

# Africentric Alternative

## School Council Agenda & Minutes

Wednesday February 16 /2022

6:30-7:30p.m.



Meeting start time: 6:05pm

### Welcome

- Everyone was welcomed by Maureen

### Land Acknowledgement

- Read by Maureen

#### TDSB Land Acknowledgement

"We acknowledge we are hosted on the lands of the Mississaugas of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Wendat. We also recognize the enduring presence of all First Nations, Métis and the Inuit peoples"

### Principal and School Updates (Mr. Reynolds)

-Thanked parents for supporting the school during this difficult year and for helping with keeping their children safe at school with all the adjustments.

#### Photo Day:

- The TDSB has given the okay to invite the photographer back into the school
- February 23/2022 regular photos & graduation photos will be taken on the same day
- Photo retake date not confirmed at this time but will be share with parents once a date is secured

#### African Heritage Month: (lots going on at the school)

-The Center of Excellence of Black Students Achievement has black art experiences every day during the month of February and our school is participating. All the teachers log in each day depending on what is offered for that age group such as African Drumming, Storytelling, Reggae Size and lots more

#### Africentric African Heritage Month Celebration-March 4, 2022 (virtual):

- Ms. Sullivan is the teacher that is taking the lead on this and all the students are preparing for it, more information will be made available to parents closer to the date.
- The celebration was pushed back to 1<sup>st</sup> week of March due to so much going on at the school

### EQO Testing:

- The Ministry sent an email out saying that it will be happening online this year (no more written books)
- It will open on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2022 - June 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 for students in grade 3 and grade 6.
- We will select a date in May and more information will go out to parents via email.

### Kindergarten Registration:

- February is usually the month for Kindergarten registration for TDSB and it is currently open
- The current enrollment for that age group is less than 15 students at our school
- TDSB requires that a Kindergarten class must have more than 15 students in order to have a teacher and an ECE in the classroom. This means that it will be the teacher alone with the students
- This will be a challenge as this is the 1<sup>st</sup> learning environment for the children and will be difficult for the teacher without that additional support in the classroom
- Parent support is needed to help recruit more students, please spread the word to family and friends especially to parents who have children starting JK in September
- We would like to see the enrollment increase in the other grades also

### February Switch:

- In December 2021 parents had the option to switch their child/children from in person to virtual learning and vice versa there was a cut of date for that
- Currently we have only 1 student moving from in person to virtual and that will start on Feb. 22/2022
- There are a few students that are doing virtual that will be coming back to in person learning too

### **Downsview's Africentric program/Downsview Partnership:**(Mr. Reynolds)

- TDSB has one Africentric Elementary School (this is our school), but there are 2 Secondary Schools Winston Church Hill and Downsview Secondary School, they have an Africentric program there
- We have started a partnership with Downsview and Ms. Sullivan is vital to this partnership
- For African Heritage Celebration both schools will be doing it in March and will support each other with a performance contribution for this virtual event
- Mentoring program for our grade 7 & 8 students is encouraged and we are trying to find opportunities for Downsview students to do this.
- We are also working on online pairing with our Grade 7 & 8 students with other students in the Africentric Advantage program at Downsview to visit classrooms to experience the classroom routines and environment.
- Downsview Black Brilliance Conference plans are in place to engage staff and grade 8 students' participation
- Several of our Grade 8 students have applied for the Africentric program at Downsview and were successful. This will allow them to continue the values and the teachings that they have been learning at our school when they go to high school.

### Open for Questions/Suggestion:

Q: Could you touch base on the Downsview Africentric open house that happened in January for our grade 7 & 8 students?

A: The open house presentation from Downsview (via zoom) shared information about their Africentric program and important information about the application process/deadline. The plan is for next year that the open house will happen much earlier so that parents and students can have the information early to make an informed decision around high school placement.

### High School Placement:

-Grade 8 students are ahead of the game with regard to course selection for grade 9.

-Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Sullivan has worked with the grade 8's on the course selection online with "My Blueprint" and have applied for optional attendance at the school of their choice and currently have offers. This is great for news for our students as the deadline for course selection was Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, but all our students are finished theirs already.

