



**Maple Ridge Elementary School**

*Aiming for excellence! Visez l'excellence!*

**MAPLE RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015**

**October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Prepared by: Cynthia M. Allen, PhD  
Maple Ridge ES Council Chair**

# School Council Annual Report 2014-2015

## **Introduction:**

As Chair of the Maple Ridge Elementary School Council, I would like to extend greetings to fellow council members, parents, students, staff, school administrators and Board members.

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2014-15 School Council Annual Report summarizing Council activities, events and decisions. This is a required report.

There are three reports required to officially conclude the 2014-15 academic year.

- School Council Annual Report – Due October 30/2015
- Year-end reporting of School Generated Funds – Due September 21/2015
- 2014-2015 Parents Reaching Out Grand Funding and Report Back – Due August 31/2015

In the course of school council activities throughout the year, we endeavour to fulfill the overall objectives of school councils as mandated by the Ministry and the Board such as improving student achievement and enhancing the accountability of the education system by providing advice to the Principal, Board and Ministry.

## **School Council Members:**

At the beginning of the first meeting (September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014), an election was held in accordance with the Maple Ridge School Council constitution. The outcome of this election was as follows:

Parents:

- Chair: Cynthia Allen
- Secretary: Tamara Johnson
- Treasurer: Wil Dykstra, CGA
- Fundraising Coordinator: vacant
- Communications Coordinator: Rosita McLaughlin
- Community Representative: Barbara MacIntyre
- Past Chair/Member at Large: Kim Glass
- Member At Large: Micheline Lalonde
- Member At Large: Jennifer DaSilva
- Member At Large: Sylvia Glenn
- Member At Large: Lori Henderson

- Member At Large: Charmaine Clarke
- Member At Large: Elitza Palazov
- Member At Large: Crystall Matheson
- Member At Large: Jennifer Tracey
- Member At Large: Mary Dixon Bourque

School Administration/Teaching/Non-Teaching Staff:

- Principal: Nicole Guertin-Colverson
- Vice-Principal: Natalie Makara
- Teaching Representative: Mara Belitzky
- Non-Teaching Representative: Lizabeth VanDaalen

**School Council Meeting Dates:**

Maple Ridge ES Council convened the following dates during the 2014-2015 academic year:

- September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014
- November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015
- June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The meeting dates were generally held on the second Tuesday of every month. The Council has been meeting on a Tuesday for several years. This day has been working well.

**Fundraising Initiatives & Grants**

Fundraising is one of the core functions of this Maple Ridge ES Council. Council tried a few different fundraising initiatives as compared to recent years with the main source of revenue coming from the Pizza Lunch program. Thank you to all the volunteers that assisted in the success of these fundraisers by collecting forms and money, selling food, delivering items to the classrooms and organizing tasks.

Council fundraising activities included:

- Weekly pizza lunches (every Thursday)
- Sale of Entertainment Coupon Book Memberships
- Movie Night (October 9<sup>th</sup>/2014)
- Weekly Pita Pit lunches March-June (every Wednesday)
- Sale of wooden birdhouse kits
- Family Fun Day (June 18<sup>th</sup>/2015)
- On-going fundraising collaborations with: Home Hardware, Mabel's Labels, Funhaven, Boston Pizza

Fundraising activities coincided with the start of the school year. Order forms for the Term 1 pizza lunch program were included in the 'Welcome Back' package that students received on the first day. Pizza Lunches were offered weekly this year. There were 34 pizza days throughout the school year. This is an extremely important fundraiser for Council. Its success is largely dependent on our volunteers. There are not enough parent volunteers available during the week, mid-day, therefore we rely heavily on student volunteers from the older grades. Thank you to all that helped make this fundraiser such a success.

