

SIR OLIVER MOWAT COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

Minutes of School Council Meeting

Tuesday September 16, 2014

1. Welcome & Introductions

Vania Sakelaris chaired the meeting (19 parents attended, the Principal and Vice-Principal plus a representative from the Port Union Community Centre).

2. Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Dawn and seconded by Sonia that the Minutes of the meeting of May 20, 2014 be approved. Additions to Agenda included discussion of parking lot entrance safety, the question of a grad trip, Safe and Caring Schools initiatives.

3. Election of 2014/15 Council

A motion was made by Dawn and seconded by Sonia that Vania continue on as Chair, Jane will continue as Secretary, and Latha Jacob as Treasurer. Motion carried.

Vania reminded everyone to add their email addresses to the school council email list and that if anyone would like to add an item to the Agenda for discussion at a meeting, it is a request that is easily accommodated via email.

4. Principal's Report

Anthony reported he is glad to be back – this is his first September at Mowat as he arrived in February 2013.

One issue raised at the end of the previous school year that Anthony was eager to try to find a solution for was the phenomenon of having up to 8 ISUs (Independent Study Units) all at once at the end of the school year. The introduction of a master calendar on the wall in the hall for teachers to schedule ISUs, will be used to help avoid overlap by trying to space them out.

Anthony and the two Vice Principals Linda and Greg visited all of the grade 9 classes in the first two weeks to introduce themselves, to welcome all, to connect with them and let them know what's available to them. There were assemblies for each of the other grades this week to promote a positive school environment. Mr. Hack's engaging welcome back video (which Council viewed and was very well done!) describes positive behaviour and expectations utilizing "I CARE" (Integrity, Communication, Accountability, Respect, Empathy).

Anthony's three wishes for all students are:

1. That every student will graduate.
2. When they graduate, they will have become a better person than they are now.
3. That they can look back at their years at Mowat and say that they had the time of their life.

The theme for this year's school year is "How are you doing today?"

Fall sports are underway with boys' volleyball, girls' basketball, cross country, girls' and boys' rugby, and cheerleader tryouts. Preparation for this year's drama production "Legally Blonde" will begin with auditions.

Last week's Terry Fox Run raised \$ 1500.00.

The hope is that there should be something for everyone in the wide range of extracurricular activities available – but if there is something missing, any student should feel free to inquire about implementing something new.

Enrolment is 50 students above capacity and as a result, two additional teachers will be added (hopefully by Sept. 26) which will trigger some timetable reshuffling, but this is always done very thoughtfully to minimize disruptions to students. Many schools have declining enrolment, but Mowat consistently continues to maintain or increase its numbers. Caps for class size were discussed (vary by class type but typically not more than 30, except allowed for music or phys ed).

The peer tutoring program will begin again in October. Thirty senior students will be allocated to younger students and they will meet somewhere such as the cafeteria or the library at their convenience.

Parent communication was discussed. Last year Greg Foulidis started looking into a more direct route. The TDSB system Synervoice calls home for lates or absences but it has some glitches.

Greg is implementing the use of email messages starting on Sept. 22nd to notify parents of student lates or absences (which may also have glitches). It would be a one way email to a parent and is not set up for a reply so if clarification is needed, the parent would still call the school as per usual.

The issue of supply teachers who incorrectly take attendance was discussed.

Remind (formerly Remind 101), the text messaging reminder system to communicate with parents has been tested by Anthony and now has 286 parents signed up. Every Sunday afternoon a text message is sent (to cell phone number or email address), listing notable events for the upcoming week. In addition, during the week, reminders are also sent for specific events. This is a one way reminder that does not allow a reply.

Anthony posed the question – "What is the most relevant way the Parent Council meeting can be used?" Suggestions included:

- Invite people from outside agencies to discuss various issues (might depend on size of group, eg. community centre staff, CAMH, police to discuss social media, guidance)
- Anthony can use parents as a sounding board to bounce ideas off of
- To be able to hear issues as they are happening - have the new Trustee come in
- Keep up with knowing what's going on in the school and community
- Round table to share experiences as parents
- Get more insight into experiences/traditions at Mowat
- Invite curriculum heads to talk to the parent council

Grade 9 curriculum night – this Thurs. Sept. 19th, then Freshee Follies begin next week which are competitions involving grade 9s amongst themselves.

For the first time there will be a Homecoming Football event, on Oct. 14th.

The issue of geese congregating at the front of the school property and making a big mess was discussed – problem solved by a community member that placed 2-D fox-like figures on the lawn which scared the geese away!

Linda Lake discussed the Safe and Caring Schools initiatives that have been ongoing at Mowat (Impact, Student Justice League (formerly Equity), SASSY, Anime, Me to We, SAC, Prefects). After speaking individually to the grade 9s, they expressed that they felt Mowat is a warm and safe place to be and they are excited about being here. The invite is open for anyone to join Linda for participation in Safe and Caring Schools discussions.

5. Parent Reaching Out Grant

Vania reported that the grant application submitted by last year's Council had been approved by the ministry. As such, the school received \$1000 in support of a mental health and addictions awareness night for parents and a day session for students.

It was suggested that a planning group be struck with a goal of hosting an event by end of November or early spring. Vania, Dawn, Tazmeen, Christine and Crystal have offered to work on this together.

6. Correspondence

None received.

7. New Business

Concern about the east most entrance of the parking lot and maximizing students' right of way was discussed. Anthony has recently discussed signage and lines with Linda and Greg and the Head Custodian.

There is an improvement in lateness. Music is played in the halls at certain times to alert students as to what time it is.

School trips were discussed, and the existence of advertised trips posted in the school that are NOT affiliated with Mowat or the TDSB. (eg. Breakaway Tours ski trip is not organized by Mowat or the TDSB). Any overnight trip would require a letter to go home to parents.

There will not be a Europe trip this year as it was determined that there is not adequate staff available to prepare and participate (permission from Superintendent requires 3 months notice).

Grade 9 students have an all day trip to Camp Robinhood on Fri. Oct. 3rd.
The annual ski trip is scheduled for Feb. 8th 2015 (which is organized by Mowat).

8. Adjournment

.Vania thanked Colleen Brien from the Port Union Community Centre for coming to the meeting and welcomed her to bring anything of future interest to the group.

Vania acknowledged her positive experience of working with Anthony and his quick response times regarding issues of concern.

Next Meeting – October 21, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Future meetings – November 18, 2014, January 20, 2015, April 21, 2015, May 19, 2015

To request an item to be added to the next meeting's agenda, all are welcome to forward via email at mowat.council@gmail.com