

Westmount Collegiate Institute  
School Council Meeting Minutes  
September 11, 2013

**1. Welcome – Steven:**

- Introductions: Administration
- Thanks to Sharon Haniford for many years leading council. We have big shoes to fill.
- Tyler Stanton, VP for Student Council

**2. Principal's Report – Simon:**

- It is great to see so many people at our council meeting
- Construction of the dance studio is now complete. The school is examining any remaining deficiencies in the studio
- School was staffed to accommodate 1092 students, and currently has 1150 students.
- The school enrolment is limited by the facility size.
- Grade 9 day was fantastic. The theatre was packed with both moms and dads.
- As every year there are timetable issues to deal with.
- School is expecting additional staffing by Friday afternoon, which should settle and accommodate all classes.
- From an operational standpoint, it was an interesting start to the year due to Rosh Hashana being right after the start of school.
- Post job action, things are almost back to normal. The school is running extra curricular activities, student council is running, yearbook committee is running.
- We are planning to have school trips. Europe and NY City to combine business and music courses.
- We hope to have a great turn out for DECA. We had over 60 students participate last year. 4 students went to the international competition in Anaheim CA.
- EQAO results will be out on September. WCI did fairly well.
- Emails to parents are still an issue, so the school will communicate through Synrevoice. Please make sure that the school has the correct contact information.
- Staffing is based on number of students registered in the school. The Board had to declare a system surplus of 128 teachers.
- WCI was given a dance specialist to start on Monday. We are assuming we will receive all the staff required for classrooms in grades 9 and 10 as well.
- Parents will receive messages from school if their son or daughter is absent from class. Please make sure to call the attendance office to advise any absences. Please don't call your kids directly in class.

**3. VP Report – Sheldon Zelsman**

**a. Safety Week - last week of September.**

- 1<sup>st</sup> semester lock down drill practice. Our staff and students will be prepared. Students will have the procedure explained as to what is required by them
- Fire drill practice will take place on Friday the 13th due to the fire department having to check the new alarm in the dance studio.
- Hold and Secure: If something happens in the community, we need to go into hold and secure. Activity inside the school continues, but no one goes in or out until the all clear sounds (bank robbed for example).
- Parent: Is there a safe place if kids are outside and cannot get back in?

- Sheldon: The problem is that we cannot control the outside environment. We can't let anyone in, not even students. We will tell them that if they find the school locked, they have to go somewhere safe.
- Parent: if they are outside for physed what happens? There will be an announcement to come inside.
- Simon: The hold and secure does not apply to the theatre or the community centre. Our responsibility has to be to the school. Students will be told to assess the situation and go to a place they deem safe.
- Lisa: Mr. Conte could tweet it, but if kids aren't following, they won't know.
- Simon: parents need to advise their kids that if the school is locked during a school day that means something is going on. To find a safe place to go to. But just because there is a police car in the driveway, that doesn't mean that something is going on. Our community police officer is in our building a lot.
- Parent: How do parents find out about a hold and secure?
- Simon: after the situation has been resolved, we send out information. During the situation, we are busy keeping our students safe. We lock all of the side doors during the day, but the front doors are usually open.
- Lisa: Teachers went over the safe and caring school policy and acceptable use of technology equipment. Admin will be going through the classes this week to collect signed agreements.

**b. Dress Code – Lisa Wargo**

- Student Council did a great job discussing it in their skit for grade 9. The warm weather does make girls come to school in unacceptable outfits. We told students that this is their full time job, and they should be respectful of the place. No hats are allowed in the school either. Whenever I have been telling kids that they are dressed in appropriately, they have been respectful and understanding.

**4. Facilities Report:**

- Mario is doing a board wide initiative. Jeffery Hartung has taken over and is our SOFA. He is doing a marvelous job. The building is immaculate.
- The parking lot has been repaved.
- Technologically we are where we should be. We have a brand new Mac lab, 27" screens used for ArtsWest, multipurpose and Music. We are in a digital world, and we are trying to make kids savvy as to what is real and true on the internet. We are focusing on digital literacy.
- Parent: Elementary schools have new cameras. Will there be new cameras here?
- Simon: We have as many cameras as our server could hold. There are 64 cameras in the building including outdoors. We have 2 cameras to move as they were where the dance studio is now. One camera will be allocated to an area where kids think that they are invisible outside. The other one will be relocated as well.
- The latest breed of marijuana has a very strong smell. If you are suspicious, just smell it – it will have a skunk odour

**5. Student Council Report – Zoe Schmilovich**

- Student Council hasn't been in full bloom yet. We will start planning events and grade senator elections soon. Every grade will have 3 senators.
- On Grade 9 Day we had volunteers from higher grades to show grade 9 students around. We had grade 9 presentations.
- You can follow us on twitter @WCI\_StuCo . More will come as soon as timetables are settled.
- Elections will be held at the end of September or early in October.

