

School Council Agenda

Wednesday September 21, 2022

6:30-7:30p.m.



**Africentric
Alternative
School**



Meeting start time: 6:05pm

Opening of tonight's meeting:

Land Acknowledgement: - Read by a Parent

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"

Welcome: - Maureen B.

Welcome new and returning parents to our September meeting. We are happy that you could join us tonight. I would like to also welcome and introduce Colleen our Community Support Worker, who is back with us. We missed her greatly.

Ice Breaker/Introductions: - Maureen B.

Please introduce yourself and give us one word that best describes you?

1. Principal and School Updates - Mr. Hugh Reynolds

Thank you so much. Good evening again. It's so nice to see 16 people at the meeting, this is wonderful! First, I'd like to say thank you to everyone for all your support, all the words of encouragement, all the support that you're giving your children to come to school. I know that sometimes to balance life and balance taking children to school and that picking them up can be a challenge sometimes for families. We really appreciate everything that you do to support the children that we have at our school.

I'd like to welcome back Colleen or our community support worker. She has been fabulous working with this school over the years, and we're so delighted that she has returned in her role, and we know that she's going to do awesome things this year with us. Thank you so much, Colleen, and welcome back.

We have been in school for almost seven days, things are happening, students are adjusting to in person learning. We've had two and a half years of difficulties and challenges, and I can see

where students are re-adjusting to their daily routine in school and in classes, and this is exciting.

Assessments

Our teachers are currently doing assessments, because we know that there might have been gaps in learning over the two years. We want to make sure that we know exactly where our students are in terms of assessment especially literacy and numeracy. This will allow the teachers to program effectively for the children this year. There are a few updates I need to remind you of.

Curriculum Night

We're going to have Curriculum Night in person this year, and this is an opportunity for families to visit the school to learn more about the school and to meet your child's teacher. It's not a parent teacher interview because the teachers don't know the kids very well at this time. So it's just for the teachers to give you an update as to what they'll be focusing on for the school year, and how the children are adjusting to the routines in the classroom. So that's going to be on September 29th from 6-7 pm, and you will get more information via email soon.

Music Program

For those of you who don't know we have a vibrant music program at the school, we have a Steel Pan program that is taught by music instructors that are assigned by the TDSB Music Department. Last year our program started late because we did not have an instructor sent to the school, unfortunately we are in the same position this year. I reached out to the TDSB Music Department last week, and they inform me that they are in the hiring process for instructors. It's not only our school, but our school, unfortunately is on the list of schools that don't have one at the moment. So last year before our program started there was a professional musician name Joy Laps Lewis, and she did an amazing job with our students. I reached out to her this year to see if we can get her to come back to do some work, and she is interested. She will be coming, but just has some family situations that needs her full attention right now. However, she has informed me that in October she will reach out to me, and then we can plan how many visits and what it will look like. I'm excited about having her back at the school, because last years she wanted to do some recording with the children because some of our students created their own Steel Pan music. She was amazed, and said that they need to be recording. So, this year we're hoping that we can push it one step further and do the recording.

Nick Nurse Foundation

For those of you who were here with us last year, you would have heard that the Nick Nurse Foundation will be setting up a music lab at our school. I have reached out to his representative this week, and she has informed me that Nick is busy. He's coaching Canadian basketball, and he's getting ready to coach the Raptors but everything is still in the works. So he will be calling me directly to invite me to an event. He has a function that he's hosting, and that's where he wants to make the presentation. So, I'm just waiting for them to finalize everything. It's very exciting having this program come to our school. We have identified the room that will be used and it will be decorated, and painted before we set up for the music classes. The children can learn to play not only the Steel Pan, but also the Piano, Guitar, and

any other instrument that they choose. The students can take home the instruments to practice with at home and bring them back to school on a loaner basis during the school year.

School Assembly

We have started our assemblies and we have had two since school started. Please join us on Mondays usually we have the assemblies after 9:00 am, and would like parents to be there. After you drop off your child and school has started, we welcome you to come to the large gym if you have some time to attend the assembly. We'd love to have you there and the students love having their parents there also. Feel free starting next Monday to come on in and join us.