### Open for Questions/Suggestion:

Q: In your update there was no mention that tomorrow you will be on a panel talking about your experience as a black educator. The parents or students at the school were not aware and I heard if from my own channels.

A: Unfortunately, I won't be attending due to Parent Teacher Interviews. Report cards went home today and I have to be available to support the teachers with Parent Teacher Interviews tomorrow. I have informed the organizers and they graciously asked me to send my responses to the questions and they will read my responses as they go around to the panel during the virtual session tomorrow.

Q: The new application for Kindergarten registration. I understand there is a question on it that ask if you rent or own and to provide a lease agreement or mortgage statement. I'm surprised about that is this something new?

A: No, that's nothing new. It's usually when your registering children in any school in the TDSB you have to provide proof of address. So that's what it's asking for. However, our school is different because we are an Alternative school with student from all over the GTA that attend our school. We don't have to take children from a certain catchment area we can take children from all over the GTA.

Q: Does it state why that question is on the form and/or why that information is needed. It would help parents to know that this is a standard question on the TDSB forms.

A: It's a general requirement for all home schools. If you live in a certain area then there is a home Elementary school and a home High school that you are entitled to attend. Schools get funding based on the numbers of students that attend from their area. They want to make sure that they don't have students that are out of area, unless it's an alternative school or a specialized program. (e.g. if a student in Etobicoke attends a school in North York then the school in North York will receive the funding for that student from Etobicoke)

Q: So those forms are standard from TDSB but it doesn't explain that? So, it's a bit of a confusion for parents because it seems like it's our school asking this question and not TDSB? Is there any way we can clarify this or is it a standard TDSB form?

A: Yes, right, It's a standard TDSB form.

Q: You did mention enrollment for Kindergarten are you accepting enrollment for all grades? If so what is the cut off date for people to enroll in the Africentric school?

A: We are accepting enrollment for all grades. Generally, students who would attend our school would need to complete an optional attendance form but sometimes that is waved. So even though the optional attendance date has passed for Elementary schools we will still accept students who are coming in this help to increase our numbers.

Q: Do the high schools have the levels? I heard you say that they picked their courses. So, they don't have it as general level advance level stuff anymore, do they?

A: No, your speaking about academic and applied levels? Most of the High School in Ontario they are phasing out applied level courses. This is especially for math and English, because when the kids go from grade 8 to grade 9 and the kids are doing applied level courses it closes some doors especially with math. To do applied level math in grade 9 you have to do a bridging course in grade 10 to go back on the academic level. So there giving all the students a opportunity to do the course at the academic level when entering grade 9. Which is really good for the kids because this doesn't close any doors and you want them to be on track for University. We recommended the best for all our kids when they were picking their courses. The TDSB have been researching this for years and what they realized was sometimes teachers make recommendations for the children that are not good for the kids. The board is trying to move forward and allowing all the children to have an equal opportunity to do academic courses

#### Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment:

-Mr. Reynolds reached out via email to them 2 years ago to inquire what support and/or programs that they could connect with our school to do. (e.g. mentorship opportunity). This year they reached out to Mr. Reynolds and the discussing was around providing our school with some support. During the meeting the representatives from MLS & E discussed how to go forward to help our small school and mention that they were shocked when they looked at our school budget. They decided that they would auction off some items from the Toronto Raptor players and the proceeds from that would come to our school. There will be a financial donation from them to the school and more information will be given when available.

#### **Graduation 2022 -Planning for Grade 8 Students:** (Mr. Reynolds)

-No planning has started as of yet as we are waiting for more direction from the Board in regard to the guidelines which are currently changing daily. Once we know what the Board will allow we will share that with the Grade 8 students and their families. Mrs. Hodge the grade 8 teacher received an iPad from Mr. Reynolds for the students to capture their experiences so we can have a variety of moments to share this graduation year. This includes photos and small video clips from the Grade 8 students. Ms. Sullivan is also part of the team that will be working on the grade 8 graduation and is an integral part of everything that is done at the school.

