

Michael Strembitsky School Council Annual Report to EPSB 2017–18

Elected Members:

Position	Name
President	Sarah Jane Barriage
Vice-President	Janet Michelle
Secretary	Lori Laybolt

Meeting Dates:

2017	2018
September 12th, 2017 *Annual General Meeting and election of a new board	January 11th
October 5th	February 1st
November 2nd	March 8th
	April 5th
	May 3rd

Summary of activities of the school council:

Our Annual General Meeting took place on September 12th, 2018, and a new board was elected with a one-year term.

With changes to the Michael Strembitsky School (MSS) catchment, we experienced unexpected reductions in our community engagement at the council and fundraising level. Increasing community engagement became an early primary goal of the school council. Efforts included an electronic survey, moving our long standing meeting dates from Tuesdays to Thursdays, connecting with the Satoo school community and a the creation of a widely distributed electronic newsletter. The topic of securing a school council social media account was raised by members. Council decided against it in favour of more traditional and more widely used forms of communication that would allow board members to provide members with a timely and accountable response.

Concerns about classroom temperatures were raised by members at the first meetings in the school term even with the current procedures in place to safeguard students. At times classrooms were reported to be above 25 degrees Celsius first thing in the morning. Members brought forward several possible recommendations to further enhance administration's procedures and requested these be investigated by the school board and the building owner Honeywell for financial, structural and practical feasibility. Requested enhancements included window tinting and air conditioning installation, permanent or portable. Administration took our requests to the school board and kept members apprised of new information. We are happy to report that at the time this report was written, our portables all have air conditioning units installed. We hope this greatly increases the learning experience of our students and staff.

Continued development in our surrounding neighbourhood has resulted in ongoing growth and accommodations to our catchment. In its six years, Michael Strembitsky School has undergone two catchment redesigns with the latest seeing the school reduced from a K-9 to a 2-9 for an unspecified length of time. The upcoming 2018-2019 school year is scheduled to be the first year students transition from Satoo. The Superintendent's last report to Trustee's outline possible shortages in high school space. The school council felt it was important to members and invited the EPSB Planning Department to a meeting to answer any lingering questions and update members. In advance of the meeting council summarized pertinent information and distributed it to members. Council then collected member questions and submitted them to the Planning department so that they may provide complete and clear responses. On February 1st, 2018, council welcomed several members of the Planning and Transportation Departments. The meeting had a relaxed and open atmosphere. Discussion was cordial and covered a broad range of relevant topics.

The Jr. High population at MSS has been steadily growing and with it, the social and educational opportunities have also grown. Council and our fundraising foundation made focused efforts to support this. Members have been advocating for six years to have Jr. High social events held inside of school hours to ensure equal access. We felt that although we are primarily an elementary school, Jr. High is a unique time for our students and required specific practice in social development to prepare them for high school. Council was very pleased this year to see administration accept our request and two highly attended social events were lead by our inaugural leadership class! Council heard requests from the Jr. High staff to fund technical equipment. The Strembitsky Parent Foundation was pleased to be able to fund all requests. MSS now boasts healthy classroom libraries, three virtual reality kits, new computers, a 3D printer and a shop equipment. All of these items will be available to the learning community for years to come.

Planning confirmed the upcoming transition of students into Grade 2 at MSS. After two years of no new students entering MSS, council felt it was noteworthy and required some special consideration. Communication between MSS and Satoo has been continuous and supportive. Council made a request to allow for a specific orientation for incoming grade two families as MSS does not conduct an open house due to its closed boundaries. Administration wanted to delay the meeting until end of August to ensure students would be given specific classroom information. Council agreed this was prudent; families were invited to make individual appointments in advance of the formal group orientation taking place on August 31st, 2018 should it conflict with their schedules. Students will have the opportunity to meet their teacher, see their classroom and orientate themselves to the school environment. At this time it will also be important to orientate families to drop-off and pick-up procedures to facilitate overall student safety.

Fostering student well-being and growth is part of the mission of the council. With internet safety being a persistent issue, council invited back the Saffron Centre for a brief presentation to the learning community at our March meeting. The Saffron Centre is a tremendous resource to our community. Although we all agreed we wished there was more time for the speaker to present, members were grateful and left feeling informed and empowered.

Following the 2017 municipal election results, council invited Trustee Adams to attend a meeting and connect with members. She accepted and we happily hosted her at our last meeting in May of 2018. Members were aware she had taken a medical leave but were asking for an increase in communication from the trustee going forward — specifically surrounding advocating the Provincial Government for increased funding to inclusive education services, Capital Plan projects in our area, and for clarification on her previous voting decisions surrounding parental rights and LGBTQ school board policy. Trustee Adams was open to our feedback, thanking us for the challenge to increase her communication, and volunteered to share her monthly board report with the council.

It has been this council's honour to serve the learning community in our elected roles. Our Annual General Election will take place on September 13th, 2018. At this time a new council and fundraising board will be elected. MSS is strongly positioned to continue to achieve its priority of student growth and success.