Parent/Q:

I don't know about these assembly meetings or anything around this. So what is it?

Principal/A:

Our school has always had assemblies, it's a gathering of all the classes in the large gym. We get together in the morning and the routine is we do messages in a group setting. It's usually a way to motivate our students, and for us to speak to them as one body, we have had special things happening at the school and other times we address situations. It started a number of years ago, the school used to have an assembly every day, then it went down to Mondays and Fridays. At an assembly on Monday we would set the expectations for the week, and then on Friday we'll do some reflection in the Assembly, and two years ago what I decided to do is to invite professionals from the black community to come in to speak to our students, for about 10-15 minutes to share their experiences and stories with the students. The hope is to try to motivate them and let them know they can achieve, and we find that it has really worked. So, we're planning to get back to that and if you know someone from our community who is very successful and very good with children we would like to have them at our assemblies. Please reach out to me and let me know, so that we can extend an invitation because it really made a difference when we did it two years ago.

Parent/A:

That sounds great, I will.

Extra Curriculars

I've spoken to teachers about extracurriculars, because I know that our students were deprived for the past few years. The teachers are on board now with planning for extracurricular activities. So you'll get more information on that as to what they'll be facilitating for students. Already we have students coming into the office reading the announcements and the kindergarten class has been working with Ms. Tyrell from the grade 3/4 class to get some students helpers too. We want to make sure that we build leadership among our students as the years goes by.

Lunch Room Routine

Our lunch room routine has resumed to eating in the gym. Last year, because of Covid, we had students eating in their classrooms individually, and now we have everyone back in the gym, and it's working out very well, so far. We are currently short of one lunch supervisor. It's difficult to get lunch time supervised at the TDSB schools because they're working just one hour and fifteen minutes every day. So it's difficult for someone to travel/take the bus just to do an hour and fifteen minutes each day. So if you know someone who is not working, who is living close by, and would like to be a lunchroom supervisor please let me know. I can take them through the process in terms of interviewing them and recommending them to the board. It's a good stepping stone to get into the TDSB, lots of people have started as a lunch supervisor, and now they're secretaries, office administrators and there are other roles to advance within the

TDSB. Colleen our Community Support Worker can also give you more information about that too.

Parent/Q:

Eating in the gym, does that apply to Junior kindergarten as well?

Principal/A:

No, the Junior kindergarten class has a dedicated lunch room supervisor that goes in the classroom to support the children during lunch.

Parent/A:

Okay, Thank you

Self-regulation Issues

Last year we had some challenges in terms of students with self-regulation issues there's an organization called CAFCAN, and they operate out of the Jamaica Canadian Association, and they worked with this school in the past. So, they have programs that they brought into our school, and its people from our background, so they know how to program for our children. I've reached out to them, we have had two meetings. They have a program called ***The Leaders in Partnership*** that we plan to take into our grade 3/4 class, and they also have what they call a ***SNAP*** program (Stop, No, and Plan) where they can work with individual students. We are on the ball with getting support in the school, and we're just waiting for them to hire employees to come into the school because we already did the initial meetings and everything.

2. Parent Open Floor - Questions/Suggestions/Concerns

School Council/Q:

Mr. Reynolds, I was talking at the end of the school year with Ms. Ramsey, and I was wondering why we don't have a breakfast program for the kids in the morning. Some of the kids come early. I have some information. I know you have Toronto's Breakfast Club, but it has to be petitioned by this school, so I could send the information on that.

Principal/A:

Yeah, that's excellent. We had a breakfast program, maybe about three years ago. Ms Ramsey was the person who was in charge of it, and it was really good. So I welcome any information you can share about that, so we can see if we can get that started again.