Student participation was lower this year for the fall "Maple Ridge Movie Night" therefore, we did not have a spring movie. In the spring, the Junior Leadership group sold wooden birdhouse kits to raise funds for the school garden greening project. The kits were very popular and therefore sold out. Students had the opportunity to assemble and decorate their birdhouse to be displayed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Art Vernissage evening, May 7<sup>th</sup>/2015. The Art Vernissage is held during Education Week where students can showcase several art projects of different genres displayed throughout the school. The evening was very well attended.

School Council concluded their activities this year in mid-June with their annual Family Fun evening and Silent Auction. It once again had great attendance and excellent weather. Fun was had by all – students, parents, school staff and Council members. This event is a highlight for the students and enjoyed by the community. Planning for this special evening started early. Council very much appreciates the time invested by the organizing committee which this year consisted of Anna Dykstra, Sarah Baptiste and Cynthia Allen. Thank you to Council members and parents who solicited prizes for the silent auction and basket draw. The Maple Ridge school community greatly appreciates the generosity of the local businesses who donate to our event! This evening would not be possible without parents, students and school staff that volunteered their time at the various stations - ticket booth, games, food tables or by supplying cakes for the Cake Walk. Thank you ever so much. Council also would like to thank the students that volunteered. Their help is invaluable.

## Grants

Maple Ridge Council has been fortunate throughout the years to obtain funding from various granting sources and this year was no different. We received an IBM Community grant for \$1000 which was spent on much needed supplies for the school science program. We also received a \$500 Parent Involvement Committee grant. In addition to the Community Environmental Projects Grant Program (CEPGP grant) that Council received the previous year to build a 'Butterfly Garden', Council applied for the city of Ottawa Schoolyard Tree Planting Grant and was awarded 18 trees. The trees were planted in May 5<sup>th</sup>/ 2015. The trees were watered twice weekly by parent volunteers. Thank you so much for their dedication to the school greening project.

MRES Council applied for and was awarded a PRO (Parent Reaching Out) grant through the Ministry of Education. These funds paid for four (4) parent/child evening workshops conducted by Scientists in Schools. Due to the success of these science evenings, Council applied for a 2015-16 PRO grant to fund workshops facilitated by the Canadian Museum of Science & Technology. Due to the closure of the museum, they have created an outreach program called 'Science Mobiles' where they bring the workshops to you. We were awarded the grant and are looking forward to interesting science sessions during the 2015/16 year.

On behalf of the Maple Ridge school community, Council would like to thank these granting agencies for their generosity. These resources will enhance our children's education and better support student achievement and overall well-being.

## School Council purchases & school support this year

In recent years, Council had supported the purchase and upgrade of technology in the classrooms which was very successful. However, last year, Council decided to set a goal to save money for a school grounds greening project and school yard transformation. Therefore with funds amassed last year and throughout this year, we were able to commit \$30,000 to our school yard project. It is our plan to create an outdoor educational area. Council and the school administration met with a design consultant for the OCDSB and Evergreen to begin the process. This project is quite extensive and will require a few years.

As a Council we voted to continue supporting these very important purchases & activities:

- **Library** – Books for the Forest of Reading Club – popular with the students. This is a great program to encourage children to read.
- **Parent Resource Library** – Purchased select books to add to the existing collection.
- **Activity** – Funded four (4) days of Rocks & Rings Curling program – every student was able to participate.
- **Garden** – Purchased mulch, plants, hoses and picnic tables.
- **OCASC** – Paid for Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils membership fees.

