

October 30th Spring Valley School Council Meeting Minutes

Date & Time: 2025-10-30

Location: Spring Valley Elementary School

Attendees: Barb Mcvittie(principal), Jennifer Lumsden(Teacher Rep), Tina Verbinnen , Leslie Montreuil, Asal Davoodi, Alla Rovner Bida, Sobia Amir, Josh Lebrun, Aleta Andrew, Adam Kappheim, Alex Anderson, Bethan Alfano, Andria Henry, Christine Ho, Jessica Pilon-Bognell, Natasha Macdonald, Lisa Veloce.

Online attendees:

Meagan MacKenzie

Meeting Overview:

- School Council Attendance, Introductions, and Land Acknowledgment
 - An attendance sheet was circulated for names and emails for attendance purposes.
 - The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board land acknowledgment was read, referencing Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land and the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, as well as relationships with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River.
- Council Operations and Email Access
 - Access to School Council Email (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board)
 - Confirmation that an email was sent on the 24th.
 - The password can be changed; no specific timeline or instructions beyond platform suggestions were provided.
 - Board Website Coordination
 - An email was sent to the board regarding the website; no response has been received yet. A meeting next week is planned to raise the question again, with a request to keep asking.
- Chair's Report and Prior Action Items Review

- The chair initiated a review of action items from the last meeting.
- Cobb's Bread Fundraiser Inquiry
 - Leslie and Christine contacted Cobb's Bread.
 - Cobb's typically sells gift cards to the council for \$20, Council to Sell for \$40.
 - The council had been considering scheduling this in "February,"
- Staffing Updates
 - Staffing Mention (Informal Update)
 - A new LTO teacher was hired for the Grade 3 position until Mrs. Watkins returns; the teacher will start Monday (after Halloween).
- Fundraising Committee, Plan, and Vision
 - The first fundraising committee meeting occurred and was described as fruitful, with high engagement and many ideas; Leslie will provide a detailed update during her segment.
 - A group email was sent to committee members; meeting dates for the rest of the year were emailed; minutes will be distributed.
 - A parent council email address is being created; once set up, a welcome email will be sent and used for ongoing communications.
 - A draft template was created to define budget target (historical reference), visionary purpose (school spirit, inclusivity, accessibility), annual planning steps (goal setting, teacher/staff input, family survey, drafting ideas, approvals, event calendar, volunteer support, promotion).
 - Emphasis on tying fundraising activities to specific goals (e.g., tech) to improve transparency and parent understanding of where funds go.
 - Last year's first-ever annual report tracked where funds went; intent to report more regularly and clearly.
- Teacher Needs, Procurement, and Quantifying Needs
 - Top teacher needs identified: outdoor equipment for play and ongoing technology replacements (not new tech, mostly replacing items, notably iPads).
 - Procurement must use board-approved vendors for safety and liability; donated items cannot be open-call due to vetting requirements (tags/labels/safety checks needed).
 - Fundraising dollars can be allocated, with orders placed through approved vendors (bulk pricing, durable school-use products).
 - Planning approach discussed: standardize needs by grade bands (e.g., K; 1–2; 3–4) and color-code equipment by grade to manage ownership and movement.
 - Ordering can range from small to large quantities (1 to 100+), with no strict minimums or maximums; needs should be framed to provide a funding amount for decision-making.

