



# NORTHERN SCHOOL COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2025

### ATTENDEES

Council Members in-person: Jessica Miklos, Omar Becerril, Anna Rutledge, Sarah Flint, Kristina Turner

Council Members on-line: John Bakous, Julie Buckareff (in person), Shelagh Durno, Wendy Li, Gavin McCulloch, Stephanie Nacawa, Ali Pajang, Harp Thind, Keith Tong, Catherine Wong

Principal: Adam Marshall (in person)

Teacher Representative: Jenn Marr (in person)

Student Representatives: Savannah Royes (online) and Humza Jadoon (regrets)

Community Representative: Bronwen Alsop (online)

Online Attendees: Beth Lauer, Brian M, Kaan Yigit, Karen, Lynne, Margaret Yeung, Morgan Hedges, S.K., Y. Song

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Omar Becerril

- Welcome to all attending.
- Quorum is confirmed.
- Land acknowledgement

MOTION: Approve the January 16th agenda. Motion to approve: Anna; seconded: Kristina.  
Motion Carried.

### CO-CHAIR'S UPDATE

Jessica Miklos

- Thanks to Council members who contributed to December's staff appreciation breakfast.
- Thanks to Robotics Club parents and students for their assistance drafting Mr. Wong's nomination for the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence.
- Welcome to all members of Northern community
- The Provincial and Federal government approved funding for food programs in Ontario. We are not sure how this will roll out. We are waiting to hear if we will qualify for the funding so we are not yet sure what this means for Northern.
- December was a busy month for reports related to the TDSB. The recently released Auditor General's Report has a section focused on safety, financial management and capital at the TDSB.
  - You can read the full report here: [Auditor General's Report](#)
  - [The Trillium on the Auditory General's Report](#) is a summary of the report
  - One of the Report's key findings is that TDSB buildings are in the worst condition compared to all other areas in Ontario.



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- The [Facilities Condition Index for Northern](#) is 96.6% which represents the portion of the building that needs repair. You can see the parts of the school that need urgent repair, including the boilers. This is important information for Northern families.
- Rates of violent incidents in TDSB schools are below the provincial average, but they are the highest that have ever been recorded.
- Another report on Ontario school building conditions from the Financial Accountability Office was released.
  - Overall, 62% of schools in Ontario meet the threshold of being in a state of good repair, but only 16% of TDSB schools meet that threshold.
  - In Ontario, each school board, regardless of the number of schools in the board, can only apply for capital funding for 5 schools. It would take 116 years for the TDSB to apply for all of its schools.
  - As a parent community, we might want to advocate on this issue. Council will consider ways to advocate for change on school facilities.
  - The current 5 TDSB capital priorities can be found [HERE](#)
- The By-election is coming up for the Ward 11 School Trustee.
  - Here is the [list of candidates](#).
  - There are currently ten candidates with one more day to register.
  - Northern families can inform themselves as the candidates are running on a variety of platforms. The School Trustee can be a powerful voice for schools; it matters.
  - School Council will circulate a list of questions to each candidate and will share their responses
  - We are also offering meet and greet opportunities with the candidates and Northern parents. We will share any updates through the weekly Parent Post email.
- The final version of the School Statement of Needs has been submitted and is on the website: [www.nsscouncil.com](http://www.nsscouncil.com).
- Consultation on the [Use of Copyright Protected Works Policy \(P079\)](#) is open until February 1st. It sets out expectations of staff, students regarding how copyrighted work will be used in the course of TDSB business

### PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AND ASK ADAM

Principal Adam Marshall

#### 1. Attendance Automated System:

I spent some time looking into the system. We send out automated calls if a student is not in the classroom at the start of the day. If a student is not in a classroom after the day has started,



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we do not send out an automated call. At Northern, we do the callout at 10am, as it is required to be done within 75 min from the start of the day. Northern also does an evening callout at 5:40pm which is also part of the policy. If a student goes to get lunch and doesn't come back, we don't find out, as it is off school property.

If there is a consensus with parents that there should be additional callouts, the school could accommodate that. Many parents do not want more phone calls. The callouts are automated and can be added with system level changes, if parents want to advocate for this.

