



NORTHERN SCHOOL COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

February 11, 2025

ATTENDEES

Council Members in-person: Jessica Miklos, Omar Becerril, Kristina Turner, Stephanie Nacawa, Shelagh Durno, Sarah Flint, Gavin McCulloch

Council Members on-line: John Bakous, Julie Buckareff, Wendy Li, Harp Thind, Keith Tong, Catherine Wong

Council Member Regrets: Anna Rutledge, Ali Pajang

Principal: Adam Marshall (in person)

Teacher Representative: Jenn Marr (in person)

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

Community Representative: Bronwen Alsop (online)

On-line and In-Person Attendees: Ruth, Karen, B.M., Tempie, Patricia Coburn, Amanda Ricketts, Morgan Hedges, Wendy Bordman, Susan Porritt, Tania K., S.K., K.H., Diana, Vanessa, Hongman Xu, M. Hu, Mary W.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Omar Becerril

- Welcome to all attending
- Quorum confirmed
- Land acknowledgement

MOTION: approve the February 11th agenda. Motion to approve: Julie; seconded: Sarah. Motion carried.

CO-CHAIRS' UPDATES

Jessica Miklos

- Thank you to the web team for the recent updates to our website.
- Trustee election
 - We received responses to the questions from 9 of 10 trustee candidates
 - Meet and greet: 1 joined walking buddies, we held one on January 30th and one coming up on February 21st. No others responded.
 - Other School Councils have been referring their families to our website to help them make informed decisions.
 - Please get out and vote. Advanced voting is on February 22nd and 23rd and the election is March 3rd.
- Capital funding
 - We drafted and circulated a letter to submit as part of the provincial budget consultation process. A majority of Council endorsed the letter and it was



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- submitted. The provincial election was called the next day and that ended the budget consultation process. It is not clear that our submission will be reviewed.
- Shelly Laskin was also disappointed in the capital priorities process. No TDSB projects from the priorities list of capital projects received funding.
 - We are in discussions with other schools in the ward and there is a local newspaper doing a story on capital funding. It is starting to gain traction. Later in this meeting we can discuss further actions.
 - The provincial election is underway, coming up on February 27th. Families can advocate for pressing education issues like the capital backlog. Links to organizations that are looking at education related issues are in the Co-Chairs' Report. Families can ask candidates their views on these issues and most importantly, get out and vote.
 - Northern back field
 - Some Council members walked it back in October.
 - We are in the early stages to explore funding options. Parents are allowed to fundraise for outdoor green spaces.
 - We are also looking at grants and partnerships.
 - There are safety issues. The drainage is not optimal and the field can be out of commission due to flooding. There is a height difference between the field and the track which could lead to injuries. There are wasp issues. We are looking at mitigation and ideas.
 - Anyone who is interested in helping on the back field, please reach out.
 - There are two policy consultations currently ongoing at the TDSB:
 - Learning Opportunities Index Policy: this policy steers resources to schools serving students who face greater challenges, to make sure that all students have access to educational resources. The deadline to comment is March 24th.
 - Dealing With Abuse and Neglect of Students Policy: this policy addresses how abuse and neglect is identified and who is responsible for reporting it. The deadline to comment is February 24th.
 - Policies under review can be found here: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Policies-Procedures-Forms/Policy-Consultations>

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AND ASK ADAM

1. Gifted program course registration: will Grade 9 tech rotation and French be offered for gifted students next year?

Gifted French will be available. The tech rotation will not be on the course offering sheet, but gifted students will be together in a cohort passing through tech courses, now that all students have to take a tech class in Grades 9 or 10. So, it will be a similar experience to the tech rotation.

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2. How does guidance support students with course selection? Are Grade 11 students supported in course selection and university applications?

- Happens in home forms every year. Tomorrow evening an ESL/DHH evening includes information on course selection. Google classrooms by grade have course selection presentations. Every student has a course selection sheet, there are posters, announcements and PORs (Positions of Responsibility) are keeping their departments updated. Guidance has a section of the weekly bulletin to keep families up to date. Students can have 1-on-1 appointments with guidance. There is a QR code to sign up for guidance appointments. There is an upcoming course selection fair for electives. There are guidance drop-ins to classrooms where the guidance counselor can attend classrooms where there's interest to answer questions.
- For Grade 11, in the spring, there will be information on where to do research for post-secondary, OSAP, scholarships, etc. There will be an OSAP workshop in February/March. There will be information in the bulletin for parents and students.

3. Updates regarding facilities:

- The boilers have been repaired. Heat is distributed more evenly. It's a better situation than when we were heating a small area at full blast to try and heat the school.
- Room 121 is closed due to asbestos remediation. There is a leak in the pipe circulating hot water from the boiler. These pipes are quite old and are leaking in a number of places, which is a situation that will need to be addressed.
- Room 143: Robotics has a renovated tech space. It is not signed off as complete, but robotic practice can take place there.
- For the courtyard, the windows are the first step, but there is a long list of repairs in the building that we can draw attention to.
- Can parents help support/advocate for facilities? If you want to see more funding, the Trustee is the best pathway. It would be worth sharing with Shelly Laskin.

