

RWA



News

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SEPTEMBER 2015

A Word From The Administration

Mr. Tony Pita, Principal

Ms. Chantal Juhasz, Vice-Principal

Mr. Steven Manstavich, Vice-Principal



It has been an eventful start to the school year at Royal West Academy. We would like to offer a warm welcome to our newest additions, Secondary I, and upper graders who are new to the RWA family.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new staff members:

- Ms. S. Chawki (English and Ethics)
- Mme A. Gouin (français)
- Mme L. Moreau (français)
- Mme M. Gauthier (français et histoire)
- Ms. J. Pevec (Science Fair coordinator)

As you may know, Mme N. Cheff, our interim Vice-Principal in 2014–15, is on leave for the 2015–16 school year. Replacing her is Mr. S. Manstavich, who was, until recently, Vice-Principal at James Lyng High School. Like Mme Cheff previously, Mr. Manstavich will be responsible for students whose family names begin with the letters M–Z. Ms. C. Juhasz continues to be responsible for students whose family names begin with the letters A–L.

This school year got off to an enthusiastic start, with the Student Life Association welcoming the Secondary I students at our annual Orientation on August 27.

Members of the SLA organized activities and led school tours in hopes that the new students would be well prepared for their first day of school. Special thanks to our co-presidents Karley McIlwaine and Chloe Ginsberg for their leadership in making this event possible.

Also prior to the school year, RWA families opened their homes and their hearts to our exchange partners from Taiwan. Royal West Academy is proud of its exchange program which has allowed Secondary II students and staff to receive students and staff from countries like Taiwan, India, Greece, Ukraine, Italy, and Poland. Students and staff then travel to these countries in Secondary III where they are in turn hosted by families of our exchange partners. This program would not be possible without the leadership of our exchange parents and our staff, Ms. Westlake, Mr. Diacoumacos, Mr. Vamvakas, and Ms. Belina.

The RWA Foundation organized the second annual Royal West Academy Start of Year Celebration, which took place on September 11 (*see page 4*). Volunteers dedicated hundreds of hours toward the organization of this event. Students, parents, staff, and community members were treated to large inflatable games, great food, and beverages as well as a visit from the SPVM's mounted police. The evening proved to be a huge success with proceeds going to the RWA Auditorium Renovation Project. Special thanks to Mr. K. Kelly for his leadership in organizing this memorable event!

Once again, during the first week of school, staff members were visible in their orange and yellow vests, directing the student pedestrian traffic from the Montreal West train station. A review of these procedures was also done at our annual start of year



assembly. We ask that parents discuss the issue of traffic safety with their child. Please note that there are three sets of commuter trains running through the Montreal West train station—assume that there may be more than one train coming through at a time.

Remember to look both ways, cross the roads only at the crosswalks specified for students, stay alert, do not wear headphones, and practice safety first!

In addition, there are large numbers of students boarding the STM buses after school. It is important to line up and board the bus in an orderly fashion, so that no one gets hurt. Parent drivers are reminded that the drop-off and pick-up of students takes place on **Easton Avenue ONLY!** Easton Avenue is the only safe drop-off

area for students. Ainslie Street is a No Stopping Zone. If you drop off your child on Ainslie, you risk receiving an \$85 ticket from Montreal West Public Security. The town of Montreal West has also informed us that Easton Avenue will temporarily become a one way street going west. This is being done to ensure the public's security as the traffic in the area increases due to the closure of the Saint-Jacques exit off of Highway 720. We ask that parents remain vigilant while navigating this area. Please keep our students and staff safe!

Our Secondary I Meet the Teacher evening was held on September 9. Despite an intense heat wave, over 200 parents attended this event. Parents were given short

SHARING THE STAGE WITH YOU.

