

EQUINOX HOLISITIC ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

Council Meeting Minutes November 9, 2016

Library | 6:00 pm – 7:40 pm

SCHOOL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Co-Chair: Matthew Hall
Co-Chair & Secretary: Angela Matich
Treasurer: Cherokee MacLeod
A.S.A.C. Rep.:* Boriana Karan

SCHOOL STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

Principal: Mark Lasso
Vice-Principal: Chris O'Shaughnessy
Teacher Rep.: Tanya Demjanenko

*A.S.A.C. = Alternative School Advisory Council

MEETING ATTENDEES

Shelagh Smith, Jillian Dempsey, Lorien Iantomasi, Kelly Drennan, Irit Kelman, Lisa Olafson, Syd Grainger, Branco Karan, Randy Robinson, Matt Humphries, Heather Bell

VOTING PROCESS

All parent attendees and the one teacher representative were able to vote on anything presented during the November 9th, 2016 meeting. If a vote was passed or not, has been recorded below. Before each vote, the School Council motioned for the vote and one of the meeting attendees seconded it.

OPENING

Matt opened the School Council meeting by reading the TDSB acknowledgement of the Traditional Territories/Ancestral lands of Aboriginal peoples. Next, he led the group through an opening circle where everyone was invited to share their name, their children's names and grades, as well as one of their favourite elementary school memories. Lastly, Matt reminded the group that every parent has the right to vote on anything presented at any School Council meeting. He also explained that due to a tight schedule only items listed on the agenda would be covered.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Angela presented the School Council and Communications Committee's goals for this 2016-2017 year. The full document is attached at the end of the meeting notes for reference. It includes the School Council meeting dates for the rest of the year.

OCTOBER 19th MEETING NOTES

The meeting notes from October 19th, 2016 were approved.

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TEACHER UPDATE

- **WINTER FAIR RAFFLE BASKETS**
Each class is responsible for collecting items for its theme-specified Winter Fair raffle basket, such as “Foodies Delight.” Parents should be receiving an email from their class parent representative with all the details. The baskets will be raffled off at the Winter Fair to help raise funds for the school. Parents should drop their raffle basket donations to their child’s class by Friday, November 25th.
- **THE P.I.N.E. PROJECT TRIP - <https://www.pineproject.org>**
All the p.i.n.e. project trip dates have been finalized. A quick reminder to parents that forms need to be returned at least a day before the trip to allow time for processing. To make things easier, it is recommended that parents pay their fees online if possible to help reduce the flow of cash between students, teachers and staff. To register for online payments, please visit the new TDSB program called [School Cash](http://kevgroup.com/intro/). (<http://kevgroup.com/intro/>)
- **STUDENT REP.**
A call was sent out for an Equinox student representative. No student has offered to take the position as of yet. Mark will continue to solicit for a student representative.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Cherokee presented a budget summary to the group. The one-page document is attached at the end of the meeting notes for reference. She explained that the teachers are currently reviewing the list of potential expenses to confirm what they will need this year. The final budget will be presented at the January School Council meeting to be voted on and approved. Prior to that School Council meeting, an informal budget meeting will be held to allow the Equinox community more time to discuss the budget in more detail. The informal budget meeting date/time/location still has to be confirmed.

CO-TREASURER NEEDED

Our School Council needs a Co-Treasurer to work with the very knowledgeable Cherokee MacLeod this year. She will show you the ropes of this volunteer position as she transitions from this role. If you are interested, please email Angela Matich at gtafemale@gmail.com.

REQUEST FOR FUNDS (RFF)

Matt and Angela addressed the question raised if voting on funds can be done in the same meeting they are presented. According to the bylaws there is nothing to prevent this from happening. The Co-Chairs explained that some of the RFF’s being voted on that night were indeed presented at the previous meeting (Read-up Club, Grade 8 Trip and Movie License) while the others (String Instruments and Workshops) were time sensitive. The larger fund requests outlined in the earlier budget summary were to be part of a separate informal budget meeting for greater community discussion. The School Council is also exploring other ways to promote more parent engagement in these processes.