School Council/S: (regarding Bullying at the school)

In regards to bullying, I was talking with some parents and this was a big concern. So, I did some research and I know you're linked to MLSE (Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment), and they have a bullying program called ***Huddle Up***. The only issue with that program is that it's only for grade 6, 7, and 8 students. There's also another program, called ***Canadian-Wide***, which is for all ages. In order to be part of that program, it's up to the teachers at the school to apply for that program to get it into the school. I think it'll be a good program because it's really good for the children in our school. I'll send the link.

Principal/A:

Yes, definitely, I welcome that information. Thank you!

Parent/Q:

It's regarding the children that come early. I know there is a daycare that is attached or inside of the school, but I was wondering if parents are interested in having like our own before & after school program, and busing on a whole. I know there's interest for like each part. But just like all together, there's like a before school. There's like a busing thing dedicated, and within the before school we could also have like snacks that's connected to the breakfast program that Robert was just saying. I don't know if that's something that you guys would be interested in?

Principal/A:

I think that's a great idea. I had a meeting this morning with principals and vice- principals from my learning network. What I realized is that we have a challenge getting the number of kids that we need at the school, and two of the biggest things are there's no transportation provided at our school because it's an Alternative school, and the other thing is that daycare space is limited in the building. Even last week a parent came to me and said, I can't do it. She has a child in the kindergarten class and she had to withdraw her child for now, because she can't drop off and pick up as she'd like. I spoke with the superintendent this morning about that, and one of the things that he mentioned to me was that when the school started. The understanding with the parent community was that because it's an alternative school like any other alternative school, there's no transportation provided. I expressed how unfair that is and even though it's an alternative school, but if you want to remove barriers from the families and communities then we need to look at doing things in a different way. Obviously, there's a demand for the school but there's a lot of strain on parents to get their children to school.

I said we need to lobby for that and the reply was it's not that I don't believe in that, but the meetings that I've attended regarding this which were many in the past the messaging was the same.

I think that as a parent community this would be something that needs to be organize and lobby for what we want/need. It's clear that we could have a lot more children enrolled in the school if we didn't have those barriers.

Parent/Q:

How many recesses do the Junior kindergarten have during the day?

Principal/A:

The Junior and Senior kindergarten class does not go out for recess, so it's built in the program, because you know that it's a play-based program for kindergarten. So it depends on the timetable that the teacher has they give them a break in the morning and break in the afternoon, and then they have out their outdoor play time also.

Parent/Q:

The outdoor play is that like once a day or a What's the frequency in that?

Principal/A:

I'll have to look on the timetable. I can't tell it off my head right now but you can call me tomorrow, and I can take a look at the timetable and I can let you know.

Parent/A:

Okay,

Parent/Q:

So just to clarify. There's outdoor playtime, and then two recesses. Is that right?

Principal/A:

Within the classroom

Parent/A:

Okay within the classroom. Yeah. I was actually asking my daughter about that too and she said they have one recess per day. Thanks.

Parent/S:

Since Mr. Reynolds has stated that numbers are low at the school, and parents have difficulties with daycare and all those other issues. Then I guess it would be a really wise idea to try and establish the morning program like before and after. My child started since kindergarten at the school and is in grade 7 now. They had a morning program, and it was successful because parents were coming with their children to drop them off so that they could get to work, and whatever that they needed to do on time. So, I don't know if my input, or what I've said makes sense.

Principal/A:

Yes, it makes absolute sense, but we're going to need volunteers for that. It's an excellent point. Thank you!

Parent/Q:

Is Ms. Ramsey on leave?

Principal/A:

Yes, Ms. Ramsey is off. She will be back but she is off for medical reasons right now.

3. Model Schools Updates-Community Support Worker – Colleen Huggins

So I just wanted to talk a bit about School Council, and this information will come home to you. I'm happy to see 18 parents, especially a lot of kindergarten parents, and hopefully we'll have you for the whole eight years of your children's educational journey.

