

MINUTES

Westcreek SCC

01/21/2021 6:30 |

In Attendance

Quincy James – Principal
Allison White - Teacher Representative
Hedy Huk – Co-Chair
April Blackshaw- Co-Chair
Amy Whitson – Secretary
Fareed Ali - Treasurer
Julie McGranachan
Diane Bilecki-Ellis
Stephanie Vordemberge
Jessica Affeldt
Rebecca Kennedy
Michelle Concessao
Anil Singh
Samantha Soleil
Catherine Maginley

Meeting was conducted virtually on Google Meets.

Welcome & Introduction

Mr. James opened with the Land Acknowledgment and called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Amy moved the adoption of minutes as circulated.

Principal's Report

Mr. James opened his report with acknowledging that the "shift to virtual learning was done in short order and it is a work in progress".

- Shared kudos to the educators and the parents who are "in the class" as well.
- Additional time has been added and remote school will be continuing to February 10th at the minimum.
- Update on electronic report cards, Feb 17th was proposed initial date, but timing may change, will keep us posted on any changes.
- Update on Cindy Conklin's memorial: School is going with a red maple after having some input from her family. The goal is to plant as early as possible in the spring. There will be a plaque with an inscription, Mr. McCurdy looked after that.
- Looking to the future transition back to school. Parents and staff will need to prepare and support students as they adopt a new mindset and shift into back to school mode. New guidelines regarding masks will in place.

- Masks will be required all the time for all grades 1 to 8. For many of our classes, greater than 90% of the kids already wear masks so hopefully won't pose an issue. Case by case exemptions will be made as needed. A form was provided with DDSB notice.
- DDSB should be sending info about transfer from virtual to in-person learning and vice versa. The changeover will happen sometime around Feb 23 or 24th.
- School Climate Survey: Between now and March, all DDSB schools will be going through a school climate survey which looks at the wellbeing of staff, students and parents of those in our school (district). Students grade 4 and up are able to complete the easy survey. It is coming soon.
- Chromebooks: 17 computers have been lent out to students. More are being assembled to be distributed next week. A new protocol is that students must sign a waiver indicating that care will be taken and that the computer will be returned when the students come back to school. The Board is still trying to sort out how to meet the needs of students, as there is a shortage of chromebooks available for purchase. The school also has Thinkpads but they are old and don't function as well. Ipads can't be lent out for security purposes (Ipads are have been used mainly in Kindergarten and primary grades.)

Questions from Hedy: What if a high percentage of students who have borrowed switch to virtual, does this impact supply at the school?

- Short answer is yes (supply at school will be impacted). We can't order more at this time because of supply shortage. We have ordered more chargers as they can go missing.

Question from Hedy and Rebecca: And, do our students have what they need for right now? Is there a shortfall; are there families who have requested computers that don't have one? How many are usually in the school.

- Most families have what they need although because of shortage, we can only supply one Chromebook per household, which does impact families with more than one child. Sometimes they have devices but they are not compatible. Some families who've reached out don't have enough devices for all their kids. The school has enough right now to meet current needs (requests). There are normally 30 Chromebooks in the school.

Side bar: A discussion arose on kids bringing their own laptops to school to reduce pressure on school's supply but that there was concerns about property damage and the teachers not wanting to feel responsible. Also comments on how fast students are adapting to technology and how it has impacted learning as well as a desire to return to more traditional ways of learning that involve less screens. Some students have had issues with accessing technology; parental restrictions or incompatible platforms have caused some compatibility issues.

- Mr. James reflected that there has to be a balance between using chromebooks and pen and paper. "We have to get on board with digital literacy but kids also need to learn to write letters. DDSB holds digital learning, near and dear".
- On a good news front: Ms. Pizale had her baby this past Sunday. A baby boy named Cayce and they are both doing well. Very happy news for the arrival for the school community.

Budget/Treasury report

Nothing to report at this time.

SCC & Advisory Committees

Comments from our Teacher Representative Mrs. White:

"Nothing to report from teachers as they haven't been together (due to the current restrictions and at home learning). They are just continuing on with virtual learning as best they can."

