**Princess Margaret School Council**

January 24, 2023

6:00 PM

Miss Dostie’s Classroom

**Meeting Minutes**

Attendees: Cindy Kohinski, Angela Leitch, Nakita Dostie, Jaya Newell, Amanda Cronkwright,

**Elected Positions on School Council**

**Chair**: Tess McFarlane

**Secretary**: Jaya Newell

**Treasurer**: Alicia MacMillan

**Principal’s Report:**

Welcome and thank you to everyone for coming tonight. The school council chair, Tess McFarlane is doing a fabulous job and is a great communicator. She has been meeting with Mrs. Kohinski and Mrs. Leitch with suggestions. Some feedback from parents and families is that they want to know about what is happening at Princess Margaret. Families are now receiving weekly Friday emails on what is coming up the following week. Thank you to Mrs. Leitch for composing these weekly emails. If there is anything you would like to discuss, you don’t have to wait until the school council meeting, please reach out to Mrs. Kohinski. She allots 2pm each day to return phone calls to parents and guardians. Also, please contact Tess at [theresa.m.mcf@gmail.com](mailto:theresa.m.mcf@gmail.com) if you would like to add an item to the agenda. Tess is working on bulletin boards throughout the school.

Mrs. Leitch will confirm that the school secretary, Anne Moody, has the correct email for Crystal Topp.

Construction Update

The construction began with the new ventilation systems that are in each classroom in response to the Ministry funding during COVID. We were also able to add to the construction budget for a major renovation to the cafeteria. The cafeteria is being turned into a special education wing. There will be 2 special education classrooms, a movement space, new kitchenette, and storage. Everything is delayed due to parts and trades people. They were hoping the construction would be completed by Christmas and now it’s expected to be done the end of March 2023. It is still a construction zone. Mrs. Kohinski and Mrs. Leitch were able to have a peek at the progress last Friday afternoon after the workers had gone home. They are now at the drywall stage. In the past, the cafeteria was also a gym and an auditorium. When they took down one side of a wall they thought it was just paneling overlay, but it revealed a wall of glass windows that they didn’t know was there. The wall of windows is not part of the plan so masons have to come and deal with it. There will be new windows in both classrooms so they will have natural light. It is coming along and is looking great! It will be an exciting space for our special needs students and our school as a whole!

A parent commented that we spent a lot of money to renovate our library and a portion of the library is now being used as a classroom. It’s disappointing that the children can’t use it to its full capacity.

Students are still able to access the library and check out books. Once the construction is completed, 2 classrooms will be available and Mr. White’s class will move to one of the empty classrooms. Mrs. Kohinksi will take parents that are interested, for a tour of the library after the meeting.

Tara Carter, Casey Jenkins, Alicia MacMillan, Tess McFarlane, Crystal Topp, and Garrin Topp

Great Things Happening!

Activities:

* Cross Country
* Rugby
* Soccer
* Eco Club
* Volleyball Senior
* Basketball Senior\
* Volleyball Junior
* Basketball Junior
* Intramural Basketball
* Taekwondo
* Robotics
* Student Council
* Crochet Club
* Friendship Group
* Brock Science
* Forest of Reading

All of the sports align with the DSBN athletic calendar.

Today the boys were in during nutrition break for junior intramural and over 60 students showed up!

Trips:

* Walker Living/Adventure Campus
  + Grade 8 Classes focus on Team Building
  + Grade 6/7 and Grade 6 January 31
  + Grade 7 and Grade 5/6 February
* Swim to Survive
  + All Grade 3s February/March

Weekly Communication Emails

If you hear from any parents or guardians that are not receiving the weekly Friday emails, please tell them to call the office to have their email added to the list. We want everyone to be in the loop.

If you are not receiving the weekly Friday emails, please check your junk/spam email and mark it as “not junk.” You may have to do this step a couple times before it goes into your regular inbox.

The school website accidentally had the wrong date listed for tonight’s school council meeting. It was listed as Wednesday, Jan. 25th, but it was changed to today’s date.

It was suggested that a recorded phone call be done to all families to look out for the Friday weekly email, and if you haven’t received it to be please call the school (like Mrs. Harriman used to do). Parents do miss receiving the recorded phone call reminders.

Community Funding

Mrs. Kohinksi read an article on the Niagara Falls Review website about breakfast food programs in schools. Niagara Nutrition Partners and Community Crew were highlighting the need at DSBN has increased for healthy snacks. We have been really fortunate for some community funding that we have received lately for our breakfast program. The Stamford Kiwanis provided Princess Margaret with $1,500 for our breakfast program and supporting students in need. The Chippawa Lions Club also gave us some money for our breakfast club. It’s wonderful when service groups recognize the need in our community. We are very fortunate to have their support.

At our last meeting, Casey suggested putting a link on our website for people to give to our breakfast program and as of today we have collected $220. This is great because Nutrition Partners does like us to offset some of their funding. We have gone back to Nutrition Partners for some additional funding and they have been very generous. Every child is welcome to take something from the snack basket for breakfast or at other times of the day. We never question or ask students who take snacks. We don’t want stigma to be attached.

