

Graminia School Council Meeting Minutes
6:30pm Wednesday January 15 2025
Graminia School Library

Attendees Angie Gehlert (Chair), Amber Darragh (Vice-Chair), Anna Liska (Vice-Chair & Acting Secretary), Christine Bileau (Principal), Luke English (Vice-Principal), Lorraine Stewart (Ward 2 Trustee), Kelly Maxwell (SILA), Dawn Kostyshen, Angayla Waterman, Jody Friesen, Robyn Williams, Kristen Gerwig, Sheila Avison, Kerri Golka, Sami Mesh, Mandy Lussier, Alicia Hole, Paige Tribiger, Rose Leder, Chris Graham

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Meeting called to order by Angie Gehlert at 6:38pm.
- 1.2. QR Code about One Small Thing pointed out on the agenda. Please take some time to make some notes for the teachers/bus drivers/ admin etc. It is a really appreciated and well received thing in our school. It is a quick & easy little way of making their day brighter.
- 1.3. Introductions were made.
- 1.4. Land acknowledgement read by Angie Gehlert.

2. Adoption of Agenda

- 2.1. Kerri made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Anna Seconded. Carried.

3. Adoption of November Minutes

- 3.1. April minutes were reviewed and approved.

4. Trustee Report - Lorraine Stewart, Trustee, Ward 2

Trustees Foster Quality Learning and Wellness

- The Board received a Supporting Student Wellness Report at the December 2024 Board Meeting.
 - PSD school nutrition program continues to evolve with the support of multiple partners. Implementing an evolving universal school food program requires an ongoing commitment to researching best practices and creating/maintaining school infrastructure.
 - Plans are being developed to support ongoing mental health needs across the Division for the 2025-2026 school year. As the MHIS pilot concludes in June 2025, we will await Alberta Education's decision in the spring regarding the availability of mental health funding for school divisions in 2025-2026. Key outcomes include the development of an evidence-based mental health resource (the MHIS website) for ongoing staff use, as well as a strengthened partnership with the Westview Primary Care Network (PCN). Through the establishment of school-based youth mental health clinics, this partnership has not only reduced wait times at the PCN's community clinics but has also led to a commitment from the PCN to continue funding the social worker position initially supported by the pilot. This ensures the school-located clinics will remain a resource for students beyond the pilot's end.
- The Indigenous Education Facilitators at PSD prepare a Newsletter, Weaving Indigenous Ways of Knowing. It is a fabulous newsletter - reader friendly with links readily available, and it provides so much information for staff who are working with the students.

Trustees Engage, Listen and Advocate

- Trustees defeated a motion at the December 2024 Board meeting that would require candidates running for trustees in the October 2025 election to obtain a criminal record

check as part of their nomination package. This is an option as part of the Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act (we know it as Bill 20).

- The Board held a Special Board Meeting January 14, 2025 and passed a motion regarding the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Ratification of the Memorandum of Agreement.
- The 2025-2026 School Calendar has been posted. The Division heard from 1571 respondents on the calendar survey between November 19th, 2024 and December 6, 2024.
- Parent Engagement was held on November 27/24 at Ecole Broxton Park for parents of students in grades 4-6 , and the Board will receive a report of the themes discussed at our January 2025 Board meeting.
- The Board met with Parkland County Mayor and Councillors in November 2024 and discussed joint advocacy regarding rural schools' issues related to traffic on the highways in front of Blueberry School and Muir Lake School.

5. Kelly Maxwell: Mindfully Improve Communication with your Family

5.1. SILA Skills representative

5.2. Presentation was directed specifically for parents, but this can be directed towards many different networks of people from different realms – first responders, teachers, additional family members etc.

5.3. Compassionate understanding and letting go of judgement can help to elevate communication and foster supportive understanding within relationships.

5.4. Land Acknowledgement reiterated – along with the statement from a member of the indigenous community that said “education got us into this mess and education is how we get out of it”

5.5. Who are we: – SILA (Skills In Life for All)

5.6. Designed to utilize DBT – Dialectical Behavior Therapy

5.7. These skills are designed as lifesavers for all relationships in all walks of life. When you can communicate more effectively and can listen in a way that works, you can transform the way you live your life.

5.8. About Kelly – she was an elementary school teacher when her son was diagnosed with Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder. Kelly attended a session on communication skills and instantly related to them. She realized that learning these skills allowed for a transformation in communication not only for herself and her family but also within her work and everyday life.