- Technology replacements are a constant due to devices becoming out-of-date and non-functional by September.
- Ongoing and Proposed Fundraisers
 - Ongoing fundraisers: Pizza, Subway, TCBY, Popcorn, Mabel's Labels.
 - Proposed/extra events: donuts, movie nights, two bake sales, Cobb's Bread, glow-in-the-dark dance (fun event, not fundraiser), Yoga for mental health, big box of cards, Mother's Day flowers/plants, dough raiser, family picnic.
 - Additional possible fundraisers: Panzeroli, Pita Pit, Osmo's, Harvey's, Chipotle, Booster Juice, March Madness, Candy Gramps, Restaurant Nights, Indigo.
 - Pizza Participation and Framing
 - Pizza is a strong fundraiser; participation estimated at “60% to 70%” or higher, particularly in younger grades; frozen yogurt and popcorn are also popular.
 - Subs were introduced as an alternative service, with lower margins but easy class-based distribution.
 - Additional Funding Targets
 - Bussing/trip subsidies were suggested to support sports events and class trips; noted as a good addition to the plan.
- Community and Student Surveys
 - Community Survey Structure and Prioritization Approach
 - Plan to collect feedback, consolidate responses, categorize items, and convert to multiple choice with a ranking list. A disclaimer and an additional “other” suggestion box will be included.
 - Barb will advise on feasibility to ensure the list reflects realistic options. The focus is on differentiating needs versus nice-to-haves, with potential parent involvement for the latter.
 - The goal is alignment with building needs and ensuring the community voice is captured.
 - Student Voice: Simple Survey for Grades 4–8
 - Intention to involve students to surface ideas adults may not consider; target grades 4–8.
 - A simple electronic survey will be designed for students to rank items and add suggestions. Emphasis on showing alignment by selecting items already planned to demonstrate “we hear you.”
 - Family Survey and Disclaimer
 - Plan to run a quick one-question poll to gather family input on where fundraising dollars should go; a disclaimer will clarify that the committee gathers input, the plan remains

general, and final decisions are based on school needs and approvals.

- Transparency commitment: explain later why certain priorities (e.g., top three) were chosen, share the fundraising plan once set, and recap in the annual report.
- Timing: the formal plan is “supposed” to be in by tomorrow, but flexibility exists; the general blurb used has been effective with ministry approval and shared by finance with other schools.
- Treasurer’s Report and Sales Performance
 - Popcorn and TCBY started earlier and are performing ahead of last year
 - Pricing changes included a 50% increase and removal of the kiddie cup; expenses will be higher accordingly. Donut feedback was mixed; profit margins were “bang on” due to the company-paid structure.
 - Pizza and Subway were launched later on School Cash, resulting in noticeable sales lag year to date. There is a pre-sold plan to recover in January; an earlier School Cash setup is critical, especially for pizza.
 - Current sales are about \$4,000 less; at a 50% margin, that is \$2,000 in lost potential funds.
- Operational Timing and Data Handling
 - Reorganization happens in October, complicating class-linked ordering and delivery logistics, particularly for the first two weeks as routines are being established.
 - Discussion raised that School Cash requires only student name and item, not the teacher; suggestion to explore automation to manage data, sessions (e.g., September–October, October–January), and reduce manual labor.
- Council Elections Timing
 - Proposal to hold school council elections in June to start the year organized and avoid delays.
 - Communication strategy includes spring outreach and promoting at the barbecue to recruit volunteers and inform parents.
- Finance Follow-Ups and Summer Spend Reconciliation
 - Some summer expenditures need settling; playhouses and climbers are in place.
 - Plan for Barb and Adam to visit finance together to get definitive answers and finalize spending clarity.
- Vendor Code Fundraising Programs
 - Domino’s offers a program with a special code (e.g., Spring Valley code) for orders on designated days; purchases at \$12–\$13 trigger a kickback to the school.

- Requires better advertising; minimal work as orders are placed by families at home. Similar opportunities exist with other vendors using a code.
- Extracurriculars, Athletics, and Student Activities
 - Extracurricular Activities Coordination
 - A central list of extracurriculars (e.g., flag football and other sports) is being compiled; Danny K is leading most sports entries, with additional activities to be added.
 - Athletics Updates
 - Volleyball teams are currently in first place; new jerseys received positive feedback from outside observers.
 - Grade 3–5 swim meet is on November 3; older students' swim meet will occur in the spring.
 - Grade 7–8 band is starting next week on Day 3.
 - Primary choir has 70 students (grades 1–3), meeting on Days 3 and 5.
 - Robotics competition is on November 25; two competitive teams (grades 6–8), each with 10 students, are active. Focus is on building the competitive team now, with a broader club opening after Christmas (in January) for all students and eventual progression to competitive involvement.
 - Expanding Student Sports Access and Intramurals
 - Participants asked whether new offerings would extend beyond robotics to other sports and if low-skill, non-competitive intramural options could be added. The goal is to include students who have less early exposure to sports.
 - The school currently runs intramurals for grades 1–3 (primaries); expanding for juniors depends on staff willingness and availability since extracurriculars are voluntary and rely on staff giving up breaks and before/after school time.
 - Gym space is heavily booked, causing scheduling conflicts and limiting how many sports can run. Staff try to avoid overlapping activities so students don't have to choose.
 - Junior Skill Development and Middle-Ground Proposals
 - A suggestion was made to run brief junior volleyball development clinics (e.g., two sessions, one in February and one in April) as a pre-grade 6 tryout primer for interested students.
 - The school already informally includes additional interested students: for junior volleyball, the coach invites 4–6 students who show potential or interest to attend practices and games to learn skills, even if they are not on the playing roster.

