

AMETHYST SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Meeting
November 3, 2020

Present:	Selwyn Hicks, Chair	Michele Neuman	Heather Rogan
	Barbara Hicks	Andrea O'Donoghue	Sara Middleton
	Shari Campbell	Amanda Kerr	Val Collins
	Jessica Gates	Lynne Markey	Jennifer Schroter
	Melissa Baidoobonso	Delanie Zettler	Sean Gregory, Principal
	Sherry Eacrett, Res. Manager		

1. **Welcome** – Selwyn Hicks

- Everyone in attendance was welcomed; Last meeting's minutes were approved by Andrea O'Donoghue; this was seconded by Michele Neuman.

2. **Terms of Reference** - Sean Gregory

- What is a School Council?
- The mandate of a School Council is to encourage parent engagement, act as advisory group to the principal, celebrate student achievement, and discuss school climate.
- We have a unique council as our members are only on the committee for a short time.
- Provide educational component for students and parents through workshops and outreach piece.
- If you have concerns specifically regarding your child, school council meetings are not the forum to discuss them. Follow the protocol in place by contacting your child's teacher/counsellor, principal or residence manager.

3. **Residence Update** - Delanie Zettler & Sherry Eacret

Delanie Zettler:

- Extended Day students working very hard during homework time; there are various activities for them to take part in after homework completed – Mandala Colouring Sheets, scavenger hunts, crafts, photo club for the Elem. Kids (will be offered to secondary in new year) and ASL (American Sign Language) for secondary.
- In the evening kids are participating in Scavenger hunts, tag with pool noodles, outdoor sports, and crafts.
- Each dorm has 1 night a week to use gym and games area (pool table, table tennis and foosball)
- Dressed up for Halloween, carved pumpkins, played Halloween trivia with peanut free prizes and watched a movie.
- Kids need to bring their coats to school and soon, hats and mitts – to be prepared for outside time each day.
- In Social Skills, working on Binder organization, required supplies checklist and agenda usage

Sherry Eacret:

- Schedule for November has been sent home outlining new clubs; looking at outdoor education activities.
- Aim is to keep kids active while building on their social skills.

- A parent asked, what if a student regularly requires extra time to complete their homework? How can they participate in the free time activities?
- Mrs. Eacrett noted that if there is a particular activity that a child would like to participate in, for them to let their counsellor know so they can make a plan together; Mr. Gregory noted we could look at supporting a child at lunch to get assignments completed; students need to touch base with their teachers and counsellor

- Michele Neuman noted that there were concerns around not having a consistent person helping with homework.
- Mrs. Eacrett noted that as per Public Health regulations, student cohorts stay together; they try to have same staff assisting with homework, however, a counsellor may need to spend more time with a specific child, staff may be off work due to illness or personal reasons, and this year we are setting schedules for double the kids with same number of staff.

- Heather Rogan asked why kids can't interact with other dorms in the evenings if they are wearing masks. Kids may want to participate in a different activity than what their group is doing. They are part of different cohorts during the school day than they are in the evening.
- Sherry noted the kids are groups are based by Cohorts, as per Public Health Regulations for contact tracing.
- If there are activities a child wants to do, please let the primary counsellor know.
- We are trying to be creative to work with the Public Health regulations - staff are working very hard to make activities work; everyone's safety is priority.
- You can email Sherry Eacret (sherry.eacrett@ontario.ca) with any questions and she can look at contacting Public Health so see if there is any flexibility.

- Heather Rogan said that it seems that lot of the meals are high in carbohydrates and low on vegetables.
- Sherry Eacrett and Delanie Zettler noted that counsellors have been talking with the kids and have compiled a list as to what they would see more or less of, for snacks, lunches and dinners. Kat, in the kitchen, is very open to feedback from the students. She will do the best she can with the constraints she has – allergies and health regulations.

- Amanda Kerr asked if parents would be getting the residence version of IEPs?
- Sherry Eacret noted that these are currently under review by Senior Management, however, kids are setting goals; please reach out to your child's counsellor if there are specific areas you would like looked at.

4. **The Loft Dorm Updates** - Katelyn Keip

- The girls in The Loft Dorm have been keeping very busy getting outside and enjoying weather, playing soccer, exploring our campus, and playing Person of Interest.
- Dressing up for Halloween was fun for all.
- Having lots of laughs and enjoying getting to get to know each other.

5. **Principal's Update** - Sean Gregory

- PDSB is in the process of increasing bandwidth at all sites.
- Shout out to all staff - counsellors, teachers, support staff, nursing staff, cleaning staff, cafeteria staff, Tech. staff – everyone has been so flexible and creative dealing with sanitizing, masks, risk reduction measures, creating new acceptable phys. ed activities, cleaning gym equipment;
- Thank you to Mrs. Vincent for organizing the recent in-house cross country meet.
- Kat, in the kitchen, puts a lot of special care into preparing snacks and lunches preparing pre-packaged snacks and lunches each day.
- Tech team – we have received new chrome books for students; prepared if we need to pivot; provides options for students and staff who are having connectivity issues; families will be receiving a call from Katie Guild and there will be a loan agreement.

- Daily Covid screening is to be done each day – by parents at home for daily students and by counsellors for residential students. Handwashing, sanitizing, wearing of masks, and social distancing require reinforcement from parents in the evenings and on weekends.
- Heather Rogan noted that some kids are experiencing chapped hands; is there a different sanitizer available? Is lotion available? Mr. Gregory and Mrs. Eacrett noted that parents could send in Scent Free lotion for their child to use.
- We have not received any information from Public Health regarding modifications to current plan.

