

Lorne Akins Parent Council Meeting

November 14th, 2019

November News

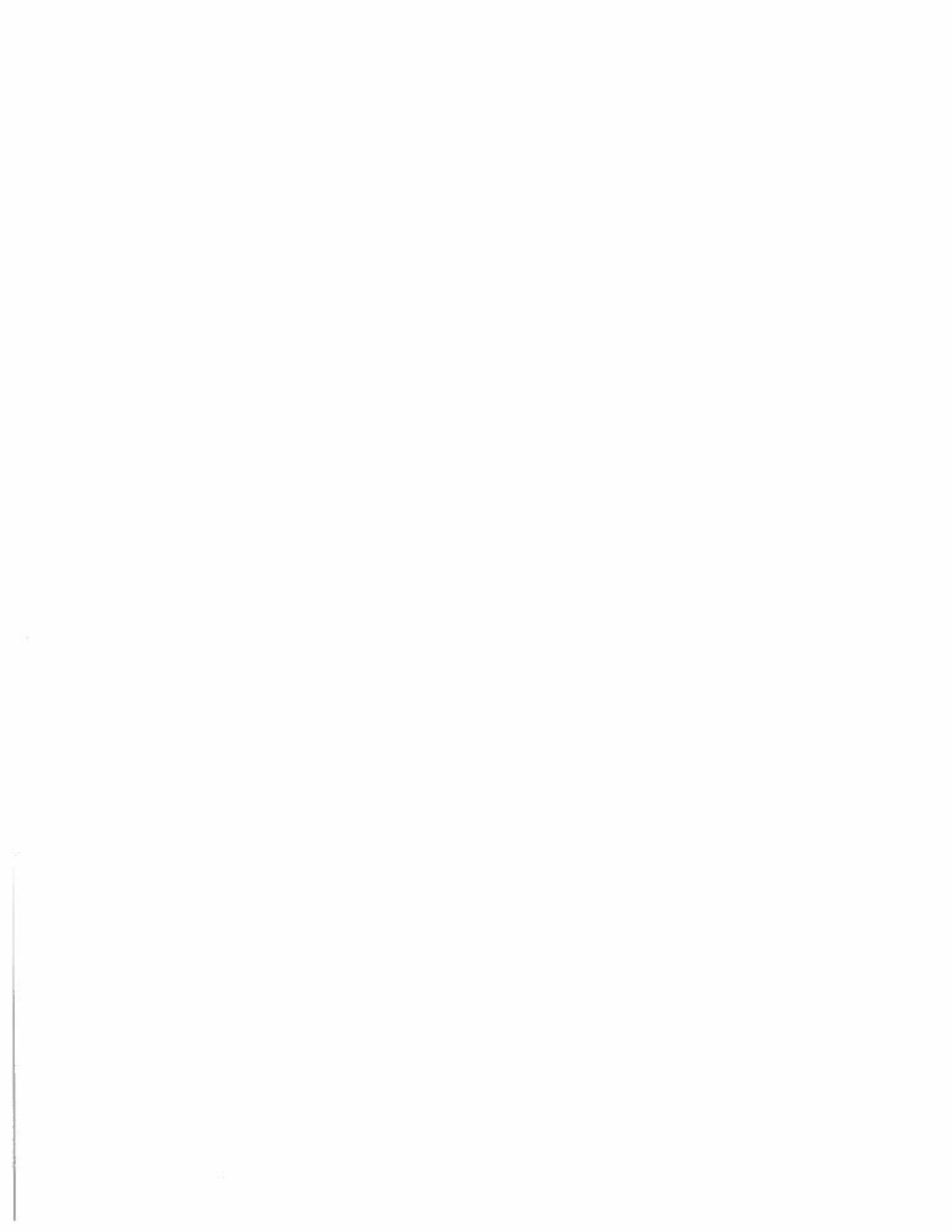
- 6th 1st Interim Reporting Date
- 7th Senior Volleyball Finals
- 8th Remembrance Day Assembly
- 12th No classes
- 20th Parent Teacher Interviews Arena Style 5pm-8pm
- 21st Parent Teacher Interviews Scheduled 5pm-8:30pm
- 27th PARTY Program 9-5

December News

- 3rd Christmas Concert at Arden Theatre 7:00
- 4th Staff Meeting – Early Dismissal
- 11th Party Program 9-6
- 19th School Council Meeting 7:00pm
- 20th Staff-Student Charity Hockey Game at Akinsdale (Early Dismissal)

January News

- 6th Classes Resume
- 8th Staff Meeting – Early Dismissal
- 10th Gator Gear Day
- 16th School Council Meeting 7:00pm
- 16th, 17th, 18th SAPEC Basketball Tournament
- 22nd Gatorski Rabbit Hill
- 24th Honors Breakfast
- 29th Gatorski Rabbit Hill
- 31th APPLE Day





**Lorne Akins Junior High School
School Council Meeting**

Tuesday November 14, 2019 at 7:00 pm

1.0 Approval of the Agenda (Susan Komlenic)

2.0 Adoption of the minutes October, 9 2018 (Susan Komlenic)

3.0 Teacher of the Month (Derek Harrison)

4.0 L.A. Happenings (Graham Jackson)

5.0 Discussion Topics (Graham Jackson)

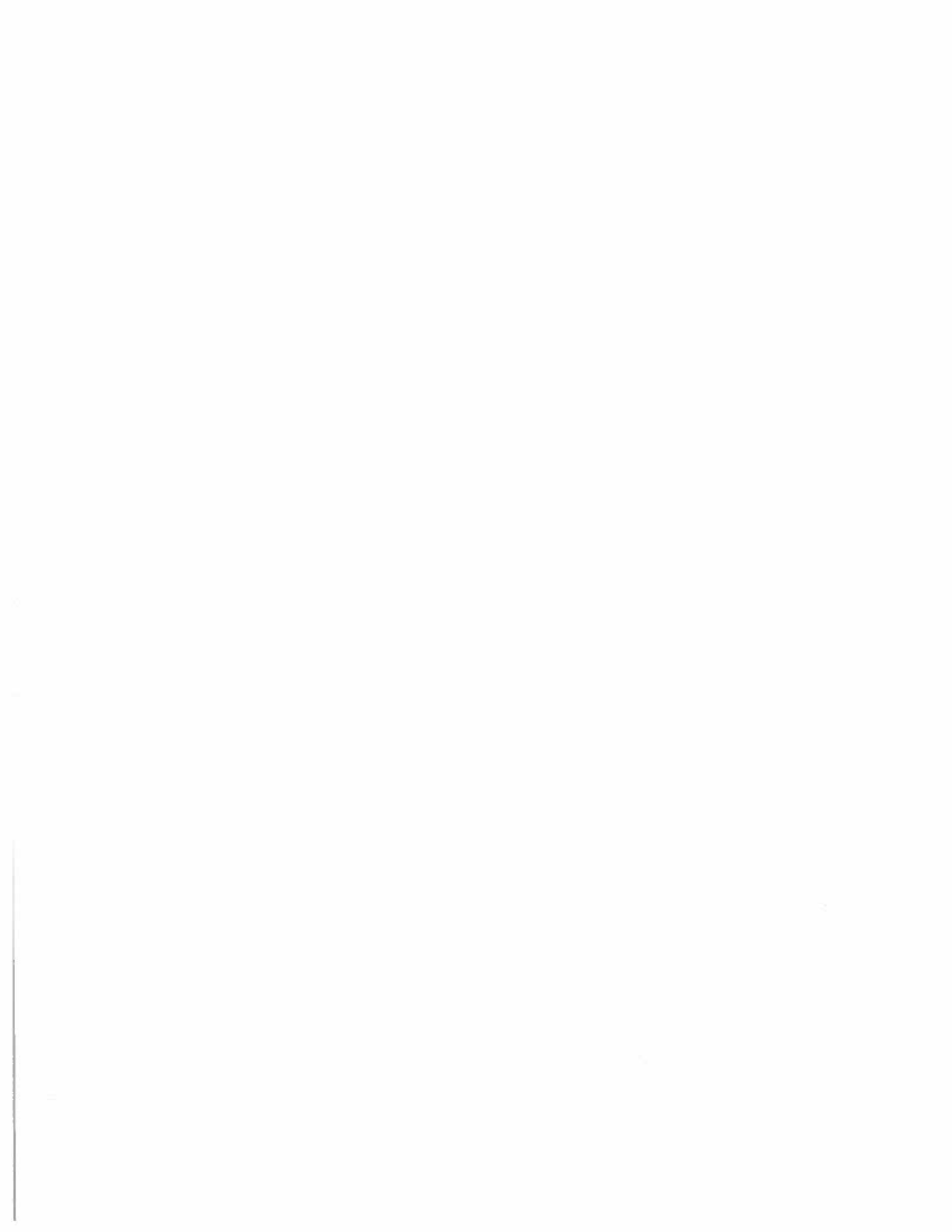
1. Budget issues
2. Education Plan
3. Technology Challenges
4. Stakeholder Workshop
5. Staff Meetings
6. Parent Communications

