

SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING
 Cootes Paradise Elementary
 (Hybrid Meeting – School Library/Remote)

May 16, 2023

MINUTES

In Attendance in Person: Jennifer Hogan (Principal), Rosalee van Staalduinen (Chair), Sue Dumitru (Teacher Representative), Natalia Gonzalez (parent member), Kara Jessop (Home & School Representative), Lisa Feinberg (Secretary), Shao-Pin Chu (parent member), Daniel Chong (Daily School Route Representative), Stan Visaticki (Vice-Chair), Lily Huang (parent member), Anneli Thomson (Treasurer), Kathryn Wiersma (parent member), and Heather Ricks (parent member).

In attendance via MS Teams: Anna Trikoupis (parent member), and Mohsen Arain.

Regrets: Susanna Gojsic (Vice-Principal), and Ashley Francis (parent member).

Agenda Item	Comments	Person Responsible
1. Welcome, Introductions, and Land Acknowledgment	Called to order at 5:44 p.m. with quorum. Ms. van Staalduinen presented the land acknowledgement. Ms. Jessop has an ongoing disclosure that she is an employee of the HWDSB.	Ms. van Staalduinen
2. Notice of Minutes	The Minutes for the March 21, 2023 meeting were previously circulated by email for review. Motion was made by Ms. van Staalduinen by email to approve the Minutes, seconded by Ms. Feinberg. Motion was approved on April 3rd by email. Minutes have been posted online and on the School Council (SC) bulletin board.	Ms. van Staalduinen
3. Review and Approval of Agenda	The agenda for today's meeting was posted online on May 5, 2023 and was again reviewed. Motion made by Ms. van Staalduinen to approve the Agenda, seconded by Mr. Visaticki. Motion approved.	Ms. van Staalduinen
4. Business from Previous Meeting	a. Approved motion to allocate school council parent engagement funds to purchase agenda stickers and child minding services This is the final report. SC purchased stickers for this meeting. SC engaged one educational assistant through the board for child minding services for this meeting.	Ms. van Staalduinen

	<p>b. Approved motion to draft a letter to SEAC in support of more EA support at Cootes Paradise Elementary School</p> <p>Ms. van Staalduinen updated the summary document to include the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further communications with the Minister of Education and the Board. • An ongoing freedom of information request to the Board from a parent at the school. • A response received from Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education, on April 6, 2023. • A meeting between School Council and Sue Dunlop, Associate Director of the Board, on May 1, 2023. A detailed summary document is appended to these minutes. <p>Ms. Dumitru underscored that teachers are advocating for children with additional needs, along with other educators and administrators.</p>	Ms. van Staalduinen
	<p>c. Approved motion to strike a sub-committee to organize a Talent Night at the school in collaboration with HSA and Admin</p> <p>Talent Night was held on April 18, 2023 at the school. 222 students and family members attended the event. The video was a compilation of 54 videos from JK to Grade 5 students. \$46.43 was spent on providing popcorn for the attendees from the HWDSB engagement fund. The grade 4/5 Leadership Team participated. Feedback on the event was very positive. Attendees appreciated the organization, inclusivity, and togetherness of the event. Constructive feedback was also provided regarding the length of the video clips (namely that they could be shorter). There was some discussion as to whether there should be two separate events in the future, one for the younger students and another for the older students, but concern was expressed about splitting up families. There was also discussion about sending thank you cards to all participating students in future and inviting teachers to be involved.</p>	Ms. van Staalduinen
	<p>d. School Pathways Maintenance</p> <p>Ms. van Staalduinen, Mr. Visaticki, and Ms. Hogan met with Dave Anderson, Senior Manager, Facilities Management, on April 26th. School Trustee Elizabeth Wong was unable to make it at the last minute.</p> <p>The following was discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten pathway has a drainage issue; • Snow and ice are being pushed against the building that stores the caretaker’s snowblower, thus blocking access; • Path between the parking lot and the school isn’t properly cleared; • Salting is not sufficiently being done by the contractor; 	Ms. van Staalduinen

