



Divine Mercy School Council Meeting – Minutes

November 6, 2023, 5:30 pm | Meeting called to order by Nuno Tome

Staff/School Representatives:

Brea Corbet (Trustee wards 9&10)
 Herman Vilorio (Trustee wards 2&8)
 Daniel Del Bianco (Associate Director of Corporate Services)
 Mathew Thomas (Superintendent of Operations)
 Laura Odo (Superintendent Mississauga North)
 Nuno Tome (Principal)
 Daniela Letterio (Teacher Representative)
 Pamela Leermakers (Community Representative)

Parent Representatives:

Tannice Ashman	Lisa Bitonti-Bengert	Johnson Lai
Angela Trewartha	Paula Mendonca	Mike W
Vivian Correa-Pinto	Jonathan Walker	Rita Panousis
Tashani Parker	Marcus Pinto	Katrina Vieira Reis
Elaine Dantas	Karen Chan	
Pearl Mofunanya	Karim Hanna	

Parent Regrets:

Meryl Gomes	Dami Olorunda	Funmilayo Chukwuma
Whitman Najar	Monica Oguamanam	Michael Wglinski

- Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, Opening Prayer (5 minutes)- Mr. Tome
 - Approval of Agenda: Angela Trewartha and Lisa Bitonti-Bengert
- French Immersion Discussion (20 minutes) (Parents, **Brea Corbet** – Catholic School Trustee Wards 9 & 10, **Herman Vilorio** – Catholic School Trustee Wards 2 & 8, **Daniel Del Bianco** – Associate Director Corporate Services, **Mathew Thomas**- Superintendent of Operations, **Laura Odo** – Superintendent Mississauga North, **Nuno Tome** - Principal)
 - Letter sent to Trustees with a desire to explore French immersion (FI) from grades 1-4 currently at Divine Mercy, to extend it to grades 1-8
 - Brea engaged the board in the discussion, Herman, Daniel, Matthew, and Laura- will be here to listen and engage with families about the letter

- **Parent shared:** In the letter, it shared the rationale for the request- mental health and well-being of children- continuity- peers, educators, administrators- reduce anxiety and potential trauma changing schools, for parents- parent will has 2 children 2 years apart- with current system only in the same school for 1 year- then have to drop off and pick off between two schools- staggering of starting and ending schools to help- but creates anxiety for parents- volunteering with schools is difficult between two schools
- **Parent Question:** Want to understand the rationale for split, and can't have continuity- in the grand scheme, it will be beneficial for everyone if FI was offered at Divine Mercy
- **Mathew Thomas response:** Thanked parent for question- *History:* to address space issues, to balance enrollment across multiple schools, to offer FI and ensure regular English track offered- this model was implemented at a few schools- instituted when enrollment was much higher across the system
 - *Current state-* enrollment is not the same when the split was implemented- great and fair questions- senior staff at the board looking at it and taking it forward- good input and makes sense- appreciate that parent recognizes the impact on the sister school- the board is looking at enrollment #'s that was shared with Brea- 344 enrolled at end of September at Divine Mercy: 104 are FI students (grades 1-4); Our Lady of Mercy- 231 enrolled at the end of September (77 are FI students: grades 5-8)- if FI is consolidated between 2 schools- it's going to impact on enrollment of either school; both schools have the capacity for many more students- Divine Mercy has over 700 students and currently enrollment is at half- senior staff have to wrestle through- not only FI but board challenge- looking at how can the board make better use of capacity- looking at different options to do that. Acknowledge the concern brought forward- the board is committing to looking at that as part of the ongoing review and needs to look at other issues from the big picture to address underutilization issues- a lot more capacity in the system than we actually have students in our buildings- equivalence of 14,000 pupil places that are not being filled and quite the challenge we have to work through and shift in demographics over the last few years- through covid many people have left peel region to other areas where homes are more affordable- so working through issues and considering other options that take into account what works for parents, the challenge faced by parents- children in two different schools- also want to ensure whatever plan put in place works long term i.e., if we move children once, we're not going to have to move them again- when we look at long term picture. Leave it with us; we are reviewing this among a number of considerations
- **Parent response:** Acknowledged challenge and appreciation of the board's work to look at this, and asked: is there a timeline for the discussion- is it just in infancy?

