

WFISS Parent Council

Tuesday, October 4th, 2022 at 6:00 PM
In Person Meeting at WFISS – Foods Room

In attendance: Gillian Kajganich, Steven Brown, Seth Compton, Olga Danylenko (Student Senator), Gayle Widdop, Sarah McNeil, Brent Yacoback (Teacher representative), Tiffany VanMeer, Lori Jackson, Julie Price-Martel (VP)

Regrets: Laura Frost, Heather Garbutt, Natasha Lee Smith, Heather Hersemeyer, Amanda Doherty, Kim McGinn, William VanMeer, Kayla Heaslip

Minutes

1. Welcome & Introductions

- As we had many new faces in the room, we took a few moments at the opening of our meeting to introduce ourselves and explain a bit about how we are connected to the West Ferris school community.

2. Roles & Votes

- Gillian spoke about the various roles that there are to fill on our parent council committee.
- These meetings are our place for creative ideas, questions, concerns, etc. Legally we need to have a minimum of 6 meetings. Last year we had them October-May monthly, with the exception of December making for 7 meetings in total. This is our first meeting for the 2022-2023 school year.
- Roles we need filled:
 - Chair (Steve Brown)
 - Secretary (Tiffany VanMeer)
 - Treasurer (Sarah McNeil)
 - Student Representative (Olga Danylenko)
 - Gillian noted how important the student voice is and appreciates when they can come to our meetings. We are still hoping for some intermediate representation with us.
 - Community Representative (Seth Compton)
 - General Parent Member (could be any of us)
 - Teacher Representative (Brent Yacoback)

3. Recap/Update from our PRO Grant project from last year

- The picnic tables arrived in the summer and are currently in our shop being spray painted. We will have one table each in rainbow, orange and green colours.

4. Recap/Update from Parent Council Last Year

- We had a small but mighty group of volunteers on our committee last year who accomplished some good things.
- We spent a lot of time last year discussing the possibility of uniforms coming back to our school. We'd need a huge population in favour of it. Many feel that students wearing the clothing of their own choice is an important form of self-expression.
- Ultimately, we decided to focus our efforts elsewhere, such as work on the PRO Grant and discussion of fundraising for a new track & field. At this time, the board believes it's not a feasible project due to rising costs.
- Gillian mentioned some funds possibly going towards improving technology.

5. School Update

- West Ferris is currently a full and vibrant school, having just under 1200 students. Maybe due to Covid and possibly many grads unsure of their future plans, we have a number of returning students. Gillian noted that if students are 18 years of age or older and have already completed their high school requirements, the school does not actually receive funding for them.
- These higher numbers can provide some challenges, but the staff are wonderful and are making it work. We are seeing some bigger school issues occurring, but staff is being diligent and working through it. Due to some space issues with such high enrollment, there has been some consolidation of classes at the elementary level. The secondary side is making creative choices in terms of use of space. The new library is up and running, which has been wonderful for especially senior students, those working on e-learning courses and those with spares. It seems to be a popular hangout area.
- With about 1200 students – sometimes bad things happen (such as someone from WFSS stealing from Metro) and can affect the reputation of us all. The school is working to foster positive relationships in the community. Seth said that sometimes it only takes one voice to invoke change. The upcoming food drive is one positive thing which is occurring tomorrow.
- Our school is a community hub – lots of people walking dogs and using the track and field outside of school hours

6. Vision & Mission

- The school's team leads (formally known as department heads) have been working hard on visioning. Some of the issues which are of importance are:
 - Equity & Inclusion. We are seeking to ensure that WFSS is a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.
 - Students: staff is watching out for students who are non-attenders, those with substance abuse, etc. They are attempting to champion around high-risk students.

7. Wooded Area by the Rock

- Gillian noted that there is a large wooded area adjacent to our school property that is a point of concern. The area seems to be an ongoing battle, where kids cause trouble. We are in contact with the North Bay Police. They are aware of the issue and we are trying to work together on this issue.
- This can be a safety issue for our students. Staff is encouraging them to stay on school property where they are visible.
- Gayle questioned whether it was possible to simply fence this area off. Gillian's concern is that people will still find a way to get to this area, perhaps then infringing on the personal property of our neighbours to do so, adding to the problem.
- Some would like the area to be cleared of brush and having 'No Trespassing' signs put up. Gillian would like to clean it up herself (watch out of her wielding a chainsaw one of these days!), but it's not our property. The kids know smoking/vaping on school property will result in a suspension so they go there as it's off of school property, sometimes up to 75-100 kids there on breaks to vape.