4. Can more doors be unlocked at the start of the day and lunch?

It's a balance between access and safety. At lunch, more doors are unlocked (3 and 12) but then we lock them again. Having access to only door 1, we can intervene with kids who are leaving, and there are cameras on the main door. Students should arrive earlier if doors are an issue. Safety is the priority.

5. Were statistics gathered for exams in January?

This refers to how many students stayed until the end of their time slot and used the maximum time. I will be asking the PORs on Friday (2/14, a PD day) so there is no



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update yet. I don't think this is a school-wide matter, but we might find teachers and exams where we need to adjust the duration.

6. **Can students reach ahead and take a Grade 12 class in Grade 11 or a Grade 11 class in Grade 10?**

Things are done differently around the Board. We have to prioritize the students in the correct grade. We do not have a one-out one-in policy. We need to hold and fill any empty seats with students in the correct grade. If we give a spot to a student that wants to reach ahead, there may then be a new student who comes in the correct grade and can't get a spot. Our response is usually no, but two weeks after the semester starts, we can revisit it. Students who need to graduate or retake the class need to have access to that class.

7. **Are there only six Grade 12 gifted courses offered next year (and four have prerequisites)?**

There are 12 courses that can be considered for the Gifted Program as AP courses are recognized as gifted courses in Grade 12. They are all on the course selection sheet. Historically we have offered a robust course list. The Board is directing us to offer 4/4/2/2 (by Grade) gifted courses - likely English and Math in Grade 11 and 12. We are pushing back. Older grades than the current Grade 9 class have been grandfathered to have extra gifted course options. Grade 12 math is not even a requirement so it may be challenging if there are only two gifted options, as some students may opt not to take math. Currently, there are 12 sections x 30 seats and 3 sections of gifted students x 30 seats. We have to have full courses to offer the course for the gifted program. It is not guaranteed that we can run a course as we can't run classes that are half full.

8. **What is a POR?**

It stands for Positions of Responsibility, like department heads. There are 27 PORs at Northern and they make up the Leadership team with Administrators.

9. **Other updates:**

- April Vibert and Student Success: offering opportunities to students to learn more about pathways after Grade 12 other than university, including trades and colleges
- There are playoffs in many sports this week.
- Vaping in washrooms is still a concern. Northern's hall monitor staff is all male which creates challenges in the girls' washrooms, and that is the largest area of concern for vaping right now.
 - Opening the main bathroom door to see if people are vaping is a reasonable safety measure. Some families are disagreeing. Either we



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are not checking the washroom or we are propping doors open so there is a line of sight to the washroom.

- We aren't entering washrooms, but want to have a line of sight. We will continue with that to reduce vaping.
- Staffing challenges:
 - It is not always possible to get qualified supply teachers. This means that we have to rely on less qualified staff to supervise classes when teachers are not available.
 - An emergency replacement person (ERP) provides a clear criminal record and passes a short interview process. This is not a long-term solution to the teacher shortage. Parents may need to advocate for change as the use of ERPs grows.
 - Some schools have double-digit ERPs. At Northern, there are typically 2-3 ERPs per week. Sometimes ERPs can help teach but others come with no teaching background so it's more like asynchronous learning.
 - Are ERPs in any LTO positions? No, however, the potential for that could be a reality. It can be hard to staff some LTO positions because qualified teachers will take a longer contract if it is available over an LTO of shorter duration
- Room 143 looks great and we're excited that we will have it in the rotation soon.
- No cell phones in classrooms: Administration will be reminding students and parents in the bulletin and in classrooms.
- Mantras: there are signs in the building, but it has not been actively promoted. There's not a lot happening on this at the moment.
- Incident last Thursday (2/6/2025) I received information that was concerning enough to call 911. There proved to be zero risk. The incident was contained in a space that I had eyes on. There was as minimal a disruption to the day as we could manage. The school took police direction about dismissal. Students were to head out, unless supervised by a teacher. In essence, it was a false alarm.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

MOTION: approve the January 16th minutes. Motion to approve: Kristina; seconded: Gavin.
Motion carried.



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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Budget Committee Update

Sarah Flint

- We are in the spending phase. There is \$6,800 still available for distribution and has been set aside for student clubs and sports teams. Go to the website to submit a form.
- We still have funding for a parent event. If you have any ideas, reach out to the Social Committee.
- We delivered wish list items to the Food and Nutrition Program and cameras to the Math department. There has been a very positive reaction from Staff.
- After May 22, any unallocated funds will be put towards the staff wishlist and fans.

Social Committee

Kristina Turner

Our next Walking Buddies will be on Saturday, Feb 22nd at 9:30 am in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. The walks have been great, even in winter, and parents can meet other parents.

