

DPCDSB

**Father Michael Goetz Catholic Secondary School
School Council Meeting**

Tuesday January 27th, 2009

**Resource Center
Start Time: 7:00**

Present: Diana Harripersaud; Dina Madeira-Silva; Maha Broum; Norrine Burns; Rosemarie Schoutsen; Patricia Dapaah; Wendy Goberdhan; Karen Cole; Dotun Akinola; Cathy Cosgrove (Teacher Rep); Nancy Begin (non-teaching rep) Suzann Verhoeven (teacher); and Samuel Macaluso (Principal). Also attending was Dana Young (a guest speaker on gambling from YMCA).

Absent: Raman Raghavan; Ashley Khan.

Welcome and introductions: (Diana Harripersaud)

The Council Co Chair welcomed everyone, introduced herself and the parents present. Diana expressed concern for Raman's absence without hearing from him especially that it was his turn to chair the meeting.

Opening Prayer: (Rosemarie Shoutsen)

Rosemarie prayed for grade 9 students who are in high school for the first time, for the grade 12s going into university, and for good health and good times for the community.

Approval of November minutes: (Diana harripersaud): Dotun approved, Norrine seconded, then the other members who were present at December meeting approved. There was a reminder of receives a draft of the minutes. Before approval of the minutes, only the parents present at the meeting receive them. After their approval, the minutes are posted on the school's website under school council for all parents to read.

Mr. Macaluso encouraged the parents to open the website and know more about the school. Parents can find a list of upcoming events in Goetz on the website. He mentioned that there is an intention to include course outlines on the websites to be reviewed by parents and students.

Guest Speaker (Dana Young):

Dana delivered a sample of a presentation given to students about gambling. Dana gave the signs of being involved and addicted to gambling and ways for students to stay safe. The program YMCA presents is educational, i.e. aims at raising awareness. They do not give any counseling but can provide referrals to counseling. The YMCA program tries to reduce harm and this is being done by giving students accurate information on how to make a good decision. The program is neutral, and that means it show gambling realistically, not as exciting.

The YMCA program to raise awareness about gambling started in 2000 by funds from Ontario Ministry of Health promotion. The pilot project started with 7 sites. Because of its success, there are now 11 additional sites. There are different approaches to this awareness, all integrated in various school subjects.

The definition of gambling is: Risking something of value without knowing the outcome.

Dana asked the parents about the good things about gambling. Answers were: winning, socializing and entertainment. Negative things about gambling are lost pay cheque and addiction. Time and money are lost and these are the most precious resources a person has.

Why do we need to address the youth? Gambling is now legalized and promoted by the government. Gambling has become so popular in the last few years. In 1994 the first casino opened in Windsor, Ontario. For youth, it became normal and accessible. Research has found that the highest risk group is between ages 19-24. Research also found that last year 80% of young people ages 12 to 17 has gambled at least once. 4 to 8 % of those have a major problem as gamblers. Why do they have problems more than adults? For reasons such as having money that they earn from employment, not having responsibilities, and peer pressure. For youth, gambling is an escape from other problems, entertaining, gives them bigger ego, exciting, a show off winnings and a solution in troubled economy.

What is considered gambling? 'Quarters', marbles, online gambling, lotto, bets and dares, dominoes, mahjong, bingo, poker, cards, dice, scratch tickets. Sometimes, youth are encouraged to gamble by parents when they give their kids lotto or scratch tickets for their birthdays.

Youth are curious to know and they usually ask the YMCA speakers these questions: What happens in the casino? How do slot machines work? What is the difference between a game and gambling? How do people get hooked? What happens if I get caught as a minor in a casino? How often will I win?

Parents in the meeting asked the speaker a number of questions mostly about consequences. In a lotto selling store, it is all the responsibility of the vendor not to serve a minor. In Woodbine racetrack, minors are allowed to come in to the seats between races on breaks. One parent mentioned she has been there once and upon entry, she was asked to provide her driving license. The trick is that 'they' invite people to go again by special promotions on their birthday. They give you incentives to go and spend money there and they get young people hooked.

In a hands-on experiment, the YMCA speaker would play a game of Roulette with her young audience and show them the small chance of winning using mathematics and probability.

Signs of problem gambling in your kids: Spending a long time playing any one type of game, not paying attention to their surroundings, increased spending, stealing, debts, and mood swings.

Harm reduction strategies: Setting limits with and for your kids, expect to lose when you gamble. We can not expect an addictive gambler to stop immediately. As a result, we need to give them tools to get to safety. Dana gave parents referral information card they give to students in schools.

An official site for the program is: www.ymcatoronto.org/gambling

Nancy Begin (Child-youth worker): Gambling is addictive and it is a result of underlying problems. We solve the underlying problems to get to gambling and not deal with it as a problem by itself.

Cathy Cosgrove (Teacher): How do we deal with online gambling?

Dana: Online gambling is a grey area and there are no laws to cover it. In Canada you have to be 18 to gamble online. However, most sites are managed outside Canada. These sites accept credit and debit cards. There are always loopholes. In the beginning, a youth starts playing by oneself, then gets addicted. It is dangerous for loners. It is like a 'playground without supervision'.

Patricia: Sometimes parents give their children credit cards, especially if they do not live with them.

