

Bennetto School Council

Monday November 20, 2023, 6pm

Attendance

In person

Kate, parent
Laura, parent
Anna-Marie, parent
Julia, parent
Lucas, parent
Jen, principal
Liz, vice-principal

Online

Jordan, parent
Audrey, parent
Alex, parent
Matias, parent
Kelci, parent
Cat, parent
Alissa, parent
Darlene, Public Health nurse/community member

1. Welcome and Attendance

- We welcomed everyone, and the online connection worked well. We had one new attendee this meeting, for a total of 12 parents, 1 community member, and the Principals. Everyone agreed the hybrid was working well.
- The previous minutes were approved.

2. Principal's Report

- Liz has been working on the website, and it now should be up to date, including a calendar with school events. Please review the website and let Liz know if there are items to be updated. Liz has put up a QR code to help staff and families know to go to the website and alert re: updates. There is a page for School Council where our minutes can be posted – Kate to send minutes to Liz. Community program information and links are also going on the website, including programs at Welcome Inn and Eva Rothwell Centre, which have free and low-cost programming for children as well as families and seniors. The Welcome Inn Community Centre offers a free after school program twice a week with McMaster volunteers for grades 1-6; it walks across the field to Bennetto. The Eva Rothwell Centre is technically in Ward 3 but serves Bennetto as well.
- Last meeting, Jen had asked if there was a need for additional crossing guards. Suggestions had been made for Strachan and James and Burlington and John. Jen has sent this information to our trustee, who is bringing it forward. Jen is hoping to hear back soon
- Jen shared the EQAO results from last year for Grade's 3 and 6. The results are below

Grade 3:

Reading: 61% Bennetto; (62% HWDSB)

Writing: 36%; (53%)

Math: 33%; (42%)

Grade 6:

Reading: 62%; (75%)

Writing: 57%; (73%)

Math: 24%; (35%)

- Jen shared some additional context for understanding the scores: these tests are not mandatory, and these scores will therefore not include all children (only the Grade 10 literacy test is mandatory). Some children who have different educational needs may not write the test, as well as children whose parents request they do not write it. Any children who do not write the test count as zeros, which lower the school's overall score. Approximately 86% of Bennetto's students wrote the test. We did not have the numbers regarding the rates of test completion from other schools in the board. All scores across the board have also seen a decrease, which may be related to the disrupted time in classrooms during the pandemic.
- The principals and teachers will be looking at the individual tests as well to provide support to students who need it.
- The board has put some things in place to improve reading, writing, and math skills at Bennetto. We now have 3 day a week ESL support, and 2.5 learning resource teachers.
- There are multiple programs running at Bennetto
 - o Math academy – 3 nights a week. There are 6 kids in the program, have some space for that program. If interested parents could ask their teacher about it.
 - o Running and reading every Tuesday night; teachers who are running it reached out to families directly and asked if interested.
 - o YMCA is also running a program called Beyond the Bell for grades 1-3, 5 nights a week. Students were recommended by the principals, and could also be added by outside agencies. It is a free program happening onsite.
- Each month the VP and Principal do trainings with the board. Recently the trainings have been on anti-racism and anti-oppression, currently focused on anti-Black racism.
- School photos were taken with a different company this year. The school had a more positive experience working with them. During the meeting, some parents noted they had trouble receiving their photos last year. Parents also noted that this year some options were more expensive and you could not see your child against the virtual background options online. There was a question about class photos, and Jen thought that this year class photos might be a composite. Many photo companies have not gone back to class photos since COVID due to staffing.
- The week of Nov. 20th was Bully Intervention week. There is a handbook on the hwdsb website about Bully Intervention. Parents asked when Pink Shirt Day is – a day to stand against bullying. This is in February and will be on the website.

Public Health Community Report

- Darlene is a member of the Bennetto-St. Lawrence Community Collaborative, which includes 12 partners that are supporting both school communities. The focus is on children and their families, and there are a lot of supports for newcomers involved as well. The collective tries to build on the strengths in the community.

