

Caldwell Parent Council Meeting Minutes October 15, 2020

Present:

Carm Ciocio	Lisa Code
Kate Murray	Stephen Coghlan
Wendy Ferris Groulx	Kym McIntyre
Angela Reid	Lauren Kerkhoff
Maeghan Gapp	Laurie Flegg
Becky Whelan	Sue Byers
Lindsay Chunik	Denise Packard
Cheryl Quinn	Natasha Major
Kyle McCullough	

Welcome

Principal Carmela Ciocio gave us all a few minutes to “enter” the meeting room in Microsoft Teams before our first official Caldwell Street Public School parent council meeting of the school year. For the record, this is the school year that will always be the one that started with mask-wearing, distance dots on the ground, no parents setting foot in the school, and teachers not only teaching those present in the classroom, but also the at-home learners. Thanks a lot, Covid-19.

Chair Kate Murray summed up the start of the school year with, “So weird!”

Carm said, “Welcome to the most unusual year ever!”

Carm also mentioned that we have a good meeting turn out, considering the strangeness of these circumstances.

We were all momentarily distracted by the cute baby that appeared on our screens.

We all took turns un-muting and introducing ourselves, while the secretary (ahem) scrambled to get last names spelled correctly. (Note: Please let me know if I have not gotten your name correct in the meeting minutes and it will be corrected at the next meeting.

Thanks!)

Except for Cheryl Quinn, who conveniently seemed to disappear at the time of introductions (wink, wink), but who did manage to reconnect with us later in the meeting.

Kyle McCulloch and Denise Packard seemed to connect at a later point in the meeting as well, missing introductions.

Principal Report

Carm said that the students physically attending Caldwell have settled into new routines that include: physical distancing, class cohorts, eating in classrooms, unusual recesses, no assemblies, etc.

Classroom programs are moving along at a slower pace this year, as kids settle in.

Vice Principal Sue Byers said, "Kids are doing a good job with everything." She went on to say students are doing a good job of distancing in the hallways – doing their zombie walks with their arms out – and they are doing well on buses. "Kids are incredibly resilient, overall."

Carm said that the changes to the Covid-19 screening tool has meant a drastic reduction to our absenteeism. Originally we were averaging 50 absent students a day. One day there were 83! That number has now fallen into the teens.

There is now a sign-off sheet for when kids are sent home sick to be filled out before kids come back to school. The form has parents sign off that students are symptom-free and do not need to quarantine. The board has not made the form mandatory.

Maeghan Gapp thinks the return-to-school form is a good idea because it is hard for parents to know the correct procedure when kids have been home sick.

Carm says we are trying to keep the documentation we need so if there is a case of Covid-19, we can quickly do the contact tracing on our end.

We may need to review dismissal procedures; waiting to hear about the student monitor position.

It is IEP Week. There is a learning curve to write IEPs for students that are not attending in-person learning at this time.

Progress Reports are coming up. Kindergarten progress reports will go home in late November, with the rest of the progress reports going home November 10 or 11.

Like with the IEPs, there is a learning curve and many questions about writing progress reports for students who are participating in asynchronous learning; Carm says they are looking for more direction and clarity on this.

There are four programs being run by classroom teachers this year. This means there is a huge learning curve and a lot of stress. Carm pointed out, using Kate's situation of her daughter starting out in asynchronous learning and now transferring to at-school learning, that at least our board allows for fluid movement and choices can be made.

If Caldwell had reorganized our staffing according to the in-school population of students right now, we would likely have no Vice-Principal (sorry Sue!) and we would be down three teachers.

We have a challenge with supply teachers this year, with the schools in the horseshoe area around Ottawa being hardest hit as we draw from Ottawa and they currently have increased demand.

In previous years, we would combine classes if necessary if a supply was not available, but we cannot do that this year because class cohorts must be maintained.

"Maybe I will be calling one of you to see if you want to teach one day!" - Carm

There is an added complication that many teachers live in Ottawa and have to abide by Ottawa Public Health guidelines.

Eastern Health Unit is dealing with a high number of Covid infections (part of our Board).

Carm has not heard anything about school closures. The principal emphasized that the province (at this time) seems committed to keeping schools open and managing cases as they come.

However, Carm also pointed out that there are guidelines in place to ensure we are prepared to go to remote learning within 24 hours, if necessary.