**School Council Activities** – In addition to fundraising, Council activities included:

1. October 27<sup>th</sup>/2014 was a municipal election to elect a Mayor, City Councilors and school board Trustees. Maple Ridge Elementary school is within Zone 8 of the OCDSB. On October 21<sup>st</sup>/2014, Maple Ridge Council hosted an evening to 'Meet the Candidates' running for school trustee in our zone. Although all three candidates, Keith Penny, Patrick Ready and Virginia Quinn were invited, the latter did not attend. An invitation was sent out to all the schools within Zone 8. Parents/guardians from various schools attended. Keith Penny was elected the Zone 8 School Trustee. Mr. Penny attended a Council meeting later in the year to provide us with an update on Zone activities.
2. Using 2014/15 PRO grant funds, Council hosted 4 evening Scientist in the Schools workshops (two for SK-grade 3 students and two for grade 4-6 students). As a Council, we understand the importance of science in childhood learning therefore this was an opportunity for parents/guardians and their children to work together in a team setting, to learn various skills adaptable to learning at home and provided parents with tools to help support student learning both at home and at school. Council continues to emphasize the role that parents and guardians play in their children's education.
3. Emphasizing the importance of numeracy, Council had previously spent a portion of the 2013/14 PRO Grant funds to purchase supplies and assemble more than 100 Take-Home Hands-on Math Kits based on faculty suggested activities. The math kit activities are applicable to kindergarten, primary, junior and intermediate aged students. Each kit focusses on a mathematical concept that incorporates various strategies, concepts, skills and thinking processes. These activities encourage students to discuss their learning and to look for connections to mathematics in everyday life occurrences. The kit assembly and documentation was completed this year. Students borrowed the kits from the school library to share with their parents at home. The kits were signed out on a regular basis.
4. Communications - Council had an information table at the Meet the Teachers evening in September, at the November Parent-Teacher interviews, at the May Art Vernissage evening, as well as at the Family Fun Day in June. Again this year, the school administration sent electronic communications to the Maple Ridge community on Council's behalf. Parents/guardians were always aware of upcoming events, fundraisers and Council meetings. We also sent out several "Council Corner" newsletters to parents keeping them up to date on our activities as well as the on-going fundraising initiatives. This was on top of the 10 monthly Council meetings where extensive minutes were maintained and posted to the school website.
5. School Council participated in the Kindergarten Information Night on May 5<sup>th</sup>/2015 to inform parents about School Council and encourage participation in the coming year. A ten minute presentation was made to the parents and a table was set up to welcome parents and promote the importance of School Council. Council would like to thank the school administration for allowing us to participate in their Information Night.

6. A School Grounds Greening sub-committee continued to work on the 'Butterfly' Garden and surrounding gardens. This spring we had several gardening days at the school, including the front and back gardens along with biweekly watering of the 18 new trees planted the first week in May. This is an on-going project that will span a few years. This will be an important school council sub-committee over the next few years as we start to transform our school grounds to include play areas and create an outdoor learning area. Pictured is the garden as of September 2015.



7. Once again this year, the MRES Council was a member of OCASC (Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils). Attending the monthly OCASC meetings allows Maple Ridge to stay connected with schools within the OCDSB as well as exchange ideas with fellow parents. An OCASC update is made available to Maple Ridge parents on a monthly basis. Executives from the Maple Ridge School Council attended the School Council Training Day on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2014 at the Confederation Education Centre. The day was sponsored by OCASC and the OCDSB. There were presentations about school yard greening, managing school council finances, communication strategies, getting involved in your School Learning Plan, learning support services for students with special needs, just to name a few.
8. On-going initiatives – Council continues to maintain a 'Student Alumni List' where on occasion, high school students may be asked if they would like to volunteer to help with future school projects. Volunteering at Maple Ridge is a great way for students to acquire the mandatory volunteer hours required to graduate high school. Council also added a couple more books to the 'Parent Resource Library'. These books are available for our parents to sign out and cover a wide range of pertinent topics.

## **Challenges:**

Challenges faced by Council this year included parent participation. Council continues to struggle with parent involvement however we are not facing this situation alone. Many school Councils throughout OCASC expressed the same concerns. Maple Ridge is fortunate to have a group of very dedicated parents and community members. The electronic communications (email messaging and website updates) have helped to reach out to parents. We will continue to improve upon our communication strategies.

Council finds it difficult to get parents to actively participate in the school grounds greening project. Although parents have expressed their appreciation of Council's efforts to create a more educationally stimulating outdoor environment, it has been difficult to get volunteers to help with the project. Parents have limited time to spare with so many extracurricular activities and heavy workloads. Council is encouraged by the tremendous response we received when asking parents to help maintain the newly planted trees obtained through the schoolyard tree planting grant. We are hopeful that parents and students become more enthusiastic now because the project is coming together and results can be seen.