**2. Parent suggestion: can teachers adopt a more concise format with a maximum recommended talk time, as it can be hard for students to listen to a teacher for long periods of time. Would there be more enjoyment of classes? Teachers need to be realistic about the attention span of the students.**

A master teacher is good at reading the room, using the lesson plans but shifting them to meet student needs. There's no simple prescription: they read the mood of the kids or if there are exams that cause stress, etc. Sometimes, there's a lab without a lot of talking and sometimes there is a need to drive through the curriculum, or with a test coming up, which might present a situation where there is more "chalk and talk". Other lessons require very little teacher talk. At staff meetings and PD days, they touch on best practices for lesson delivery.

I am not in a position to be prescriptive with this. In the workplace, we don't get to decide to put a 200-page report aside. We need to grind to get through it and endure and learn how to maintain focus for longer times.

**3. How often is there exclusion in the classroom because special education staff are not available to meet the needs of students?**

Never. Things are in a far better place than in September with support staff. If staff are sick, it does present access barriers, but students are not excluded for safety concerns.

**4. I was very concerned to hear there was no longer extra time allowed for exams.**

This is inaccurate. I'm not sure how that was relayed. In prior years, we would have two or three exams in a day with limited ability for extended time. Now that we have gone to the one exam per day model, there is a significant amount of extra time for all our students. Universal design means we use the approach where everyone benefits from the same best practices. For example, we put ramps outside the buildings so people with disabilities can get in buildings. If you are pushing your kids in a stroller or bringing a bike in, you benefit as well. Everyone gets the time they need.



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**5. Could we gather data during the January exams? Are the students using the full time for their exams? Was there enough time given?**

We have always paid attention to this. We had to follow up with teachers that created exams that were too long. I like there's a pretty small amount of time between now and exams, but we might be able to come up with a spreadsheet/checkboxes for teachers to fill out.

**6. Do you have any updates on secondary schools without a boundary applications?**

We don't have data with any accuracy. Our office staff is working on processing applications but I'm not hearing total numbers, just daily additions.

The Board comes out with projections each year: they are expecting 450 students for Northern this year. That puts Northern at 1800-1900 in the long run, which creates space in the building but we can still offer breadth of programming. That's a good number. I'm less happy that the catchment area represents only 75-80 students a year. I am advocating for expanding the catchment area and it's going to be discussed but will take some time to figure it out. The goal for September, 2026 is to have subtle changes moving to 150 in the catchment area while still taking in 30% technical students through the lottery process. Special education programs will add 110 students to the building. I'm gently prodding the Superintendent for the addition of another gifted class. Currently we have three gifted classes, which, with a class cap of 27 is only 81 students. (When the class cap was 30, there were 90 spaces for gifted students).

**6. Football gets more attention than other sports. They get after-school practices so other sports have to take morning hours.**

The issue with football is that we rely heavily on community coaches and they are only available when they are available. There are 160 boys, so it's a big program. Practices are incredibly long. The team is typically here until 6PM, or shorter with less daylight. If football practiced only 3 days a week, it would be a safety concern. I wish we had more field space and could make this work, but as long as the school is offering a football team in the fall, practices will be in the afternoon. It's different from most other sports in how many community coaches we rely on.

**7. Boys' football was on the cover of the Athletics Assembly. My daughter is disappointed.**

I agree with that. I don't micromanage the programs but I'm mindful of what's going on the covers of programs. The girls' sports programs are thriving. They should be equally represented.

**8. Are there opportunities to share ESL signs around the school to raise awareness?**



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Great idea. This would be a great class project for a sign language class. We used to have a sign of the week in the bulletin but it lost momentum. It's a really good suggestion and a good way to learn things.

### **9. How are things with the washrooms?**

I'm spending significantly less time on washroom issues. We now prop open the bathroom doors and hall monitors call in frequently. A group of students are keen to do a mural project to refresh the spaces. The murals have the effect of discouraging graffiti. The current hall monitors are male dominated and are a strong team. Oversight of female spaces is a weakness, but the hall monitors are having a big impact on these spaces. An all-gender washroom stall rusted off the floor. Impressively, within one week, it was fixed. This is just wear-and-tear on a 100-year-old building and probably will happen again in other bathrooms.

### **10. Is there a teacher who can teach data management with a sports focus so it could continue to be offered?**

There are concerns that the entire curriculum is taken up in the sports focused class. There needs to be the right teacher with the right background to teach it. I spoke with Jennifer Malloy to ensure there are more options to do work with a sports focus. But, the math skill set in the end has to be the same, whichever version you take (sports or regular).