- Parent: Will the Leadership Conference take place this year?
- Simon: This event is open to all kids in the school in all grades. Last year, leaders were doing activities that were not appropriate to the younger students. Staff found out, and said that conference would not happen this year. We are looking into it. But we want to bring leadership to what it was when I started here.
- Rod: The word is that it will come back. There were discussions that were done in the groups where kids were revealing and disclosing things that the leaders were not equipped to deal with. Leaders were told not to encourage it, but they did. There were disclosures that were not appropriate. At the end, it seemed more like camp than a leadership conference. It will come back when the kids that are leading will be trained to lead, and it will be clear that this is not the place to disclose your darkest moments.
- Parent: There were kids who got into trouble that were encouraged to attend conference. These kids should not have been encouraged to go and it seemed like a punishment.
- Rod: No one was forced to go, it was voluntary. But if the leadership would have been right, these kids would have been guided and would have flourished. It didn't happen that way.

## 6. Guidance Report – Rod Conte:

### a. Timetables

- 100 kids registered over the summer. I started to go through timetables over the summer. The week before school started we started handling the issues that arose. Even though this is the second day of school, it really is the first as September 3<sup>rd</sup> was grade 9 day, the on the 4<sup>th</sup> many kids didn't show up. Thursday and Friday kids were off.
- There are still 850 requests that we need to handle. Parents are asking for meetings with counsellors, but this is the worst time of year to try to meet with us. We prioritize grade 12. Make sure that they have everything they require to graduate then we will deal with lunch-time and other requests.
- When we call students down we have solutions. We guarantee that every student will be seen and dealt with. All timetables should be done before next Friday. We can see the kids once before all serious issues are dealt with, and when this will be done, we will advise the kids that they can come down for a second review if they would like.
- Parent: Could there not be a in basket to advise counsellors that they are dropping classes, so that when other kids come down, you know what courses are open?
- Rod: We cannot do that because it's not a straight drop. That kid usually wants to pick up a class.
- Parent: if you did all the deletions together, it would open up courses for other kids.
- Simon: I don't have an issue with students dropping courses, but if that makes them a part time student I will meet with the student. It's a catch 22. If we have the kids leave, it affects our staffing. Kids cannot be registered in two day-schools at the same time. So all these courses must be taken after school.
- Parent: Is this a Westmount Issue? Admin: it is a province-wide issue.
- Rod: I can try the drop basket for second semester. But it can only be for a straight drop, not a course change.
- Parent: Kids that go to summer school cannot drop the course in June for the next year because they need pre-requisites to get approved for the next level. So in a way they want to alert you, but they cannot really do it.
- Rod: What if kids don't end up going, or if they are ill and kicked out of the course for missing time?
- Parent: What are you doing with kids in 9 and 10 that are not registered in their required courses?
- Rod: We are focused on math, science and English. If we cannot get them into history and geography, French or gym, we will come up with a plan. Kids will get their diplomas and not be

penalized. Some courses are offered for grade 9 and 10. When you graduate you need 30 credits. 18 compulsory and 12 electives. It doesn't say from what grade.

- Parent: My son made a note to advise that he wanted a different course in June. This change was done for him. Good feedback.
- Rod: We offer all this information on Twitter, Facebook and on the school website. Kids need to get the information.
- Parent: What is with first period lunch? Parent: Some teachers allow kids to eat in class during periods 3, 4 and 5. Others don't allow it, and it's not healthy to not eat lunch all day.
- Rod: When you have so many kids to accommodate, some kids will have 4 classes in a row. This is a province wide issue. We have to fill the classes and accommodate all kids. We have had many conversations with admin. We were thinking of getting rid of grade 10 common lunches. With ArtsWest and Co-op, and the curriculum getting more creative, more timetable issues will arise.
- Simon: this is a conversation that I have no answer for at the moment. We are more concerned that grade 9 and 10 have common lunches. We don't have the space to do a common lunch for the entire school. Senior kids can handle 4 courses in a row, as some want to sleep in and this will follow in university.
- Rod: We are open to suggestions and appreciate the feedback. It's not always possible to accommodate though.
- Parent: What is DECA?
- Simon: DECA is an international business competition. Students have to solve business issues. Grade 9 and 10 get exposed through the club, grade 10 and 11 go to competitions.
- Co-op is an opportunity for grade 11 and 12 students to experience a subject that they are interested in – police, medicine etc. They can get up to 4 credits in a field. It's like job shadowing, but in more detail. It's wonderful for kids who know what they want to do in the future. Universities are interested in what you have done beside the academics. Co-op is great for that.