#### Scholarship

-We received a \$50 Thousand donation from an estate. We have put aside 10 thousand out of that to provide scholarships for our students in grade 8 who are moving on to high school  
-There will be 2 grade 8 students that will get \$500.00 each around leadership and academics. This will begin this graduation year

#### Kindergarten Celebration:

-Africentric provides a kindergarten celebration for the SK children  
-Not a graduation as it puts a strain on the parents  
-Going into grade 1 is a natural transition for the children and that's why we do a celebration instead

#### Open for Questions/Suggestion:

Q: Is the graduation a virtual or in-person for the grade 8's

A: We don't know yet, as it depends on the removal of the guidelines. As it stands right now we are not sure if it will be virtual or in-person but we would like it to be in-person but we have to take direction from TPH (Toronto Public Health) and also the TDSB (Toronto District School Board). I am sure that they will give us enough information and also time to plan once the guidelines have changed.

### Extra-Curricular Activities

Open for Questions/Suggestion:

Q: With the changes in the Province what does that look like for the rest of the school year for the children and what are those activities available to the children?

A: It's not clear yet but we were told that schools can begin extra-curricular activities and this is based on if the teachers feel comfortable doing it. We can't mandate the teachers, but we can encourage them because we know that our children have been without it for 2-3 years now. We know that they need some outlet in order to participate. This conversation came up with two teachers that I met with this week regarding the importance of providing these experiences for the children not just at the end of the school day but it could also be during the lunch hour. While the level of comfort is not there for everyone but as a school as soon as we see it clearer then we can see what we can provide for the students. In the mean time we are looking for other opportunities such as *Cafcan* came two years ago to do a leadership program with the grade 7/8 students and we have reached out to them to see if this can be done virtually this year. So, we will continue to look for other type of opportunities for our students to engage in extra-curricular activities.

### **Model Schools Updates-Community Support Worker** (Maureen)

- This position is not currently filled and Colleen is our interim until it is
- Colleen will be providing School Council and the School support where needed but will not be attending School Council Meetings
- School Councils Co-Chair(s) will be responsible for creating the agenda and Zoom link for the meetings going forwards. Maureen currently taking on this with support from Mr. Reynolds

### **Model Schools' Parent/Caregiver Academy 2022**

- February is African and Chinese Heritage Month
- Events online via Zoom from Jan-May 2022 for TDSB families
- Colleen sent the flyer to Mr. Reynolds and the School Council Co-Chair(s)
- The flyer was shared in January with the Africentric parents via email by the principal, and will also be shared this week because each month they have something

### **School Council Updates** (Maureen)

#### 1)Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants for School Councils

*The purpose of the Pro Grant: to support initiatives/activities that engage parents/caregivers (virtual), and builds School Councils' capacity around Human Rights, Equity, Anti-Racism, Anti-Indigenous and Anti-Black Racism*

- School Council Co-Chair(s) apply for the grant on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021 for the amount of \$1,500.00
- We were not selected to receive the Pro Grant
- We will continue as planned to book the Part 1 of the workshop with Itah Sadu storyteller which is happening tomorrow from 1-2pm. This is a workshop for parents & the students and that's the reason

it's taking place at that time. We are partner with Ms. Sadu in regards to getting books for ever student enrolled in the school.

-The fee for this workshop and the books will come out of the money that the school receives per student each year that must be spent before the end of the school year. Ms. Sullivan will be supporting me and taking the lead with selecting age appropriate books for each of the children that is written by Ms. Sadu and if this is not possible then the selection will be based on books focusing on Canadian Black Authors and/or Canadian Black History

-Mr. Reynolds has sent out the reminders of the workshop today to parents the is titled "Integrated Literacy with a focus on Black Heritage Storytelling"

*A Different Booklist-* (Ms. Sullivan)

-Connected with them to check that the books requested are in stock and some were not in print right now. The list was adjusted. The target date for the books will be March 11/2022 and this was also confirmed today. This is a great opportunity to provide the children with a "keep sake book with a memory of the presentation as well as the month.