6.0 District Initiatives and Policies (Glenys Edwards)

7.0 Topics for Future Meetings (Graham Jackson)

- December – Parenting an adolescent - schools and homes
- Additions?

8.0 Adjournment (Susan Komlenic)



**Lorne Akins Junior High School
School Council Meeting
November 14, 2019**

In Attendance:

Graham Jackson (P)
Derek Harrison (AP)
Susan Komlenic (Chair)
Darren Moric
Tracy Moric
Roger Scott
Elaine Wong

Ammanda Cole
Marion Johnson
Allison McNutt
Robyn Lafleur
Amanda Hargreaves
Glenys Edwards (Trustee Board Chair)

Call to Order: 7:05 p.m.

1.0 Approval of the Agenda

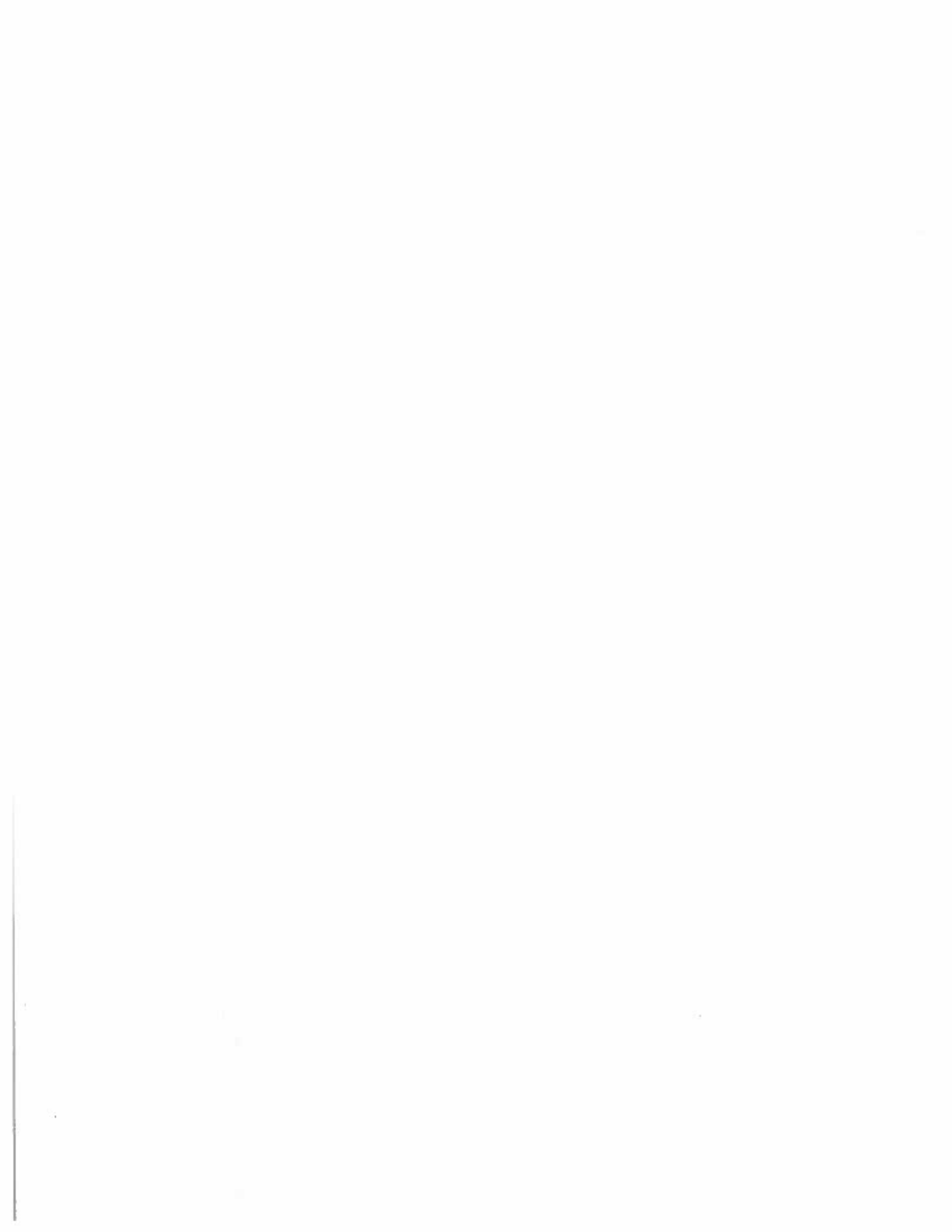
Motion: Ammanda
Second: Derek
CARRIED

2.0 Motion to Adopt the Minutes October 9, 2019

Motion: Graham
Second: Robin
CARRIED

3.0 Teacher of the Month – Derek Harrison:

- Teaching Grade 9 Social Studies, excited to connect outside world with what's going on in the classroom. Bound by Curriculum, but current events such as the recent election help make the topics more interesting. With the election, students were able to see a live debate.
- It's been easy to get the kids attention this year and it's because of what's going on around us. They can focus less on the textbook focus more on the real-life examples.
- Kids have access to social media, and that helps familiarize the kids with politics (i.e. current leaders etc.)
- Were able to compare the student vote to the actual vote.
- Youth Criminal Justice Act – a lot of great material. Kids are engaged.
- Kids are comfortable providing their input and it's because they've been speaking since the beginning of the year. It's been really good watching the kids make connections because of what's going on around them.



