



Richmond Public School Council
June, 2020

Chairs' Report

School Council Profile for 2020

Principal: Nancy Dlouhy

School Council Chair(s): Kina Simmonds and Anne Scott

School Council Secretary: Fiona Sutherland

School Council Treasurer: Miranda Lexmond

Volunteer Coordinator: Bryonie Beaucaire

Message from Council Chairs

Richmond Public School is a small, rural school with a tightly woven community. This year, more than ever, we have appreciated and admired the support and values of our community. We encountered some challenges throughout 2019-2020 but with support from our families, school staff, and OCDSB staff, we have been successful in improving our practices and shifting gears. After four years, our principal, Nancy Dlouhy, is moving on to another school and we wish her all the best. We appreciate her many valuable contributions and caring nature. Looking ahead to 2020-2021, we are excited for the new year and the opportunity to work with our new principal, Laura Ladouceur.

Recent Achievements

1. **Improved Financial Controls and Management:** In mid-November, Council discovered major financial irregularities, which it promptly reported to Principal Dlouhy and the OCDSB. During and after the 90 days in which the Council worked with the Board to investigate and correct the problems, Council also worked to ensure that funds management, instead of fundraising, became a major priority. Council voted to strictly limit fundraising for 2019-2020, giving time to ensure that proper controls were put in

place and tested. A new Funds Management Guide and Guide for Fundraisers and Events were prepared, bringing Council's practices in line with OCDSB recommendations and community expectations. This also helped to ensure that, moving forward, the role of fiscal responsibility and transparency is taken seriously and is shared among all council members. The new Guide for Fundraising also aims to help fundraising volunteers more easily navigate this new process and to ensure future events end on a well deserved "high note".

2. **Focus on Coming Together:** Despite the fall's fiscal challenges, Council worked closely with the OCDSB and the school to ensure the continuation of the winter holiday events that have come to be much anticipated celebrations for students. Santa's Breakfast saw almost 50 families sit down together for pancakes. The RPS Kids Market ensured that every student who wished could take home up to four gifts for their family members at winter break. Building on this positive momentum, Council turned its 2020 focus away from fundraising and toward communication and community building. Getting the RPS community together to learn, share, and celebrate became a priority. Council began looking forward to and planning for efforts such as a speaker series, Human Library, Grade 5 leaving celebration, and Fun Fair. While these efforts were paused as a result of COVID-19, Council is well positioned to restart this community-building energy upon reopening.
3. **Growing Council Participation:** 2019-2020 saw Council grow in size and participation. While 2018-2019 saw seven regular participants at meetings, 2019-2020 Council maintained an active membership of 11. A conscious effort was made to ensure council members were able to maximize their input and participation in the events, topics, and decisions they found most important. In addition, efforts to send home a regular, monthly newsletter received positive feedback. This helped to ensure an increase in the regularity of communication with the whole school community.
4. **RPS Snack Program:** The RPS Healthy Snack Program ran another successful year. In collaboration with the Ottawa Network for Education and RPS Council, volunteers bought, prepared, and distributed over 3 000 healthy snacks between September and March to encourage student nutrition and help equalize the day for all students. As the social and economic repercussions from COVID-19 are realized, it is hoped that this program will be well positioned to continue supporting students in the 2020-2021 school year.

Challenges

1. **Fundraising Shortfall:** The financial irregularities discovered in November rendered impossible Council's ability to fulfill all its September funding commitments. For example, annual amounts for Arts and supplements for field trip busses were struck from the budget in the new year. As fundraising had been a major focus for many years, the shift away from raising money to a focus on communication and community engagement took some thought, adjustment, and creativity. As evidenced by the above proposed events, members continue to rise to this challenge.
2. **Money Talk:** Creating a culture of financial openness and accountability, where all members feel comfortable looking at Council finances and asking questions, will continue to take time and experimentation. In addition to the aforementioned financial controls, Council will experiment with a Finance Committee, open to all members who wish to engage and familiarize themselves with Council funds.
3. **Hot Lunch:** The hot lunch and milk programs have been long standing fundraisers at Richmond Public School for many years. Over half of the families at Richmond Public School participate in the program, which contributes to a large portion of the Council's fundraising. Traditionally, the lunch program ordering and delivery has been coordinated internally by Council volunteers and has evolved over the past three years, from three food vendors down to one. This year, Council began to explore alternatives and planned two trial deliveries from the Lunch Lady Ottawa West. Unfortunately, due to the school closure, these events were cancelled. The Council plans to explore this and other options to diversify its program and reduce the need for volunteers. The milk program will continue to be offered next year, with a subsidy available to requesting families.
4. **COVID-19:** COVID-19 presents the most obvious challenge to Council as the year comes to an end. Many initiatives and planned events were cancelled or postponed, including the Human Library, Speaker Series, and Fun Fair. Council used their new culture of collaboration to put together a plan for refunding all funds collected to support the Hot Lunch, Milk, and Popcorn sales. However, an obvious challenge is before us in how to restart or reimagine these activities in the new and fluid COVID reality.