

Member Attendees:

Colleen Kaus, Rawan Al Louzi, Julie Burgess-Nichols, Rola Chen, Andrea Colbert-DeGeit, Reasa Diab, Andrea Gamberg, Karin Hewlett, Mohammed Nalla, Amy Meng, Joey Pottinger, Kristi Snary, Etido Umah, Adrienne Van Dam, Sandra Wohl, Nicole Vincic

Non-Member Attendees:

Kelly Dunford (Principal)
Jennifer Flewelling (Teacher Representative)

Regrets:

Jessica Thomas-Troian
Rebecca MacIsaac (Umbrella Family)
Sherri Johnston

Secretary:

Nicole Vincic

Welcome

Meeting called to order, by Colleen @ 6:33 pm.

Land Acknowledgment

Read by Reasa Diab.

Approval of January Agenda and corrected November Minutes:

Motion to approve, Reasa Diab. Second, Mohammed Nalla. Motion passed.

Principal Report – Kelly Dunford:

Covid-19 Update:

The Ontario government indicated that parents will only be notified of a covid outbreak when 30% of staff and students are absent from school.

Current student in-person population is 536. This number is continually changing as some students are transition to online and some are returning to in-person. Current staff in-person population is 53. Therefore, 30% of the school population is approximately 176 individuals.

The school is currently reporting 11.6% absenteeism. This includes all absences that may not be covid related (i.e., absences due to personal appointments, vacation, or religious observances).

Staff coverage is going well. The teachers are all flexible and helping where they can. Principal Dunford indicated that she has a list of supply teachers that she can call upon if coverage is needed.

The following website link provides up-to-date information about daily school absenteeism. Ancaster Meadow Elementary School is school #1164.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-school-closures-and-absenteeism>

Students have been very good at following covid protocol. There have been no issues/ concerns in the school.

Rapid tests have been home last week. Next, we have PCR tests available that will be provided to students or staff that become symptomatic while at school.

There is one self-reported Covid positive case that has been reported today. This case may have interacted with Mrs. Hewitt's grade 8 class. This announcement will be posted on the school website. All self-reported cases will be posted on the school website news.

Staff have access to N-95 masks.

Question: What was the absenteeism rate in December? What is the typical absenteeism rate pre-covid?

Answer: It is not unusual to have 40-60 absences on any given day in the school. today, with the lower number of students in school, we have had about 84 students absent. The rate is higher but not significantly higher given our current situation.

Question: Please explain the process for distributing PCR tests in the school.

Answer: If a child or staff member is symptomatic and they need to go home. The school will send home a PCR kit with them. The school will track the information on a spreadsheet. The PCR kit is voluntary to use.

Question: What will happen if the school absence rate reaches 30%? Does the school shut down or does it stay open?

Answer: We do not know exactly what will happen. There are several considerations – class coverage, health, and safety. Direction will be provided by the Superintendent. School closure is the last resort. Student safety is number one. These questions are going to continue, and the school board will be responsive based on the situation.

- Reasa added that from the HWDSB meeting she attended, the board indicated 30% threshold has been set to be a point for overall awareness to families. School closure will not happen unless there is an issue with coverage. The school board will consider many options to keep schools open and to ensure student safety.

Families are encouraged to visit the Ministry of Health and to the information that is provided by the board.

Ministry of Health website link which includes guidance documents/ resources for families to access:

https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.asp

Effective, Wednesday January 26th, we welcome our new acting Vice-Principal (to the end of the school year), Ria McNichols-Ramrattan. There will be a new Vice-Principal in September 2022.

January P.A. Day Focus:

This is a report writing day for teachers.

Administration and Educational Assistants will be in workshops.

Report cards will go home with students on Friday, February 18th.

Other Matters:

Joey Pottinger acknowledged Mrs. Nash for her online/remote work with her class. He added that she was well prepared and had the students engaged. Positive feedback from his daughter and others in the class.

Colleen added that her children also had a positive remote experience. The expectations were clear. Teachers have refined their blended learning experience which is helpful for any students that may need to transition to temporary online if in isolation.

Acknowledgement was also given to Justin Plant for his fully online delivery. Other parents commented "We are fortunate to have amazing teachers!"

New Business:

PRO Grant 2021/2022:

Application for PRO Grant funds is due by January 28th. PRO Grant refers to Parents Reaching Out Grant and it is for up to \$1000 to lead initiatives that engage and support our school parent community.

To learn more about the program, click on the following link:

<https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/blog/2021-22-parents-reaching-out-grants/>

Colleen has extended the discussion to school council members, inviting ideas and recommendations for what we can do with the funds this year. In the past, PRO Grant ideas have included workshops, guest speakers, and the parent lending library (ranging in various topics).

Suggestions:

Joey Pottinger – Ancaster Meadow is a culturally diverse school. There is an opportunity to learn about the different cultures and heritage/ customs of the cultures. Suggestion to provide videos/ books/ various resources.

Colleen added that these funds could purchase resources to add to the parent lending library. The funds must be used to support parents in our school community and not for classroom resources.

Principal Dunford added that these resources can be helpful to support families engage in conversations with their children (i.e., what you think? what do you wonder? etc.)

Colleen also added that parents have expressed some concerns with learning gaps as that have come up within this timeframe of covid. Therefore, an option may be to provide grade level learning kits that could help address any gaps and provide parents with resources that they can use at home.

Colleen asked Jennifer (teacher representative) if there is a something that teachers are seeing that there is a need for? Jennifer suggested she can ask the teachers.

Rawan also provided a suggestion to celebrate an International Day in the school. This would provide students with an opportunity to share information about their culture/ heritage. Rawan mentioned that her children had this experience in other schools that they attended internationally, and it was very well received by students, teachers, and families. Students have an opportunity to learn from one another.

Kristi added that on May 21st is World Day for Cultural Diversity.

We are limited by covid restrictions. Colleen suggested that she will complete the application and base it on the intent to use the funds for multicultural awareness and resources.

School Nutrition Program Announcement!

Reasa announced that the school has been granted funding from Taste Buds Hamilton for a snack program at school. This grant will help take some of the financial burden from the Home & School funds that have been used to provide the snacks for the food cupboard.

The initial funding is \$5,000 which will be based on the number of children using the program. The intent to offer snacks to our students with no barriers. All children in our school will be eligible to receive a healthy snack option. The snacks must be within two of three food groups. Reasa indicated that she had to provide a list of snacks in her application – she included apples, carrots and hummus, cheese and crackers, yogurt tubes, granola bars etc. Every day there will be a different snack and every week the menu can change. Snacks must follow the nutritional guidelines. The snacks will be for general for everyone to access including those with dietary restrictions. Because of covid restrictions, all snack items will be pre-packaged.

The goal is to start the program in mid-February. It will be available during BOTH nutrition breaks. The snacks will be distributed directly to the classrooms. Each classroom will receive a bin of the snacks. This will ensure all students have access to the snacks. Since this is new, the distribution process may change based on feedback.

This program is also available to our remote students. Remote students will receive a gift card to access snacks.

We may need some volunteers to help with the program.

Question: HWDSB has a vaccination policy. Does this apply to volunteers?

Answer: Yes. Currently, we do not have volunteers in the school. However, once this program starts, it is deemed an essential service and we will be able to have volunteers help.

Note, this grant is for this school year. The funds cannot be carried over to the next school year. Reasa is still learning more about the guidelines and will provide additional information as she collects it.

Meeting Adjourned:

Motioned by Joey Pottinger. Second by Andrea Colbert-DeGeit Motion passed @ 7:30 pm.