Mr. Macaluso (Principal): The government is not even there dealing with the issue mainly because the internet has developed so fast. Ten years ago we would not have imagined blackberry in elementary schools. Because of the new technology, we do not know what our kids are doing and who they are talking to. We need to tell them we know about it, and we need to educate parents regarding everything.

Dana: Youth seem to value the following: money, electronics, jewelry, drugs/alcohol, clothes (brand names) and food. These things are a reason for gambling and also a reason for fight when lost in gambling.

Suzann: As a teacher on the Bullying and safe school team we see a relation between gambling and bullying. Betting may start a fight.

Dotun: As parents we are not sure where and how to draw the line.

Mr. Macaluso: The important thing is to draw a line for the kids.

Patricia: Who has the power at home? Some parents give power up and when they want to get it back, it becomes very hard.

Karen: It is hard to draw lines because in the past one community had one set of rules. Now every family has different rules. Some are more lenient than others.

Treasurer's Report: (Dina Madeira-Silva)

Dina reported \$53 for coffee and cookies for Christmas council meeting.

The parents found that amount too much for such thing. They would like to have coffee and cookies on meetings without paying this amount. Parents will bring cookies themselves to the following meetings.

The invoice for the luncheon in appreciation for Goetz staff has not been received yet. Dina will report the amount next meeting.

Norraine would like to keep a continuous and separate fund to support needy families in school community.

Parish Report: (Rosemarie Schoutsen)

Rosmarie brought the bulletins of the 2 parishes: Christ the King Church and Sts.

Peter and Paul. Sts. Peter and Paul has a prayer group Tuesdays evening, and

Legends of Mary on Wednesdays evening.

Knights of Columbus has a Valentine dance planned. Info is in the bulletin if anyone is interested.

Teaching Staff Rep: (Cathy Cosgrove)

Cathy reported that the White Pine Reading Club has started already and running well. Money will be needed for registering qualifying students to go the provincial

conference. Cathy is not sure how many students will qualify so she will give the numbers in March.

Diana (chair) suggests to reach out to neighbouring bookstores to get more resources for the library.

Cathy also mentioned the Valentine's contest in February. There will be 2 prizes and these are 2 chocolate boxes, one for a male and another for a female.

\$3000 was spent on PIP books and that was enough to buy 246 books. The books fall into 3 categories: novels with easy vocabulary and includes graphic novels, non-fiction with basic research skills and includes science and art books, and teacher-referenced to generate lesson plans.

Non- teaching Staff Report (Nancy Begin, Child Youth Worker):

Nancy reported on Christmas baskets. The council has supported 2 families and both were very appreciative of the gifts. More information that may be interesting for parents is on school's website to review.

Norraine suggested giving help to some needy families in the community all year round.

Nancy responded that such work is organized with the school chaplain.

Chair's Report (Diana Harripersaud):

Thank you cards for stores who donated gift certificates for Christmas basket were signed by all parents present at the meeting. Appreciation of 145 Goetz teachers and staff will take place on Thursday through a luncheon that includes pasta, salad, desert and coffee catered to by the Caf personnel. A parent from the council, Mrs. Goberdhan will be at the luncheon to speak on behalf of the parents.

Diana would like to finalize the letters to arrange activities with other school councils, like competitions or cooperation, before February 26th.

Diana will also ask Mr. Choles (music teacher) if it is possible to volunteer to play music with his kids for seniors in the community. This will result in students going out to the community to be seen. A suggestion came up to bring seniors to school to use the facilities. For example, do their hair and their nails in the cosmetology class, have a meal prepared by food prep students, and listen to music played by music students.

Music and musical theatre go out to feeder schools and get the spotlight, but that might not be enough to foster community relations.

The Principal (Mr. Samuel Macaluso):

Joe Rich presentation for parents will be on February 12th at 7 in Mississauga Convention Center. It is free and the invitation is open. The Board has arranged for each school council a number of tickets, of which Goetz got 25. Mr. Macaluso gave the tickets to interested parents present at the meeting.

First semester was outstanding. Wednesday Jan. 28 is PD day, Thursday the 29th is Exam Review Day as well as Goetz staff appreciation day. Friday is first day of second semester.

The numbers this year are higher compared to last year. Last year's numbers were 1760. The numbers today is 1860. The school is not getting a new VP since numbers in second semester are less than the first one.

January 14th was Grade 8 feeder schools parent information night and it was excellent.

Thursday February 17th is school dance for Grades 7 and 8 (feeder schools) from 4 to 7:30.

Goetz had won \$7000 in grants from the government for a number of activities such as the Robotics Club, and Ballroom dancing. The school plans to get a new sound system to be installed in the cafeteria to provide a theatre quality sound for theatrical performances. The superintendent Ms. Liz McGuire has given the school \$3000 as a gift for startup for the sound system. Other funds are still needed to get it done (costs between \$12,000 and \$15,000).

Principals had a 3-day meeting (January 25-to 27) in Niagara Falls with workshops focusing on safe schools. One more day of training is left to be done in St.

Marcellinus school at a later date. The remaining training will be in law, suspension, safety, police, lawyers, etc...

We need to stress Jesus in our teaching, as a foundation for our kids.

8:55: Adjournment.