**Workshop Part 2 – When applied for the PRO Grant**

-Was to be held in the night on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 7:00-8:00 pm but this depends on what is left over from Workshop #1

-Suggestions is to have something simple like a family game night (virtual), Kahoot Night with maybe some gift cards. School Council Co-Chair(s) will reach out to Colleen to see what support they can provide regarding gift cards. We want this to be a fun night for our families

**2) School Council Page in School Newsletter:** (Maureen)

-We have a page in our School Newsletter, this is a new thing for School Council going forward and the school

-School Council thanked Mr. Reynolds for working with us to make this possible.

-We have page #2 and December 2021 was the first entry by the Co-chair. Each month we have provided content that is important for our families

-We have shared information about School Council, the different roles and how parents can get involved. We also shared upcoming meetings, events and workshops that would be of interest to our parents

-We have one page currently but Mr. Reynolds and Janet (admin) have been very supportive and expressed that we can have more pages if needed. They have been very flexible with School Council getting content to then on time

**3) School Council Website:** (Maureen)

-At the 1<sup>st</sup> Alternative Schools, School Council meet for this year which was last month the subject of School Council website was brought up. Some schools already had one for years, some are in the works, and the others didn't have one at all

-In the past our school had one and we need to get it back up and running. School Council inquired about this last year and sent emails to the acting principal and vice principal regarding this website

-Going forwards School Council would like to revisit this conversation and have the website up and running this year. If this is not possible then working on putting everything in place now so that it's ready to go for next year

#### 4) School Council Meeting Minutes posted for parents: (Maureen)

- School Council meeting minutes are to be posted for parents many schools that have their website up are already doing this
  - Posting of the minutes is a requirement we currently don't have our School Council meeting minutes up anywhere for parents. We need to make it accessible to all parents, which will allow them to be in the loop
  - The school does have a page with information about the School Council, on this page there is also a section with the monthly School Newsletters that parents can click and read them
- Posting of the School Council Meeting minutes: (Mr. Reynolds)
- Once the meeting minutes are completed, School Council can share with me and I will upload it

#### 5) Africentric Image and awareness of the school in the community: (Maureen)

- Last year it came up a few times in the School Council meeting about the image of our school in the community and the school is seen as a negative. It was said that the school was a dumping ground for all the black children that are problem children in the community
- The acting principals last year Ms. Johnson & Mr. Castello shared in School Council meeting that they were also concern about the school image and were in talk with Mr. Reynolds (the principal for the on-line learning) regarding some suggestions that they had. These suggestions were also shared at School Council meeting(s)
- There was a lot of sharing and suggestion from parents at the meeting last year but no action plan put in place because there was no regular principal at the time
- School Council would like to continue that conversation this year and put this topic back on the table to support the school in finding ways to change this narrative going forwards
- With the changing of the school image, this will help with the enrollment in the school to go up

#### Open for Questions/Suggestion:

Q: Is there way that we can do an open house. That way parents can come and see what Africentric school offers? Either in-person open house based on the restriction guidelines or virtual and/or both? Does the school promote Africentric to the other schools in the GTA? I am aware of all the negativity of Africentric from the pass like what was just mentioned. If people are aware of that then the open house would help out with that.

A: Yes, we had an opportunity to do an open house and we were thinking of doing it but Covid came we were unable to do an in-person. One of the things I wanted to do when Mrs. Richards was the vice principal was to get a professional photographer to come into the school. The goal was to have the photographer take photos and do short video clips of the children engaged in the learning environment of our school. We would promote the school by sharing this with other schools in the form of a CD so they could see what's happening.

#### Image of the School: (Mr. Reynolds)

- There has been significant improvement and the best way to show the community that we are on the right track is to work from inside out
- Compared to when I just arrived at the school, we are more focussed, our children are more compliant and they are doing well
- We want to focus on the brilliance of our students because they are capable of achieving anything that they set their mind on



- We want to focus on the positive of the children and not the negative behaviours
- We will focus on the academic achievements so that other students and parents in the community can hear about the great things that are happening at the school and be drawn to attend our school
- It will take awhile to change when you have a negative reputation, even when it has changed inside the school.