By Jasmin Uhthoff

Five years on the Board

When my son finished Secondary V in the spring, it felt like I too was graduating from Royal West Academy. It has been five great years for the both of us. I remember the day he got the acceptance letter. Unlike some of his friends, he did not get in right away after writing the October entrance exam, nor after the interview—no, he was on the waiting list until the following March. When he got in, we felt we had hit the jackpot! Even if RWA did not insist on parent involvement, I would have wanted to be involved, simply to give back. Having been part of the foundation of his elementary school, it was a natural progression to join the RWA Foundation.

After spending my first year as a board director, I served the next three as Foundation President. And I would do it again. At times it was a lot of work and there were periods when it was challenging. But in return, I learned so much: how to negotiate, to lead a meeting, to get over my nervousness about speaking in public and to sloooooowww doooooown when I speak, to persuade, and to organize. I learned that most people want to help—you just have to ask.

I had the privilege to work with so many interesting people: Roch Carrier, Jacob Tierney, Joe Lalla, Tony Pita, and best of all, many other dedicated RWA parents, especially those who sat on the Foundation board.

Together in five years we accomplished a lot:

- raising just shy of \$300,000
- adding a new sound and light system to the auditorium
- moving ahead with engineering and architect's plans
- holding numerous fundraising events which helped create a stronger school spirit

And now it is time for me to pass the baton. While very capable and dedicated parents and staff sit on the board, there is always room for more! I encourage—no, **urge**—you to attend one meeting to see what a dynamic and fun group it is. I can guarantee you won't regret it!



presentations by teachers from all subject domains. They also had an opportunity to hear from the administration, the Secondary I homeroom teachers, and our school guidance counsellor, Mr. Mateus, who discussed the sometimes difficult transition to high school and the pressure some students may feel at Royal West Academy. He also highlighted the necessity for students to have some relaxing downtime! Parents were also encouraged to ensure that their child not have a cell phone or computer available during times of rest. Cell phones should not be used as alarm clocks. The distractions far outweigh the benefits.

Members of our three major parent organizations, the RWA Home & School Association, the RWA Foundation, and the RWA Governing Board, also gave presentations and welcomed parents to Royal West Academy. For more information on upcoming events and opportunities to get involved at RWA, please consult their respective websites that can all be accessed through www.royalwestacademy.com.

On September 16–18, students in Secondary I and Secondary IV boarded buses to the Eastern Townships and Boston, Massachusetts, respectively. Close to 300 participated in these annual Grade Level Trips. Special thanks to our trip organizers, Mme Bourdeau, Mme Dupaul, and Ms. O’Neil as well as the teacher chaperones for their time and effort in making these trips possible.

On September 21, Royal West Academy opened its doors to over 1000 visitors at our annual Open House. Special thanks to the volunteer students and parents who were great ambassadors for RWA. Qualifying exams were written on September 26–27. Special thanks to Mr. Mateus, Ms. Wineberg, Ms. Di Pietro, Ms. Taylor, and our student monitors for all their hard work in organizing and administering these tests.

At the Annual General Meeting on September 28, the following parents were elected to two-year terms as parent representatives on the Governing Board: Mr. M. Delis; Mr. M. Mendelson; Mr. N. Gharibian, and

SHARING THE STAGE WITH YOU.

And the winners are ...

- Grand prize—15 pairs of Canadiens 2015–16 season tickets: John Massa
- 2nd prize—10 pairs of Canadiens 2015–16 season tickets: Andrew Robb
- 3rd prize—7 pairs of Canadiens 2015–16 season tickets: Ralph Nozzi
- 4th prize—5 pairs of Canadiens 2015–16 season tickets: Arlene Segal
- 5th prize—5 pairs of Canadiens 2015–16 season tickets: Bettina Karpel
- 6th prize—52" HD Sony TV: Scott Chapman
- 7th prize—2 Giant bikes: Vera Gavizon
- 8th prize—2 Osheaga passes: Patrizia Zullo

But the real winners are all of us! With this raffle, we raised \$84,280 (equal to 2107 tickets sold). Thank you all for your help and support!

You can play a part!

