

BOWMORE SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Date | time November 19, 2018 @ 6:05 pm | *Meeting called to order by* Lyndsey Camps

In Attendance:

Lyndsey Camps, Andrea Maugham, Cindy Perry, Brandi Zebrak, Ruth Lee, Elizabeth Grundon, Andrea Ackery-Moore, Jody Sadotsky, Graham Seater, Shaileen Casimiro, Jolane Fotts, Jill Nurse, Shelley Baboolall, Kelsie Hernandez, Joanna Karidis, Natalie Poissant, Nancy Batelho, Fatima Zehna, Leah Jarvis, Heather Groves, Talcia Richards, Marycarmen Lara-Villanueva, Darryl Gershater.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes were read from the October 2018 Bowmore School Council Meeting by: Approved by Nancy Batelho, seconded by Brandi Zebrak.

Call for New Business:

Potential extension of LD classroom for Grades 7 and 8

Grade 8 trip

Toronto Public Health

Our Community Public Health Nurse Voula Varsamidou joined the meeting to support the topic of allergy awareness t Bowmore. Voula is responsible for working with our children to support the wellness network. The includes working with teachers with the health and education curriculum. She manages many parenting programs, including topics such as substances, stress and anxiety.

Fatima Zehna also attended to advocate for her son. He is in grade 4 at Bowmore and recently had the second anaphylactic attack of his life on a field trip. Fatima explained the dangers of cross contamination and asked for the Council's help to establish a campaign for allergy awareness. This campaign could cover critical topics, in an age-appropriate way, such as allergy bullying, cross contamination, reading labels, not sharing food.

Fatima also requested that parents take some time at home to talk about these important issues at home with our kids. We can save a child's life by paying attention to ingredients. Fatima and Mr. Parsons will continue to work on ideas and update us at future meetings.

Mr. Parsons supported with a clarification about the school policy. No school board can claim 'allergy free'. The term is 'safe' or 'aware'. The Board does recognize certain rooms may need to be 'free' of specific allergens. Heather Groves added that every child in the school should be seen as our own. Serious allergies can affect any one of us. We all need to be educated around the triggers. Hope for the best and plan for the worst. Make sure our staff knows what to do. We're also looking to get hand sanitizer in every class and reduce vandalism in the bathrooms to emphasize hand washing even more.

Nurse Varsamidou confirmed that a child with allergies should have 2 EpiPens – one to carry with them and one for the school. Bowmore has extra EpiPens. We also really need to emphasize the importance of hand washing before and after eating. And before leaving for school.

ASK: are lunchroom tables being adequately cleaned? ANSWER: tables are cleaned with commercial soap, especially in the Junior Gym. Maybe we can be more diligent with that to reduce cross contamination.

Fundraising & Volunteers

Volunteers are desperately needed for the Make-it Fair, Carnival committee, donations/sponsorships committee, Book Fair, bake sale and bathroom beautification.

Heather Robson emphasized that without a Co-Lead for the **Make-it Fair** we will not have the event this year. At this time of year the commitment is light. From January to March it requires around 2-3 hrs a week to do online and email work. It will also involve organizing meetings and managing progress with the team to make sure everything is being done (once every 2 weeks). We need at least 5 on the planning committee. It's a great event. Great community engagement. Would be a shame to lose it. Can class reps reach out to find volunteers?

We also have no volunteers to run the Carnival this year. It doesn't have to be overwhelming. Volunteers can each take one aspect of the Carnival (like the bake sale, booking the bouncy castle, volunteers, supplies, permits, food, baked goods, communications/signage, etc.). Andrea, Michaela and Lyndsey will help oversee but at present we're at risk of not having the Carnival.

Other smaller volunteer roles open:

- Book Fair (various day and evening slots open). Ashley will confirm roles.
- Bake sale items and volunteers for Winter Concert nights (Dec 11) - grades 5, 6 and up could help out.
- Wreath and poinsettia pick up night (Dec 4).
- Sarah and Leah are working on the bathroom beautification project. They will need helpers, and paint donations.

