

# Equinox School Council Meeting

December 8th, 2020

Present (26 people!)

- Carrie Klassen
- Vu, Cathy, Kyle
- Victoria Adilman
- Ben Blakley
- Robyn
- Michelle Monteith
- Courtney
- Meredith Bannan
- Janna Luettmann
- Stavros
- Genevieve Kenny
- Tina Faridi
- Sean
- Andrea Espezua
- Robyn Switzer
- Michelle Lam
- Jodi
- Sonia
- Jillian D
- Julia Waller ● Miren
- Nicola H
- Hannah
- Matthew Hall

Agenda

## 1. Opening - Carrie ○ Land acknowledgement

## 2. Teacher Update - Kyle

- Teachers thankful all parents are taking the COVID screening in the morning
- Teachers are stressed, numbers going up every day, appreciate extra mileage go to do that screening every day
- Glen Rhodes Foodbank - teachers wondering if there will be a monetary donation
- Carrie - School normally gives a donation at the end of the winter fair. This year we decided to give in-kind donations. It's a hard year for people to do financial donations.

## 3. C-CAT Screening - Carrie

- Teachers did a beautiful job framing the test as an opportunity to sit with discomfort and practice testing; thank you Kyle and staff
- Jillian D - Child had to miss the test due to new screening process. Does that mean she doesn't get to take the test?
- Kyle - Hopeful that makeup day will occur.

## 4. Update on School Council - Carrie

- Winter Clothing Collection - sharing bins are overflowing. If kids need snow boots or any winter gear let their teacher know and students will be able to "shop"
- Food Drive - huge success. Next Tues last one before winter break. Abby's trunk will be open on Ashdale
- Two new natural playscapes - Sticks! Stumps and other heavy lifting stuff! Working out and having fun in smaller recess areas. Thank you to Ben for delivery of some of the materials and for all families who donated

- Supported Roden's Tech Drive - They are still looking for laptops and tablets. Please email [Chair@equinoxschool.ca](mailto:Chair@equinoxschool.ca) if you can contribute
- Wrote SSON - if ever Cathy leaves, there's a document school produces with parent council input that highlights what's different for our school and the skills and talents we'd like for our school in terms of administrative staff strengths and passions
- Virtual Book Fair - \$12 credit for the school library
- Launched new fundraisers
  - i. FlipGive - if you shop online check it out! Use link and any time shopping from big brands our school gets a small percentage from that big company. Asking people to give to the school without spending more money or buying anything that they wouldn't normally buy
  - ii. Mabel's Labels - When buy through Mabel's labels link can give a little bit back to our school
- Supporting other schools on outdoor education - teachers, parents, student council through advice and in-kind donations sourced from community
- Washer and Dryer - family kindly donated one. Working on how to get it to the school. If anyone has a moving company or vehicle big enough! (Update: the family coordinated delivery and Vu volunteered to come in on a weekend to receive it! Thank you!!)
- Carpet Replacement - maybe Cathy can update on this
- Water refilling stations - maybe Cathy can update on this
- Skating Rink Advocacy - City capped # of people who can be on the ice at any given time. Doesn't make a lot of sense for classes. No additional public health risk for letting them skate together. So important that they can get outside. Cap is currently 25. Cathy will update when she does her update.
- Supply Teacher Shortage - on ground when talk with teachers this is a serious issue. Teachers are people and need to be able to leave for the day. Doing that right now means potentially burdening already stressed colleagues. Not a system that's sustainable or that we want to support. Have been in touch with Trustee and Superintendent.
- PPE Recycling Program - working on finding one for the school. Need to find one that the TDSB likes.
- Skate Swap - planning. More details will be coming. Dec 17th. After school (3 - 4 pm). Figuring out logistics for collection. Watch email and Facebook for that/
- TDSB Committee of the Whole Meeting - brought up transition between in person and virtual school. Next transition deadline by end of Jan. Nobody wants the upheaval. Some people may have been relying on this. If in favour of that, let trustee know! If not in favour - also something to talk with Trustee about.
- Interview Committee for TDSB VPs - opportunity to be a part of the interview committee. Need to sign up pretty soon. Send Carrie an email and she'll send you the details. Really important to have a voice in terms of who gets to be the leaders of our schools
- Alternative Schools Committee - meeting coming up. Watch for that!
- Winter Solstice Celebration - Dec 17th. Singing together! This year it's on Zoom. Invite grandparents!

- Survey Results - School council sent out the survey - one to educators and one to parents and guardians for students and one for parents. No shocks

i. Intention - this is a different year. Always committed to our school's philosophy and make sure it's stewarded through this difficult year

ii. Things identified by parents and guardians as essential

1. Nurturing mental and emotional health - ongoing priority for educators.
2. Learning to be anti-racist - staff also working on anti-oppression learning and integrating
3. Spending class time outdoors - so thankful for teachers making this work. Cathy and Vu being supportive of this
4. Environmental Stewardship - learning to take care of the earth
5. Field trips - getting away from the classroom and spending time in community and in nature

iii. Things considered important

1. Environmental stewardship
2. Kids outside!
3. Learning to be anti-racist
4. Field trips
5. Mental and emotional wellbeing
6. Direct relationship with the earth
7. Cultural Programming - learning about diverse cultures
8. Learning through the arts
9. Making our school grounds beautiful

iv. Communications - are appreciated (respondents who follow Facebook page as well as reading all school emails report feeling most informed and connected)

v. Facebook - some people don't like Facebook. School council email - Carrie writes, Cathy reviews and approves, Jodi puts it into format and sends out. Quite a lot of work on office side so for quicker updates that are important but don't warrant school-wide email, FB is best

vi. Facebook - place Carrie can put information that's easily accessible. Can change your setting to get email notifications when there's an update to the page and then you don't have to log into FB if you don't wish to but still access the info

vii. Class Reps - All physical classes now have class reps

○ Concerns

i. Virtual Schools - survey good reminder we are all individuals with different desires and wishes