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drains are clogged with woodchips, which needs to be removed; and • Snow and ice removal isn't always being done in a timely manner. <p>Mr. Anderson said he would follow-up directly with the contractors to address these issues for next season. The Kindergarten pathway has been assessed and will be regraded before the school year is complete.</p> <p>Ms. Hogan will connect with "YMCA Before Care" about re-routing drop-off to the back parking lot entrance on bad days.</p>	
5. Chair's Report	<p>Ms. van Staalduin reported on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you to all School Council Members and volunteers! • PIC Connects (April 4th) was held at Cootes Paradise Elementary School for all parents within HWDSB. • Ms. van Staalduin will complete a Year-End Survey to be submitted to the School Board. • A PRO-Grant was approved by the board, which will be used for the Ann Douglas Speaker Event: "Happy Parents, Happy Kids." This event is taking place on-line and in-person on June 8, 2023 - there is a book give away and a children's colouring table. • SC/HSA/Admin met May 8th and May 15th to discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outdoor spaces (creative/field/kinderpen) - Ms. Hogan will put out a survey to students and staff about outdoor space needs. ○ The Nutrition Program needs more funding. ○ Communicating with the community – Ms. Hogan will share a weekly calendar and a whole calendar for June. ○ Grade 5 Farewell is June 21st. • SC, HSA and Admin will meet June 6th to talk about Fundraising Plans and Events for 2023-2024. 	Ms. van Staalduin
6. Treasurer's Report	<p>Ms. Thomson reported on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pita Pit lunches are launched (2 complete, 2 left) – special thank you to Chloe Steele, Lily Huang, Ashley Francis, and Grade 5 runners. • For next year, online ordering is available to eliminate paperwork. • We anticipate \$1,300 revenue for school, which is very good for 4 days of lunches. • Parent engagement fund was \$500 – we have about \$40 left – This money was used to buy apples, agenda stickers, popcorn for talent night, and childminding for SC meetings. • Ms. Hogan to report on Pizza days. 	Ms. Thomson
7. Principal's Report	<p>Ms. Hogan invited Daniel Chong, Daily School Route (DSR) Representative, to present a report on the survey sent to families in April 2023. Mr. Chong reported as follows:</p>	Ms. Hogan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSR is our active transportation system for students – we want to see as many students walking and biking to school as we can. Mr. Chong reviewed the benefits of active transportation. • DSR is separate from the City of Hamilton and focuses on schools, but collaborates with the City, where appropriate. • DSR is currently working on a project in Ward 1 to learn about routes to school – the survey is part of that project. • Operations – 1. Engagement, 2. Understanding, 3. Planning, 4. Implementing, 5. Evaluation. • We are currently at the “Understanding” stage of operations. • Survey results – heard from 153 families; representing 221 students; 34% of the school. • 60% walk/bike daily, 27% take the bus, 20% are driven. • Barriers to walking include the distance, family schedule, safety concerns re: traffic, and strangers. • Students would be encouraged to walk more if there was improved street safety, designated routes to school, different bell times, and more people walking and wheeling. • Mr. Chong reviewed the routes of the students and areas that were identified as safety concerns, including: various crossings along King St, Glen Rd, Marin (at Dromore), Cline Ave, Main St West, and so forth. The results will be posted on the school website. <p>At 6:46 p.m., Ms. van Staalduinen made a motion to extend the meeting by another ten minutes until 6:55 p.m. Ms. Gonzalez seconded. Motion approved unanimously.</p> <p>Ms. Hogan reported on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open house was a huge success, in particular the book fair, popcorn, and spirit wear. • Butterfly kits had a huge sellout. Funds are to be split up per division. • Track and field is underway. • Grade 5 Farewell is on June 21st. • Ms. Dutchak arranged for a local author to come. • Play Day is coming up – stay tuned. • A lot of fundraising revenue is going to be put towards increasing STEM activities (e.g., either a STEM room or a portable cart). • Staffing has been completed. Class building is in progress for September. 	
8. Fundraising Subcommittee’s Report	<p>Ms. Thomson reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In school pita and pizza lunches are going well. • We have a list of new ideas for next year. Will vet any new ideas with Admin and teachers to ensure not too much work for the 	Ms. Thomson

	<p>School. Will also survey parents to make sure that we have parent interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will coordinate with HSA to ensure no overlap. 	
9. Teacher Representative's Report	<p>Ms. Dumitru reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you to HSA and SC for fundraising support. • Open house was amazing – very successful. • Mandarin open house was also very successful. • Kindergarten orientation went smoothly. 	Ms. Dumitru
10. Home and School Association's Report	<p>Ms. Jessop reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "Skate and Bake" event in April was successful - students and families attended who had never before skated. • Cancelled the "Grow Too Fast" sale –not enough parent interest. • Continuing the popcorn and cookie fundraisers, but having a hard time maintaining volunteers. • Planning a Staff Appreciation event for June 1st – need volunteers and food. • Planning a "Book Swap" at the School on June 23rd. • Lianne Smith is working on making a "Little Library" outside the School and has sent info to Admin, who will connect with Facilities. HSA will fund and maintain the "Little Library." • Approved requests from staff for funds to support fields trips and will fund refreshments at Grade 5 Farewell. • There is an exciting Play Day planned for June 26th. Stay tuned. 	Ms. Jessop
11. New Business	<p>School Council Elections for 2023-2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion made by Ms. van Staalduinen by email to form a subcommittee to plan the 2023-2024 SC elections. Seconded by Ms. Huang and approved on May 10th. Votes were 8 in favour, 0 not in favour, 0 abstentions. • Step 1: Confirm date, time, and location of election with Admin. It will be part of the first SC meeting in September. • Step 2: Advertise SC, roles, and the election process in June, via School Messenger. • Step 3: Inform parents of the process for nominating other parents or themselves for various SC roles in the September start-up letter. • Email Ms. van Staalduinen if you're able to serve on the subcommittee. • Ms. van Staalduinen looks forward to passing on the baton for the Chair role and urges everyone to consider what role they might play. 	Ms. van Staalduinen
12. Next Meeting Date	Not applicable.	Ms. van Staalduinen