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- **Read-up Club: \$200 Approved**
To buy supplies such as books for the Tuesday after-school Read-up Club.
- **End of Year Grade 8 Ottawa Trip: On Hold**
Tanya is to confirm with Kyle if the recent \$500 request for funds is separate from, or the same as, the \$500 Grade 8 Graduation Celebration listed in the budget summary presented by Cherokee. In other words, is Kyle asking for \$500 or \$1,000 in total this year from School Council.
- **String Instruments (Violins/Violas): \$650 Approved**
There are currently 12 Grade 5 to Grade 8 students on the waitlist to participate in the string instruments extracurricular program which has already started. Prior to purchasing the instruments, the school will confirm the actual number of students who still wish to participate in case it has gone down. Each instrument costs approx. \$125. The School is covering the other 50% cost (\$650). The instruments will be owned by Equinox and can be used again in the future by more students.
- **Mental Health Workshops 2017 - Participation Approved**
Roden received a Parents Reaching Out Grant. They are using 100% of that grant (\$1,000) to fund five different evening workshops featuring mental health professional speakers. They have inquired if Equinox would like to participate in these workshops. At the November 9th meeting it was voted that yes Equinox would like to participate. Roden also asked for help from Equinox volunteers. Equinox agreed to put out a request for the following volunteers...
 1. Parents to donate baked goods for people to enjoy at the workshops.
 2. Volunteers to provide childcare during the events who will not mind missing the workshop.

It was also agreed upon to explore using Equinox School Council funds to help support these workshops. Matt is going to contact the Roden workshop organizers to see how Equinox may be of financial assistance if any is needed. If required an RFF will be filled out and submitted to the Equinox School Council for review at the next formal meeting.

**The Mental Health Committee meets the last Wednesday of each month between 11:45 am and 12:30 pm in the school library. Mark chairs the meetings. Currently, only Roden parents participate; however, Equinox parents are more than welcome to join as well.*

- **Movie License Fee: Up to \$200 Approved**
Angela confirmed the movie license is shared between Equinox and Roden. The exact fee will be confirmed once the license details are negotiated; however, she does know from Roden that it will be under \$200. This license fee will be paid back to the School Council from the money earned through upcoming Movie Nights.

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MOVIE NIGHTS

The group voted yes to Angela approaching the teachers/clubs that have a recurring request for funds each year from School Council to see if they are interested in hosting a Movie Night for their cause. For example, an Equinox class/club could work with School Council parent volunteers to pick the movie, design the poster, promote the event and come up with other fun ideas to create a memorable Movie Night experience. The funds raised from their Movie Night event would go directly to support their specific cause. Movie Nights on average raise \$500-\$1,000 per event.

WINTER FAIR

The Winter Fair is well underway. The committee still needs help making crafts for the Children's Store and a Volunteers Coordinator on the day of the event. If anyone is interested in volunteering, please contact the [Winter Fair Committee](#).

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Currently, there is an Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Committee of volunteers working with TDSB as they remove all the carpet from both Equinox and Roden starting this school year. The Equinox School Council would like to launch a new umbrella Health and Safety Committee to investigate other areas for improvement within the school(s). If you are interested in joining this new group, please email Matt at mattmung@hotmail.com.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This new committee will be meeting on Wednesday, November 23rd at 2 pm to start planning a Equinox Parent Holistic Workshop featuring Jack Miller and hopefully a few other special guests. The purpose of this workshop is provide parents a fun way to learn more about Equinox's holistic approach to education.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL COUNCIL ADVISORY COUNCIL (ASAC) UPDATE

Unfortunately, we ran out of time during the Equinox School Council meeting for the ASAC update. The group agreed it should be added to the meeting minutes to help keep the community well informed.

