

Westmount School Council Meeting - February 2022

Date: February 9, 2022

Location: Video Conference

Time: 7:00 pm

Chair: Baljit Singh

Council

Vice-Chair: Roti Akinsanmi

Treasurer: Navdeep Kailey

Secretary: Thomas Chan

Communications Director: Kathy Good

Fundraising Director: Kim Anthony

Parent Engagement Director: Ashley Wilford-Matthews

Special Events Director: Ameet Kooner

Director-at-Large: Dawn Courtman

Director-at-Large: Laura Teterenko

Administration

Superintendent: Joe Frank

Principal Elementary Campus: Hal Curties

Principal Mid-High Campus: Graeme Finlay

Student Council representative: Jun Heo

Note: Video recording of this meeting is also available online ([link](#))

1. Opening Remarks and Approval of the Agenda

Chair provided an introduction and listed out the agenda. New announcements made by the Provincial Government regarding removal of restrictions.

- The School Administration made many changes over the last two years to ensure continuity of learning despite the pandemic scenarios.
- Students are looking forward to their upcoming graduation. The school is making plans for the graduation ceremony.

Motion to approve the agenda: 1st Navdeep Kailey, 2nd Dawn Courtman. Agenda approved.

2. Approval of minutes from January 12, 2022 School Council meeting

Motion to approve minutes: 1st Peter Khu, 2nd Ashley Wilford-Matthews. All in favor, none opposed. Minutes formally adopted.

3. Student Council Report - President Jun Heo

- Currently running candygrams for Valentines. More sales seen than Christmas.

- Junior Council came up with a photo submission idea. The theme is love. People will be submitting photos of things or hobbies that they love. A large collage of all the photos will be available after submissions close.
- Planning to hold a lip sync competition and a replacement for the Winter Formal. Might be done virtually or in-person depending on the changing restrictions. Planning a Spirit week for March 14 to March 17, before Spring Break.
- At the suggestion of Principal Finlay, asked students for opinions regarding the mask mandates. Mixed opinions were received. Some students stated that they would continue wearing masks to limit the spread of COVID. Some felt uncomfortable with people not wearing masks around them. Others were indifferent to the matter while a minority indicated that they will not be wearing masks.
- One of the options raised was to allow the freedom of choosing whether or not to wear a mask. Will lead to less restrictions regarding physical activity. Also gives more freedom for events being held and upcoming ones. Main concern would be about potential social ramifications.
- Suggested teachers to discuss the mask matter with their students. Have them make a few compromises and allow students who are not comfortable around their peers to change their seating arrangement among other things.
- School to keep in place restrictions that they have control over.

4. Superintendent Update/Comments - Joe Frank

- **Executive DEI Council** - Regarding the size of the organization, there are a total of 180 staff and about 1,300 students. This makes a relatively small organization and lacks enough people to address the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Organization is restricted on the amount of work it can do.
- The whole process of addressing DEI has been done mainly at the school level over the last year and a half, and primarily at the mid-high because of an incident that occurred in the 2021 school year.
- The Council brought in a consultant through the benefit provider Morneau Shepell, Dr. Joseph Smith. He worked directly with the students and the staff at the mid-high. Training modules were extended to every teacher and leader in both campuses.
- School is restrictive in some ways due to its charter that mandates it to address the needs and provide support and programs to students gifted and qualified according to the criteria set out.
- Also restrictive to staff who are required to have some background training or coursework from university. School also hires practicum teachers from the university because of the live-in experience. All these things are considered in the context of DEI work.