- Darlene is at the school on Thursday. She can be reached by email at, and is available for staff and students and parents. You can also reach her through Liz or Jen.
- Bennetto is registering in a 4 step process for a healthy school. We are also registered with the Safe Spaces team, which is focused on promoting mental health, bullying awareness and prevention. As part of this, Darlene is offering stress lessons with a grade two class. Grade 7 and 8 and also looking at mental health.
- The Bennetto-St. Lawrence Community Collaborative had put forward a grant a number of years ago for a program called "Cooking with Compass", where Grade 3 students will be working with Compass Community Health Centre (across the field) on cooking, compassion, and wellbeing. Ms Ross's class is currently completing a session, and a second class will start in January – Mr. Eaton's class. It has been a 3 year program, which was delayed due to COVID, but will end after this session. Parents asked if the program would be able to be extended, but Darlene said it could not. She said the collective could apply for different funding, but not for this program.

Treasurer's Report

- The council currently has \$736.50 + original \$250.00. The bake sale funds were counted by the office manager and deposited into the school council line.
- Parents asked what the process would be for accessing the field trip funds. Jen and Liz noted that they will reach out to us when requests come in, and that staff are aware the fund exists.
- Often parents will let teachers know they aren't able to pay; parents noted it is helpful if staff can be encouraged to put it on the forms that they can be approached about cost as a way of taking the first step.
- The school also tries to help parents out in other ways: they have put in 24 applications for the Hamilton learning foundation in the past few months to help support families with supplies.
- Audrey asked re: amount per year that may be necessary for field trips, but it is too hard to determine because there isn't a good sense due to the COVID pause. Buses are the biggest expense; usually schools can get good pricing for events.

Fundraising

- The council decided that the movie night would not have a fundraiser tied to it – we would use some of the start-up funds to purchase popcorn.

Other business

- Movie night:
 - o Due to Fridays in December being very busy, we decided to move our movie night to **January 19th**. This will give families time to get back and settled, and does not conflict with other holidays.

- Anna-Marie was going to work with Jen to determine if the gyms were available. Jen will determine gym capacity. Possibility of two movies in two separate gyms for the age groups.
 - Liz noted that if we wanted to use a popcorn popper to start early as it can be very time consuming. Costco popcorn was also suggested
 - We decided it would be a Winter themed movie. Initial ideas: Snow Day, Bigfoot, Happy Feet, Jack Frost. Could do a survey for kids, with voting completed by 8th or 11th. Anna-Marie will send out options.
 - Our meeting on January 15th will be a final planning meeting for this event
 - Jordan will make flyers
- Future events
 - Book swap – this could happen as part of the movie night
 - Hot chocolate and coffee/tea at morning drop off. This would only reach 50% of parents (approx. 200 kids on the bus) but could be a simple fun way to build community. This could be next, in February or March.
 - Spring cleanup – the kids and staff do spring cleanup on Earth Day in April – we could look into doing this as a bigger community event.
 - We have a new Instagram page – please follow! Thank you Laura! Search bennetto.sc
 - Two parents noted that there were a lack of books in their children’s classrooms and asked if we should be donating books to the school. Jen and Liz suggested against it, as it could involve a lot of sorting of and disposal of older books, but they let us know that the school had fundraised approximately \$6000.00 for books and the school could order through Indigo for a discount. The parents asked if they could bring this up at the next staff meeting so teachers were aware of the fund and how to apply for their classes.

Next Meetings

- It was decided that the meetings will now take place on Mondays. The next meeting will be **Monday January 15th at 6pm**. The following scheduled meetings will be Monday March 25th and Monday May 25th.
- The hybrid meetings was considered a success. Everyone in attendance felt that zoom would work better than Teams, and we will host our next meeting hybrid using zoom as well.
- Jen and Liz reached the Parent Involvement Committee at the board and will help us arrange child care for next meeting if there is interest.
- Kate suggested we could have two additional online-only meetings without a principal’s report to keep in touch during the months where there are no scheduled meetings. This would be in February and April. At the next meeting we will set these dates.