#### **b. University and College information**

- Rod: All the information is on the guidance website. September 27, 28, 29 is the Ontario University Fair. If you are a grade 12 student, it's a must. Great for grade 11, very good for grade 10. Grade 11 is the year you have to rule things out. What students don't want to do will rule out some courses. There should be a reason to continue with a subject if they don't require it for their university career.
- During the first week of October we visit grade 9 students to and find out how they are doing and we give them a survey to find out how they are doing and assist if we can.
- Important Dates:
  - October 10 - parents' night.
  - October 16 is grade 12 information night in the theatre.
  - October 11 is the college fair at the Energy Centre. Some colleges are offering university degrees and offer as many careers in half the funds and half the time, or a university degree.
  - November 6 - Alexander Mackenzie High School university fair. Universities will come out to present to students.
- Universities offer tours during the weekends. March break is an amazing time to visit as well. Kids have been able to pinpoint their decisions.
- Parent: Do you know about apprenticeships for the trade?
- Rod: If son or daughter is thinking of becoming a plumber or electrician, you can apply to OEM. It's fast track into apprenticeship. Information is on our website as well as the link to it.

## 7. School Council – Steven Mayers

### a. Election for School Council positions:

- The Board has taken up the role of the treasurer. All funds raised through the school are counted by the school secretaries and transferred to the board.
- Positions available are chair or co-chairs, and secretary.
- Sharon: The focus is to have programs to involve parents, not fundraising as in elementary schools. The focus is running the meetings, it gives you a good connection with administration, and provides a better insight into the school.
- Steven: We apply for funds through the Pro Grant. We use these funds for programs that have been approved by all council meeting attendees.
- Elections: Co Chair - Hands raised by
  - Steven Mayers - last year's co-chair, has a son in grade 10 in ArtsWest, has co chaired at Yorkhill and Baythorne, been on council at Thornhill.
  - Daphna Romi – last year's secretary, has a daughter in grade 9, been on council at L.H. Frechette, Rosedale Heights, and other schools in the board
  - Steve Feldman – new parent to the school, has a daughter in grade 9 ArtsWest, resident of maple, daughter came from Mackenzie Glenn PS, worked with the ministry as part of council over the years, happy to run as co chair or secretary
  - Bobby Cohen – new parent to the school, has a daughter in grade 9, no previous experience as on school council, worked at Baycrest with intergenerational programming, planning speakers and events, religious programing. Thinks the school has done a marvelous job of transitioning students into grade 9. Likes the energy in the school, it is positive and wonderful. That energy has come home and that's what prompted the interest in seeing how I can contribute to the school. Want to run for co-chair only.
  - Steven: All parents are always welcome to assist whether they have a council title or not.
  - Simon: This council has been always inclusive. All parents have a vote. In most high schools there is not such a high turnout at council. We appreciate every parent that comes out to council and wants to be part of the school. Council is about voicing our concerns and working together to better the school.
  - Elected positions:
    - Steven Mayers – Co Chair
    - Daphna Romi – Co Chair
    - Stephen Feldman – Secretary

### b. Speakers – Daphna Romi

- Will work with VP Lisa Wargo to arrange for two speaking engagements for the student body and speakers at every council meeting, if possible.
- Sharon: before or after Holocaust Education week, we bring a speaker in to present to the students. If your child's grade is not involved, it is because we cannot accommodate all the students in the City Playhouse theatre. Two assemblies don't accommodate all the students. If grade 9 cannot be involved this year they will be involved next year.
- Speakers recommended by parents:
  - Dr. Ron Clavier – speaks about anxiety in teenagers and drug use. It is directed at parents rather than students. He discusses why teenagers act the way they do, both from a neurological and physiological aspects.
  - Alison Schafer - works with kids and speaks about parenting kids that are struggling or have challenges. She works on improving parent-child relationships.
  - Sonia Nicolucci – speaks about parenting techniques. Targeted primarily for parents.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: NOVEMBER 13, 2013 - 7:00PM**