

Equinox Student Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Date: October 14, 2020, 12:15 - 1:15 pm

Agenda

12:15 - 12:20 - Welcome, zoom rules, land acknowledgment (Carrie)

12:20 - 12:30 - brief council member introductions:

- Carrie
- Ben
- Courtney
- Genevieve
- Heather - not present
- Janna
- Michelle
- Robyn
- Sarah
- Sonia
- Vanessa

12:30 - 12:40 - School Council Chair Update (Carrie)

12:40 - 12:45 - Teacher Update (Kyle)

12:45 - 12:50 - Tree Festival Announcement (Sarah)

12:50 - 1:00 - Principal's Update (Cathy or Vu)

1:00 - 1:15 - Open for questions and closing

Minutes

- **Carrie** opened the meeting with an introduction, outlined her goals for council and a land acknowledgement
 - Hope to bring her love of language and connection through words. Appreciation of beauty and the natural world.
 - Land acknowledgement - We are all supported by the same land right now. Also beneath the building where our children learn. Those of you who know me, know I have a special connection to flowers. Last flowers are goldenrod. Thanks to stewardship of first nations people.
 - In terms of school council, I'd like to honour and renew the covenant chain. Share clothing. Sharing food within the school (safely) and within the larger

community. As well we continue to celebrate the natural world in everything we do as a council and everything that already happens at our beautiful school.

- New council introduces themselves
 - **Ben Blakey** - General member. Hope to assist in whatever capacity, father of Annabell in JK. Teacher, researcher. Teaching practicum with Kyle in 2014. Really excited to be involved again.
 - **Courtney** - Parent to Francis - Heather's JK. Burst into tears when got phone call. Feel incredibly fortunate to be at Equinox. Really excited to get involved in the community and bring what have to offer into the council. Already find the philosophy of the school so centering and even in her life. Help whatever way she can
 - **Genieve** - Most people call me Gen. Two kids at Equinox. Peter grade 2 and Luke in Heather's Maple Kindie class. Put her name forward to be treasurer. This is an amazing school and beautiful community and want to help any way can. Especially seeing hard working teachers want to help however she can.
 - **Heather** - Not present. Leader of the Winter Fair that usually happens. Presently looking at how it might be reimaged during COVID times. Representative for virtual kids.
 - **Janna** - Grade 1 and 4. This is their third week. Still in Germany when got accepted into Equinox. Equinox was the reason came back to Canada. As a family have a keen interest in outdoor education. Gone to Pine for many years. On waiting list for many years. Being new at a school hard to meet anyone. Being on school council is another good opportunity to get to know the community.
 - **Michelle Monteith** - parent of daughter in grade 3. General member of council. Volunteering at Equinox is a part of the experience of having a child there. So looking forward to having a more structured place where I can be of service to the school and help create an environment where all the children thrive.
 - **Robin** - Have two children, Silas in grade 6 and Elias in grade 1. In non school life family lawyer. This year working from home and not in an office which means can be at the school more often. Great opportunity to be involved.
 - **Sarah** - Three kids, two at Equinox one preschooler. Love that there are opportunities for the triangle of child - teacher and family to work together to support children's learning.
 - **Sonia** - Parent to a kid in grade 6. General member. Been involved in other parent councils before. New to the school and welcome this opportunity to be involved
 - **Vanessa** - 2 almost 3 kids. Son is in SK. Next son in JK. Like everyone else felt like won the literal lottery when got into Equinox. Took the practices at home in March. Lots more time spent outdoors. Really excited to be part of the council and do whatever can as a general member to help.