School Council and Elections

So, it would be really great to have you be a part of the School Council and elections is part of School Council, and it sounds very, you know, political and stuff but it's not at all. It means in the first 30 days we look at electing people to be voting members that has to do with maybe fundraising. Sometimes the school might need something so the council might support by doing fundraising, and you can vote on what you want to fundraise for. You can nominate yourself for a position, there's usually Co-Chairs or a Chair and basically, you're just leading meetings. You're connecting with parents to find out what programs and things they want. You're working with me and Mr. Reynolds for the students, and their parents. There's a treasurer that looks at if you're fundraising or money, and the secretary who can take notes or minutes of the meeting, and also help with any agenda or flyers.

Here are different ways to get involved. Of course, one way is attending the meetings, you know, getting your questions answered and finding out updates of what's happening in the schooling community and get connected. Volunteering, now that we're back, and schools are open. If we have a breakfast program we're going to need volunteers. The snack program sometimes needs volunteers, the Before & After school program might need volunteers. So, looking at volunteers and engagement in the school, then joining the Council as an actual voting member, or holding a position that I had spoken about on the Council. So all that information will come to you. If you're interested, you can nominate yourself. You can nominate somebody else. *(the flyers that was shared during the meeting will be sent home via email by the principal to all parents)

Workshop #1-Welcome to the New School Year to Our Circle of Care

Some other updates. I have a really good workshop That's happening this Thursday, October 6th/2022, and it's **Welcome to the New School Year to Our Circle of Care**. Basically, it will have different workshops from people on navigating the school system. There's a new parent concern protocol that will be presented, and they're talking about accessing interpreters and translators. They're talking about well-being, we have the management of social work. We'll be talking about well-being for your child, talking about school improvement plans, inclusion, and education, support information about different supports and resources available. This will come home to you. Please, if you're interested attend, it's virtual through Zoom. It is a webinar, so you have to pre-register in advance to get the link.

Workshop #2- Food Handling Program and Certificate

Okay, another opportunity is food handling program and certificate. This is for Thursday October 20th /2022, from 10am-2pm. You do have to register, and the number is below to call, and then you have to register by October the 18th /2022.

Parent Survey

Another thing that's going to be coming your way is a Model School's Parent Survey. Basically, it's to assess the needs that you have for workshops and training. I work with a lot of different TDSB Central staff to support on literacy, numeracy, wellness. It could be parenting strategies. It could be anti-bullying strategies. I'm just curious right now before we do the survey because that will be coming out for October maybe put in the chat some interest you have for training or workshop topics. We're working a bit differently where we're not doing the one-off workshops, we want to do series where we build on those skills. So, if it's literacy, we're working on pronunciation, we're working on sounds, we're working on different things. Then our next workshop would be following up on how did it work? where can we work on things? Then maybe how to make reading fun and then bringing in some activities at support literacy. We're looking at building on the different topics that we have for parents, to help build your skills to support your children because we find the one-off workshops don't really work. Parents don't use it sometimes we really want to make this meaningful for you. We want to ensure its things that you will learn and apply in your life. So, any ideas please put in the chat or feel free to just let me know, I'm making notes of the interest of parents.

Parent/Q:

Just wondering anything that we want to sign up for, whether Colleen recommends it or Mr. Reynolds do we just send an email to the office? Do we go to the office? How would we sign up?

Principal/A:

Colleen usually sends me whatever comes her way, then I would send it by email to share with parents.

Parent/Q:

Okay, and then we just respond like that?

Community SW/A:

Yes, based on the flyer because some of them are from different agencies. I'm just outreaching it so you would have to contact somebody else. I'm just getting you the information.

Parent/A:

Okay, sounds good. Thanks.

4. School Council Updates -Maureen B.

Okay. So now you guys are stuck with me and it's my turn to share about School Council with everyone.

Nomination forms & Election of new Council

So as Colleen mentioned, nominations and elections for New Council will be happening soon. A nomination form will be going out tomorrow, Mr. Reynolds has it scheduled. It's a Google form, feel free to self-nominate or nominate someone else or other people. We only ask that if you nominate someone, please let them be aware that you've nominated them. So please look out for that form tomorrow, and it will be available to you until Friday October 7th, then it will be closed to see who has been nominated. Information has gone out via email about the roles. Just like what Colleen had mentioned earlier. I believe it went out Monday to parents via email by Mr. Reynolds.