Website Committee

Harp Thind

- The Trustee candidate responses to questions have been posted
- We are making improvements to the website. We are removing forms and going to direct emails instead.
- We are adding tools to track website usage.
- On the Navigating Northern page of the website, you can find daily school announcements and the school's weekly bulletins.

Student Rep Update

Jessica Miklos on behalf of Savannah Royes

- United Way is having their annual thrift shop and they are accepting donations until February 20th.
- SAC: Valentine's Day heart message collaboration with Buddies
- GAA: welcomes all members to a Valentine's Day party
- BAA: hosting ping pong intramurals
- February 25th is the Black History Month Assembly.
- Girls volleyball wrapping up, winter sports coming to an end.
- Spring sports are starting next week.
- Career Week: set up by Guidance with different careers to explore each day
- Class selection: Guidance and teachers working hard to guide students through course selection. There is a Class Fair to allow students to explore options.



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Teacher Rep Update

Jenn Marr

From staff members: Parents, please have conversations and remind students regarding the cell phone use policy. We can see students on their chats on computers and other non-educational purposes. Technology is for school-related use only.

Community Rep Update

Bronwen Alsop

- Reminder that the election for the Ward 11 School Trustee is coming up.
- Reach out to people in the community if you have any questions on the candidates/election.
- There's a free Pflag event coming up on February 25th at Fairlawn Avenue United Church. The session covers key 2SLGBTQIA + language and concepts, inclusive parenting, and how to prepare for and/or handle the coming out conversation.

NEW BUSINESS

Social Media

Harp Thind

- The Website Committee has a proposal to implement a School Council Instagram page to share events and updates
- The goal is increased awareness and reach, as families are more likely to see an Instagram post rather than checking our website. There are benefits of Instagram vs. other platforms in terms of greater engagement and reduced conflict.
- Concerns: usage of social media is discouraged in school and uncertainty around how would parents react
- The content would be related to the Parent Post and the Weekly Bulletin.
- The work to implement and maintain would be done by the website committee.
- Principal Marshall shared the types of issues that come up with student-run social media accounts for the website team to consider.
- Some raised the point that other schools have successful Instagram pages already.
- Parents asked about other platforms (discord, X, Facebook). Those platforms are not under consideration at this time.

MOTION: create a School Council Instagram page for Council members only until April 3rd (the next SC meeting) when we can decide whether to share it publicly.

Motion to approve: Kristina; seconded: Shelagh seconded. Motion carried.



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International Week for the Deaf (Sept 22-26 2025)

Shelagh Durno

Would like to start planning with the DHH department to recognize this next September.

Superintendent visit to the April 3rd School Council Meeting

Jessica Miklos

Jennifer Chan, Northern's Superintendent, will join our next meeting. This will be the first time that we have our Superintendent at our meeting.

Capital Priorities Advocacy

Jessica Miklos

Does the Northern community wish to engage in advocacy for capital improvements system-wide? Do we want to have talking points and/or a letter for this topic?

- Northern is not one of the TDSB's priorities. There needs to be adequate funding system-wide to get Northern projects funded.
- Education is not really a priority in the upcoming provincial election.
- Are there other ways to advocate, like through trustees or superintendents? That's more local and we are not the school that is the worst off. Other schools in the TDSB have greater needs.
- A group of elementary teachers in Toronto are working to raise awareness of the damage to the education system in Ontario and it was pointed out that there are Liberal and NDP candidates in close districts. A difference of 50 votes in a close district could change things.
- Building Better Schools website: you can search your school and see how much funding your school has lost. It's a lot of money that should have been invested in these buildings that has gone somewhere else.
- Consider putting on the website resources on school capital projects. It can be specific to Northern.
- Principal Marshall: We should stick to factual information that we disseminate. There's a fine line between someone not wanting to send their kid to Northern because of issues raised and wanting to advocate for the school.
- A motion is not needed to add info to the website. We are helping people to make informed decisions.
- There is support for putting resources/election dates/ issues affecting schools, reports, and facts on Northern facilities on the website in advance of the election. Jessica will work with the Website Committee to add information.

MOTION: Motion to adjourn: Motion Jessica Miklos; Seconded: Shelagh Durno. Motion carried.



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Upcoming meeting dates:

- Thursday, April 3, 2025
- Thursday, May 22, 2025

New Items for follow-up:

- School Council to consider ways to advocate for better funding for facilities
- Website Committee to add education policy issues, website links, etc. in advance of the provincial election
- Website Committee to build School Council Instagram page and invite Members as a trial run
- Principal Marshall to provide data on exam length this past cycle

Items for follow-up from prior meetings:

- Caretakers - any issues remain around losing one?
- 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
- Adam Marshall to consider ASL posters around the building: "sign of the week"
- Social Committee: considering bowling event and small coffee gatherings