Classroom Rep update

Kelsie Hernandez. The Goal this year is to make the big Bowmore community feel more intimate. A close contact from your class can make that happen. Opt in forms went home and class reps are putting together distribution lists. Several classrooms are still missing reps. The role is very different this year. As the weekly email blast is being covered by the Council, the classroom rep role is more about specific issues.

ECO update

Jen Cloke-Campbell (in absentia). The club planted tulips in the front planter. The textile drive was a great success and next time we'll align it to the Lost and Found donation. We have established a marker recycling program – please drop off old markers to the box in the foyer. There is a hold-up with the Green Bins. Admin/caretaking have been asked to help resolve

After School Basketball

In past years Dan has organized a drop-in basketball program at the Fairmount Community Centre. All kids are welcome to play basketball from 4:30 – 6:00. It's great for kids, especially in the winter. However, this year the City of Toronto is not providing the gym booking, staff or permits. Funds are required to continue the program. Heather, Stephen and Dan will discuss the funding issue and try to find a resolution.

Classroom Screen Time

Nancy voiced concern over the amount of time kids are watching TV at school, particularly as the weather gets cold and the holiday season approaches. ASK: What is the school policy about how much non-educational TV the kids are allowed to watch? Are there any guidelines around screen time? ANSWER: media should be

connected to curriculum or on inclement weather days during lunch any programs/movies must be appropriate. The Administrators ask that parents inform them of any particular instances of screen time that seems outside those guides, so they can inquire about the connection to curriculum. They will encourage teachers to use other ways of engaging, especially before the holiday break and before end of the school year.

Lunch Lady & Volunteer-Led Lunch Program

Andrea reported that after a few rough weeks we have seen an improvement the last two weeks with the Lunch Lady. We'll stay with the Lunch Lady on Wednesdays as long as everything continues to work better.

A Pita lunch option was investigated as a possible additional fundraiser; however, it's not profitable. It would be great to put in another pizza team (5-6 adults + the crew of kids would be required). Current pizza organizers suggest pizza only (not milk).

Chairs also requested feedback on a hot dog lunch. There was not a great deal of support. We could add another Lunch Lady day. Support was minor, as there is a lot of garbage created. Parents would prefer healthy lunch options, but they are unfortunately not profitable as fundraisers.

ASK: Couldn't we have a fundraising box at events? Or add a donation line to the cashless system? ANSWER: It is possible, as long as donations are earmarked for specific items.

Principal's Report: Heather Groves, Talcia Richards (VP)

Talcia reported on the **TDSB pillars of Wellbeing, Achievement and Equity**. The admin team sets measurable goals against these pillars. Last year a group of teachers and learning coach gathered info from students about their feelings around inclusion (especially marginalized students). The Equity team is looking at the results to drive planning for Equity within the school. They will share the data with the School Council and partner with the parent committee to improve equity. They want to ensure student voices are heard and changes are implemented to improve their experience at school. They are already doing things like integrating special education students into classes to remove barriers and help them feel included. Geometry results were poor, therefore we now have an assessment tool to determine level. Also focusing on early literacy. There will be a Snuggle Up and Read program and possibly other ways to improve reading. Recently our students had a wellness day while teachers did PD in these areas.

Andrea confirmed that the last **parent workshop** had great feedback and it will be revived in March. The presenter was excellent and he touched on so much. Not clear why there weren't there more parents there.

Roots of Empathy. Mr. Parsons is looking for more instructors (volunteer babies). We currently have two classes going but we're having a hard time finding babies. This program teaches a lot about empathy and coming together to study the little miracle.

Co-ed **ice hockey** is back. Every kid who shoes up gets to play. Good turnout this morning. **Skating** also begins in January. Make sure you return the permission forms.

