

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 11, 2024 (6:30 PM – 7:45 PM)
In Person



ZION HEIGHTS MS
SCHOOL COUNCIL

ATTENDANCE:

School Staff: Principal Le, Ms. O

Elected School Council Members (13 Voting Members): Aaron Iravani (Co-Chair), Key Kasravi (Co-Chair), Carrie Jiao (Treasurer), May Mark (Vice-Treasurer), Aarthi Visva (Secretary), Philip Wood, Nitin Narad, Asli Ozbek Figueros, Ken Ng, Vince To, Tejal Patel, Jenny Zeng

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”.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: November 9, 2023 – Motion to approve Minutes by Key Kasravi; Seconded by Aaron Iravani; no objections, motion approved.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Principal’s Report** – Principal Le:

- Principal Le commented on concerns brought forward during last meeting. Acknowledged mistakes made last year were due to lack of communication; admin team is committed to hearing and honouring parents’ voice going forward.
- Chairperson-Key, enquired about staffing shortage: what affect does this have on the model? Can certain subjects be grouped together for a teacher to teach? E.g., Math & Science and English & History/ISS. This will make it easier for teachers to increase their competency.
- Two parent comments made suggestions to Principal to consult with school council subcommittee for making decisions. Principal Le’s response – parents via the School Council consult on the school allocation; consulting parents regarding teaching model is not part of the process; but hearing parents’ voice and honouring parents’ feedback are part of the process.
- Principal Le had data on students’ progress?? and models? that were used to support the current staffing model – documents with data that was assessed was shared and passed around for parents to review during the meeting. Acknowledged that students’ needs are put in the centre when building the model, and staff were consulted.
- Ms. O commented that Grade 6, 7, and 8 school/field trips are confirmed. For the grade 8 trip: 119/167 graduating students have signed up for the trip (made the \$50 deposit). Original quoted price was \$309/student based on 100% participation, but based on those who have signed up we are currently at \$314/student.
- For families who may need some financial support, the school will send out a letter and then follow-up with phone calls (usual protocol) to find out their interests and admin will also follow up

with School Council. Students are also planning fundraising events to for the trip. Grade 8 is also planning a Forest Valley outdoor education day before June.

2. Teacher's Report – Principal Le / VP O

- Ms. McArthur has retired after a long tenure with us at the Zion community and she will be missed. Ms. Park is returning from leave to the music department.
- Speech/Art unit is working to engage all students – divisional speech contest is being planned for April.
- Q? Chair-Key: Are the art classes utilizing the kiln that School Council purchased for the school prior to covid for making clay arts? Mr. Le: no they are not.

- Reviewing the Start of School Year Assessment (diagnostic data)
 - Grade 6: from 165 students, 28 were at below “Level-3”
 - Grade 7: from 147 students, 24 were at below “Level-3”
 - Grade 8: from 167 students, 28 were at below “Level-3”

- Facilities: Science Labs – replacement of counter tops: measurements have been completed; expected completion date, early 2025. A walk about was completed to identify renovation needs and what can be repurposed for modern education.

- Chair-Key, raised concerns regarding repurposing the Design & Tech lab. Zion invested in equipment that would be difficult to bring back once it leaves the school. AY Jackson does not have this equipment. Opportunities related to careers in “trades” within the curriculum are growing now and it will be difficult to bring equipment back when school is ready to support the curriculum. We should be very thoughtful about letting tens of thousands of dollars in equipment leave our school.

- Principal Le: There are 3 rooms that were designated to stay closed this year to cut back on school budget (janitorial cleaning savings), and D&T was one of them. May repurpose them to replace portables if necessary in terms of future head count at school D&T labs are not centrally funded for middle schools and there are no staff available to run them. D&T comes out of the science curriculum; not many schools have them. Zion has several teachers who are knowledgeable, and book groups of students to use the lab for STEM etc.

- Trustee Li: Supported Chair's concerns and comment, and he suggested redesigning D&T room for STEM purposes and losing it. He also shared that Georges Vanier (high school) does have D&T space and programs. They have a very robust Design and Tech program. Vanier has separate rooms for Media Tech, Music Recording, Arts Lab, Aero-engineering hanger – and all are well equipped. Discussion took place around having space but no funding to run the D&T program. Funding needs to happen at provincial level and will take time to put together a curriculum and structure to support the program. It's school's decision to keep D&T room/space (Trustee Li).