**Open for Questions/Suggestion:**

I have heard those rumors and those things over the 9+ years that I've been at the school from Kindergarten to now. I would encourage anyone to send their child here and have. These problems are at all the other schools too, it's not an isolated situation. Some parents want to put it on the school but that's not always the case, in fact sometime it's the child that has the problems no matter what school their enrolled in.

As a parent I will continue to support this school even when my child has graduated.

S: Something that we can do on a yearly basis is have the previous graduates come back to the events at the school. They can share what they accomplished, and how their learning at Africentric has helped them.

**Image of the School:** (Ms. Sullivan)

- Yes, the school has had ups and downs and all arounds
- One of the things that really stand out are the children and the parents, a lot of times those are the necessary sparks that encourage other parents to become involved within the school
- So, any opportunity that we do have in terms of spotlighting parents from our school and spotlighting the children in our school, their words go a long way too about their experiences
- Past students and also new students, if we can provide opportunities for them to be heard, to also become involved in events that involve our school with other schools as well. The more that we are seen out there the better for us, with the students and parents support that will go a long way, in terms as how others are looking at the school
- We have had a lot of parental involvement over the years and we really need to celebrate the parents that have continued to promote our school by talking about their experiences and it's impact on their children
- The school has come a long way we are on a very good trend and you can feel it in the school when you walk in, and you can see it within the children in the classrooms
- Their voices are powerful elements. In a class last week, I asked what does it feel like to be a student at the Africentric School? some of these will be featured in our presentation. As we focus on what our students are actually feeling in school? When the students have an opportunity to express themselves that speaks to the place that we are and the environment we've created

**Africentric Image and awareness of the school in the community:** (Maureen)

- A School flyer would be great for parents to send to family and friends to bring awareness of the school and help with enrolment, this could be a PDF version
- A PowerPoint slide or quick video could be added to the Africentric School page for others to learn more about the school and the programs offered. This is something that Downsview Alternative school has on their webpage and showed at their virtual open house this January
- As we work together to change this narrative we welcome all suggestions and support from everyone. If any parents want to be involved with brainstorming you are welcomed to send an email to Mr.



Reynolds. School Council will continue to support in anyway that they can to help improve this image for our children and the next generation of children that will attend the Africentric school

#### 6) Parent Involvement/ School Council meetings/events (survey from School Council)

- A survey this year to go out to parents, to get the awareness out about School Council
- School Council would create the questions and would like Mr. Reynolds support to send out to the parents. We would also like teachers on board
- The survey is to see what parents want from School Council and the school for their children
- Dates could be March/ April 2022 for the 1<sup>st</sup> survey then May/June for the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey
- Survey 1 & 2 would have questions specifically geared to get feedback to plan for next year and this year

#### **Follow up question from last meeting -Fundraising during Covid?** (Maureen)

- Can School Council have one this year?
- It could be an off-site fundraiser event lead by Robert G. (Treasurer)
- It wouldn't be anything that requires the children to solicit or go out into the community
- What are the concerns if any?
- School Council does not have the answer to this question right now. We will need to contact Colleen H. or Michelle M. to get the answer

#### Fundraising during Covid? Robert G. (Treasurer)

- Currently right now my wife and her business partner are selling shirts that say "Africentric Matters" and some of the proceeds will be donated to the school. They have mask and T-Shirts, they have shirts for all ages
- This started because last year we were trying to get an online Africentric program for our child and other parents enrolled in the school, and were told that it would not be possible
- The school could do a fundraiser that could be something indirect like a virtual fashion show or another type of event this is a suggestion

#### Open for Questions/Suggestion: (Maureen)

- S: Freeze Days (Jumbo for older grades/mini for younger grades) \*May-June
- S: Popcorn and a Movie Day (last Friday of the Month last period of the day) May-June
- S: Make Movie combo Popcorn & Drink Box

#### **Next Meeting date(s)**

- ◆ Wed. April 13, 2022 @ ~~6:30-7:30~~ pm via zoom changed to 6:00-8:00 pm \*Meeting and Part 2 Workshop
- ◆ Wed. June 15, 2022 @ 6:30 -7:30 pm via zoom

Meeting Adjourned: 7:47pm | Minutes Maureen B.