Washrooms continue to be an area of concern in our school. Kids are flushing apples and pears in the toilets. Bathrooms need to be serviced almost constantly. TDSB is the hold up for some repairs. We have too few bathrooms for 1000 students. But we need to continue to support handwashing with soap in the bathrooms and sanitizers in classrooms. Looking at options for better sinks. Hopefully there will be more pride with the implementation of the beautification project.

Library volunteers are really needed to keep the library open all day while library teachers are out teaching media, etc.

Character assemblies are a tradition at Bowmore. Leah helps organize these to help honour and celebrate students for different accomplishments. Want to expand the issue of character with intermediates. Looking to student leadership team to help. The reason we don't advertise/encourage participation of parents is we don't have capacity for parents to attend.

Daycare room access. Admin team is in the process of trying to access unused space for next year for health classes, etc.

House committee. Spirit is strong. Water is winning. We have new initiatives focusing on kindness and caring in December including a new door decorating contest and continuing with good deeds. And we're doing a food drive in December for the Daily Bread Food Bank. Students will get House points for every item donated. The last Friday of every month is House colour day. Students do cheers on the announcements. Parents suggested awarding bonus points for volunteering for pizza day, etc.

Diversity & Inclusion team update

Co-leads Marycarmen Lara-Villanueva and Darryl Gershater thanked the Council for supporting / setting up committee. They are currently working on growing the committee and culture. They are providing a safe place for parents to come together to share stories of inclusion and diversity.

Their first meeting was held October 28. Parents were invited to speak of their experiences of marginalization and barriers to participating in school activities. The brainstormed about ways to make people feel welcome. They found that some parents do not attend events or Council meetings because they do not feel safe or welcome. They have experienced or are concerned about feeling racialized or discriminated against based on identity and expression.

Future meetings may also include Skype or conference call, to provide different ways for parents to access the committee and feel safe. They will look into the school's capacity to provide this technology.

Council Chairs will provide relevant survey results to enhance the mission of the committee. Right now they are focusing on developing the necessary processes and gathering more parents' opinions. They would like participation from other parents – not just racialized/otherized voices or people who are oppressed.

Heather suggested that perhaps a school space (Parenting Centre) could be used during the day for parents to come and share issues.

Some parents expressed concern about the lack of cultural content (e.g., events/celebrations) in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. We should be using the classroom, assemblies and announcements, etc. to create awareness and excitement about diversity. The kids love it and it normalizes other cultures.

Roden does a Spring Fair fundraiser with really good Indian food. It's sharing cultural food as a safe space, a common language. Food is really effective at bringing people together. The Bowmore Multicultural Potluck brings out a different group of families but has experienced challenges. We should investigate improvements. Perhaps rolling it into the carnival to normalize it.

Lyndsey expressed that showing parents and families that this is a school where all parents should feel safe and welcomed is one of the hopes for the Diversity & Inclusion committee.

It was pointed out that the kids really respond to parents visiting the classroom to teach the kids about different traditions. Teachers are generally receptive and appreciative and it's a more authentic learning experience for the kids. Perhaps class reps could ask if teachers are interested. Darryl expressed concern about that kind of approach becoming tokenism and otherism.

The Diversity & Inclusion committee will take more time to gather ideas and information. Maybe the role of this Council needs to be more about parent education and holding the curriculum accountable (e.g., more culturally relevant texts so kids can see themselves and making diversity part of math learning, etc.). Every parent should try to bring someone new to meetings and events.

New Business

Expansion of LD program. In the past we had an intermediate and primary class. The Board goal is to integrate students back into the regular stream to prepare them for high school and give them an opportunity to experience a more intense program, for those who qualify. We want to provide more opportunities for integration. We continue to advocate for intermediate LD here or to find ways to support students within the class. The administration is advocating for those students and will share future plans with the Council. They are also looking at ways to improve the facility for accessibility. Anyone else who has an interest, please reach out to Heather.

Meeting Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 8:12 on Monday, November 19, 2018.

Next Meeting

Wednesday January 9, 2019 at 6:00 PM.