In previous years, Council had provided child minding services during Council meetings so that parents could more easily attend. With the establishment of the Student Alumni List, this initiative can be re-visited.



## **Recognition:**

Thank you to school administrators and staff members who attended our Council meetings. The information and guidance you provide to Council is invaluable. Thank you Nicole Guertin-Colverson, Natalie Makara, Mara Belitzky, and Lizabeth Van Daalen!

Thank you so much to Tamara Johnson for taking on the role of Council Secretary. Accurate recording of the minutes is crucial. Not all parents are able to attend Council meetings on a regular basis. Having access to the minutes on the school website is so helpful to keep parents up to date with school council activities. I would also like to thank Lori Henderson and Mary Dixon Bourque who offered to record the minutes when Tamara was not able to.

Thank you, Wil Dykstra for your dedication and your attention to detail. The position of Council Treasurer is so very important. Thank you for volunteering your time to Council for another year. Your professionalism is greatly appreciated.

Maple Ridge is blessed to have such a dedicated and committed Community Representative such as Barbara MacIntyre: Thank you for giving your time to benefit our children's educational experience.

The role of Communication Coordinator was taken on by Rosita McLaughlin. Thank you for preparing the written communications and working with the school administration to deliver the information to parents. Thank you for coordinating the Scientist in the Schools evening workshops. These evenings would not have been so successful nor so well attended if Council did not have someone as reliable and organized as Rosita to make the arrangements. I also want to thank her for preparing the 2015-2016 PRO Grant application. This grant is an important source of funding for parent engagement initiatives at Maple Ridge.

Thank you to Mary Dixon Bourque for organizing the weekly Pita Pit lunches and committing to distribute the pitas every week. The students enjoyed the healthy wraps. Council chose the on-line ordering process which was appreciated by many of the parents.

Thank you to Anna Dykstra for 'decorating' the front display. This showcase is an invaluable communication tool. Through the display, parents can visualize Council activities. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. Thank you for your fundraising efforts including but not limited to the Entertainment book campaign, the Family Fun Day and Pizza Days.

Thank you to the dedicated pizza lunch volunteers. This is such an important fundraiser and service to the students. Council could not offer weekly pizza days without the commitment from parent volunteers.

Council would like to extend a thank you to Sylvia Glenn for accepting to do the 2014-2015 Financial Review again this year, an important requirement set out by the Board.

Thank you to Lori Henderson, Catherine Eames and Charmaine Clarke for their interest and enthusiasm in the School Grounds Greening project!

This year Council consisted of several parents having students ranging in ages from JK to grade 8. In addition to members noted above, I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Kim Glass, Jennifer DaSilva, Micheline Lalonde, Jennifer Tracey, Elitza Palazov, Crystall Matheson.

It is apparent that this year's Council members were very dedicated. Through regular participation in Council meetings as well as assisting at numerous Council activities and providing insight to our numerous discussions, every single member was invaluable to the team.

The Maple Ridge Council would like to acknowledge the Office Administrators for all their help throughout the school year. Tanya Dumas and Tammy Caldwell are in constant contact with parents, students, staff and Council. As a Council we could not function without their input. Thank you so very much.

Appreciation is also extended to the custodial staff at Maple Ridge, in particular Dan Lepage, in assisting Council with our numerous activities throughout the year.

Council extends a heart-felt thank you to our Vice Principal, Natalie Makara. Mrs. Makara has been vital in communicating with parents on behalf of Council.

As Council Chair, I have found this year to be very rewarding. I would like to thank the entire Maple Ridge community for an exceptional year. I feel our students are very lucky to attend such a wonderful school as Maple Ridge ES.

Cynthia M. Allen, Ph.D.  
Chair 2014-15