- It's good to hear from teachers what's happening in the classroom as it can be isolating so it's nice to talk about what the teachers are doing. Kids love the engagement. Thanks to Derek for his hard work.

Q: How does the Movember contest work?

- Pretty much every male teacher is on board (and one female!)
- Everyone has been invited, you can make donations on Movember.ca
- Encouraging kids to get involved in the school.
Two teachers will be going 1v1 in the basketball court, the loser gets head and mustache shaved.
- The big message is that they see all the male teachers on board and it sends a great message seeing their teachers getting involved.

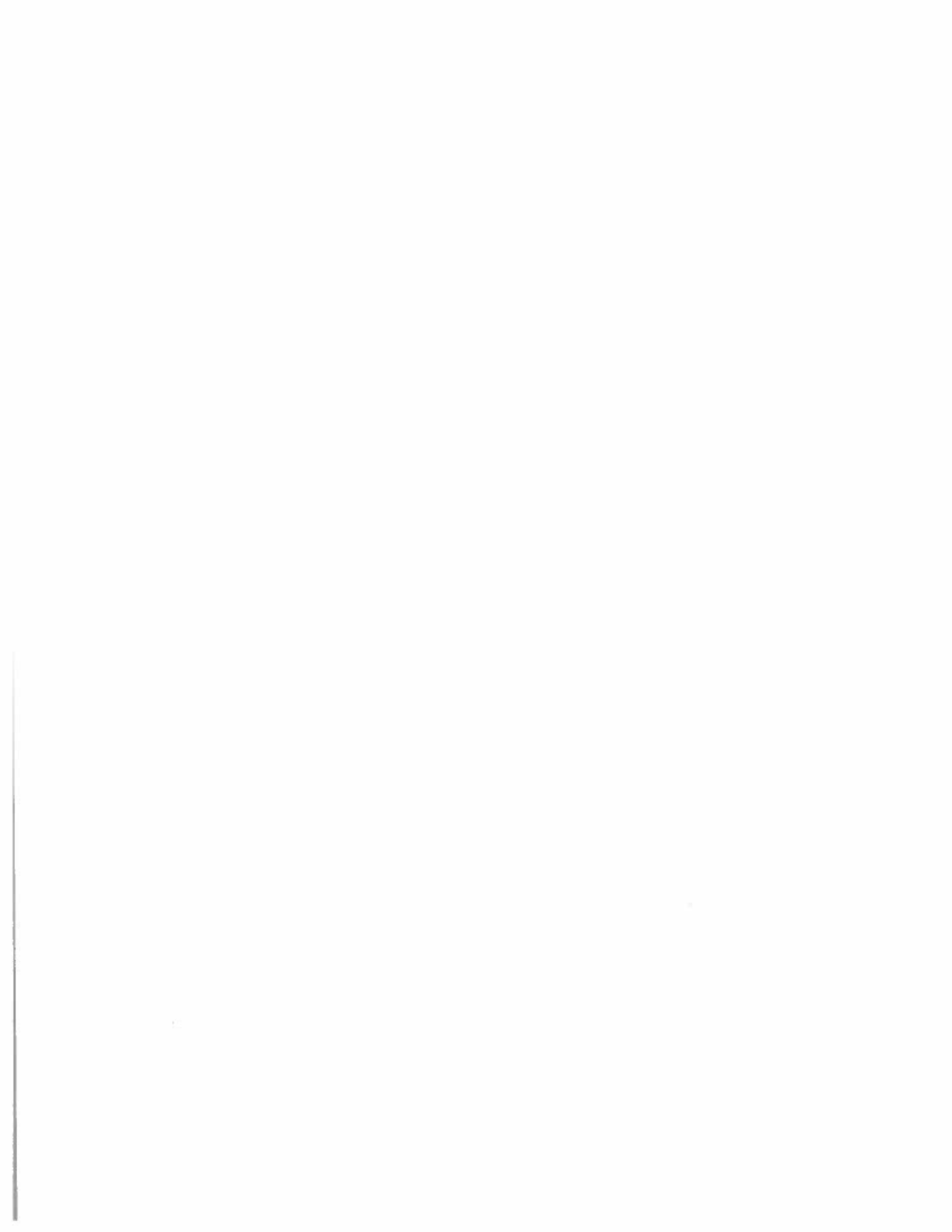
4.0 L.A. Happenings

Q: Why were the order of arena-style and scheduled interviews switched? It makes it easier for parents if they missed the first day then they can come the next day.

- Graham: Teachers don't know who they're going to get for the scheduled interviews and they need things to get ready. It would catch more people coming in on the first day.
- The arena-style interviews get very busy and you end up waiting a long time.
- Derek: Eventually we will be going fully to scheduled interviews.
- Graham: It's easier to schedule, parents can have a time and the teacher can be more prepared and organized.
- Also, parents can come in anytime and book an appointment.
- Graham: Scheduled is great because it's organized, but not every teacher can be accessed in that time.

Q: Are arena style interviews 10 minutes max?

- Graham: Yes.
- Maybe parents should try and only go to the teachers where your child is struggling.
- Graham: Good suggestion.



Q: What is the PARTY Program and is Christmas Concert for everyone?

- Graham: The Christmas Concert is band only. PARTY program for Grade 9 brings RCMP and bring in Guest Speakers of what's going on in St. Albert and discuss situations that have happened that have affected individuals negatively. It's a good program.
- The Christmas concert is the band performing at the Arden. Everyone invited to attend.

Q: What time is the hockey game?

- Derek: 10:30 – 11 am. It's a Food Bank Drive and kids play hockey against teachers. They bring in Food Bank donations and get a ticket for a chance to play. The more tickets the more chances they get for their name to be drawn to play.
- Graham: We are going to do a surprise in the gym for the kids – staff singing Christmas carols.

Q: Is Rabbit Hill for everyone?

- Graham: It's open to everyone. They go after school until about 9 pm.

Q: How many students go?