- Boriana Karan and Amelia Golden will be the Equinox School Council's ASAC representatives.
- Both of the Equinox School Council ASAC Representatives, the Co-Chair (Angela) and several other parents attended the recent ASAC meeting held on Tuesday, November 8th, 2016 at the Toronto District School Board. During that meeting the following items were discussed:
 - TDSB is going to conduct an extensive review of all Alternative Schools, including [Policy P062](#), as well as identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programs. This information will be used to help guide future TDSB decisions. The schools have been invited to participate in that

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review process. Equinox has confirmed we are interested in participating.

- ASAC hopes to re-energize social media and overall communication efforts amongst its various schools, teachers, parents and overall community.
- ASAC is encouraging alternative schools to work together on common concerns so we may have a stronger voice with TDSB.
- Several different alternative school representatives at the meeting expressed concerns with TDSB placing staff not trained in core alternative school philosophies at alternative schools. This often occurs due to the "bumping" process that is non-negotiable based on current TDSB and Teacher Union contracts. Alternative school representatives also outlined that TDSB does not currently provide these placements with the adequate support required for them to successfully transition and grow in an alternative school setting. Manon Gardner, the TDSB Representative, confirmed she will investigate these concerns, but also recommended school representatives inform Trustee Jennifer Story as well.

EXTRACURRICULAR SPORTS AND CLUBS

- **Toronto Police Sports Group Grades 7/8 - Instructors: Sherman Lam and PC Adam Whyte**
Alternating Tuesdays | Gym
- **Karate Kids**
Tuesdays (Sept. 29 – Dec.15) | Gym and 2nd Floor Common area
- **Ukulele Club Grades 4/5 - Instructor: Lisa Olafson**
Wednesday and Thursday | Lunch | Library
- **Colouring Club Grade 1 - Instructor: Pauline Vaccinos**
Mondays (Sept. 12-Dec. 19) | Library | 12:15 pm
- **Read-up Club**
Tuesdays | Library | 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm
- **Girls Basketball (R/E) Grades 7/8 - Instructors: Simon and Kyle**
Mondays and Wednesdays | Gym | 3:30 pm

**The Girls Basketball group needs more students to participate to create a separate Grade 7 and 8 team. Currently, no Equinox students have chosen to participate. The Roden students plan to reach out to the Equinox students to encourage them to join.*

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- **Boys Volleyball Grades 5/6 - Instructors: Denise Chan, Jen (Parent), and Andrew (Parent)**

Mondays and Wednesdays | Gym | 8 am - 8:45 am

**Tournament December 1st at Roden*

- **Boys Volleyball Grades 7/8 - Instructors: Doug Mighton, Jen (Parent), and Andrew (Parent)**

Wednesday and Fridays | Gym | 8 am - 8:45 am

**Tournament November 22nd at Parkdale*

- **RECOMMENDATION: Follow @Roden_HPE for helpful sports updates.**

OUTDOOR KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS PROJECT

Mark Lasso confirmed that the outdoor kindergarten classroom project has not yet been signed-off. He will be meeting with the committee to review a few deficiencies and discuss potential workarounds for other items.

RENEWED MATH STRATEGY

Equinox was chosen to be a Level 1 Renewed Math Strategy (RMS) school due to low EQAO Math scores for Gr. 3 and 6 due in large part to many parents not consenting to their children participating in the assessment. This has resulted in our school receiving increased funding and support for math as part of the ministry's new overall investment in math learning. The exact funding is \$6,800 for Equinox and \$5,800 for Roden. Staff at both schools will receive additional training, resources and access to a Math Coach.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Due to TDSB budget constraints Mark and Chris's offices may not be covered every time they are required to be off-site. Mark is currently in discussions with the Superintendent regarding this decision. Parents can voice their concerns to Mark.

LIBRARY UPDATE

Our librarian Steve is currently on medical leave for approx. seven weeks for his hip replacement. Mark announced that Ms. Montgomery has returned from retirement to help manage the library during Steve's medical leave.