8. Synervoic System

- We are working with a new system that has had some glitches at the start of this school year. Secondary attendance calls have not been going home. We are hoping to have this rectified by the end of this week. This is not affecting the elementary students.
- When a teacher is absent and a class has a spare, students are to sign in at Student Success. If they do so they should not receive one of these absent messages.

9. Zoom Parent Involvement Committee

- Next week there will be a Zoom call for those interested in connecting with a wider group for further information. This will be on Wednesday, October 12th at 6:30pm.
- The topic for this meeting will be ‘SAC Best Practices’.
- Anyone interested in joining in can RSVP directly to Gillian Kajganich and she will sign you up.

10. Secondary Parent-Teacher Interviews

- Parent-teacher interviews have been scheduled for Thursday, October 15th from 6-8pm. This is a wonderful positive step as we have been missed them for the past 2 school years.
- Sarah asked about the attendance rate of teachers, as in the past there often have been a large chunk of teachers missing on this night.
- Gillian talked about scheduling and that it’s just not always possible to have everyone in attendance, but that those who miss speaking to a teacher can sign a paper and will be contacted by their child’s teacher with an update. The date was chosen as being one in which it is believed a majority of teachers will be present. Sports game schedules are made well in advance and some teachers may need to miss if there is a scheduled game on this evening. Any practices set for this time will be cancelled for this one evening.
- The date was chosen earlier in the semester this time so that parents/guardians can know where kids are at earlier and if there are problems they can be addressed sooner. Teachers will be in gym, some in hallways and classrooms.

11. Edsby

- The Edsby system is a great tool in which parents/guardians can communicate quickly, seeing current marks, as well as other updates.
- Some find the website difficult to navigate, and there has been ongoing problems for parents/guardians who are also board employees to sign in.
- Brent suggested an Edsby Help Desk in which someone can help those who are having difficulties to navigate the system with more ease.

12. Student Update – Olga Danylenko (Student Senator)

- Prom - Many students are asking about it. Staff doesn’t want the liability and it needs to be off site as a non-school sponsored or promoted event. Historically the event has had troubles, such as poor behaviour, intoxication, etc. Seth helped fundraise for the prom last year. One parent took on all liability. The students had been offered to use the space at Out Loud, but ultimately they went to Ramada. A team of students needs to form on their own if they want this to happen. Gillian noted that with WF being a learning environment there are boundaries that cannot be crossed. Gayle said it’s a shame because school dances and these events in the past were wonderful. Gillian mentioned that we do make a really big deal out of graduation.
- East/West – The students want it. Is it a board thing? Brent says it is usually in December. Gillian isn’t aware. Julie says it’s run by the NDA. Pre-Covid the event ran every 2 years. It should happen this year. Gillian will ask at the next NDA meeting. Olga noted that school spirit is lacking and the students believe this will help foster Trojan pride. Gillian noted that our recent pep rally was amazing and enjoyed by all.
- Meeting @ WF – Olga mentioned a meeting between students at the representative level chose West Ferris as a meeting place in the near future. We will get creative about where this meeting can be hosted and will look into a way to serve lunch (ie. The foods class preparing sandwiches or pizza ordered in).

13. Vice Principal Update - Julie Price-Martel

- Julie noted that there has been a lot of grief in the last couple of years. Students are now seeing faces and things are changing. We cannot change all that has occurred, but is encouraging the school community to seize each day moving forward and to not take anything for granted. This is our rainbow year – get involved!
- We have an incredible staff here and our students are amazing. We are a big and wild bunch sometimes, but West Ferris a great place.
- Students are excited for ‘normal’. We are noticing some huge gaps in learning and socialization, and are working together on these things this year.

14. Conclusion

- Gillian thanked all for coming. She recognizes that our time is valuable. We will broadcast information about these meetings for others who would like to join us in the future.
- Gillian provided a tour of the school afterwards for those who were interested.

15. Adjourn: 7pm

16. Next Meeting Date:

- Tuesday, November 8th @ 6pm
- We will aim for the 2nd Tuesday of the month
- This works well because the staff meeting is the day before, as well as student council meeting on Mondays.