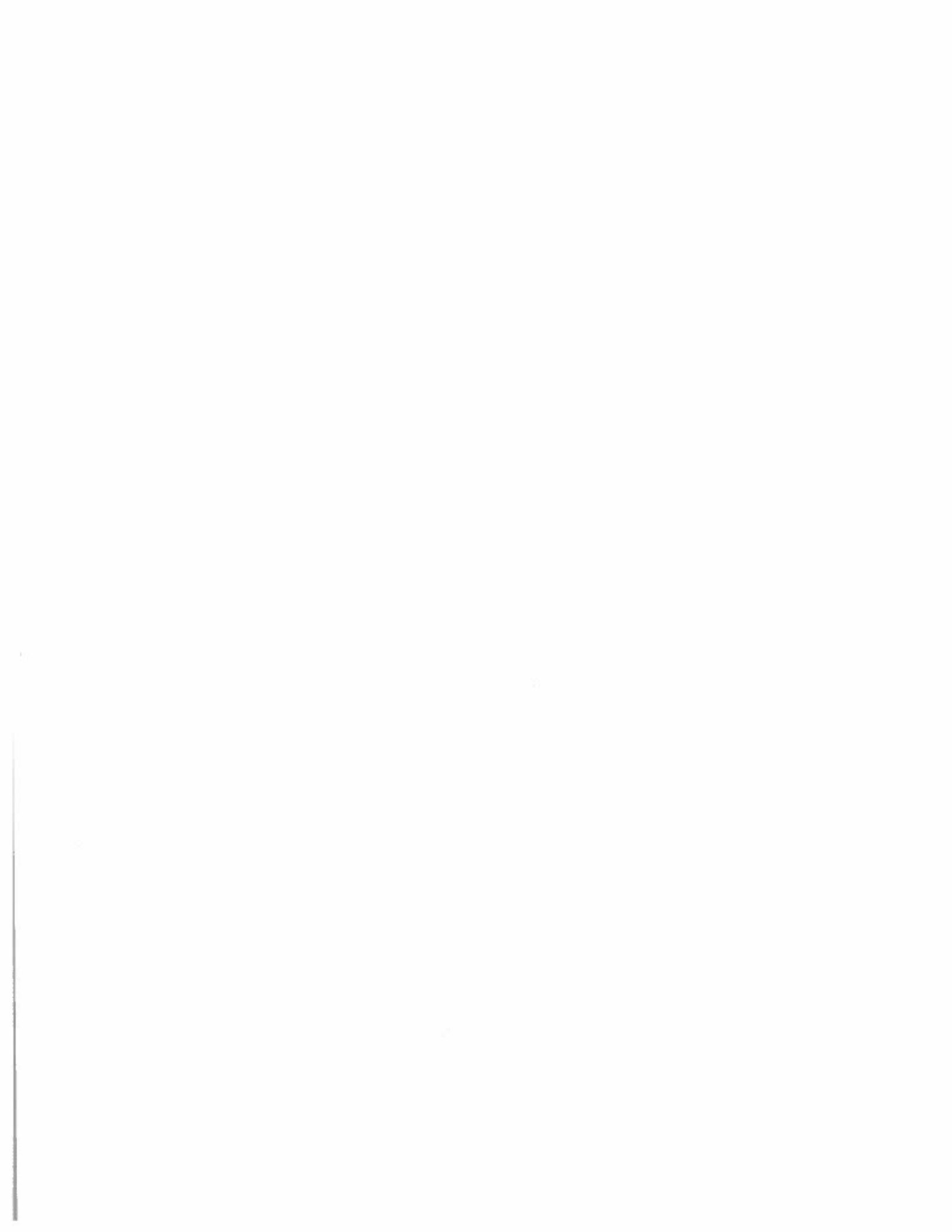
- Derek: Last year we had about 70 – 2 buses.

Q: Interim Reports, where are they?

- Graham: Just the marks on PowerSchool. We are changing the way options are reported, it's hard to say what grade they're at.
- Parents were confused, only core marks. Something could have gone home.
- Graham: Interim reports will only be for core – hard to measure the option marks.

Q: How does that affect their core average. How will they calculate it?

- Graham: Options will be on a number scale. 4 is the highest number. The reason we are moving is that it's hard to give a specific percentage grade. There will be a rubric that outlines the expectation and the number grade will be assigned accordingly for each option. Working with PowerSchool to get this up and running.



Q: What's APPLE day?

- Derek: Reward and recognition for students for regular attendance, marks, good attitude, etc.

Q: How many kids don't do APPLE day?

- About 20 kids.

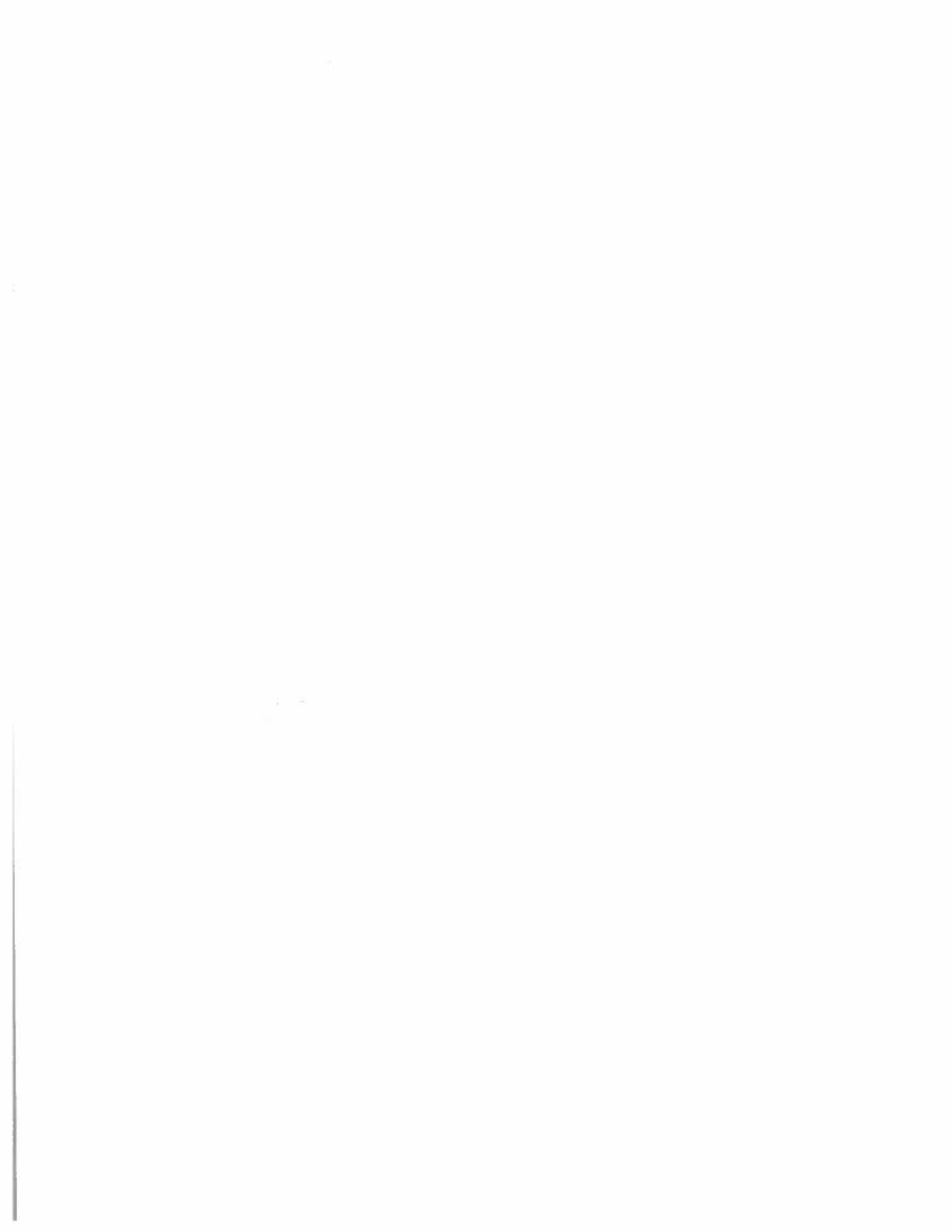
5.0 Discussion Topics (Graham Jackson):

1. Budget Issues:

- A huge thanks to Roger for organizing the Casino
- Was nice to see parents. It was nice to see that parents found time to help out!
- A draw was done for Gator Merch for the parents who helped out.
- Money will come soon and it's already been spent.
- Budget – some money is no longer available. We have an \$80,000 shortfall. We have some reserves that are restricted reserves that will serve us, but once those are gone, they're gone. More cuts are coming, this year we made sure we had certain numbers, but it won't be the same next year and some staffing changes are coming down. Have to take from every program to make it work. The district has a surplus to work with but it won't last forever.
- Have to find ways to strategize and be more efficient. Team teaching is a possibility.