5.9. Question of the session is “how can I improve communication with my family this year?”

5.10. DBT is based on the same concept as CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), and is a therapy model that helps people learn and use new skills and strategies so that they build a life they feel worth living. It aims to help people understand and accept difficult feelings, learn skills to manage those feelings, and make positive changes.

5.11. We all experience intense emotions. Being able to regulate and respond to these emotions helps us to navigate these feeling in a positive way.

5.12. Avoids the concept of right and wrong, me & you, and works towards understanding.

5.13. Stress within the family unit increases poor communication and ultimately heightens negative results even when attempting to communicate effectively.

5.14. The most common life stresses within a family: work life balance, financial pressures, parenting challenges, technology and screen time, social pressures & expectations. These things can leave us feeling overwhelmed and hopeless.

5.15. Introducing us to 3 skills – how to better control your reactions; listening with genuine interest; and becoming more aware of benign body language.

5.16. Video presentation on Dr. Marsha Linehan: The Practice of Mindfulness

- 5.16.1. Mindfulness definition in psychology is the practice of focusing and paying attention. Spiritual meaning – practicing becoming one.
- 5.17. According to DBT the practice of mindfulness is the ability to focus on one thing at a time without judgement. Removing the word “should” – slowing things down. Allowing us time to process information more appropriately, to be present, and think about how we truly respond situations.
- 5.18. Need to practice noticing and focusing on one thing and then if your attention shifts, non-judgmentally shifting back.
 - 5.18.1. Start by taking a slow breath and pick something and truly notice it. Focus on it and practice bringing yourself back to that one thing. Once you have practiced this concept when you need it, you can access it.
- 5.19. The next step is relationship mindfulness – practice noticing the person you are with. Connect with them and focus on them. This is hard to practice when you are both stressed out so it is best to practice during positive times so that you can access it when you need it
- 5.20. Being fully present means listening with genuine interest & empathy.
 - 5.20.1. This doesn’t mean just agreeing with someone, this means acknowledging that what they are saying is important to them. You don’t have to agree in order to value what they are saying.
 - 5.20.2. Don’t interrupt: hear what they are really saying while also understanding that not everyone is looking for advice, they are looking to feel heard.
- 5.21. Benefits include better communication, stronger connections, and improved conflict resolution.
 - 5.21.1. Building better emotional bonds and opening up more opportunities for loved ones to want to truly connect and communicate. If you have had conflict and broken connections there is a loss in trust.
 - 5.21.2. How do we do this – device free time (start with you and model this behaviour), actively listening (not just with your responses but also with your body – WAIT – “why am I talking”), mindful communication (don’t argue - you could remove someone’s truth; acknowledge their truth and understand it), focused connection (find ways to calm your mind so you can find ways to create a better connection - if you need a reset, present the need and express when you will return and then return with more focused support) & then check in.
- 5.22. Knowing that ultimately, you are not always going to get it right. That is okay. Re-enter the situation fresh and say, “hey, I didn’t handle that the way I wanted to, can we try again” and know that this is okay.
- 5.23. Benign interpretation in parenting – We receive their feedback and dysregulation as malignant rather than benign.
 - 5.23.1. Benign interpretation allows us to interpret actions and words in a positive or neutral way, and assume the best intentions, allowing us to reframe and consider alternative explanations.
 - 5.23.2. How do we do this – give them the benefit of the doubt, avoid jumping to negative conclusions, focus on empathy and understanding and think “what’s their story?” without questioning them, create and build trust so they want to come to you.
 - 5.23.3. Find time to discuss issues when you and they are not angry about the situation and instead when you can have the ability to be empathetic.
 - 5.23.4. Remember in the beginning they and you may be ready for the fight. It takes time to reset that learned behaviour and help them/you feel safe within a conversation again.
- 5.24. What if nothing works or feels like it’s working – Radical Acceptance.
 - 5.24.1. It means accepting this instance and this moment exactly as it is.