### **11. Is there an update on the courtyard project?**

No updates. There is \$75K of carry over in an account for this project. It depends on the Board's Facility Department to replace windows and create access points, etc. This is not a cheap endeavour and \$75K is not enough. Until Facilities allocates the funds, we are in a holding pattern.

### **12. Other Updates from Principal Marshall**

- We are nearly finished staffing for Semester 2. We are filling a few positions this week.
- Northern has three boilers, two large and one small. The two large boilers are currently under repair. There is almost always someone working on the boilers. A complete overhaul of the heating system is expected in the next 5 years. It will take a large team working for six months to complete this.
- There are two caretakers on site at Northern. The Board has tried to take one away from the school. One caretaker won't work with 2000 kids. It's all about funding but it's important to mention.
- Regarding the moratorium, can new assignments be given out if there is not an exam? Yes, but I need to approve it. Teachers want to be nice and give opportunities to increase grades, but it can be detrimental to the students given the exam schedule. Parents can reach out to me, if this is happening.



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### COUNCIL BUSINESS

Approval of the November 21st meeting minutes. Motion to approve: Sarah; Seconded: Anna. Motion carried.

### Budget and Funding Update

Sarah Flint

I reviewed our proposed budget at the last meeting and it needs a vote to be approved.

As a reminder, the highlights of the budget were:

- We have \$11,500 in new revenue to spend and a carryover of \$6,000
- There is approximately \$17k available to spend and we are on track to meet that.
- Planned disbursements include graduation awards, Buddies and clubs and sports teams
- New disbursements this year include classroom enrichment for staff based on last years wish list. We have been able to deploy the funds for the classrooms already.
- \$1500 for parent enrichment is granted to us. We would like to spend it on parent events.

MOTION: Approve the budget for the 2024/25 school year. Motion to approve: Jessica; Seconded: Kristina; Motion carried.

### Budget Committee Update

- Cameras: Julie was able to negotiate the purchase of three cameras and they have been delivered to the photography class.
- The Committee is working on a few things to get delivered.
- We opened with \$6,338 in the bank, plus fundraising, less \$2,000 that we hold over. Currently there is \$16k available and we spent \$4k already. There is \$12,649 to spend the rest of the year. There is still room for clubs and teacher requests and an activity for parents.
- Only about \$3-4k has already been allocated. There is still a lot of room to go.
- There were ideas generated from the staff breakfast so we will be patient for a few more weeks to see what comes in.

### Gifted Advisory Committee Update

Anna Rutledge

- Jessica Miklos spearheaded the STEM award submission for Mr. Wong. Thank you Jessica for the large amount of heavy lifting. We are hopeful that Mr Wong wins.
- We are planning an event for February 20th and speaking with guidance. It will likely be on the topic of how to prepare for post-secondary applications.



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### Social Committee Update

Kristina Turner

- We run Walking Buddies every two weeks, meeting at the Mt. Pleasant cemetery at 9:30 am. We alternate Saturdays and Sundays so hopefully one of those days works for everyone to join us. We put the time in the weekly email Parent Post.
- The next Walking Buddies is on Saturday, January 25th at 9:30 am.
- Fun for parents! We are considering a bowling event and figuring out the best time over the next month. It should be a fun outing to meet other parents. Please consider joining us.
- If you are not into walks or events, we are looking at coffee get-together somewhere nearby for a smaller group. Please keep an eye out for that.
- If you have any ideas for a social event, let us know.

### Website Committee Update

Harp Thind

- [nsscouncil.com](http://nsscouncil.com)
- The Committee is making updates to the content and look and consistency with the new logo
- The resource section has support for students and parents
- There is help navigating Northern, including a school schedule, map, calendar
- The team is working on an archive solution
- Please check out the website and provide any feedback on your user experience

### Student Representative Update

Savannah Royes

- Clubs: Peaceful Plush Spirit Day this week
- WellNSS working with students to manage exam stress
- GSA door decorating contest
- Buddies Toy Donation
- BAA & GAA are running intramurals
- Black History Month Assembly on Feb 25<sup>th</sup>

### Teacher Representative Update

Jenn Marr

- Today, she and other staff were judges for the Grade 12 Master Chef Competition with the feature ingredient "Italian Seasoning." One of the students brought in an old family recipe for Chicken & Arugula Salad, stuffed peppers.