- Principal Le suggested that the school can pilot D&T space with teachers for STEM lab etc. similar to Robotics club.

- Chair, Key, volunteered to connect with School Council co-chair at George Vanier. Maybe we can plan to tour GV and/or invite them to tour Zion to get suggestions on how to best utilize the D&T space, collaborate with their programming for students that may have interest.

3. TDSB & Ward Update – Trustee Li

- Trustee James Li spoke about the hybrid rotary model – teacher teaches more than one subject but not all; allows continuity for students; allows specialization for teachers, which results in more in depth and broader material being taught. Model increases proficiency and capabilities of teachers; suggested Zion to consider grouping subjects as recommended by parents.
- This year at the Board level, there are not many changes as all are looking for some stability; have full staffing / enough supply teachers this year; projecting that absenteeism will build up in June and staff will look at trends to compare with previous years.
- Busing consortium – added more stringent performance clauses; will physically inspect busing company and check for sufficient staffing; if a company doesn't meet the requirements, then we will give the contract to another company. Buses for field trips – part of TDSB's list on contract. Price has increased: \$250 pre-pandemic, now \$550 for a round trip. Q? Chair-Key: Did the Board negotiate field trip rates? Trustee Li: this was not part of negotiation last year – we will need to incorporate that next time.
- 2024 Sept – A number of new Student Interest Programs are going to start operating. Current model (draw system) is not equitable either. About 1 in 3 students applied for math student interest program, and only 50% were accepted. To meet the demand, 35 more math-sci-tech programs are going to be made available centralized and localized. If schools can handle, then they will be let to operate. AY Jackson in Sept. 2024 will have MST certification program starting in Gr. 10. If gifted students want certification, then will have that opportunity automatically by taking the courses within the gifted program.
- At AY Jackson – MST, AP, SHSM will all be offered to students
- George Vanier – will have central STEM+ program – starting with 35 spots and growing to become the largest program in TDSB with 70-80 students per year
- Specialty Arts programs are more difficult to implement within existing schools and to open – currently there are Earl Haig, Claude Watson and one in Etobicoke. Goal is to open 2 new Arts Schools soon – one around Warden/Lawrence/Kennedy, another in Central Etobicoke to cover both east and west parts of the city.
- Question raised by parent regarding enrollment whether it will be merit based vs. interest based? Trustee Li – talked about equity in opportunity vs. equity in outcome; and feels success of students are going to be jeopardized. This year's admission process required an application; otherwise, will be counterproductive for students if they are not committed.
- Question from parent regarding whether exams are standardized: Yes, at AYJ (i.e., gifted, regular stream etc. will write the same exam at the end of the semester).

- Parent generated funding at school. Policy being reviewed regarding retainment and redistribution of funds raised by individual school councils. Some voted to have fundraised money from schools with higher fundraising success redistributed to others. Zion school council objected to the idea. Policy being discussed would include capping school-held fund at a certain amount, and redistributing any amount raised above that. For example, if capped at \$30K; the school can keep \$30K raised by school; for amount raised above the threshold amount, a percentage would go to the board for redistribution to other schools that do not fundraise. Trustee Li had voiced to the Board that total revenue will drop if capped. Trustee Li looking for Zion parents' voice to express concern at the board. This is a School board's decision and not provincial decision.
 - Q? What percentage of school councils are raising money? In Don Valley North, there are 28 schools and 2-3 have no fundraising program
 - Q? What do we think the reason is for that? Key issue is a lack of School Council participation
 - Comment from Parent: fundraising at the schools is volunteer driven and it's a lot of time and work from community members. So taxing our school council will discourage people from investing their time.

4. Financial Report – Carrie (Treasurer)

- SC started the year with about \$10k and with the two pizza lunches so far, we've generated \$4,100 in revenue and \$2,600 in profit. Our current cash balance is about \$13k
 - Chair-Key suggested to review the budget plan for the year and discuss school needs at the next meeting.

5. Other items (Jenny)

- The Innovation Grant – we've received funding and need to follow up for programing the workshop with Common Compass.
- Few parents asked if future meetings can be hybrid to encourage more participation from those who have difficulty coming in person. Mr. Le will follow up and check to see if the next meeting can have an online presence and be held in the Library, which is more quiet.

Motion to adjourn: Motioned by Aaron, seconded by Key