- Volleyball typically starts at grade 6 (occasionally grade 5) because skills are taught in phys ed classes; offering earlier extracurriculars is unusual due to skill readiness.
 - Volunteer Involvement and Requirements
 - Parent council members asked if they can volunteer during or after school. Volunteers must have a police check and must be accompanied by a staff member; availability of staff remains the limiting factor.
 - Due to busing, extracurricular scheduling is constrained to the two nutrition breaks; walking commutes would allow more flexibility, but this is not the current situation.
- Community Fundraising and Donations
 - Terry Fox fundraising totaled over 3,000, with 1,800 arriving after the event day. This suggests students engaged with the cause, discussed it at home, and prompted additional donations.
 - Kilka Farms donated over 500 pumpkins. Staff organized pickups on Thanksgiving Monday, loading trucks and delivering pumpkins for Tuesday morning. Caretaking staff assist despite added cleanup work.
 - Attendees encouraged publicly acknowledging staff efforts (e.g., photos of pumpkin logistics) and sharing this in reports or communications to highlight above-and-beyond contributions.
- Communications, Newsletters, and Assemblies
 - There is interest in quarterly newsletters or website updates showcasing activities (e.g., pumpkin patch photos, tournaments), with caution about rules for posting student pictures.
 - Past year-end newsletters were well received; expanding to quarterly communication is a goal to improve visibility of extracurriculars and teacher-led initiatives.
 - Parents expressed desire for assemblies to celebrate diverse student achievements (kindness, volunteering, skills beyond sports/music).
 - Assemblies are on the list for future discussion and will be added to the next agenda.
- Upcoming Events and Student Placements
 - Grade 8 students will visit Ancaster High for “A Day in the Life” on November 5.
 - Three co-op students are currently placed: one in kindergarten, one shared across grade 1 and grade 2, and one in grade 5–6. Placement numbers are lower than usual due to scheduling mismatches; more may come at end of January.
- Holiday Hampers and Logistics
 - The school plans to run holiday hampers again and has requested up to 19 individuals to match the number of classes for collection.

The exact number of families is unknown, as some individuals belong to the same family.

- The team needs bins (e.g., Rubbermaid totes) to collect and transport items; bins were donated last year by a staff member. A participant offered a bin donation; details to be coordinated.
- Donations for hampers were requested, with interest expressed by attendees to contribute.
- Classroom Donation Program and Gift Cards
 - The community collects toys, clothing, and other items for classroom baskets; gift cards are also requested to support struggling parents and provide flexibility for children's needs.
 - If an item list is full, gift cards can still be donated; lists may have only 8 items while classes may have 20 students.
 - Social workers provide limited information to help create classroom-specific lists; the process remains confidential and is well-regarded within the community.
 - The community is recognized and appreciated
- Potential Partnership with Another School
 - A suggestion was made to donate to another school (Davis/Dr. Davey), but the topic was tabled due to time constraints.
 - It remains on the list to pursue a partnership with Dr. Davey.
- Kindergarten Yard Improvements
 - New equipment was installed in the kindergarten yard; the quality is reported as very good and children are enjoying it.
 - The caretaker loaded the sandboxes; an additional 20 bags of sand still need to be purchased.
 - Work continues on platform covers to protect tree roots, which have been extensively exposed by children's digging.
- Halloween Parade Logistics
 - Halloween parade scheduled for tomorrow at 10 o'clock.
 - In case of rain, parents will stand around the gym (out of range), and children will come in and go back out.
- Teacher Professional Development
 - Recent PD occurred for math (Grade 6 team) and reading (Grade 5 team).
 - The board is investing in PD again after limited activity in recent years, focusing on best practices and teacher training.
- November Reports, Interviews, and PA Day
 - PA day: 21st of November.
 - Report cards: go home on the 18th.
 - Interviews: likely on the 20th (evening option) and the 21st (daytime), with scheduling based on teacher preference and family needs.