Q: What can we do as parents?

- Derek: There is a form letter that is prepared. Highly encourage parents to do it. It's great that different boards are writing letters to parents showing what a drastic impact it has on our childrens' education. The rhetoric hasn't been strong enough from the Government but now it is. Encourage you to contact your MLA and share your thoughts.



2. Education Plan

- We have done something different here. **Review handout document**
- Key part: our Education Plan has been very robust and has been amazing for the school and students. It's been around for a really long time. We are hoping to be very specific in the goals. **Refer to School Goals Cycle on Page 7**
- This gives us direction and something to jump off of. Sometimes it's hard to know where to start. Graham put a lot of time into it. It provides us with something substantial to use.
- Graham: The goal is healthy, good citizens.

Refer to key Strategies on Page 8

If something comes to you – please share your feedback

3. Technology Challenges:

- Still don't have a tech lead in the building. Trying to solve the problem.
- Second year without IT, doing really good despite that.

Q: Is it because of budget?

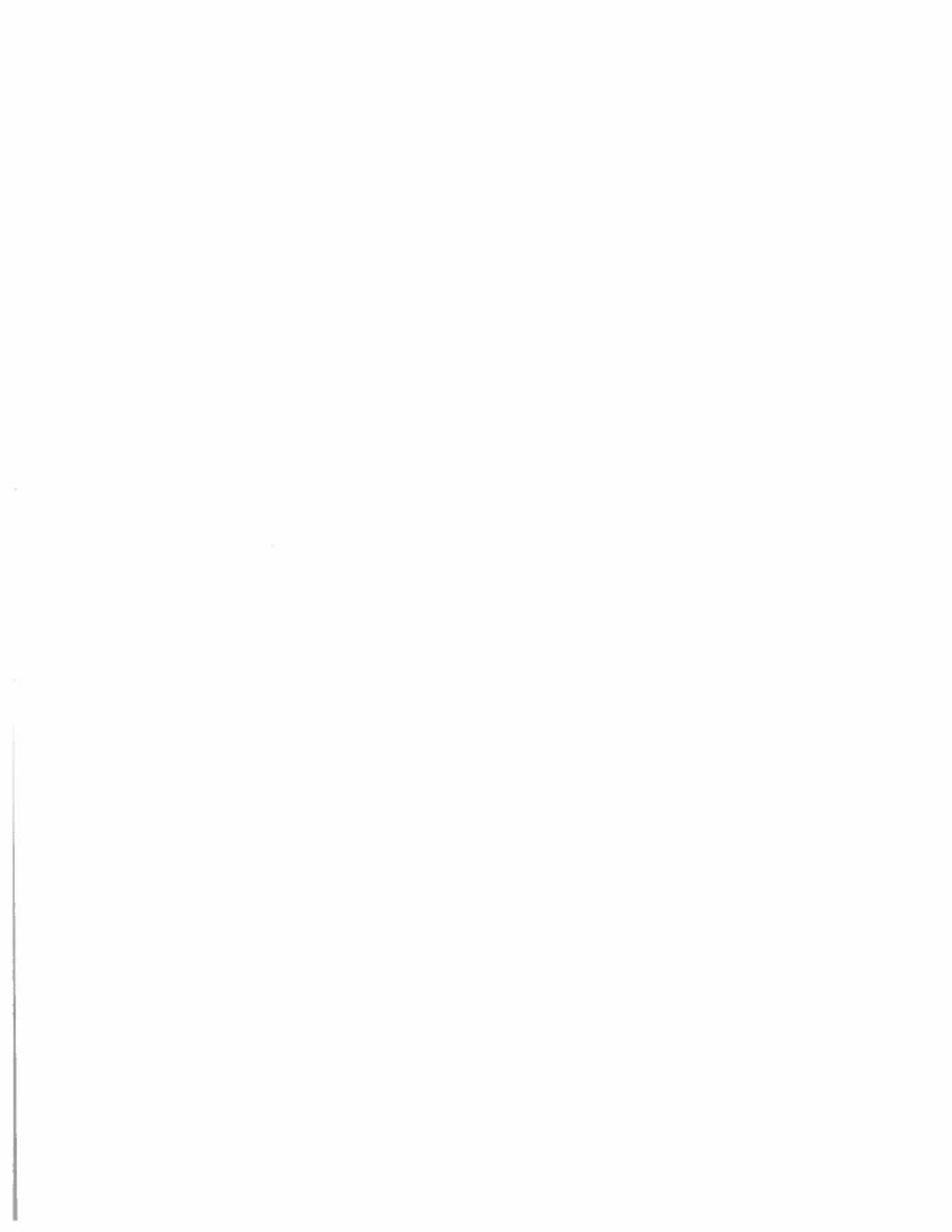
- Graham: low paying job, and not enough interest

4. Stakeholder Workshop:

- Jan 31, 2020 at Paul Kane:
- Graham: Good opportunity as parents to share what they're feeling at large.
- It brings together parents and students from all different schools. Good conversation, good to hear different points of view.

5. Staff Meetings:

- Graham: We were doing morning meetings last year. Mentimeter – sends you questions and then gives you feedback. More teachers wanted it, but decided to fold it. Meetings have gone back to first Wednesday. It hasn't impacted too much.