- **Board rep Response:** Great question- definitely infancy stages- planning department- reviews enrollments all the time- look at enrollment #, capacity- opportunities to adjust boundaries- the board considers what is respectful and sensitive to what makes sense for families, staff, program offerings system-wide. It's premature to make a commitment timeline at this time. However, we acknowledge and recognize the question and issue- consolidation of FI is one of the issues amongst the others mentioned earlier- we also have to look at program offerings- **Superintended Odo added:** on the instructional side, we look at and investigate how changes on the model impact programming- programming at both schools can be impacted, i.e. if moved- it impacts the other school
 - **Parent Question:** How do we (parents) stay informed about the progress of the discussion?
 - **Board rep Response:** This has been on our radar for a while- we were exploring pre-COVID (FI in two different locations) but halted during COVID as we needed extra space. The ministry had a moratorium on programs moving- everyone wants to see it in one location. We are available to come out and provide updates, we can share information through the community bulletin, school council, school newsletter, and in the Spring, we put out long-term projections- maybe come back out then to provide an update
 - **Parent response:** Acknowledged Brea was exceptionally fast with her response to the e-mail- suggestion that the updates can be a standing agenda item for parent council, maybe quarterly update can be shared, other parents have questions too, so having the update would be great. Also happy to be a part of the update as well
 - **Board rep Response:** as the planning department, when proposing updates to programs- FI, boundary adjustments- there is a consultation process- we come out to affected schools and provide information to parents, guardians, and the community regarding the proposal, timelines, impacts, etc., and board commits to engagement.
 - **Parent shared:** having FI remain at Divine Mercy is helpful as we have access to bussing, and moving to another school, we would lose that access
 - **Board rep response:** When doing boundary studies- we think everyone in the program will be happy to stay in one school, but those who lose the grades will have questions about what happens to them. The receiving school will ask if there is capacity on the field, kiss and ride, fundraising impacts, etc.- all these little things will have to be navigated through before making a decision
3. Approval of the last meeting's minutes (2 minutes)
 - Lisa Bitonti-Bengert and Daniela Letterio
 4. Chair's Report (A. Trewartha & T. Ashman) (5 minutes)

- Angela Trewartha and Tannice Ashman- discussed having a fundraiser in the springtime
- Pizza day- still our biggest fundraiser, we received fewer individuals signed up this year, compared to last year, however, enrollment is also lower- so that's why we may be seeing this. Overall- it's running smoothly

5. Principal's Report (N. Tome) (5 minutes)

- 4 priority areas

Faith - Believe

- Focus on theme of Love – Family Photos were developed from our Open House and sent home with families
- Visits from Seminarian every second Thursday
- Visits from Rosary Apostle – Morning Star every month
- Retreats for Gr 5-8: Grade 8: October 26; Grade 7: October 30; Grade 5/6: November 8
- Remembrance Day Assembly 10:45am on November 10th
- Advent Mass and Advent Retreat for Students: December 14th
- Christmas Concerts: December 20th (English) and December 21st (French)
- Faith- there weren't enough frames for everyone, so only some received frames
- Retreat this week from 3-8 pm
- Prayer for peace November 10
- Families invited to mass on December 14, 2023
- Retreat focuses on love- 1-3 downstairs, upstairs 4-8
- Christmas concerts – students will present- separated due to logistics- it'll be an afternoon of students presenting to the families- had to find a way to divide up the kids to seat everyone

Achievement - Excel

- Divine Mercy continues to Focus on New Language Curriculum with Team Teaching in our Primary Classrooms
- CCAT Testing
- Lexia and Empower
- EQAO Results
- Progress Reports go home on November 14 and Interviews are on November 16
- Meet with teachers FDK to grade 8- review concerns in the classrooms
- EQAO sent home to families
- November 16 interviews- should have received a letter on October 25 if you or teacher is requesting an interview

Social Justice/Equity - Respect

- Indigenous PD for staff
- Equity Parent Committee
- Truth & Reconciliation Week: Nov 3 – Nov 10
- Working with Staff – identify and address systemic racism and discrimination
- Sent 6 staff from school to indigenous workshop

Wellbeing - Thrive

- Gr 1-8 Clubs continue
- Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week: November 20-25
- Peel Public Nurse Immunization Clinics – November 23
- Peel Health Nurse – November 28
- Jungle Sport – November 27 – December 1
- Volleyball Jr and Int, Cross Country and Flag Football
- Gonzaga CYW Visit – December 2
- Koye- parent in our community running a lot of our clubs
- Grade 7 and 8 students- PPH doing immunization- information sent in March/April/May- recommendation that immunization gets completed at school, it's free, doesn't have to take time out of school, some immunizations are a series so can't be done
- Jungle sport- similar to Guelph Grotto
- Jr volleyball just finished- flag football tournament next week
- Gonzaga visiting grade 8 students on December 2

6. Treasurer's Report (V. Pinto) (5 minutes)

- **Request from Principal:** can parent council provide \$4,000 towards "Mental Health for All" initiative (see below)?
- **Budget update:**
- A few items to be confirmed
- Some funds still need to be withdrawn from the account- noted as outstanding commitments)
- Used budget from last year to plan for the budget this year
- Suggestion Mr. Tome - having two book fairs, as opposed to 1- the school does make money from scholastic- maybe take off French books from the budget for this year