October School Council Meeting

The elections will happen at our next council meeting, which we had to schedule and plan for because we had to do it within thirty days, so that falls on 26 days, which would be Wednesday, October 12th will be the next meeting. This will be the nomination/election meeting and School

Council and it will be from 6:30pm-8:00pm, it's a bit longer in order to do the School Council meeting and the nomination/elections. We hope to see everybody and more parents and a lot of you on the ballot for nomination.

Survey Monkey

We did our first School Council Survey in June 2022. I used Survey Monkey for the first time and I never used it before, but it wasn't a good avenue to use. I only could read five parents input but it says that about ten or fifteen parents did the survey, but because it was the free version they wouldn't open until I paid, so I don't have all the results. However, I had some information that came back as to what was so important for us to know and what is needed. Going forward, I don't have the results with me tonight, because it's not really conclusive, but I will have it for our next meeting. It's important for the information to be shared with everyone.

Letter of Parents Concerns to Mr. Reynolds

So as Mr. Reynolds talked earlier about some things such as extracurricular activities and the music program. One of the requests from the last meeting in June was for School Council to support in sending a letter to Mr. Reynolds of parents concerns. I was able to put together a list of them and sent a really long email to Mr. Reynolds on the behalf of our parents. It was great that Mr. Reynolds has already touched based on some of the stuff today, and his response to my email, was he's on board with supporting the needs of our children. So, whatever is a concern for us as parents is definitely a concern for him, and he looks forward to working with the new Council, coming forward for the year that will be elected to problem solve and find solutions going forward. So, this will be a new task and joint commitment going forward for the next Council elected in order to further support the needs of our children.

School Council Newsletter

So, we have a newsletter, a page in the School's Newsletter that comes out every month, but Mr. Reynolds has been so nice to embrace the growth of School Council and supported us with the launch of this last year. As we continue to grow this year Mr. Reynolds supports the growth again with allowing us to have our own School Council Newsletter. Going forwards the September 2022 edition will not be part of the School's Newsletter. It'll be independent, and it will come out before the month ends because it's a monthly newsletter. So that's a great big leap and a great step for us.

Thank you from the School Council Co-chair

So, before we leave and I stopped talking, I hope I don't get emotional. This is my section where I say, Thank you!

Okay. First, I'd like to thank you, **Robert our treasure** for all your support and having my back. I survived last year because you always made time to hear me vent and help me to problem solve. So I appreciate you.

I would like to thank **Mr. Reynolds** for all his support he has given School Counsel and me, especially with the many requests I have, and I put them on you to send out to parents the information at the very last minute. Your support has created this space, so we can have School Council meetings via Zoom and the parent workshops last year, and today. It's a great example of teamwork and overcoming barriers. I say barriers, because without a TDSB email

account School Council cannot have a Zoom meeting, and we don't have one currently right now.

To the wonderful **parents of Africentric** last year was a blast, and it came with a lot of big and small challenges, but we survived. This was only possible because, with the goals that we had in mind for our children and their future. I have to say you guys kept it real, and kept me on my toes. As the outgoing Co-chair I request that you continue to be united, and let your voices sing loud for our children, the future children enrolled, and the many generations after along with the current children enrolled in Africentric. Thank you, everybody that's here tonight for your support.

Words from Mr. Reynolds

I can't allow you to go without saying something, and I don't think you're going anywhere. Thank you so much for being such a strong advocate for all the students and the families at the Africentric school. I have seen, and I have observed your interaction with all the kids at school and you treat them just like they're your kids. I think you are a great example for parents to show the support for a school. I know sometimes you think that you're bombarding me with too many things, but I like that because it keeps me on my toes. Sometimes we have different perspectives on things, and I appreciate that because there are things that I don't think about that you will think about, because I'm reflective and after speaking with you I can go back and say, yeah, I think it makes sense what you were saying. Even though I may not have seen that, at the time when you said it, so I really appreciate that. I hope that even if you're no longer the Co-chair, or on the executive that you will still be able to support our school in whatever way you can. Thank you so much.