Carm is not privy to any inside information about school closures. In March, Carm found out on Twitter that schools were closing. Oh boy. (That last bit was secretary commentary.)

Squirt, Sanitize, and Slither on, is what Carm instructs the children to do each morning as they enter the school. This should be Caldwell's 2020 motto.

Halloween

Kids will be allowed to wear costumes to school but only if it is something they can comfortably wear all day long and something that allows them to go to the bathroom – very important!

Kids will not be able to change into or out of their costumes at school this year.

They must also be able to wear their cloth masks. A costume mask does not replace a cloth mask.

Classroom parties – school will provide chips. Kids must stay seated in their spot, they can't bring in treats from home, and there are no sharing of treats.

No indoor parades. Not sure at this point if an outdoor Kinder parade will be attempted.

Finances Update

We have almost \$7000 in our account.

We can't bring in anyone for any presentations right now. Potato chips are our only need at the moment.

No need to fundraise at this point. Just hold on to the money.

Maeghan asked if there would be a possibility of bringing in someone that could run an outdoor activity for kids in winter.

Last year we did snow shoes with older students and a guided nature walk with younger ones with the Mill of Kintail.

As of right now, we have no permission to bring someone in from outside of the school.

Carm said we are committed to maximizing outdoor activities.

Footwear

Wendy Ferris Groulx asked about another pair of footwear when the weather turns poor (Winter is coming, people).

Carm is trying to get clarification on whether having items in the hallway is the problem, or having the potential issue of crowding, as kids gather to remove/put on shoes. No response yet.

This will need to be reevaluated as the winter weather approaches and a change will have to be made.

Photos

Caldwell just got the okay to do school photos.

Only individual photos will be taken.

There will be a composite photo done, which combines photos to make a special Covid-19 year class photo.

Parents who have opted to do remote learning for their child will have the option to come in on an evening to have their child's photo taken. There will be no flexibility with the chosen date.

Election

Carm said she felt like Kate hasn't actually finished her year yet. Ha!
No one stepped up and said they wanted to take over for Kate as Chair of Parent Council, in the middle of a pandemic, so Kate is going to keep going in the position.
Wendy will continue on as Secretary as well, as her kids are in Grade 6 and this is her last year. (Unless someone is dying to give it a go. Anyone? Anyone? Bueller?)

Bob and Kyle-less

Carm said she noticed that Bob Derraugh was not present and joked that if there is no Halloween Fun Night, then Bob is out. Bob? Are you there?
It was noted that Kyle McCulloch was on the line at one point, but has now gone.

Staff Acknowledgement

Kate acknowledged how hard Caldwell staff are working to keep the school together in these trying times.
This led to a discussion on how we could acknowledge staff and encourage them to keep going.
We can't bring in any food and we have to be careful how we spend council funds.
Carm suggested posting positive messages on Facebook.
Kate suggested getting a banner made for outside of the school that encourages and thanks Caldwell staff. Kate is going to send out some mock-ups and we will vote on them.
Lisa Code mentioned how difficult things are at her school and said she likes the banner idea.
Carm asked how kids are doing with masks. It is tough for kindergarteners to keep them on.
Wendy said her kids are tired, but it is hard to tell if it is from mask-wearing or settling into a new routine. From a sensory perspective, Leo (who has mild autism) is doing well with his mask and keeping it on all day.

Caldwell Masks

The idea of making Caldwell masks came up. A local shop could make them.
It could be a positive from a school spirit perspective, but might be a hard ask from a financial perspective, as so many people are struggling in these times.
Kate suggested helping out some families by paying for those masks.
Carm, even with a vaccine, thinks mask-wearing will be here for another year or two.
Becky Whelan said making them ourselves is an option as we have a heat press and a Cricut machine. If we bought some black masks in bulk, we could make them ourselves to bring the cost down.
Wendy: Would we have to do it as a fundraiser? Could we just provide masks for students as a school spirit type of thing?
Becky: It would not be much more than the cost of the mask.
Cheryl Quinn: It would be unifying for the kids not physically attending school right now for them to get the masks as well.
Potential problem identified: If all masks look the same there is the potential for them to get mixed up.
Putting a pin in it for now: We don't need money at the moment and we will consider this at a future meeting.

Next meeting is: TBD by Kate and Carm

Squirt, Sanitize, and Slither on