- Information has been sent to the families of the extended day students regarding how to receive updates from the bus companies regarding delays and cancellations; please be sure to sign up for those alerts.

- We held our 3rd fire drill today;
- A reminder to please ensure kids have appropriate outerwear for outside time.

- Student reading assessments have been completed; assessments will be done again in January and at the end of the year; Elem. Also completed PRIME math assessments.
- Parents will be receiving a graph showing what reading level their child came in at and where they are currently.
- Elementary Progress Reports and Secondary Midterms will be going home Nov. 20.

- Virtual Parent teacher conferences will be held the week of Nov. 23-27. information was sent home today; please contact your child's teacher to arrange a time.
 - EQAO Assessments - The Elementary Gr. 3 and Gr. 6 assessments will not be taking place. Gr. 9 Applied Math Test will take place in January; we are waiting for word on the date. Mrs. French is well versed in administering this test. We are waiting for word regarding the Gr. 10 (applied) OSSLT that takes place in Spring.
 - Bullying Awareness Week is Nov. 16 – 20; we will be having presentations and classroom conversations for the students on conflict and bullying, cyber bullying, where to go for help and tools for resolving conflict.
 - Nov. 11th we will holding a virtual Remembrance Day presentation beginning at 10:45; parents will receive a Zoom invite.
 - PD Day on Nov. 9th.
 - Andrea O'Donoughue asked if there would be Student let Conferences; Mr. Gregory noted that there would not be SLCs in the fall, however, possibly for transition meetings in the Spring; Mr. Gregory noted that they are very valued by all staff as well; they are just on hold for now.
 - Heather Rogan also noted that the SLCs were so important; an opportunity for the student to celebrate their successes with their families. The students are so proud to produce this presentation.
 - Information regarding volunteer hours for secondary students will be sent home. Students are reminded to keep track if they have already completed volunteer hours. You can request a copy of the tracking sheet from the school office or print from our website - <https://pdsbnet.ca/en/schools/amethyst/> and type Community in Search.
 - Andrea O'Donoughue asked if the next council meeting could be rescheduled to an earlier date; these meetings provide a sense of community for parents.
 - Mr. Gregory noted that there will be a number of parent sessions taking place prior to the next Council meeting; On Nov. 24, Bonnie Grace will be doing a presentation on Transitioning to High School, Dr. Segal will be doing a presentation, there will be a technology presentation and Mr. Gregory is looking into speakers from the London Disabilities Association and OYAP – Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.
6. **Other:**
- Selwyn Hicks asked Ms. Baidoobonso about the metal health of Amethyst students; Ms. Baidoobonso noted that the Clinical Services Dept. consists of 4 social workers from each school, as well as nurses, and is led by Dr. Stephen James the Chief Psychologist for the Ministry of Education. We meet on a monthly basis when possible and are currently working to collect and distribute consistent resources to both parents and students. As we gather these resources, we

remain diligent with our search of newly developed evidence-based research and journal articles to inform our practice(s).

- At this time, I hope to meet with students on an individual basis as the need is indicated by students, parents, or staff. I expect that as Christmas approaches and our students begin to feel more isolated given the restrictions and number of family members, we cannot see due to their vulnerability, we will begin to see more struggles emerging be it emotional or behavioural. It is our hope that by January we can assist in developing social skills groups that mitigate the challenges of our students.
- In the meantime, I ask that we use this time to teach our children the importance of minimizing exposure to negative media. Although it is important to stay up to date and informed, perseveration can lead to higher anxiety. We can offer to share the information with our students or limit them to approximately 30 minutes of news per day, just as we should limit ourselves as adults for the benefit of our mental health.
- Jennifer Schroter noted that we need to remember that the extended day students are feeling extra isolated - not part of the residence program, long days; they maybe home daily but are still missing many parts of family life (home after events happen) and are separated from old school friends.
- Please reach out to Ms. Baidoobonso if you or your child are struggling (Melissa.Baidoobonso@ontario.ca)
- Mr. Gregory confirmed for Heather Rogan that the Amethyst In-Touch Newsletter goes out monthly.
- Mr. Hicks asked about fundraising endeavours as the School Council would like to gift yearbooks to each student again this year. Mr. Gregory noted that we are looking at using a local company this year for the yearbooks.
- Online Auction: Instead of running our Silent Auction, this year we will be running an Online Auction; We have items that were collected for last year's auction, that didn't take place due to the shut-down, and we will continue to collect items for this auction that will take place in the spring. Michele Neuman and Janet Harju will be meeting to discuss this.
- Janet Harju contacted Dielman Fundraising and we will be running a campaign with them; Winter Wonderland catalogues will be sent home and Eco-Essence, Gourmet Gifts and McSweeney's Beef Jerky and Meat Snacks will be available on-line.
- Mr. Gregory noted that Spirit Wear order forms would be going home in the near future.
- Mr. Gregory will also reach out to the parent of a former Amethyst student regarding Amethyst ornaments.
- Information for student Council should be out in the coming weeks.
- Jessica Gates asked if it was possible to have a residential child driven in on their remote weeks for special days when there are special activities planned - i.e. cross country.

- Mr. Gregory noted that this is definitely possible and for the parent to connect with himself or Mrs. Eacrett in advance, to make arrangements.
- Amanda Kerr asked if there have been any discussions in Ministry meetings about allowing this year's first year students to have an opportunity to return to Amethyst next year since these students are only getting half of the in-person experiences?
- Mr. Gregory noted that there has been no information provided regarding allowing students to return for a second year.
- Motion to adjourn was made by Heather Rogan and seconded by Amada Kerr.

NEXT MEETING DATES: February 9th and April 27th