13. Adjournment	Motion made by Ms. van Staalduinen to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Ricks seconded the motion. Motion approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m. Apologies for going over time due to technological issues.	Ms. van Staalduinen
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Appendix - Letter Calling for Immediate Action to Hire and Retain Educational Assistants Summary of Events and Response

Summary of Events:

- The issue of a lack of Educational Assistants (EAs) at *Cootes Paradise Elementary School* was brought to *School Council (SC)* by parents and staff.
- A motion was passed by SC on November 15, 2023, to draft a letter in support of this issue.
- SC consulted with Administration and the parent community in drafting the letter.
- At the suggestion of Administration, SC connected with Superintendent Gerry Smith.
- SC representatives met with Mr. Smith on January 20, 2023. He indicated that he loved the advocacy and suggested that SC send the letter to Director of Education, Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini and the Minister of Education. He also indicated that we could send it to the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), as SC saw fit.
- SC approved the final letter on February 17, 2023.
- SC sent the approved letter to those listed in the letter on February 17, 2023.
- The Cootes Paradise community was sent a copy of the letter on February 21, 2023, via School Messenger.
- SC sent separate follow-up emails to the Minister of Education and to the Director of Education and Secretary of the Board at HWDSB, on March 28th, as no response had been received as of March 20th.
- This summary document was appended to the March 21, 2023, Minutes so that the information could be made available to the *Cootes Paradise Elementary School* community.
- A “Freedom of Information” request was made on March 21, 2023, by an individual parent to gain access to a) the policies, matrix needs assessments, and email correspondence related to the allocation of EAs within the HWDSB for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years, and b) documents related to requests for and responses sent Re: EAs at *Cootes Paradise Elementary School* for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. As of May 16, 2023, the parent was still awaiting release of the information.
- SC representatives met with Sue Dunlop, Associate Director, on May 1, 2023. Ms. Dunlop shared the following:
 - a) The “Independence Rubric” (for assessing student needs) is complex. It’s used at various times of the year (particularly spring and fall). It’s not a formula, but rather, one piece of information. A student may be assigned an EA if a student needs more intensive support. However, the application of the rubric depends on the needs of the entire system.
 - b) Supports for students (e.g., EAs) is a challenging process, as there is fixed funding that is based on enrollment. There is a fixed number of EAs approved in June, as a

result of the annual budget process. The Ministry then counts enrollment on October 31st and adjusts boards' funding accordingly.

- c) EAs are paid less by HWDSB in comparison to the Halton board due to the collective agreement, which is bargained at the central table with the unions. The board has had conversations about changing the wages and has been told "no."
 - d) HWDSB has a shortage of EAs and many boards are having trouble hiring permanent EAs. HWDSB needs casual and permanent EAs and is constantly in a recruitment cycle. EAs can be on the casual list on various boards and therefore may not be available every day for HWDSB. HWDSB has tried permanent on call positions in the past, but it was labour intensive and not effective.
 - e) HWDSB doesn't support the practice of asking students to stay home. HWDSB can send staff to support in these situations, but not as EAs (due to collective agreements). Similarly, teachers cannot do the job of an EA.
 - f) SC can help parents navigate the bureaucracy and advocate for their kids.
- No response has been received by the Minister of Education as of May 16, 2023.
 - Updated summary document to be appended to May 16th Minutes and directly sent to parents involved in drafting the letter to provide them with information and to support them in navigating the bureaucracy and advocating for their kids.

Responses Received:

- On February 25, 2023, SC received a response from Mike Palma, Chair of the PIC, indicating that PIC chairs across Ontario met that day with ministry staff and that our letter and the corresponding issues were raised during that meeting.
- On February 27, 2023, SC received a response from MPP Chandra Pasma's office, expressing thanks for raising the important issue of hiring and retaining Educational Assistants. The response indicated that MPP Pasma shares the concerns on the current state of education funding in Ontario and went on to share that MPP Pasma brought the issue directly to the Education Minister, echoing our calls that children in Ontario should have access to an Educational Assistant when they need one. MPP Pasma's office provided the following clips of question period: [here](#) and [here](#).
- On March 6, 2023, SC received a response from MPP Sandy Shaw's office indicating that MPP Shaw often uses her question period or member statement in the legislature to speak in favour of items like this. SC responded with encouragement for MPP Shaw to raise the issue in the legislature.
- On April 6, 2023, SC received a response from Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board (HWDSB), apologizing for the delayed response, expressing care for all students and awareness of the issue, and indicating that Ms. Dunlop will meet with SC to further discuss the issue.
- On May 30, 2023, SC received a response from Romina Di Pasquale, Director, Enrolment, Funding and Labour Policy Branch of the Ministry of Education. The response indicated that the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) have increased each year and that

funding for 2023-2024 “is projected to increase to over \$27 billion through the annual GSN, representing the highest level of education funding in the province’s history.” The Ministry of Education also indicated that it is up to the individual school board to “allocate funding to specific schools, services or programs based on local need.” A copy of the response was sent by SC to all individuals/offices originally included in the EA letter.