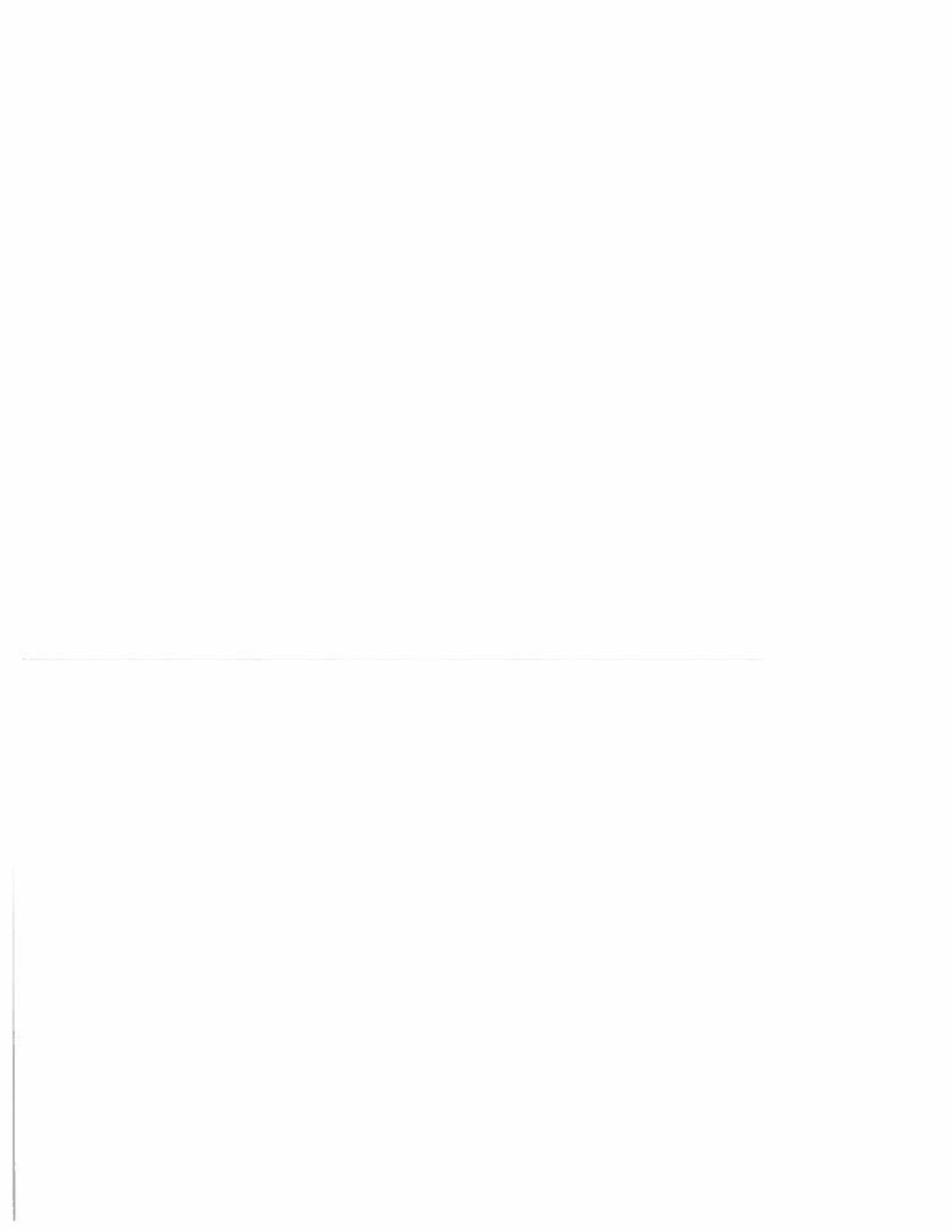
6. Parent Communication:

Q: Any other ways we can communicate with you?

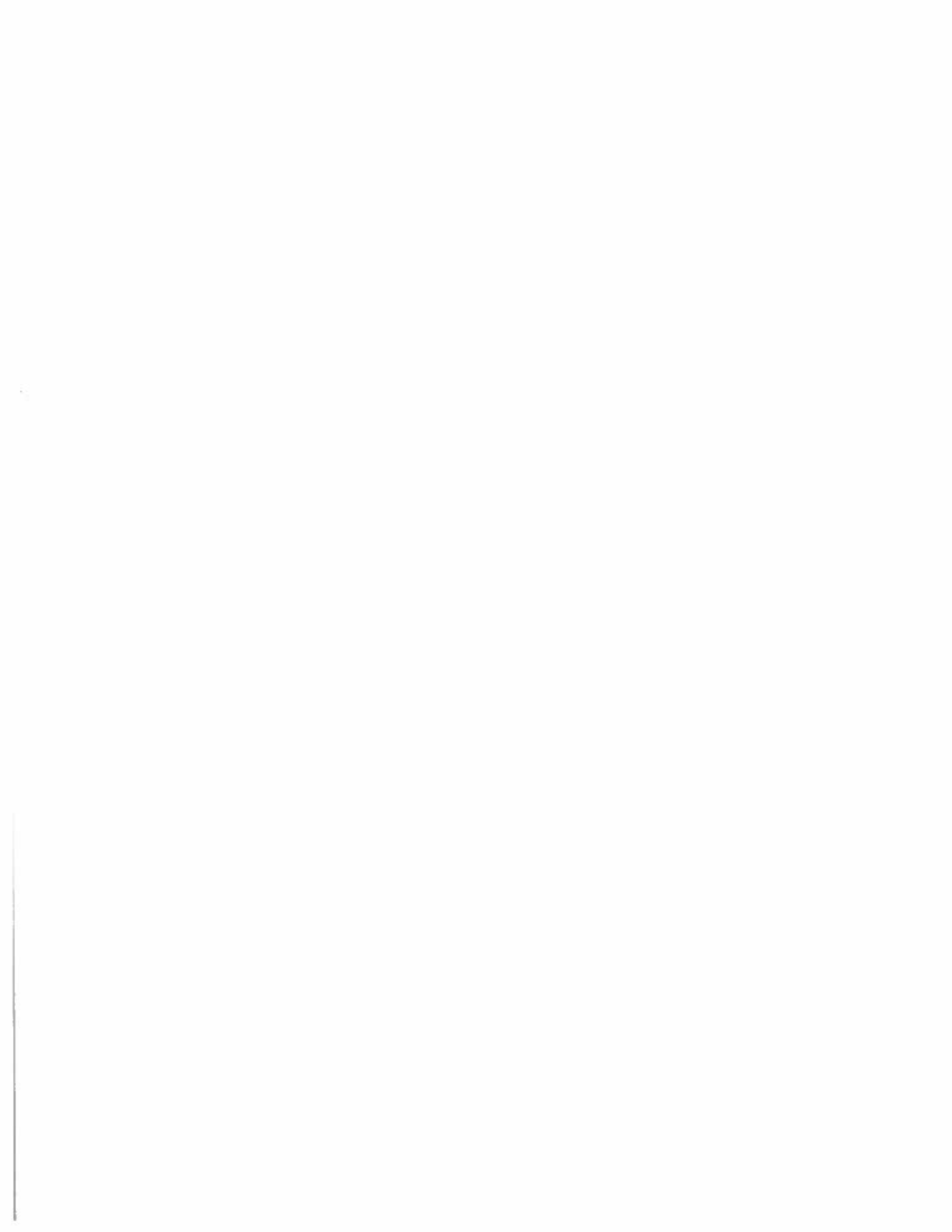
- Derek: Sending out a couple of messengers is okay with everyone.
- The weekly update on Facebook works well.

6.0 District Initiatives and Policies – Glenys Edwards:

- Tomorrow morning, the student Advisory group will meet with the trustees. There will be two Grade 9s coming from Lorne Akins. Trustees come up with their own questions and ask all kids the same questions and see how things have changed. They then meet again in the Spring and ask the same questions. They make sure the kids know they aren't speaking on the behalf of all students, just on their own behalf.
- Advocacy at the political level is important for Trustees. They are navigating through the new Provincial Government. We are used to having both MLAs in government, and this year one of the MLAs is in opposition. It proves more interesting to have an MLA in opposition.
- Doing some fairly serious advocacy right now due to the new budget. There will be a new budget in Feb/Mar and voices need to be heard about the current allocations before the new budget comes out.
- In the infrastructure announcement Trustees were pleased to hear that the Paul Kane build is still full steam ahead, despite the new Government. Due to open in 2022. In the same Capital Announcement is approval for Second Phase of High School development. Bellerose has been approved for funding in the design phase for their school modernization and expansion. Typically, they don't allot the money for the plan if they don't intend to move forward with it.
- Three Phase Solution:
 1. New Paul Kane adds 250 seats
 2. Expansion of Bellerose adds 250 seats
 3. New High School Build
- About 10 years out to needing a new high school, but need to find the site. Development can't continue and then try to retrofit land for a new high school, as there is no room.