Early Literacy Presentation

At our previous meeting, Miss Dostie and Mr. Timbers presented on Takewondo. At that time we didn’t know Mr. Timbers would be leaving us. At our last meeting, Miss Dostie was in extra literacy support for our younger students. The title is Renewal Support Teacher. Miss Dostie was asked at the end of the meeting if she could present on early literacy. She said she would as she is passionate about teaching children how to read. When Mr. Timbers was offered the new role in special education, he said that he is committed to Taekwondo and that he presented to families. The Superintendent of special education said that he valued Mr. Timber’s commitment to Princess Margaret and Taekwondo and they will release him every Tuesday and Thursday from the school he’s supporting to fulfill his commitment. There are 40 students in Taekwondo and there is a wait list. Every week more students are asking Miss Dostie to put them on the wait list. When the grade 6 homeroom position was available, Miss Dostie was a natural choice for the position. Miss Dostie still presented a slide show on early literacy at the meeting.

What is phonemic awareness?

* Phonemic awareness involves only oral language. It is “the ability to recognize and manipulate the sound properties of spoken words, initial sounds, rhyming parts and phonemes.” (Kilpatrick p. 13)
* This may look like asking, what sounds do you hear in the word “cat”?

c a t – cat - 3 sounds

Reading Rope

* Many Strands Are Woven into Skilled Reading

**Language Comprehension**

* + *Background Knowledge*
    - Facts, concepts etc.
* *Vocabulary*
  + Breadth, precision, links etc.
* *Language Structures*
  + Syntax, semantics, etc.
* *Verbal Reasoning*
  + Inference, metaphor etc.
* *Literacy Knowledge*
  + Print concepts, genres, etc.

**Word Recognition**

* + *Phonological Awareness*
    - Syllables, phonemes, etc.
  + *Decoding* 
    - alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences
  + *Sight Recognition*
    - of familiar words

How are we supporting our learners in Literacy Development at Princess Margaret?

* Early reading focus
* Capacity building and support for early literacy teachers
* Jolly phonics, Heggerty, decodable texts, Aimsweb+

Remembrance Day assembly because of the number of absenteeism right now and with the amount of illness, we didn’t want to bring 600 students into the gym at the same time.

On Remembrance Day, the school had a virtual assembly school wide and there was a moment of silence built into the slideshow. The moment of silence wasn’t at 11am because that’s when the nutrition break time is. It was communicated with staff that it wouldn’t be done at 11am for consistency. We had to have a virtual

here is not going to be a formal Christmas concert this year. The 5 days leading up to Christmas break, Princess Margaret will be celebrating all the different holidays. Eg. Monday is Kwanza, Tuesday is Hanukkah, Wednesday is Christmas etc. There will be some different virtual activities to tie in with the different holidays.

Thank you to everyone for attending!

The next school council meeting will be on Tuesday, January 24th at 6:00pm.

* Monitor student progress towards identified targets
* System data collection
* Collaborate and co-plan with LRTs
* Works with small groups, sometimes 1-1

Role of Brock Tutors

* Tutor role
* LLI support (determined at school level)
* System data collection
* Process notes based on identified literacy targets
* Works with students 1-1, and sometimes small groups

Kindergarten Support

* Provides early literacy support to all kindergarten classes
* Pulls groups of students from each class to work with students
* Heggerty and Jolly Phonics

We have 126 kindergarten students at our school.

When Mrs. Kohinski and Mrs. Leitch are walking the halls and see the kindergarten students they are so happy and excited working in their small groups with their Brock tutor, Kindergarten Support Teacher, or RST teacher. They have a connection to the adult they are working with and are excited to do the activity that is planned for that day. It’s all in support of them being effective readers. They really enjoy it. Early literacy is one of our school improvement goals. Some of our students missed a lot during COVID.

Spring Literacy Night! We’d love your help!

We are looking for a subcommittee to join Mrs. Kohinski, Mrs. Leitch, and Miss Dostie to plan a spring literacy night. If you are interested, please give your name to Mrs. Kohinski after the meeting or please call the school office. We would like to plan some fun literacy games, provide information on Heggerty and Jolly Phonics, and have teacher guest speakers.

Parent Council Money $500

Every year parent council receives $500 from the Ontario Ministry of Education and DSBN. Attached to the agenda are some information and a variety of ways we can spend it. Last year we used it towards the Eco club to have some plants and woodchips for a nice outdoor space. One idea is that we could use it towards the Spring Literacy Night. We don’t have to vote tonight. We will put it back on the next agenda. We have to spend it by the end of the year.

