minutes** – Jennifer Reitsma, seconded by Lang Vu

**School Report** – Vivienne Baines

- Last 1.5 weeks have been difficult from a communication perspective due to the cyber incident affecting the entire Board – only today have we started receiving the odd external email
- Continue to use Edsby, or call the school for urgent matters
- Some things are coming back online albeit slowly
- Lots of things happening around the school (not an exhaustive list):
  - Beautiful Remembrance Day assembly was held last Monday (a day late due to internet outage)
  - Youth Space – we are lucky to have had our school be chosen to participate in this program:
  - Older students get trained in facilitating activities to support well-being of other students

- Helps with our focus on mental health
- We have applied for a grant to receive a presentation on anti-bullying
- Safe Space
- Guest speaker for older students about self-confidence and self esteem
- Mindfulness and positive mental health activities will be taking place in the month of December
- Tour for Humanity bus was on site and our students learned about Holocaust during Holocaust awareness week
- Standing in the Doorway exhibit that is currently at the Markham Museum will be coming to our school for two weeks as part of the travelling exhibit – it showcases the lived experiences of the Chinese community in our area - Largely for Gr 5-8 students but a package is also being put together for K-4 as well. More info can be found on Board website
- Tournament was held today for Boys volleyball (we made it to the finals!) – it was a great event with a very positive group of students
- Jr Boys and Jr Girls volleyball will be starting soon
- Also hoping to set up a space in the school with coffee once a week where family members can come into the school and chat, look at resources, etc. Potentially also a book exchange/toy exchange. In the works.

Chunha Park presented the results of survey sent to School Council members about effectiveness of School Council

- Only three people filled out the survey but overall the results were very positive
- It is felt that the School Council represents the needs of our school community very well

### **School Council Report – Jennifer Reitsma**

Chunha, Thasan and Jennifer attended the East School Council Forum. The takeaways were:

- Emphasis on attendance – being late really impacts the student’s day
  - Parents are asked to try to make appointments after school or at start of day
  - The school’s Social Worker works in similar capacity to an attendance counsellor and can work with families who are struggling with their child’s attendance
- Policies and procedures for fundraising - Most information can be found on Board website
- Transition from elementary to secondary
  - IB and specialized Arts school are an option for students entering high school
  - Grade 8 students visit high schools in November each year as part of Grade 8 day
- Reciprocal communication
  - Board has a variety of tools to help with communication with families. One app they support allows schools to communicate in English and have it be received by a family in their native tongue (and vice versa). Vivienne commented that a couple teachers in our school use it.

- Managing Stress & Well-Being
  - Course was about identifying children's stresses and helping with them
- Presentation on safety by Reena Mistry (she was in our school last year for our safe transportation blitz)
  - Council discussed that generally transportation safety has improved for our school since the blitz – Vivienne will speak with staff to ensure pylons are placed at the front of the caretaker parking area after school in addition to before school to stop cars from parking there is better, except that in last couple weeks some are parking in caretaker lot (after school)
  - Cornell Centre Boulevard is still an issue with parents parking on the road once all the spots are filled up
  - Council expressed gratitude for the cheeriness of Mr. Bonello, Mr. Neveu, Mr. Szarek greeting everyone in the morning
- Toy/game drive – teachers have requested toys and games to use during indoor recesses.
  - Stephanie will draft some verbiage to put in the Weekly requesting new or used donations from parents in this regard.
  - Improves student safety when students have options to keep them busy during indoor recesses.
- Parent-teacher interviews – thank you to Amanda who organized Timbits for the staff on Thursday night, it was well-received!
- Parent engagement: Considering an in-person activity that would potentially leverage the PRO Grant to boost parent engagement.

#### **Treasurer's Report – Thanusha Jeganathan**

- \$6,013.11 balance – new money is mainly from pizza/pasta first-term profits
- Stephanie commented that roughly 130 students ordered pasta and roughly 370 students ordered pizza for the October-December period, and we profit \$1/order per week

#### **Yearbook – Jennifer Reitsma**

- A request went out to staff to see if anyone would be available to take over the yearbook preparation process from Ms. Neveu, but there were no staff or school council volunteers available to facilitate the year book this year
- A memory book will be prepared for Gr 8 students this year instead, with help of parents and School Council
- Reshma, Michelle, Amanda and Anna have agreed to help from School Council
- Vivienne/Jennifer will contact Alyshia Davidson / the Gr 8 student reps regarding their contributions

## **Fundraising – Jennifer Reitsma**

- Movie night – potentially December 7 (to be confirmed)
- Vivienne & Chunha presented the “Wish List” slide show that contained a compilation of priority requests from teachers about where School Council could contribute its money. Council discussed the options at length and the following was voted on and approved by all voting members present:
  - Scientists in School – \$1,500.00 approved (total request was for 15 classes at \$235/class – unfunded portion will be paid for by students)
    - Company comes in to facilitate hands-on experiments – fantastic experience for students.
  - Chromebooks for Jr/Intermediate classes – \$3,000.00 approved (total request was for around \$5,500 – unfunded portion will be reconsidered in 2024 when Board is likely to offer a matching program)
  - Floor mats for Grade 2 classrooms – \$1,500.00 approved (total request was for around \$3,000.00 to cover four classrooms – unfunded portion will come out of School’s Primary budget)
    - The mats will replace old carpets and are the recommended option from a sanitation perspective. Most other Primary classes now have them.
  - Custom School tent – \$1,500.00 earmarked for January when new set of pizza/pasta money flows in)
    - For offsite activities such as Cross Country and Area meets
    - One of only schools without one; we need a visible meeting spot
- Remaining asks will be reassessed at next meeting

## **Video presentation discussion on School Council Policies – Jennifer Reitsma**

- The survey results were presented by Chunha Park (as noted above)
- Council agreed that no action items were required as a result of the survey and its’ results and members were encouraged to continue the current course of engaging parents and staff in discussions related to School Council

Next Meeting – January 15, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. (format to be confirmed)