- The high school land has to be dedicated to high school place way ahead of time. We are working quite closely right now with Landrex. They will be dedicating space to a high school. When you can pre-plan that you can think about things like parking and corridors.
- The other part of advocacy is speculative, but the UCP Government has their policy convention at the end of November in Red Deer and it's their grassroots way of getting all of their constituents to propose policy.
- Policy 15 out of Lacombe, Ponoka is proposing they move to a voucher system for funding, it's a huge red flag. Voucher system means each student holds their funding and they take it with them wherever they go. Our students are funded per student, at a rate of 100% for Public Schools, and Private Schools are funded at 70% which is high. The voucher system ensures that each student gets 100% of their funding no matter where they go including Private Schools, which is not equal as they are not accessible by everyone.
- Has met with MLA and he didn't know anything about it, as these proposals are just starting to surface. Her job is to help him understand what this means.
- The Government is proposing to bring New Choice in Education Act, they are sharing limited details. They ran on a mandate of no choice. More choice undermines quality. Alberta is world class, we don't need more fragmented programming, rather we need to support core programming.
- Feels like a pivotal moment in our system. Rationale behind 15 is poor literacy and poor math and that the AB curriculum is broken. We rate highly in other skills out of world ratings, as well as provincial ratings. Our graduates are welcomed worldwide. The idea that the system needs improving is not a great message. The idea of needing more choice implies to the public that their current choices aren't good.
- Derek: Publicly funded environment being run like a company. We have to start listening now as these things are starting to surface. The government will change rules at a moment's notice and make it happen.
- When a public system is poorly funded, Private Schools thrive and then public schools don't prosper. Why do we want our system fragmented to not include diversity.
- We are very concerned about vaping. Resolution going forward to Provincial Trustee Association, which then goes to the Government of Alberta. We think that all 3 Governments need to pay more attention to marketing and regulations for vaping.
- Rates of smoking have gone up because of vaping.



Q: is vaping going on around school?

- Graham: Yes, but the vaporizers are small, and they can sneak it into the bathrooms.
- Comment: You guys are on top of it.
- Derek: Students are reporting the infractions. Kids are “smarter” about it. There were a bold of kids last year that were vaping in classrooms, buses, etc.
- Graham: They’re cheap and easily accessible.

Q: Are they being educated on what it does to them?

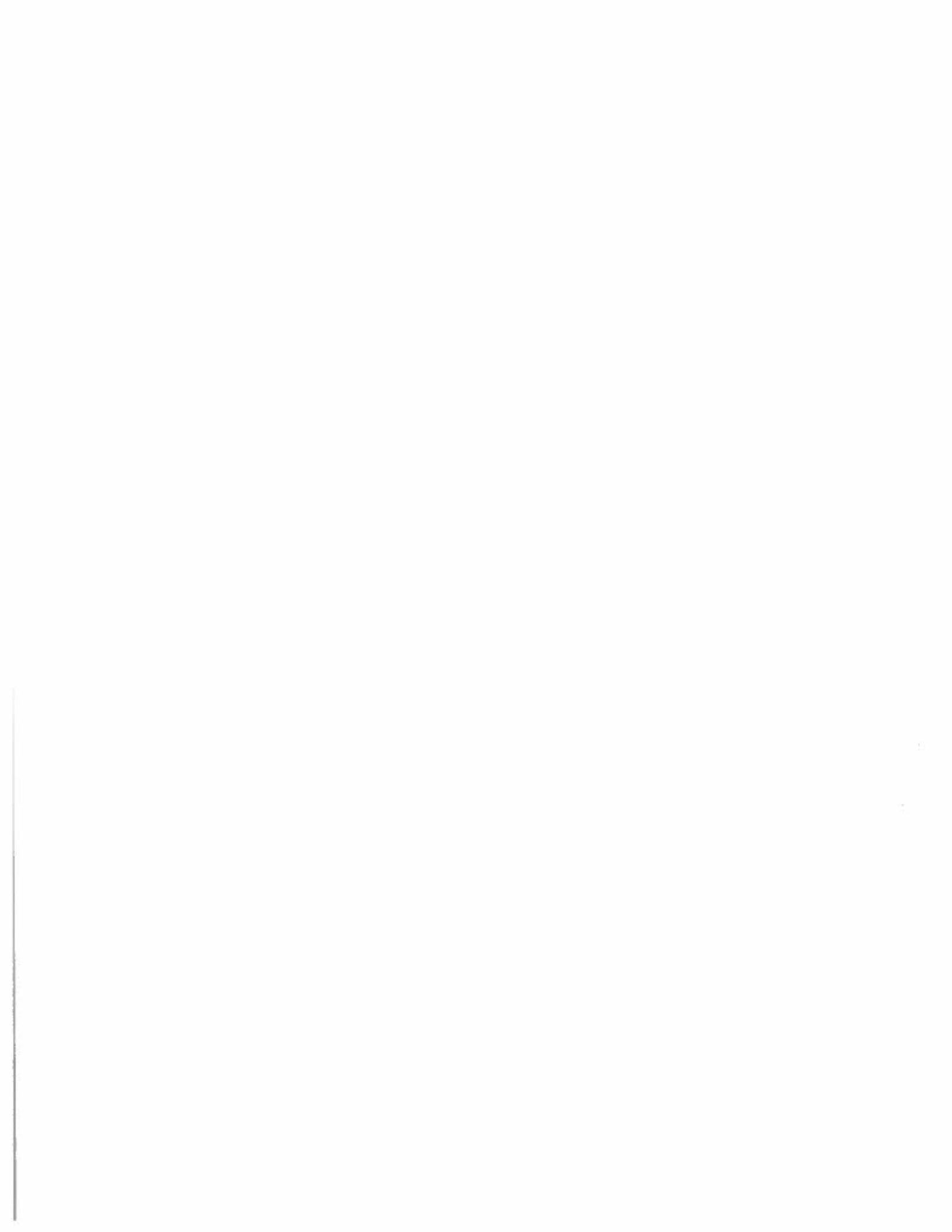
- Graham: Yes
- Derek: Students are led to believe it’s organic. They believe it’s healthier, and they’re ill-informed.
- Grade 7s will be getting an individual presentation on the hazards of vaping.

Q: Other schools have fines for vaping. Is that a deterrent in Jr High as well?
Kids that are active less likely to vape?

- Graham: No, it was the athletes that were vaping
- Derek: It was impacting teams, impacting coaching, and other kids watching.
- Graham: The kids believed vaping was safer than smoking.

Q: Were you able to deter kids?

- Derek: We were able to chase it underground
- 90% of kids will try it in high school. Most kids will probably try it at some point.



7.0 Topics for Future Meetings:

- Graham: Self-Regulation, working with kids that are developing as their brains grow and change.
- Refer to handout "What Parents Need to Know about the Teenage Brain."
- December Meeting Topic: Parenting Adolescents in School and at Home.
- Next Meeting: December 19th.