Words from our Community Support Worker

I also want to just say, Maureen, you've been wonderful, and this isn't goodbye because you're not going anywhere. This is until next time, you've done wonderful work on the Council. I'm proud of you, and I know you will continue to do wonderful work. So, thank you!

Words from the School Representative

As a member of staff, I want to say that last year I totally enjoyed working with you. You show such dedication and commitment. You are so considerate, especially knowing the stresses of teaching in the school, and then also becoming involved in activities after school. You came and you offered support, you helped, you volunteered you took initiative on what you see that needed to be done, and I so appreciated that, I didn't even have to ask. I know even if you don't have the title in the position, I know that you will support whoever has the position, because that is just how you are. You'll make sure that we are organized, and for person who talked about being organized. Oh, my goodness! You organize me, and that is what enabled us to really have such a successful graduation last year because of the efforts that you put in, and your total concern, not just for the event but also for every single student in the school. The initiative with making sure that the students receive their books and standing outside to greet parents. I mean, you really took a lot of those extra steps, so I must say it was an absolute pleasure. I thank you immensely on behalf of myself and all the staff in the school, because we all benefited from your position that you had as the School Council. You represented parents so well, thank you so much.

Words from our current School Council Treasurer

Maureen It's a great, just wonderful time really, when I meet with you to talk and get ideas. You've done a lot for the school, I know you're not going anywhere. You have one more year left. I'm looking forward to working with you throughout the whole year, learning some little tidbits from you, and we're going to have a great year. So even if you're a co-chair or not we appreciate what you do.

Words from a Parent

Maureen, I just want to say thank you very much. I truly appreciate your service, and you will be a part of our Africentric school, even though your daughter is leaving next year but please stick around. We need you.

Words from Previous Co-chair

I basically wanted to just give you your flowers. You're not going anywhere. I've already well and decided that, your contract is at least three years. That's what I was told when I started, so you're not going anywhere. I want to

make sure you get your flowers for the work done up until this point, the dedication, the passion, the encouragement, the consistency, which is something that we have not been able to say fully when it comes to Africentric. This definitely has not been lacking when you've done the work that we've all wanted to see, and just to give you folks some context this meeting has 18 participants. I guarantee you that Maureen brought in all of them, if not most of them. We do not have parent council meetings with this many participant I will call a spade of spade, but Maureen has passionately made sure that every pickup every afternoon she goes out, she encourages, she invites. she speaks, and she makes sure that folks are encouraged to join. So I'm nominating you regardless, just so you know you're being nominated, and whatever position you want to have you can have for as long as you want. I just want to make sure that you get your flowers now while you smell them, and again afterwards, as you continue to do good work.

Closing words from School Council Co-Chair

I learned most of my stuff from Jelani (previous Co-chair) when I came on board he taught me so much. Thank you, Jelani. Yes, I'm not going anywhere. I'm still going to be at the school, and I'll forever be there. So, thank you everybody. I just remembered as everyone was sharing that I've created an email account for parents to reach out to me, whether I'm at the school or not. If you need support, have questions or anything. It's africentricspeaks@gmail.com I'm going to put it in the chat, so feel free to connect with me there. Now, if there's nothing else we're one minute over time, and I want you to come to the next meeting. So, goodbye everyone, it was a wonderful meeting. Thank you all for coming, remember to nominate yourself or someone, the link comes out tomorrow.

5. Follow up question from last meeting

This was put into a letter and sent via email on behalf of the parents to Mr. Reynolds by the School Council Representatives. The hope is to continue the conversation going forward to achieve success for our children.

Next Meeting date(s)

Wednesday October 12, 2022 6:30-8:00pm

➤ School Council & Nominations/Elections for new council

Meeting Adjourned: 7:36pm | Minutes Maureen B.