

Mary Johnston Public School - School Council - Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Start time: 6:30 pm

Location: MJPS Library

In attendance:

Erika Bryant

Adrienne Brown

Sarah Bester

Samantha Hirsch

Nada Basir

Andrea Labyt

Amy Neilsen

Kara Botelho

Ellen Dobson

Tara Natter

Dianne Lapierre

Kristen House

Beatrice Peralta

Principal: Marcus Hoare

Staff representative: Janice Taylor

Housekeeping:

- We are down to 13 voting council members now. Melanie has moved away and Nick has stepped down. Minimum number of voting members for quorum is now 8.

Welcome

Principal's Welcome and Update

- Arts Night was a huge success; community came together; thanks to council for the support.
- Marcus has submitted an application to be a pilot school for a Bike In the School Program. For grades 5 and 6s right now. Run by the City of Waterloo - they will do two schools in the city. It would be fully funded by the City of Waterloo. If we are accepted, we would automatically get the program again the following school year.

OLAF Update

- Marcus has an email from Josh (facilities) responding to some of our frustrations. We have been waiting for a while - almost a year now. The response was: it will be a summer project. He is putting together one big package of multiple schools all seeking to do similar projects.
- We will get an update after March Break.

Council Matters

Financial Update - Sarah Bester

- We have made about \$320 in interest this year.
- No other updates.

Newsletter

- The second newsletter was received very well again. It was shared via School Day.

Spirit Wear

- Open until March 13 for ordering.

STEM Fair

- An introductory letter has been distributed via School Day.
- Staff have all been informed of the event as well. Some staff were worried about involvement, time in class, etc. but Janice and Marcus provided as much information as possible. They thought perhaps an assembly to introduce the fair to students would be helpful. Friday before March Break, possibly. And a paper flyer can go home with kids that day so the message doesn't get lost.
- What is the goal? How much parent involvement is expected? Would the school/council be willing to supply resources for students?
- Nada: in-school activities ahead of time have been challenging to plan logistically. So that idea has been omitted for this year.
- Students can work in pairs or groups. Does not have to be independent.
- Samie: what about an "office hours" type offer, where kids can come and get some help with their projects from an adult?
- Is it possible to have an evening for picking up project boards and some basic supplies? After hours or daytime pick up?
- Are there any opportunities for grade 6 leadership? An older student helping a very young student with a project, maybe? Or they could volunteer to help at the drop-in sessions.
- Marcus and Janice will determine pick up dates and then communicate them to Nada and staff. Parent volunteers will distribute boards on those days.
- Nada will acquire ribbons for projects.
- Someone can ask Mrs Shaver to pull some science books on experiments. Maybe we can offer basic supplies for those simple experiments.
- A lot of schools have groups of "judges" (not judging, but asking questions). Could we do this? In the past, Laurier students have come in to do so. Mme Natter has student teachers who may be willing. Consider MJ alumni too. Maybe 10-15 volunteers to circulate and ask kids questions about their projects.
- Assembly will be Friday before March Break.
- Tuesday, March 24th breaks 1 and 2 (k-3 students, break 1; grades 4-6 students break 2) – drop in for kids more by age. They can come in for help. Then we'll do a second drop in on another day, TBD.

- Nada could create some printouts with experiment suggestions too.

Year-End Event

- No updates at this time.

Spring fundraising

- Do we want to run any spring fundraisers?
- Mme Daley is running a Booster Juice fundraiser. 3 blocks (of 3-4 weeks at a time). Info will come home after March Break. It will be very organized and easy for all adults. Student leaders will help run it. Pick and choose dates, pay for orders, will be distributed similarly to pizza. This is a school fundraiser (not council).

Further Discussions

Committee Updates:

- Arts Committee: Paul visited a high school with lots of art. Perhaps there is an option for a co-op opportunity for a HS student to come and create some art at MJ.
- Active Transportation: Paul is hoping to get a path to circumvent the parking lot. Paul has talked to Lauren in facilities since it's board land.
- Safety Committee: No updates.

Track and Field

- What is the format for this year?
- Staff are planning two avenues:
 - First: The collection of times and measurements to qualify kids for Regionals (in June) at Jacob Hespeler in Cambridge. Our goal is to maximize the number of participants and help kids get there.
 - Data will be collected during gym times.
 - There will also be a community day with tug of war, etc. where parents are welcome to come and watch.
 - Format will be more similar to last year (not a full day event for parents to watch, etc.)
 - Second: A track and field club. The goal is to run a community event through this as well. This will be more competitive. It will cover the same age range, grades 4-6. The community event would be open for parents to come and watch.
- Two parents have asked to get involved and help run the after school club.
- Miss Taylor and Mr Howard are the staff reps.
- Hopefully this is a solution that can help meet the needs of as many people as possible.

Grade 5-6 overnight trip

- We have a deposit with Hidden Acres for a booking for May 13, 14, 15. (Wed-Fri)
- MJ staff team got together to make a package for approval from the superintendent.
- We will need parent volunteers for the overnight as well.

- If the overnight is not approved, it will be altered to be longer-day day trips.

Let Grow Program

- A play group opportunity for after school to encourage open-ended, unstructured play outside after school hours. It aims to teach small increments of independence too.
- Hope to start in the spring. Could be introduced via assembly.
- We can work out more logistics and details in April.
- Aiming for Fridays, likely.

Next meeting: Wednesday, April 8, 2026