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- Grade 11<sup>th</sup> doing food fusion labs, combining different cultures.
- Study suggestions for our students: Sit & mimic exam conditions when studying, helps with exam when you are in a similar environment
- Make sure students take study breaks, every 25 minutes, get up, walk around.
- Make sure students get enough sleep. Do something to fill their cups in addition to studying.
- Good luck to scholars with exams & culminating

### Community Representative Update

Bronwen Alsop

- Recommended baby sign language dictionary that can be used for visuals, basic signs could be helpful for use around the school.
- Website – [signschool.com](https://signschool.com) is a great app to have on your phone to learn basic ASL signs. Shelagh can share more resources.
- SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) resources link shared in email to School Council members.
- Please reach out if you need anything advocacy wise. Can direct families to the support they need. If anything is happening at your school that you are uncomfortable with, please bring to our attention, as Trustees do attend the SEAC meetings.
- Collaborate with the DHH department on the newsletter, to share awareness of the DHH Program in our community.

### John Bakous

- October 28<sup>th</sup> Ward 11 Forum Meeting, disappointed in low attendance
- January 24<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for secondary schools without boundary admissions applications
- Vote for Ward 11 Trustee, consider it something that you must do and question candidates up and down and see what their interests are and what they feel are the major issues at the TDSB.

### New Business

#### Ward 11 School Trustee Election: March 3<sup>rd</sup>

Jessica asked if parents are interested in hearing information from trustee candidates, and what sort of information would be helpful to hear from the candidates. We are happy to facilitate getting information to parents about Trustees. We welcome people's ideas and opinions. We currently have 10 candidates. One was a member of this council last year, Diana Goldie. Stacey Cline is a current parent, has a child in Grade 11. Jessica plans to reach out to all the





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candidates once they have contact information available and ask them the same questions. The questions include how much time do they have to dedicate to this position. We feel it is important to have a strong voice to represent our ward, not just someone who wants their name known for political reasons.

Adam – the ability of Shelly Laskin to change Board direction is fantastic, she just knows the Education Act and Policy inside out and upside down and is not afraid to push back. She can affect a lot of change. That has been really lovely to have during this interim period and he hopes that the next Trustee has similar knowledge and abilities.

Lynn (online) – Also disappointed in low attendance at the Ward Forum meeting. Important for Ward 11 to vote in an effective trustee who is focussed on this role, not hoping that this will puddle jump them further politically. Shelly Laskin is always the most prepared person in every meeting. We need someone who is paying attention to the area and all of their families.

Jessica – the format we are thinking of is asking them to respond to email inquiries and host their own virtual forum, we will share the date & time with our parent community. We don't think we have the skill set to host an all-candidates meeting. It is important that people take the time to educate themselves. Could put that information on the website or in the Parent Post. Jessica has personally already reached out to a few candidates and has made note of which ones are more or less responsive. Has been pleasantly surprised that many candidates are interested in learning about education issues. It is important that people who are voting, who have children who attend schools in this ward take the time to ask questions so that they know what is going on.

Bronwen's Suggestion: educate the parents on "What does your Trustee do?" Basic and not too complex as many do not know. Can we collaborate with other parent councils, not just Northern? Share with the community.

MOTION: to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved: Anna; Seconded: Jenn Marr.  
Motion carried.

### Items for Follow-up:

- School Council to consider ways to advocate for better funding for facilities
- School Council to circulate responses from School Trustee candidates and offer meet and greets
- School Council to create School Trustee 101
- Adam Marshall to consider gathering data on exam length this cycle
- Caretakers - any issues remain around losing one?



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- Adam Marshall to consider ESL posters around the building: "sign of the week"
- School Council: advocate for courtyard and other outdoor issues that need fixing.
- School Council: spend parent enrichment funds
- Budget Committee: continue to finalize spending plans for remaining funds
- Website Committee looking for an archive solution for past meeting documents
- Social Committee: considering bowling event and small coffee gatherings

### Upcoming meeting dates:

- Tuesday, February 11, 2025
- Thursday, April 3, 2025
- Thursday, May 22, 2025