School Council Chair Update

- Busy few weeks. A lot of advocacy work and a few remaining questions and uncertainty for all of us
- **Air quality and ventilation** - an issue a lot of us are concerned about. Lot predates us at the school. In the past air quality assessment done. Carpet removed in the past due to offgassing. Cathy is fighting the good fight on this. As a school council we are going to support her and see if this is the magic year it can be addressed.
- **Windows** - we wish our school windows could be opened. Met with trustee Story and Ward Super. Both are excellent. Very helpful in dashing hopes once and for all in saying replacing school windows is not short-term feasible nor is it economically feasible.
- Lot of talk in the school board about **HEPA units**. Of course we don't want anything for our school that would disadvantage anyone more. Advocacy - always mindful of the safety of all children. Currently determining whether our building qualifies. HEPA units are currently going to schools without mechanical ventilation. We seem to have really good airflow for the first time in a long time. Cathy shared that her space is quite comfortable. Cathay and Carrie have asked Mark (Superintendent) whether will be getting HEPA units or not. If we qualify will be annoying and ask for them for our kids and all schools who need them.
- **Class restructuring** - lost a teacher beginning of the school year. Cathy spent summer making plans and working miracles to make what she had available to her work. Number of transition points where students may move from in person to virtual. Some upheaval involved. Would love to avoid it if we can but people need to have the option to move if it makes sense for them and their families. Talked with trustee to prioritize stability and consistency for our kids if that's possible to do so safely. Caps - could potentially be over for a student for a year if it's safe to do so in the classroom.
- **Eating outside** - something that has come up. Kids currently eating indoors. Not enough greenspace for all kids outside and playing outside so recess has to be split. Parent and guardians not felt great about kids eating indoors with masks off. Talked with a number of teachers and feel encouraged by their creativity to find efforts for kids to be quiet and have it be more flexible and natural. Kids speak quietly and facing forward. In classrooms where kids can't quite do that - they're playing podcasts and audiobooks, movies, to keep them quiet. Grateful to our teachers for all the ways they are finding to keep our kids safe.
- **Tree stumps** - Maybe seen her facebook posts where plead for stumps. Called every arborist maybe 10 times. So have other schools. Request to all - If you have a tree that's ready to come down. Good time to do it because the school and kids can give it another life. There's a teacher on Roden side who doesn't have stumps. They are ahead of Julia. Really really want to get Julia some tree stumps. **If anybody has leads, ideas. Need 40 more tree stumps.** Those of us who have already gone through the kindie experience know we're never done collecting tree stumps. Good to be friends with people who take care of trees.

Kyle Update

- Teacher at Equinox - been here over a decade. This year Kyle is the Resource and Spec Ed support position and going to be the liaison for teachers with council this year. Going to do his best to attend all meetings. Sometimes a teacher may have something they want to present. If they can't be here they can speak through Kyle. If anyone has questions send via email through Carrie (she may have heard that question already).
- Teachers are very busy. Everyone feels good to be back in the building and working with students face to face. For the crazy world we are living in right now, it's a nice place to come and feel normal. Get benefit of seeing teachers and almost all classrooms - get a good feel for the school that way
- Grade 7-8 class trying to get washrooms open. Older classrooms more successful at getting out. Younger classrooms working on getting out without needing parent volunteers.
- Thank you for the stumps outside. Wasn't a small thing to get them for everyone. To be able to sit outside and have something to write on is incredible. Such a huge thing to facilitate being outside. Everyone is taking advantage of those. Some classes outside for the vast majority of the day.
- So amazing to see so many of you here volunteering and being part of the meeting.

Sarah

- **Tree Festival** - idea was born in the spring and scheduled for Oct 23rd and Oct 24th. Low pressure. On Friday it's up to teachers to take on what they'd like. Saturday - open invitation to all families.
- The Tree Festival is a joint endeavour between Roden and Equinox. Opportunity to not only celebrate and learn more about the fascinating world of trees but to connect across our brick and mortar and virtual students and families. Also looking to bring the angle that not everyone has access to getting outside and in nature. The website is in draft form and can be viewed here. If anyone has book ideas (particularly from authors who represent more diversity and represent the voice of kids who don't have great access to outdoors) please share. Also welcome and open to other ideas. Scheduled a virtual tree plant with Friends of the Rouge for Saturday. Saturday at 10am everyone will be involved to do a sit spot under a tree (similar to what we did for the bird festival).
- <https://sites.google.com/view/equinoxrodentreefestival/activities>
- Carrie - started an Instagram account [@equinoxholistic](#) (follow it) and have a photo challenge up as one of the tree activities. Would also love the Facebook page to be full of kid's tree artwork. As we don't get to go into the school anymore social media offers the opportunity to connect and see the fantastic work created by our students.

Cathy

- Introduced Vu - New VP
- Thanked Carrie. Been at Cathy's side. Spent many evenings watching board meetings together and communicating back and forth and coming up with ideas. Carrie's contribution during the summer, support and advocacy is tremendous. In Cathy's 31 years of education - never experienced that kind of support from a family.