1. Some people mentioned feeling left out as virtual school families
2. Some worry virtual students will feel left out of their classes.
3. One request that in-person teachers zoom in virtual students - this is not possible
4. Some virtual families would like class-wide activities organized and some virtual families gave feedback that they would prefer to schedule their own playdates and manage their own social relationships. If any parent volunteers wish to schedule class-wide social activities outside of school, they can reach out to the office and Jodi can connect you to class rep.
5. To note: with the transitions this year, everybody is new and mixed in the classes and makeup has shifted throughout the year; teachers are brilliant at prioritizing relationship skills. Please know that when virtual students return, teachers will be aware and will support those students and the class in unifying again. This is a priority for Cathy and our educators.

- ii. Windows - we'd love to have windows that open. We're on the list!
  - iii. Indoor eating - lots of folks saying they understand why. Still stresses us out
  - iv. Screens - couple parents raised concerns that there seems to be more screen use in the classroom and may become the norm. Carrie's perspective is that it's how teachers are handling the lunch time so that kids aren't talking to one another and are keeping each other healthy.
  - v. Lack of Diversity in Student Body - should be doing more outreach so more families know that Equinox exists. They are right; school council looking at this.
  - vi. If you are struggling financially - this has been a really hard year for a lot of us. If you are struggling with food for lunches, or getting your kids in winter gear, you're not alone. School council wants to help. Reach out to your teacher letting them know this is what you need. Or reach out to your class rep who can reach out to Jodi, Cathy, Carrie. Not everyone knows what kind of support is available.
  - vii. Appreciation - the community, the feeling, the outdoor learning and MOST OF ALL the caring of the teachers, the effort of the teachers, the creativity of the teachers, how they are showing up every day.
- o Student Survey - only in person students responded despite invitation to all.  
Respondents across all age groups:
- i. LOVE being outside!
  - ii. Appreciate - teachers and Monarch park walks
  - iii. Priorities
    1. Learning to take care of the earth
    2. Love class outings when possible
  - iv. Concerns
    1. Recess - few who have asked for more space or wondering about a quicker rotation. Know we can't do that but not sure why. Cathy - struggle is grade 1s and 2s. Struggle finding on Monday different

from where they were on Friday. Have 8 classes of 1s and 2s. Want to make sure get them something they like. To give them the basketball court isn't something valuable to them. Sticks have been great except for the ones and twos who decided to use them as swords. Others figured out how to build with them.

- Educator Surveys
  - i. What brings them joy - our children!
  - ii. Challenges - professional downtime. Outside when normally get time to work. Prep time while they have kids.
  - iii. Concern - Health and wellbeing of our children. Behind that is their own health.
- 5. Budget Update - Genevieve Kenny
  - Most fundraising done - school cash online donations \$850 been collected
  - Nothing been collected since we did the shift where 20% of funds raised go to Toronto Foundation for Students
  - Mabel's Labels - payout on the way, yet to be updated in Jodi's TDSB balance sheet
  - FlipGive
  - Expenses
    - i. Carabiners
    - ii. Had washing machine on the list - but this was donated
    - iii. Lot of expenses allocated for previous years
      - 1. Outdoor Kindie Makeover
      - 2. School Nutrition
  - Typically teachers put a request in for things they are looking for but haven't heard anything
  - Legacy Fund - another means of funding things
- 6. Cathy update
  - Teachers' kindness, compassion and grace with students has been phenomenal in response to death of a beloved school graduate, Jacob, who attended from JK - 8; Many who knew Jacob are grieving
  - Water Refill Stations - being put in NOW!
  - Carpets - Hoping to say they've started with carpets. Hoping they will do it over the break. Will keep Carrie updated.
  - Kitchen - Updated. 2-day lunch program starting in January. Opportunity to donate - number of families who support and don't ask anything of so little ones can eat good nutritious lunch twice/week. Needed a good working dishwasher, sink and stove. Renovations going fast and furious.
  - Lottery - will be doing lottery. On the form they fill out - ask if they would like to identify anything they would like us to know in terms of an equity lens. Pull 20% from that group in order to bring more diversity into the school. Last first year did that. Occurs just before Family Day weekend (or right after).
  - Equity - Staff meetings this year all based on doing anti-oppression work. Some funds gone towards School Improvement Plan - look at everything do in the

classroom with an equity lens. Teacher leaders running small groups w books to guide and drive support. Work starting next Tuesday.

- Funds - glad to hear have a little bit of money. Might ask for support around classroom libraries. This year noticed that books have really decayed and are outdated. Vu worked with grade 1 and 2s. Cathy with grade 3 - 5s. Just getting catalogues. All teachers requested classroom libraries
- Skating - Dan's Grade 7 and 8 become personal friends with our councillor. Found out will be an opportunity starting in Jan where full classes will be able to sign as students advocated for a lifting of caps that would mean classes could not skate together. Kudos to everyone who pushed that!
- Technology & Lunch - received a number of public health updates recently. When masks are off and you're eating there is to be NO talking. Strategies in place - screentime, podcasts. One supervisor has been reading to Julia's class every lunch and that has worked as well.
- Budget - this year was cut. Didn't get any for library or tech. Cut that because librarian role was cut and tech all went to virtual. Gone to update and replenish tech at Equinox. Really want students to have a one to one device when it's needed. Also put \$ towards additional literacy resources. Additional math manipulatives - one to one. Equity books purchased for staff. Little more than half budget left.