

## **Valley Park Middle School**

### **Minutes of the School Council Meeting-November 24, 2008**

#### **In attendance:**

The second meeting of the Valley Park school council was held on Monday, November 24, 2008 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. The school principal, Nick Stefanoff, and Vice Principals Amarjit Parmar and Kim Jensen were in attendance along with a number of Valley Park parents and Sosan Etrat, our Thorncliffe Neighbour Office Settlement Worker. Our guests included Paul Addie and Lynette Spence, both retired principals from the TDSB who were commissioned to do a report on the TOPS program at Marc Garneau.

The meeting began with a welcome address from one of the co-chairs, Mr. Paul Dewan. All attendees introduced themselves.

#### **Report on the TOPS program at Marc Garneau School**

Mr. Paul Addie and Ms. Lynette Spence did a TOPS power point presentation and explained various concerns related to the TOPS program. The major concerns highlighted included the following:

- Very few students from the local community get accepted into TOPS
- The community is not very well informed with respect to the program
- There is not enough communication between MGCI and the feeder schools with respect to TOPS
- Concerns about the admission process

They also explained the report's various recommendations to address the above concerns. They further explained that the report will go before the Toronto District School Board and the trustees will decide whether or not to accept these recommendations.

#### **Student's library use at Valley Park**

Ms. Tammy Friesen and Ms. Elizabeth Galli presented a power point presentation on student library use at VPMS.

We were informed that VPMS has a library resource centre with a large number of resources and a fully equipped computer lab. We were also told that our library is well-used by our students; last year at this time our students had checked out 18647 items while this year the number increased to 19845. Although most of our books are in English, the library has many that are in the first language of our students.

Our teacher-librarians made a comparative study about the use of library books by girls and boys at Valley Park. In grade 6, boys and girls check out almost an equal number of books. However, the number of books checked out by boys declines as they get older. By grade 8 the data shows that girls checked out almost double the number of books as compared to boys. Our teacher librarians also discussed ways that Valley Park is trying to address this issue.

We also learned that the library computer lab allows our children to access the internet for research and that students also have access to a printer. Students can use the computer lab both during instructional time and after school. It is also important to know that the TDSB has developed a library website which can be accessed from home. Our VPMS library organises and delivers many other services to our students including book talks, author visits, book fairs and reading clubs.

#### **Results of Valley Park Middle School's Parent Forum held on Saturday November 15, 2008**

Principal Nick Stefanoff said that the school's parent forum meeting was a great success. About 50 parents attended the meeting where they brainstormed and discussed the various issues and concerns. This was done in groups, one in English and others in the native language of the participants. Nick distributed a summary of what was discussed to all School Council attendees. Others interested in this summary can get a copy by

simply emailing Mr. Stefanoff at [nickolas.stefanoff@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:nickolas.stefanoff@tdsb.on.ca) . Nick also stated that there will be more parent forums, at least once per term as a means of positively involving parents at Valley Park and tapping into their good judgement and expertise.

## **The TDSB's Model School initiative and Valley Park's Involvement**

Vice Principal Kim Jensen explained Valley Park's involvement in the model schools for inner cities initiative. She explained how our involvement gives VPMS access to money and other resources designed to improve the school's effectiveness.

The five essential components of model schools for inner cities include the following:

- Innovative teaching and learning
- Support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students
- School as the heart of the community
- Research, review and evaluation of students and programs
- Commitments to share successful practices

## **Other business**

Vice Principal Amarjit Parmar explained about following things happening at VPMS:

- **Girls Unlimited**, a program for girls that help to improve their confidence and self-esteem
- **Life Touch**, the company that does our school photos, are using our school as a venue to train photographers and will compensate Valley Park Middle School \$1.00 per student for doing this.
- **Prayer Service**, the school is providing a venue for the Muslim student's to have prayers at school on Fridays. An Imam from the neighbouring mosque comes to our school and conducts the prayers. Prior to this, students signed out early on Friday afternoons to go to mosque. By staying at school, valuable instructional time is saved for our students.

## **Safety Issues**

One of the parents pointed out that the portables are far away from the main building and there is no gate at the back entrance. He suggested installing a gate at the back entrance and keeping it closed after the morning entry until the school dismissal. He also suggested the need for more security cameras and more effective two-way communication between the portables and main building. He also expressed concern about the right turn of vehicles at the Don Mills and Overlea. He suggested installing a NO RIGHT TURN ON REDLIGHT bylaw at this intersection.

The meeting concluded at 9.00 pm. Mr. Paul Dewan thanked everyone for their gracious presence.

**The next meeting of the council will be held on Monday, Jan 19, 2009**