IN-HOUSE CULTURAL PERFORMANCES

Both Roden and Equinox need to confirm with Chris how they wish to proceed with the in-house cultural performances so he may begin organizing them. This includes how many performances should be planned for this school year and if either School Council will be paying for them. Last year, Equinox students paid out-of-pocket and the School Council subsidized those who needed it. The Equinox School Council will finalize these details at the next formal meeting in January.

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RECESS REVIVAL

Denise Chan, the Roden gym teacher, submitted an RFF to Roden only for a proper sports cart with wheels to house all the equipment available to both Roden and Equinox students during recess (i.e. balls, ropes etc.). Currently, students/staff have to carry the equipment up and down a flight of stairs so it can be stored in the gym area. The new cart would make it easier to store the equipment on the main level and easily wheel it in and out at recess time. The sports cart costs \$650 in total. The school will cover 50% of that cost. The RFF submitted to Roden was for \$325. No RFF was submitted to Equinox because Denise was not sure if Equinox would have a formal School Council this year. Angela asked Denise to please submit an RFF to Equinox as well to split the cost with Roden for the sports cart. She felt it was only fair that Equinox pay half of the cart as our students use the equipment as well. The RFF for Equinox would be \$162.50. This cost will be discussed at the informal budget meeting and then presented and voted on at the next formal Equinox School Council meeting in January.

BOOKMAKING CLUB

Last year Robert Walters, a Roden teacher, created a Bookmaking Club available to both Roden and Equinox students in Grade 1 and 2. A total of 31 students were taught how to write and illustrate a book. The final books were produced in hard copy and made available in the school library to borrow. Robert ended up paying out-of-pocket last year to ensure all students who wanted to participate in this program could do so. This year he approached the Roden School Council for \$400 to help fund the Bookmaking Club; however, during the meeting Robert received a donation from a third-party Creative Writers' Club to fund his initiative. The Bookmaking Club will be offered again this year to both Roden and Equinox students.

NEXT MEETING

If you have any pressing issues or want your item added to January's meeting agenda, please feel free to contact Matthew (Co-Chair) at mattmung@hotmail.com and/or Angela (Co-Chair & Secretary) at gtafemale@gmail.com.

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Equinox Holistic Alternative School School Council's 2016-2017 Five Communication Goals

The 2016-2017 Equinox School Council is dedicated to clear, concise and timely communications. We believe these are key to ensuring strong parent, student and staff partnerships. It is also crucial to informing and engaging the Equinox community while encouraging greater involvement for all parents in their children's education.

The School Council Co-Chair (Matthew Hall), Co-Chair & Secretary (Angela Matich), and Communications Committee Chair (James Lewis) have worked together to develop five communication goals for this year.

1. Meeting Minutes

The current School Council bylaws require the meeting minutes be distributed within five business days of the meeting; however, the school administration requires a minimum of one-week to review the minutes before they can be released to the community. This bylaw will need to be addressed further during this School Council year. Until it can be addressed, our volunteers will work hard to deliver the minutes within two-weeks of the meeting. This provides time for the meeting minutes to not only be written, but also reviewed internally by the various School Council members and school administration before they may be released to the community.

2. Meeting Agenda

The School Council meeting agenda will be distributed a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting date to parents, council and administration. Only items listed on the agenda will be heard at the meeting due to time constraints. All requests to be added to the agenda should go through the Secretary. As per the existing School Council Bylaws, the final meeting agenda will go out three-days before the meeting date.

3. School Council Meetings

School Council meetings address listed agenda items only. These will be top-of-line items such as committee and/or school administration updates, proposal presentations, budget approvals, etc.

The 2016-2017 Equinox and Roden School Councils developed a year-long meeting schedule together that has been submitted and pre-approved by the school administration.