- Bus Monitors Program
 - Grade 6 and some Grade 7 students trained through CAA to serve as bus monitors; they wear yellow vests and assist with safety (e.g., reminding students to sit).
 - They support but do not assume responsibility; feedback has been positive.
- Transportation Costs and Booking Constraints
 - City buses within the city have become difficult to book and more expensive; past cost was around \$90, and a recent bus cost \$225. One company charges double compared to another.
 - Teams are mitigating costs by walking and carpooling when possible.
- Staffing and supervision limits
 - Volunteer participation requires a staff member present; expanding intramurals or clinics depends on staff availability during nutrition breaks or before/after school.
 - Gym space is overbooked, creating scheduling conflicts and limiting expansion of sports offerings.
- Program scope and skill readiness
 - Offering volleyball to younger grades is constrained by skill development timelines; a clear plan for junior clinics needs confirmation on staff leads and timing.
- Communications and media constraints
 - Rules around posting student photos may limit the ability to share visual updates. Guidance and compliance processes need clarity for newsletters/website content.
- Holiday hampers logistics
 - The exact number of families tied to the 19 individuals is unclear, affecting bin counts and organization. Coordination details for donations and assembly of hampers remain to be finalized.

Action Items

[] Continue planning regarding the Cobb's Bread fundraiser details, including item specifics and February timing (based on prior consideration).

[] Ask the online system administrator about simplifying weekly pizza ordering (e.g., repeat orders) in January; coordinate with Krista.

[] Leslie to provide an update on the fundraising committee's initial ideas and plans.

[] Continue compiling the central list of extracurricular activities; Danny K to lead sports entries, with additions to follow.

[] Create the parent council email address; send a welcome email and transition communications to that address once ready.

- [] Distribute meeting minutes and the meeting dates for the rest of the year (noted as emailed).
- [] Follow up with the board regarding the website at next week's meeting; keep asking due to no response so far.
- [] Circulate the fundraising plan template for annotations; collect paper edits at meeting end and send a virtual copy for digital edits with an edit-by date.
- [] Draft and send the one-question family poll with the disclaimer; prioritize sending soon to inform the fundraising plan.
- [] Add bussing/trip subsidies to the list of potential funding priorities.
- [] Consolidate community feedback, categorize, and convert into a multiple-choice survey with a ranking list, disclaimer, and "other" suggestion box.
- [] Consult Barb on feasibility of items to include in the survey list.
- [] Design and launch a simple electronic student survey for grades 4–8 to capture student voice and preferences.
- [] Explore automation options for School Cash data handling to reduce manual work and support earlier launches.
- [] Increase advertising for the Domino's "dough raiser" code to boost passive fundraising.
- [] Barb and Adam to meet with finance to finalize summer spending reconciliation and obtain clear answers.
- [] Add "Assemblies" to the next agenda for detailed discussion.
- [] Share staff effort acknowledgments (e.g., pumpkin pickup photos) in upcoming communications, subject to photo rules.
- [] Coordinate bin donations for holiday hampers; confirm quantity and pickup/return process.
- [] Prepare and publish regular communications (e.g., quarterly newsletter or website updates), including highlights of extracurriculars and teacher initiatives.
- [] Confirm and communicate logistics for Grade 8 "A Day in the Life" on November 5.
 - [] Purchase another 20 bags of sand for the kindergarten sandboxes.
 - [] Continue work on platform covers for trees in the kindergarten yard.
 - [] Confirm if the physical speaker qualifies under the PRO Grant and submit the appropriate proposal.
- [] Coordinate purchase of an extra fridge through Taste Buds (ensure it meets standards and leverages discounts, e.g., Peter Martin).
- [] Verify and, if needed, arrange group registration for additional food handling certifications.
- [] Send email reminder and agenda for the November 27 meeting.
- [] Leslie to send email to finalize fundraising committee meeting time for November 7.
- [] Finalize the parent survey based on feedback and send it out by Monday; collect input Monday–Thursday; meet to finalize on Friday (November 7).
- [] Ensure newly added email addresses receive all future communications.