- Staff requested that the entire school authority, including the Board, be in support of the DEI work and recognize its importance.
- DEI Executive Council has four members, Superintendent Joe Frank, HR Director Maria Bernadin, and the two principals. The DEI Executive Council came up with a central authority DEI statement, sent it out to the staff and the community. Statement indicates that the DEI issues are a concern that need to be addressed. Also included three simple statements to define the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Most of the functions of the Council will come from the HR group. HR Director, Ms. Bernadin reached out to other organizations. Got a framework document that highlights hiring, staffing, and development practices from an employee perspective.
- Council will use the framework to address DEI issues. Legislative frameworks are also available. One policy is at the Board level and was mandated by the NDP government.
- The policy entails a caring, safe, respectful, working and learning environment. It was generated around the LGBTQ community's need to be recognized in schools in a formal way.
- The school has been addressing some of the issues through a GSA organization that's existed before the NDP's mandated policy. Only shortfall was that the issues were not being addressed from a facility point of view (i.e. unisex washrooms and changing rooms). DEI Executive Council addressed those.
- About 13 administrative procedures currently talk about how to implement policies and legislation. They include a student code of conduct, an employee code of conduct, procedures on how to deal with harassment, discrimination, and intimidation.
- Also have the School Act, Education Act, Guide to Education, which is Alberta Education's Policy Document, a GSA fact sheet, Guide for best practices in creating a learning environment that respects sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression provided by the Department of Education. Procedures reference Alberta Human Rights Act and to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Will be posted on website to ease access.
- Also have the Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard, School Leadership Quality Standard, Teacher Quality Standard.
- Would like to connect DEI to the school Charter. School Council will work closely with the schools. Will have a discussion to determine the roles.
- Plan to continue with data collection. Data collection is done by students and parents. Looking to do a survey with staff next week through the central authority to get information about their backgrounds and perspectives around DEI.
- Planning to explore further training modules for staff. Hoping to capture more of the student population. The Council will look for additional resources for their work at the central level, such as legal seminars. The Council will determine what resources would benefit the school and the Council.

- Chair Singh stated that DEI has continuously been under discussion in the School Council Executive. Met the school administration and found them a receptive on the topic. School Council is trying to identify barriers that a family might feel when approaching Westmount with an application for their child, and how to minimize or eliminate the barriers.

Question to DEI: Will there be a separate gender washroom?

Joe Frank - Yes, it is a priority going forward. Students have continually asked for washroom upgrades in both schools. Will be submitted in the capital plan by April 1, 2022. Looking at other possibilities to add more washrooms or convert some of the others to the unisex/universal type. The traditional male/female bathrooms will still be there in addition to the unisex.

5. Reports from Council

a) Parent Engagement Report - Ashley Wilford-Matthews

- **Parent Engagement Sessions** - Had a fantastic session with Adrian Wolfleg before the new year. Recently had another session with Jill Foreman on mental health. Would like to thank Julie Jansen who invited other charter schools to attend Jill's session. A few parents also attended. Session focused on gifted students.
- **Coffee Talks** - Of late, the coffee talks have had great turnouts, usually 30 to 40 at the Elementary. Mid-high coffee talks time changed to Friday morning, but a different Friday from the elementary one. Friday time working well for parents to attend on Zoom. Next coffee talk is the Elementary one, scheduled for Friday.

b) Treasurer's Report - Navdeep Kailey

- **Revenue for January** - Bottle Drive fundraiser generated revenue of \$1,782. The goal for the year is budgeted for \$33,000 and the revenue year-to-date is at \$19,000.
- **Council Expenses** - \$100 for last month. No invoices or expenses received from the school admin yet. Hoping to receive them next month due to the events organizing happening this month.
- **Total balance as of January 31 - \$75,257**

c) Fundraising Report - Kim Anthony

- **Bottle Drive** - Had the first Bottle Drive in January which had a great response. Would like to thank Jill Foreman and other volunteers for coordinating everything. Next bottle drive will be in April.
- **WCS Family Cookbook Fundraiser** - Held in January. Would like to thank Laura Teterenko for organizing that. The cookbooks have all been ordered and sent out to families. A few are still left for sale. Interested persons should connect with Laura to get them.

- **Stampeder Parking** - Had a great turnout last year. Had about seven abridged games and made a good amount of money. Would like to thank everyone who came out. Will provide updates on pre-season games.
- **Direct Donation Campaign Fundraiser** - Held in December and carries over into this year. Would like to thank everyone who donated. Some of the money is directed towards parent education, COVID expenses, enhancement of student experience through field trips and bringing in guest speakers and busing.
- **WestJet Raffles** - Currently organizing the raffle draw. No date has been set yet to start selling tickets. Raffle draw might be done at the May 11 AGM. Sale of tickets will be done electronically again. Would like to thank everyone for volunteering support.
- Would also like to congratulate mid-high students and their families for the book drive they did for Calgary Reads.