Bingo Help

Casey has been doing Bingo since pre COVID. It raises $1,000 on a Saturday night. All you have to do is walk around and push chairs in. Casey doesn’t want to have to do it every single weekend so we would really like some more volunteers. Once COVID happened, all the training is now done online. Anne emails you the training link and it takes 30 minutes to complete. You get to bring someone with you as long as they do the online training too. It can be a friend or other family members. If we get more volunteers, we will need to wear bingo collared shirts. Casey has been wearing a bingo shirt that she made herself. Bingo is for 2 hours from 4pm – 6pm on Saturdays, once a month. Pat Gaston, the bingo supervisor, would like to do a cheque presentation for Princess Margaret because they haven’t done one yet. Mrs. Kohinski will have Anne get Pat’s contact information to arrange the cheque presentation. There are stipulations on how we can spend the bingo money. We use it for transportation for buses, sport fees, and sport uniforms. It is a very easy fundraiser! Mrs. Kohinksi will ask Anne to send out an email to see if any parents are interested in volunteering for bingo and to mention that you can bring a friend or family member with you as long as they complete the training. Depending on how many bingo volunteers we get, you may only have to volunteer once a year. You can also be placed on a “call in” list if someone doesn’t show up. If you fill in for that spot, then Princess Margaret will get their money. It’s a very important fundraiser!

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Parent Council Survey

Tess and Mrs. Kohinski were discussing how we can engage more families. Do people still want to come out in January? Should we do a combo of face to face and live streaming?

Tess brought in a template of a survey that the tech dept. worked on to add Princess Margaret’s logo etc. It will be emailed out to parents and guardians in the next 2 days. Some of the questions are: Do your require day care? What time works best for you? This data will be collected to try and accommodate everyone.

**Around The Table:**

The grade 3 students are very excited about the Forest of Reading. Mr. Gunning is our new librarian and is a published author.

Some parents enquired if there will be end of year trips this year.

Class trips are happening throughout the year. There is Walker Living/Adventure Campus planned for Grades 5-8. Yesterday, Mrs. Kohinski received an email from the DSBN arts curriculum department that the grade 4s are receiving a free trip to the Shaw Festival in June to watch a production and go back stage and meet the actors. We do want to make sure that all students get an opportunity.

It was suggested by some parents that school council put funds towards school trips that are not free.

There wasn’t a Halloween parade or a Christmas concert this year because DSBN has a whole system has a new goal in the elementary schools - equity and inclusion. As a school system, and in particular at Princess Margaret, we are reexamining if all of our events are equitable and inclusive of all the children.

It was suggested by parents that instead of having a Christmas concert, we could have had a holiday concert and highlighted the 5 days of different holidays that were discussed in the classrooms. For example, one class could have presented Kwanzaa, one could have presented Christmas, and another could have done Hanukkah etc. Some of our children haven’t experienced a holiday concert. It would have been a great experience for them to do public speaking and to perform in front of their families

Other elementary schools in DSBN did have Christmas concerts this year.

The greater community missed the Halloween parade at Princess Margaret. People would come up to Princess Margaret parents and enquire about the Halloween parade. They were upset when they heard it wasn’t happening. It was a school based decision not to have a Halloween parade. Parents are upset that they were not considered in the decision process. Parents feel there is a lack of communication and the “including is excluding.” The original email communication in regards to Halloween was for parents to celebrate Halloween at home and there won’t be anything at school. When a parent did speak to Mrs. Kohinksi directly about Halloween, she was told that Halloween will be built into the day and students can wear a costume. In the email, it wasn’t explained clearly and there was a disconnect in what the school was trying to communicate and how parents were interpreting it.

Last year there wasn’t a kindergarten graduation because of COVID. Schools did receive special permission to have a grade 8 graduation in the gym. Some other elementary schools in DSBN did have kindergarten graduations last year. We don’t know yet if the kindergartens will be able to have a graduation this year as we need direction from DSBN.

Valentine’s Day will be celebrated at school.

A parent was aware that Christmas presents were handed out to some students at Princess Margaret. The presents came from Prince Philip, the French immersion school. They had a gift drive and Mrs. Kohinski was at school late on a Tuesday night for Taekwondo and a custodian from Prince Philip dropped off some items that

Adjournment: Adjourned at 6:55pm

were collected for our new comers so that they had something to play with at the hotel during the winter break. The gifts were used puzzles. The other kids in the class felt excluded because they didn’t receive a gift. They didn’t understand why they also didn’t get a gift. A couple parents felt that some of the other students in our school would be happy to receive a used puzzle too. Parents’ feelings about this are being taken into account and we may not accept any goodwill from other schools in the future. The items were not solicited. Someone in the community was aware of the many new comers in the area and that many attended Princess Margaret. They took it upon themselves to share some goodwill. They collected items from their own homes. Princess Margaret was not notified ahead of time. Mrs. Kohinksi and Mrs. Leitch were scrambling at the last minute to hand them out to the new comers. These community members just wanted to do something nice.

In previous years, Princess Margaret students could bring a good used item to school and students could pick something out to give as a gift to a family member. It was like a Santa shop.

Some parents commented that our students would have liked to collect items from home that they could have brought to school for their class mates or a family. The students would be happy to know that someone else is enjoying their toys etc. Maybe we can do this at an upcoming holiday that is about giving.

Thank you very much to everyone for coming. Thank you for your feedback, we do take it very seriously.

The next school council meeting will be on March 28, 2023 at 6:00pm.