- Recognized how incredible it is that there are so many people participating in today's school council meeting.
- Thrilled with tree festival. **Kyle will see if Tyrel Madison can do a read aloud that will be posted.**
- Lots of good news to share
- When arrived at this building 4 years ago. Parent council worked really hard to create walls. Health and safety saw them up and asked to take them down. Sometimes win the lottery with TDSB people who come in. Two young guys, so keen and easy going. Put up the panels along the library glass looking out. Got them on open windows at front of the office, beside Jodi's office and near Philip and Marcia's rooms. They are really beautiful.
- Copper leaves created with names engraved with them. Those are finally up in Jodi's office.
- Now have a new COVID protocol. If we get a COVID case, the admin team has the ability to let class families know they can come and get their kids immediately. Don't need to wait for TPH to get confirmation on the length of quarantine and additional teachers. Much easier and smoother process than almost 3 weeks ago. Thanks to Carrie who advocated to the trustee and superintendent for this change. Thanks =to all those who sent emails and pushed for this change. Parent voice goes a long way.
- Happy to hear Heather is looking at a way of reinventing the winter fair. That is one of the most magical experiences in our building
- Doing a lot of equity work that started over the last few years. Really embracing anti oppression work. Starting announcements with land acknowledgement but have not played Oh Canada Yet. Get kids to think about 'our home and native land' and what that means. Two students worked with Cathy to create these announcements. Been really powerful. Next week move onto 2 grade 8s from Roden and will introduce the National Anthem in a mindful way.
- Looking at ways will question unconscious bias and ways things are happening in the system. Advocates things happening inside (and outside) the building. Linley and Thelma did a speaker series. Kids had the opportunity to listen to kids outside of education. Spoke from experience. E.g. working for CNN, being in the stock market. Looking into ways can bring in different voices, whether it's zoom, google meets. Life outside of education lots of oppression and bias and want to push through that
- Going to do remembrance day on Nov 11. Recently had an outside assembly to offer thanks to Vu and council for appreciation of tree stumps. Some teachers working on an outside Remembrance Day Assembly.
- Next day after Remembrance Day, is a day to remember indigenous contributions to WWI and WWII and other conflicts. Some connections going and will see where can go with this.
- Concerns (also ongoing)
 - Reorganization has been very stressful. Particularly for Roden because lost a teacher. Spent many days writing emails and on the phone. The way the virtual and bricks and mortar and back really compromise communities. We've been getting all the emails. Some communities don't know how to navigate the system.

Don't have the tech and may not be getting the emails. There's been some real mess ups. Very upsetting to try and support these families. Don't have an answer right at the moment. Pressure put onto the board. The way we engage all families in this building needs to be equitable, provides everybody with a sense of control and a good understanding of what needs to come next.

- Next reorganization is in Nov and will likely impact Roden again.
 - Because school is trying to do social distancing and keep kids in their own cohort there are two recesses, two lunches and two afternoon recesses. Essentially 10 - 2:30 have students outside. Makes it tricky to do lunch outside and classes outside can sometimes be challenging to all the disruptions. Also have lunchroom supervisors who aren't teachers. Good thing about new lunch situation is, never seen more kids eat their lunch because they are in their classrooms. Also it's cleaner after lunch. This experience has built really resilient little people. Much more resilient than adults. A lot more independent. Because they have to be more independent. Stepping up to the plate to say yes we can.
 - **Carpets - if we want to keep pushing something.** Glen Sharrien- facilities team lead. Worked side by side and pushing really hard. Should have been done last year. 1.5 years behind when carpets should have been done.
 - Refill stations - don't have water bottle refill stations. Should have been two. Line was - those that don't have should be getting first. Now mid-Oct and still don't have any.
 - Windows - actually in the queue. May not happen in Cathy's lifetime here. Glen put in request. Put in prior to all things that came in prior to COVID.
 - HVAC - updated last year. Have cool air and can feel it running. HVAC check every 2 weeks/4 weeks.
 - Vu - thanked council and Cathy for the warm welcome and the tree stumps. Moving schools during the pandemic was probably not a good idea but can say.
- **Carrie question for Cathy on the Nov transition point.** As a parent we are already in the second wave and have the knowledge. The disruption feels like a lot. TDSB has quietly acknowledged they are willing to make shifts on an individual basis. If Nov transition might benefit Roden perhaps we shouldn't push to scrap the Nov transition? Cathy Response - We should push for change to compassionate transitions only. There's a family that she has been fighting for since Friday not having any luck getting them back. Means it's messing up our numbers. Love to not have a Nov. Love to look at individual cases on compassionate grounds. Red Door Shelter feeds into Roden, if you land there on Nov 9th makes life pretty tricky. Mindful of families who are struggling to make ends meet. Not attending to all emails. Really seems unfair to her. **Push that with Trustee and MPP. Not sure the Superintendent has much say on it. Ontario Government** needs to know that this is a bit of a mess. Have one in Oct and then Nov, seems like over the top. Jan makes sense. New Year, new report card time.
 - **Marco** - Worth checking out <https://talkingpts.org/> for multilingual texting with families - education focused tech
 - **Linley** - has asked for carabiners. We are all able to purchase them for classrooms.

- **Tammy** - Brought up the idea to create a sort of buddy system, perhaps open to all families across Roden and Equinox where some may be open and willing to help support families who are possibly new to the school, new to the country and or might need extra assistance and support when facing challenges. **Cathy to follow up directly with Tammy on this.**