SCC wanted to formally share how much we appreciate them and that they are doing an amazing job. Rebecca, Hedy, Michelle, and many other parents attending the meeting shared the same comments. Samantha, who was attending SCC meeting for first time, wanted to thank teachers for phenomenal work and was so impressed with their patience and guidance.

Fundraising Update

FlipGive update from Julie:

- 58 individuals who have purchased or raised funds through the platform and \$1,360.00 have been raised so far.
- Things have slowed down in the new year (as expected).
- Was going to suggest using funds to support virtual learning but with chromebook shortfall, this may not be the time.
- Can withdraw funds for other purposes too.
- Will need to remind the school community to remember FlipGive, promote during upcoming holidays, or just regular everyday stuff.
- There is no end date, we can continue using FlipGive running in the back ground, at the same time as other fundraisers next year and beyond. It is easy and low effort from a community perspective to keep it going

Hedy's comments:

- "We wanted to do the holiday push but then also let things 'breath' a little bit with all that we have going on, it is always going to be a benefit to have collected cash that we have it there to spend. When teachers are back in class, consumables may be a place to use those funds"
- At the beginning of the year, there were other ideas for the spring, but we are not ready to start organizing, with so many things up in the air but we can look into other options when the time is right.

Quincy's Comments:

- Chrome books and a chromebook cart are probably top of the list for any fundraising in the near future.
- The school has ordered consumables and as they are not being used at this time it will provide some cost savings.

Additional Discussion:

- Some parents are still really interested in Spiritwear (several comments appeared on the chat). Will need to look into the vendor who was originally supplying to see if they are operating currently, or perhaps look at other options. Consider items that are one-size-fits-all so that trying on isn't needed - i.e. toques?

Other Business/Announcements

Hedy Question: Can Quincy speak to extended deadline for students to switch and what can we expect regarding the threshold for classroom changes.

Quincy:

- "It boils down to numbers, it can be complex the thresholds that cause a classroom to collapse.... He knows that it is pretty disturbing and that inflow and outflow of kids."
- The school board takes a snapshot of enrollment for every school then they determine what we need to do, whether leave as status quo or make an adjustment

- There is no real 'magic number'
- He has submitted numbers to the board last week and will be again tomorrow, will be updating numbers on an ongoing basis
- Right now, it seems to be pretty equal with slightly more going to virtual then coming back from virtual but there is the change that things will change. He anticipated that there would be more requests for virtual learning, but it didn't turn out.

Julie Question: What the DDSB is doing to help teachers and admin help students with the impacts (emotional and mental wellbeing) of all the changes to learning this year. Parents aren't necessarily seeing everything and she imagines that teachers are seeing the struggles (in the virtual classrooms) too. Are they being given additional tools/trainer on how to help?

Quincy commented on some of the tools available from the DDSB:

- A school social worker is available and is helping out some of the Westcreek students and Mr. K has been working with students also.
- DDSB has an electronic calming room that is available to students, it is a calming space and provides strategies to help kids deal with stressors (Mr. K shared with Mr. James)
- Classroom teachers have been the front line in helping too.
- Mr. James encourages teachers to schedule breaks.
- And shares the message with staff and parents themselves, if things aren't going well it is okay for parents to remove the kids and get them settled.
- And, that if there are issues, please bring it to the attention of teachers so that "we can intervene in a meaningful way".

Catherine asked: Can you just make a donation to the school, what is the best way?

Hedy: There was info sent in December about how to make donations directly to the school but will share again. You can send a cheque, the school will always take donations.

Comment From Amy: Is there a way to build and foster school community when kids are feeling the lack due to lockdown and online learning?

- Discussion and comments from a variety of parents about how kids are missing friends and looking for interaction.
- Different fun activities were suggested such as a puzzle competition, sharing books, Lego build offs, virtual dance parties, scavenger hunts, options that are off screen as many have screen fatigue.
- Hedy suggested that parents group together by grade/ages, possibly start a Whatsapp group as she did for Chloe's grade at the beginning of the year when her class got quarantined as a way to build community and communication with kids of similar ages and interests
- Stephanie and other parents commented that they would like to help and more discussion will follow after the meeting.

Next Meeting

February 18th, 2021