

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 5, 2024 (4:00 PM – 5:00 PM)



ZION HEIGHTS MS
SCHOOL COUNCIL

STAFFING / SSON COMMITTEE

ATTENDANCE:

School Staff: Principal Le, Ms. O.

Committee Members in Attendance: Kalan Chung, Jerome, Vince To, Ken Ng (phone), Aaron Iravani (Co-Chair), Key Kasravi (Co-Chair).

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”.

AGENDA:

Continue the discussion regarding 2024-2025 resource allocation and scheduling:

- Vince: I'm very frustrated with this process and we seem to be going around in circles. There are teachers who graduate from university without ever having taken real math courses. So if a teacher who does not have a background in math and/or does not have a likeness for math, he/she will not be as effective. Teachers who are better at a subject and have a passion for it then pass along that love for the subject to their students. Whereas having someone teach subjects that they do not like or they are as fluent in is a waste of that person's talents and not as impactful for the students. At a minimum, subjects should be paired up for teachers based on their personal affinities and specialty/background (for example math with science)
 - Mr. Le: We are considering all options and everything is on the table for discussion and assessment. We also plan to share the ideas from School Council with the teaching staff.
 - This year we've noticed that the incident of online bullying and issues related to cell phones have come down.
- Kalan: What is the timeline for this decision making process?
 - Mr. Le: everything needs to be done by mid-April
 - We will receive our school resource allocation on March 19th
 - Slide presented by Mr. Le: we expect to have approx. 470 students
- Kalan Q?: Can we not plan for the schedule/model (rotary vs. other) before we receive the resource allocation?
 - Mr. Le: No, we cannot. We need the resource allocation first. This is always on a tight timeline.
- Jerome: I'd like to echo Vince. We need to couple math & science, and language & humanities type subjects. This approach makes sense because: 1) science and math's knowledge base requires that adequate competence is achieved year over year, as it builds one on top of the other. Variability in teaching could affect student skill development and future mental health as the material become more complex. 2) Common sense dictates that passionate teachers enjoy their preferred subjects and to force them to teach subjects with less ability/interest degrades their job satisfaction and potentially increases absenteeism to the detriment of the students.
- Why can't we build the models based on the 470 students and the staff we currently have?
- I would also point out that analysis based on subjective and anecdotal data results in outcomes that are not correct, because this approach falsely assumes correlations that do not necessarily exist.
 - My kids are bored in some of their classes.
- Vince: Mr. Le, how far back does your data go when you make comparisons between the outcomes from rotary vs. this year's delivery model? And if one of the concerns for changing away from rotary is teacher absence, why wouldn't that be the same for both models?

- Mr. Le: I'm concerned that kids are bored in class. Why do we think this is happening?
 - Kalan: some teachers do not have the passion for certain courses to make the material interesting.
 - Last year the specialized teachers were providing more engaging projects that were more interesting for the kids.
- Jerome: Is there a correlation between teacher absenteeism and the courses that they teach, which they may not care as much about?
- Key: I've been at the school now for 7 years and I don't think we've had a significant change in the core composition of the teachers. We've lost a few to retirement, but most have been around through rotary model days. We don't really know where teachers sit on this matter. During this last parent-teacher conferences, I discussed how the new model is working with most of my daughter's teachers and some who do not teach her but were in the cafeteria – they all commented that the previous model worked better. And separately, three of them commented that the 30 minute classes are not effective, and frankly even 40 minute classes are tough because by the time the kids get in the room and settle, that usually takes time.
- Ms. O commented that the admin team discusses these matters with the teachers and they're surprised to hear a different conversations.
 - Key replied: they're likely worried about being insubordinate and disagreeing with admin because Mr. Le is their boss and they have to perform their duties as he defines it.
- Key: Was there a directive from senior leadership at TDSB to conform Zion with all other middle schools and move out of the rotary model?
 - Mr. Le: No, let me clarify that, there was no directive from anyone.
- Mr. Le commented that he and Ms. O plan to meet with admin at other schools to see what models are being used prior to making a commitment for next year.
- Key: Is there software used for modeling the rotary schedule or is it done manually. Because it certainly seems that it would be more complex than the homeroom model. I think high schools use software.
- Mr. Le shared that high school rotatory allocation requires a dedicated vice-principal that works on this for 5 weeks solely. He eluded to fact that they do this by hand at Zion.
 - Key brought up the fact that this is not a true rotatory system because the children remain with their class cohort and therefore simpler.
- Vince and Jerome offered assistance to help design anonymous teacher survey with respect to feedback of current system and past rotatory preference.
- Several parents commented that they're frustrated with this approach that all these meetings have ended the same way. The scheduling approach is reactionary and not worked on based on previous data.
- Key: We're all parents here and we care about issues related to mental health challenges that some kids may be experiencing. But if 10 out of 470 students needs extra support and attention, we should reconsider changing the teaching framework for the vast majority who are benefiting from it without any data or metrics. We should instead focus on identify those students and providing support for their specific needs.
- Mr. Le: It would be helpful if we can circulate a summary of the notes from these meetings that can be shared with teachers and staffing committee. It would also be helpful to receive from this committee the "asks" from School Council parents.
 - Key: Yes, we can do that.

Meeting adjourned.