6. Principals' Report - Hal Curties and Graeme Finlay

[EC Principal's Report](#)

[Mid-High Principal's Report](#)

a) Elementary Campus Update

- Had a good Coffee Talk in January and looking forward to another one on Friday. A lot will be discussed during the Coffee Talk given yesterday's announcements.
- **Attendance** - Attendance has fluctuated in a good direction since coming back from Winter Break. Had up to 19% of students away the first week back. Most were kept at home as a precaution. Currently down to about 3% absence. Teachers are staying healthy - very few have been absent.
- **Safety drills** - Continuing with our safety drills. Did an abbreviated drill yesterday where kids go into the space in their classroom where they'll be during a lockdown and stay there for 2-3 minutes.
- **Intake** - Currently making selections. Received approximately 422 applications - a healthy demand for Westmount. About 100 will be selected.
- **Deck the windows** - Would like to thank the homeroom teachers and kids who participated in the deck the windows. Regular deck the hall assemblies were not possible due to COVID.
- **Chinese New Year** - Would like to wish everyone a happy Chinese New Year, which goes till February 15. Included a link to CTV news in the report. It shows some amazing photography and video of the Lantern Festival.
- **Valentine's** - Will be having Valentine's treats. Hoping to have everything packaged and sent in by Friday. Will be handed out to kids by homeroom teacher.

- **Year book cover** - Kids to send in art submissions for the year book cover by February 15.
- **Outdoor skating** - Looking forward to outdoor skating at the new Parkdale facilities. All kids were booked to go skating but did not do so as the ice did not look good.
- **Professional development for teachers** - Had two days for professional development. Looked at signs of long term trauma with the kids and how to manage it. Also looked at health and wellbeing for students and staff. Had a session with an indigenous person who talked about indigenous knowledge and residential school experiences. Would like to thank Jill Foreman for the three sessions and continued support.

b) Mid-High Campus Update (in addition to Principal's Report) - Graeme Finlay

- **Student Diversity Council** - Would like to acknowledge strong and active Student Diversity Council.
- **Chinese New Year** - Organized a big welcome on the first day of Chinese New Year and wished everyone a happy new year at the door. Will keep decorations up until February 15.
- **Black History Month** - Organizing several different things for Black History month, including putting up timelines with information, alternating learning comments between information from Black History months, showcasing the Olympics, and hosting online sessions for students to attend.
- **Online Presentations** - Organized two online presentations for all students. One geared towards middle school students called Inspiration Republic. Will be a virtual assembly set to happen next week on Valentine's Day. Two, on February 24, Dr. Smith will be present for a Q&A with older students.
- **Graduation Date** - Finally got a date. Hoping to have the ceremony in-person instead of online. Will happen in May. Have a theme going. Valedictorian application opened up this week - all grade 12s received an email. One will be picked next month.
- **James and the Giant Peach** - Happened just before winter break. Had a phenomenal cast and a lighthearted play. Both included compositions and music by some students and the actors and technical theatre crew.
- **Skiing for Grades 7 and 8** - Did some downhill and cross-country skiing. Grades 5 and 6 were not able to ski at WinSport as usual due to lack of instructors. Department will provide updates in case something opens up.
- **Innovations Class** - Offered to both middle school and high for credits. Entails looking at the design process and working through the whole design cycle. Encourages students to pursue their passions. Had a connection between the two campuses where a student was allowed to give a presentation to elementary students on some models and fact cards he had created about dinosaurs.

- **Window Arc by Grade 5 Students** - Grade 5 students did a window arc on the front of the building, based on the theme of hope.

Question: Is it possible to add outdoor lighting in the school?

Outdoor lighting should be there as it's a safety issue. Will talk to facilities to look into that.

Question: Can staff monitor safe road crossing of students across the front road?

There is one dedicated crosswalk on the corner. Can't get an extra crosswalk due to the nature of the zoning and the alleyway.

Asking parents to prioritize safety over convenience. Would like to thank parents who do that. Constantly working with the resource officer to have them help remind parents about safe conduct for driving.

7. Q&A Session for Administration

a) Question: Mask Mandate - Received 11 emails from parents regarding the mask mandate. Ten out of 11 emails indicated support for masks in schools.

Joe Frank referenced some news released by Premier Kenney and Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Hinshaw. These were followed by a formal letter from the Minister of Education Adriana LaGrange.