- 5.24.2. It's not about approving or condoning the current situation but about understanding that changing this reality starts with accepting it. Know that every situation has a cause, even if the reality is painful.
- 5.24.3. Acceptance brings opportunity for change.
- 5.24.4. Embrace and accept reality as it is, without resistance or judgement. Let go of control and the need for perfection. Foster understanding and build resilience within yourself to start analyzing the situation more openly and look towards changing your current situation for the better instead of fighting and promoting continued self-suffering.
- 5.24.5. How do we do this – Mindfulness, open communication that is honest and real, flexible problem solving and embracing imperfections. Celebrate the differences your family has and spread a mentality that it is okay to not be perfect. Have a short memory and let go of grudges.
- 5.25. There are challenges to this process:
 - 5.25.1. Resistance or a lack of understanding.
 - 5.25.2. Emotions that get in the way.
 - 5.25.3. Lack of consistency/practice.
 - 5.25.4. Ineffective patterns.
- 5.26. How do we overcome this:
 - 5.26.1. Try something new and don't be afraid to let go.
 - 5.26.2. Put the oxygen mask on you before you try to put it on your loved one.
- 5.27. Two supportive organizations for families that may be struggling more deeply with loved ones .
 - 5.27.1. The Sashbear Foundation – available for everyone (parent, teacher, child etc.). Website: <https://sashbear.org/>
 - 5.27.2. The Lifeboat – Support for a young person (teen to young adult). Website: <https://mylifeboat.ca/>
- 5.28. Angie will send out the link for the slides from Kelly.
- 5.29. Questions
 - 5.29.1. Can this presentation be geared towards specific teams – yes, absolutely.
- 5.30. Kelly donated her time for this presentation so as a thank you for her support and the support of SILA we will be making an honorarium donation to SILA.

6. Principal's Report - Christine Bileau

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a great holiday and I am looking forward to seeing all the amazing things that 2025 has in store for Graminia. We have had a solid 10 school days since our last meeting, so I will mostly be updating you on some key dates that are coming up.

An overview since last meeting:

- Our students came back strong and have been hard at work this month. We are currently working on Term 1 Progress Reports which will be released by end of day January 30 on Powerschool. Powerschool has been paused for parent and student access since the 13th while we work on updating grades and comments. PSD was not affected by the Powerschool cyber security incident, and further information is posted on PSD's site as well as Graminia's site.
- Athletics updates:
 - Basketball - all our teams are doing well and we are looking forward to watching some exciting games at the Jr Boys/Girls tournament this weekend at Woodhaven and our Senior Boys' tournament at Holy Spirit.
- Literacy and Numeracy:

- Miss Marshall has almost completed organizing the parent volunteers who will provide literacy and numeracy enrichment for students in grades 1-4. More info to follow soon!
- Hawks' Spirit Assemblies:
We had our Attitude Assembly in December.
- Grade 9 Farewell
We will hold this year's farewell on the afternoon of June 25. Mr. Inglehart and Mr. Lygo will meet with Grade 9 students this month to form committees, start planning, etc., and will share the plan along with a call out for volunteers with families.
- Grades 6/9 students will write Provincial Achievement Tests in June. As of right now, all exams will be written with the exception of Science 6 (due to new curriculum). Last year we used an online platform to administer the PATs and will continue to do this June.
- Learnathon information has gone out and students are excited! Mr. English worked with a team of students to do a short promotional video - he will give you a few updates on this...
- 4 of our Grade 6 girls will be attending this year's CHOICES conference at the UofA at the end of February. There are a limited number of spots, and schools are only able to reserve 4 spots. Our students will have the opportunity to take part in a number of hands-on science activities.

What's coming up next:

- Remember about Share-A-Thought Survey: follow this link to share what's on your mind!
<https://graminia.psd.ca/home/news/post/graminia-school-share-a-thought>
- January 22 - Educational Assistant Appreciation Day
- Mindfulness Assembly - 8:15 January 28
- January 31 - PD Day
- Week of February 2 - Counsellors and Therapists Appreciation
- We are looking forward to hosting the February Council of School Councils here at Graminia!
- February 6-7 - Teachers' Convention
- Registration for the 2025/2026 School year opens on February 10.
- Kindergarten Open House is on the same day as our next School Council meeting, February 12, from 6-7. We will meet in an alternate space.
- February 13 is the Learnathon Test Day!
- February 13 is the date for the open house for SGCHS and MCHS
- February 14 - PD Day, February 17 is Family Day.

7. New Business

7.1. None

8. Adjournment

8.1. Angayla made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. Seconded by Dawn.
Carried.

If you have questions or thoughts that you think the School Council should look at please speak to our Chair Angie Gehlert, Vice Chairs Amber Darragh or Anna Liska, or Principal Christine Bileau.

Next Meeting Date: February 125, 2025 at 6:30pm.