8.0 Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

What Parents Need to Know About the Teenage Brain



NEUROSCIENCE, PARENTING
By Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Adolescence is a challenging time for both the kids going through it and their parents. It is a period of exploration and growth, opportunity and vulnerability. Dr. Daniel Siegel in his new book, *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*, says that there are four essential features to adolescence: 1) emotional spark, 2) social engagement, 3) novelty seeking and 4) creative exploration. During this stage of development, parents may experience conflicting feelings about their teenager's increasing autonomy and independence.

While parents may be supportive and interested in the person their child is becoming, they may also feel threatened by their child starting to assert a separate sense of self and develop his or her own identity. This is particularly true of parents who have shut down these significant aspects of the self and are emotionally deadened or cut off from their own desire for what they want and need and what gives meaning to their lives.

Teen years force parents to face the reality that their child is no longer as dependent, helpless and agreeable as he or she once was. Their youngster is now a spirited almost-adult who may talk back, storm out, roll eyes, and refuse their requests. These emotional and behavioral changes are commonly attributed to "just hormones," but according to Dr. Siegel, they actually have a great deal to do with brain development.

Siegel categorizes adolescence as the years between ages 12-24. The brain changes during this time period involve "pruning," or reduction in the number of neurons and neural connections, and "myelination," a coating around neural connections, which allows faster and more synchronization of information flow. Pruning gets rid of unused connections and myelination strengthens the remaining connections, turning them into "super highways." These changes during adolescence help the brain become more integrated, creating more coordination in the brain itself. This is a remodeling process that leads to both vulnerability and opportunity. It is during this period of life that the onset for most major mental health disorders occur, and kids entering adolescence are at increased risk for suicide. It is a time of risk but also a time of opportunity.

In this tumultuous stage of development, parents often feel frustrated and powerless, throwing up their hands and thinking, "What can I really do? Nothing I say has any impact." Teens are turning away from parents and turning more to peers for a sense of connection. However, as Dr. Siegel would argue, this doesn't have to be the case. True, teenagers need to develop their autonomy, but they also need guidance and involvement that is sensitive and attuned. Parents should strive to give their kids space but not give up on them altogether.

On Feb. 10, I will be hosting a [Webinar](#) featuring Dr. Siegel that will shed light on the "power and purpose" of the teenage brain. Recently, I was fortunate to have a chance to interview Dr. Siegel about his new book. In our discussion, he suggested a "realistic starting place" for parents hoping to improve their relationships with their teen: "give them space to just experience whatever they're experiencing at the moment and do not have a lot of preconceived ideas about how they should be." Parents may need to let go of hopes and dreams for their child that were based on the parents' needs rather than who their child really is.

In *Brainstorm*, which was written for both parents and teens, Dr. Siegel touches on the many unique aspects of adolescence, offering parents and teens alike a common language from which to communicate. The book also provides information that offers a richer understanding of the inner workings of the adolescent mind. In an interview with [SmartPlanet.com](#), Dr. Siegel explained the acronym (ESSENCE), which he uses to describe the four main characteristics of the teenage brain: ES stands for emotional spark. As Siegel explains, "The lower parts of the nervous system rise up and affect the higher part of the brain — the cortex — which gives us this passion and vitality." SE stands for social engagement, which refers to how "the brain is literally programmed to start having you turn to your peers rather than your parents and engage socially with your peer group." N stands for novelty; "the brain's change in dopamine drives you to experience novelty as very rewarding, and that allows you to go out and take risks." Finally, CE refers to creative expression. "The brain is achieving new levels of complexity that open the mind up to creatively exploring the nature of reality in a new way." Parents could personally take advantage of this developmental stage in their adolescent's life to reawaken these often long-buried aspects of themselves, rediscovering their own essence in order to experience a more meaningful "alive to themselves" existence.

teenager and influencing him or her in such a way as to diminish his or her ESSENCE .

Optimally a parent would see their child as a unique individual with his or her own mental experiences. This is not possible when parents have the tendency to want to live through their children. Therefore, it is helpful for parents to question their underlying motives in relation to their kids. For example, how much does my dream of my kid going to a certain college have to do with his or her ambitions and how much does it have to do with my own? Could I be attempting to compensate for something I felt was missing or hurtful in my own childhood?

When parents are able to start to see themselves and their child as two separate individuals and to treat their child with a level of respect and autonomy, they're better equipped to give up any preconceived ideas about their kid that often more to do with a parent's own history and aren't necessarily attuned to the child. An important first step for changing their relationship with their child is for parents to better understand their own minds.

In *Brainstorm*, Dr. Siegel further suggests that parents would benefit from gaining insight into their own attachment histories. A person's **attachment style** is formed in their first years, yet it shapes how they relate throughout their lives. By coming to know their own attachment patterns, parents can begin to understand their present-day reactions to their children. As they identify times when they are likely to "lose it" with their kids.

As parents start to be more tolerant and to see their kids in a new light, they can learn techniques for talking to their kids that promote a mutual understanding. One such exercise is described by Dr. Siegel as "rupture and repair." Because no parent, or person, is perfect, it is inevitable that almost every adult will find themselves entering into a heated conflict with their kid at one time or another. This is a particularly true when a child enters the independent-minded, opinionated and stormily emotional period that colors adolescence. Siegel explains that there will be ruptures, but after they occur, there is an opportunity to repair.

When a rupture takes place, parents shouldn't ignore it, pretending like it never happened and moving on. Instead, they should wait until they are in a calm state, then approach and communicate directly with their child. They should open up about their own feelings and mistakes, apologizing for "losing it" or for any misplaced acts of anger or frustration. They can say for example, "I'm really sorry that I lost my temper. I felt attacked and overreacted. It's important to me to know what you're going through."

The poignant and powerful state of constant transformation that defines all of childhood is of unique significance during adolescence, when the parent/child relationship also experiences a major evolution. In many ways, even with all of its challenges, there is perhaps no better opportunity for parents to take the time to learn about what's truly going on in the minds of their children than during adolescence. In order to effectively do this, they must also look into what's going on in their own minds – separating their experiences from that of their kids. Parents can broaden their ability to relate to their children by understanding their personal attachment style and learning new ways of relating that will help their kids to gracefully enter adulthood. Parents can also use their child's experience of ESSENCE as a catalyst to reawakening and getting in touch with their own deeper feelings, passions, excitement, spontaneity and desire for meaningful connections with others.

Join Dr. Daniel Siegel for the Feb. 10 Webinar "**Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain.**"

About the Author



Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Dr. Lisa Firestone is the Director of Research and Education at The Glendon Association. An accomplished and much requested lecturer, Dr. Firestone speaks at national and international conferences in the areas of couple relations, parenting, and suicide and violence prevention. Dr. Firestone has published numerous professional articles, and most recently was the co-author of *Sex and Love in Intimate Relationships* (APA Books, 2006), *Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice* (New Harbinger, 2002), *Creating a Life of Meaning and Compassion: The Wisdom of Psychotherapy* (APA Books, 2003) and *The Self Under Siege* (Routledge, 2012). Follow Dr. Firestone on Twitter or Google.

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