- January 16th, 2017 @ 7:20 pm, Library
**As per one of the November 9th School Council meeting attendee's suggestions, this meeting was changed from Wednesday to another day of the week. The hope is by hosting School Council meetings on different days and times that more parents may hopefully be able to attend.*
- February 15th, 2017 @ 1 pm, 2nd Floor Staff Room
- April 12th, 2017 @ 7:20 pm, Library

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- May 10th, 2017 @ 6 pm, Library
- June 14th, 2017 @ 1:40 pm, 2nd Floor Staff Room
**Thank you volunteer tea afterwards*
- September 27th, 2017 @ 7:20 pm, Library - TENTATIVE DATE
- October 18th, 2017 @ 6 pm, Library - TENTATIVE DATE
- November 15th, 2017 @ 7:20 pm, Library - TENTATIVE DATE

4. School Council Committees

School Council Committees and Sub-Committees provide a productive forum for parents and staff volunteers to pursue specific tasks, event management or topics. They will meet separately from the regularly scheduled School Council meetings to allow ample time to discuss ideas, develop goals, and work on proposal recommendations. Once a Committee has developed a well-thought-out proposal, it may then be presented at a School Council meetings for review, feedback and/or approval.

The 2016-2017 School Council respects, trusts and values its Committee and Sub-Committee volunteers who are giving their personal time to work hard to support our school's students, staff and community. All Committees and Sub-Committees will make every effort possible to notify the school community about all meetings so that those interested may attend. If any community member wants direct input into Committee outcomes, we kindly ask that they make an effort to participate early in those Committees and Sub Committees development processes before it reaches the final presentation to the School Council.

5. Stay Informed

The Communications Committee will make every effort possible to provide clear, concise and timely information to the Equinox community through the various channels available: email, website, Facebook and Twitter. We ask that parents please make an effort to read the information sent or posted by the School Council.

Email

A few monthly emails will be sent out on behalf of the School Council through the school administration. Please remember that all email correspondence requires a minimum of a week for internal administration review and approval prior to it being sent out.

Website

The Communications Committee is in the process of updating the Equinox website with new content, such as event listings. Our goal this year is to add more information to the website that is relevant and useful to our parent community.

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Facebook (www.facebook/EquinoxAlternative)

We will be making every effort possible to post updates on Facebook several times each week and to include reminders wherever possible for parents on things like PA Days, Pizza Days and special events. Our Communications Committee is currently pre-scheduling posts approx. two to three weeks in advance.

Twitter (www.twitter.com/Equinox_Roden)

The Principal manages the Twitter account on behalf of Roden and Equinox.

Pinterest

We propose to remove the Pinterest link on our website due to the lack of activity. Currently there are only 37 followers. The account will be kept open at this time to be used by the various internal committees as required, like the Winter Fair craft reference.

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EHAS Budget Summary 2016/17 as of Nov 9/16

Money available to spend \$6,531

Money in the Bank \$16,889

Reserved Funds coming out of the bank \$10,358

Outdoor Kindergarden funds	\$1,798
Funds to cover PINE shortfall	\$2,500
Time for Gardens soil expense	\$910
Council Childcare & pizza for 2 meetings	\$360
3rd Floor Murals	\$1,235
Accidental Deposit from Equinox acct	\$3,555

Upcoming fundraising dollars (Approx) \$8,200

Oct - Egg Fundraiser	300
Nov - Egg Fundraiser	300
Dec - Egg Fundraiser	300
Dec - Winter Fair	7,000
Jan - Egg Fundraiser	300

Potential Expenses \$14,650

Classroom Money (\$10 per student)	2,000
Classroom Money (Gym/Music/Resource/French/ Drama&Dance, HSP)	1,200
Grade 8 Graduation Celebration	500
Black Creek Trip	500
ReadUp	200
Lice Check	500
Movie License	200
Junior Production (Grade 4,5,6)	1,000
Technology	1,500
Music Program	1,000
Arts Culture Program (Mr. O)	3,000
Computers & Snack Program	2,200
Mental Health Lunch Workshops	200
String Instruments	650