- \$2,000 for speakers- Black history month- a speaker coming in, provides drumming- cost approximately \$1,400
- Goal is to have spring time fundraiser that will carry some funds forward into the next year- goal is to raise \$3,000-5,000
- Tuck shop happening from beginning of the year- maybe reduce what's given for grad support by 50% for this year- keep it at \$1,000
- Angel fund is \$500- camp brebeuf cost \$280 per child- 18 children needing support with pizza this year (up from 3 last year)
- **Suggestion from parent:** alternate fundraising options observed at other schools- Sub day, chocolates- one of the biggest fundraiser options
- **Parent Question-** if there are families that are interested in supporting other families with covering the cost for pizza
 - **Response:** please call the office to find out if there is a family needing support
- **Parent suggestion:** Can the fundraisers clearly state where the funds will be used?
 - **Response:** It's mandatory that this is listed, and for example items have outlined that funds go to help fund experiences and events run by parent council, help your library, etc.
 - **Suggestion from parent to add:** state what the goal amount is
- Motion to approve budget was passed

7. Budget Proposals School Initiatives (N. Tome) (5 minutes)

FOCUS on RESPECT & THRIVE

- Disparity with respect to Mental Health in our school population.
- Focus on "Mental Health For All" by partnering up with FlightUnit
- Hard for me to talk about- I'm a dad, white, male
- We collect data at our school on achievement, equity and well-being- and we're seeing similarities between what's happening in our school, and the board- we see disparities in how white students vs. black students, respond on the survey. When looking at the data on certain survey questions- for example- why do you not access Mental Health resources at your school? 100% of white children said they don't need it. Black and racialized students not answering the same way- a considerable proportion of the students at our school are sharing, they don't feel comfortable, or they're not aware they exist- that's a problem
- I worked with 3 black families from the school, and worked with the board, and community organization to come up with a strategy to address the disparity- I know it's not in the financial plan of our school, but it's definitely worth considering
- To ensure we have mental health for all schools-

WHAT WE WANT TO DO

- Create a climate that supports mental health & well-being for ALL students
- Normalize the use of mental health resources
- Create a safe environment that is conducive to sharing & discussing/supporting feelings & emotions

HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO IT

- Staff PD – focused on Equity / Wellbeing “Healthy Thinking Leads to Healthy Being”
 - STUDENTS –
 - Keynote Speech “Healthy Thinking Leads to Healthy Being”- Christoff Kyere K-8
 - 3 Targeted Workshops with Students Gr 5/6 (Self Love, Power of Thought, Self Awareness) – Flightunit
 - 3 Targeted Workshops through MHO for Gr 7 & 8 students
 - 3 Workshops with Student Leaders – Mental health awareness campaign - Flightunit
 - PARENTS
 - Parent engagement night – focused on effective communication to improve relationships. FlightUnit & School Team
- Want to help our Black, indigenous and racialized students

Program Cost

- Staff PD- covered by school
- Student \$1000 keynote + \$400/class workshop X 6 + \$200 x 3 Leadership Workshops = \$4000
- Parent Engagement - \$500 Grant
- Asking for support from parent council in the amount of \$4,000 to help pay for programming
- Logos

New Logos & Spirit Wear



- One of two logos on t-shirt or sweatshirt- this year is schools 25th anniversary
8. OAPCE Report (P. Mofunanya) (3 minutes)
- Foster collaboration between schools, and parental rights, catholic education

- There's a link to click
9. Parish Report/Pastoral Update (E. Dantas) (3 minutes)
- Edge: Free program for students in Gr 6 -8. Offered Bi-weekly on Fridays 6-8 pm in the church basement hall- The registration link is on the Merciful Redeemer Website
 - Can purchase books for children, youth, and adults from the Daughters of St Paul. After Sat and Sun masses on Nov 18 and 19- They are also selling advent calendars, wreaths, candles, DVD movies, etc.
 - Prayer meeting for children being confirmed is Nov 22 at 7 p.m. in church. \$40 registration fee, bring the form and the child baptism certificate
10. New Business/ Lunchbox Committee & suggestions (7 minutes)
- **Parent request:** For those interested in discussing lunchbox/ alternate lunch options outside of pizza, please reach out to divinemercuryinfo@dpcdsb.org to express your interest in participating in the discussion
 - Paula Mendonca and Jonathan Walker expressed interest
 - **Parent question:** Do we have yearbooks?
 - **Response:** No, however reach out to Mr. Tome for further discussion about this request
 - **Parent comment:** Used to have yearbook- as numbers lowered- it's harder to manage/do
11. Closing/Adjournment- 7:00 p.m.