Letter indicated that the public school authority no longer had any legal authority to mandate masks for kids from K to 12. Does not mean that students can't wear masks as they prefer. Strongly encourage and recommend students to wear masks if they so choose.

Authority still remains in place that adults, including the teachers and the support staff, must maintain masks at all times. Some additional restrictions might be removed beginning of March. Currently, vast majority of pandemic protocols will remain in place other than the change to masking.

Additional cleaning is happening, hired extra people to assist with that.

For extracurricular activities - spectators and visitors to the school need to comply with the mask regulations. Doing the best to maintain safety, security, and health conditions for kids and staff.

b) Question: Masks required for field trips and busing? - Graeme Finlay

Field trips and busing are treated as an extension of the school. The mask option would be in effect there too. At the location of the field trip, the mask option will be dependent on the venue.

Regarding field trips, Mr. Curties stated that until March 1st, classes are still cohorted. There would be one homeroom for kids, some will be masked and others will not be. Won't be different from the classroom.

c) Question: Students behavior towards others who are masked or unmasked - Hal Curties

Teasing - Had very little teasing around masks in two years. Starting Monday for the first week, students will be reminded that some will be wearing masks and some will not. Will be normalized. Students will be reminded to be respectful around people's choices. Any teasing incidents usually addressed promptly.

d) Question: Does the school plan on sending an email saying that they still encourage masking? - Graeme Finlay

Yes, that will be part of Friday communications. Communication will reiterate the restrictions that are still in place, and note what has changed and what has not.

Joe Frank stated that he had attended a Zoom meeting in the morning with the deputy minister representatives from Alberta Health Services and all superintendents across the province.

Deputy will have the conversation with the superintendents before producing a new document that will address all mask concerns. The documents will come out in the next two days. Might be before the end of day Friday.

Any new information that the school will provide to the community may come later on Friday afternoon or first thing on Monday.

Graeme Finlay indicated that the school is looking at having no spectators at the athletics. Had conversations with the school league as well as other schools involved in the league. They are all in agreement with that.

e) Question: Is there a possibility, if parents are comfortable, to go to at-home learning? - Graeme Finlay

No additional funding was received this year to resource for at-home online learning. Only thing that can be offered is access to learning resources. This is, however, not as robust as having direct work with a teacher.

Hal Curties stated that with the lack of resources, teachers cannot be asked to teach in class and online as well.

f) Question: Are children who test positive and are vaccinated still required to mask the additional five days? - Graeme Finlay

Yes, a student who tests positive has to be in isolation for five days and required to wear a mask in public for up to 10 days. Not worried about that because most students will still be wearing masks.

Hal Curties stated that the school has been able to accommodate students who need to eat privately with isolation requirement and masking.

Graeme Finlay stated that the school has been keeping daily stats of confirmed COVID cases. Would like to appreciate families that keep kids who show any signs of symptoms at home. In January, about 8% of the population was away for quarantine. Last week, it was under 2%. Will keep on monitoring.

g) Question: Could the Municipal Government mandate masks in Calgary schools? - Joe Frank

No, they don't have the authority over us as a public school entity.

Hal Curties stated that City Council voted against having civic pandemic measures at this time.

h) Question: If cohorting and mask restriction is lifted, are there plans to go back to regrouping for math in Language Arts? - Hal Curties

No, at this of the year, contemplating regrouping for math in LA is not possible. Kids in LA would have to be assessed and new classes created. There's not enough time to do all that. Will focus assessment more in September to give a better idea of the student status after two years in the pandemic. Regrouping could lead to another wave and lead to cohorting again.

i) Question: Do students have to quarantine after international travel even if fully vaccinated? - Graeme Finlay

Not sure. Will check on that. Wouldn't be the school's mandate. It will be based on either provincial or federal directives. Federal is still doing random PCR tests so some people have to isolate as they wait for results.

Derek Tererenko stated that according to the Government of Canada website, all fully vaccinated passengers are equally treated. No isolation is required upon arrival after international travel. Only have to get the test and be negative. A positive test leads to isolation for 10 to 14 days.

8. Closing remarks from Chair Baljit

Very productive and informative meeting. Would like to thank the superintendent, the principals, and the parents. Will be announcing vacant positions at the Executive level in the coming months.

AGM will be on May 11. Elections will take place on the same day.

9. Meeting Adjourned - 8:15pm