We are always looking for volunteers to join the RWA Foundation. No matter your experience or time available, everyone can play a role. If you have any questions or fundraising ideas, contact Erica Brown, Vice-President, at info@rwaf.ca or visit us at <http://rwaf.ca>.

Make a donation! Just go to our website at <http://rwaf.ca> and give what you can. Every donation takes us closer to transforming our 80-year-old auditorium into a state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre for our children.



Ms. D. Dimock. The General Assembly also elected Ms. A. Monereau for a one-year term, replacing Mr. K. Kelly whose child graduated this past June. These five new members join the following second-year members: Mr. R. Ortiz, Ms. L. Rinaldi, and Mr. N. Dahdah. Mr. Gharibian was also elected as the Regional Delegate for Royal West Academy. A Parent Advisory Committee consisting of six members was also established, with Ms. J. Neish elected as their Chair.

The first meeting of the RWA Governing Board was held on October 5. Monthly meetings are held at 7 PM in the school library. Meetings are open to the public and a question period is always part of the monthly agenda. Consult our website for the schedule of upcoming meetings.

The RWA Home & School Association's next meeting will take place on October 20, 2015 at 7:30 PM. The Home & School provides much needed funds for pedagogical materials, special events, and building improvements. With your help, the Home & School will undoubtedly be in a position to make many more contributions that will enhance your child's educational experience at Royal West Academy. All our parents are encouraged to get involved!

As you are aware, all public sector employees are involved in contract negotiations. As a result of a work-to-rule campaign, our extra-curricular activities program has been temporarily suspended and Progress Report distribution will be delayed until October 26, 2015. There is also the possibility of rotating strikes across the province. Should that happen, parents will be notified well in advance. While these situations are beyond our control, please rest assured that we will be doing everything possible to maintain services, ensure the well-being of our students, and keep you up to date on a regular basis. Our top priority remains delivering the best education possible to the students of Royal West Academy, and we know that our staff share this same vision.

If your child requires tutoring at any time this year, RWA has an excellent Peer-Tutoring program at minimal cost. Any questions or concerns in this area should be directed to Ms. Di Pietro, our School-Community Animator (ECA Coordinator) at sdipietro@emsb.qc.ca.

We continue to make improvements to our facility. Thanks to the EMSB, new lockers will be installed in the gym change rooms. Over 50 years of rust and deterioration will be replaced by beautiful and functional lockers that meet our students' needs. Improvements were also made to the fire alarm system, and new hardwood floors were installed in our dance studio. This summer also saw painting projects completed in the gym locker rooms, girls gym, cafeteria, science laboratory, stairwells, and third floor hallway—all compliments of the Material Resources Department of the EMSB. As many of you know already, our parents have been extremely generous with their time over the past years in order to improve the physical environment of our school. Once again this year, the Home & School will be looking for parent volunteers to continue the great work by painting other areas of the building. Please stay tuned for details in the coming weeks.

Please note that because of the upcoming federal election, October 19, 2015, will be a pedagogical day.

The administration and staff wish all our students and parents a successful and enjoyable year!

Start Of The Year

By Mr. Kirk Kelly, Chair,
Governing Board & Director,
RWA Foundation

Who in their right mind would stand in line for 20 minutes, climb 16 feet into the air and then leap off into nothingness? Hundreds of people did exactly that one recent Friday afternoon. Why such strange behaviour? Some mysterious Indiana Jones sect?

Here are some other clues:

- 5 rides
- 1500 attendees
- 130 pizzas
- 650 bottles of water
- way too many beavers without their tails
- St-Viateur bagels
- ... over 100 volunteers



By now, everyone should know the answer: the Start of the Year Celebration! Held on September 11—possibly the most perfect afternoon and evening of the entire summer. Not that everything was perfect by any means. Lineups for the rides were a little long and we should have had about 30 pizzas ready at 3 PM to combat the hungry teenager syndrome.

But *Jump Off* made up for at least some of the imperfections. It's simple: you climb up 16 feet into the air and jump off. It was probably the most popular ride of the day. Everyone from four-year-olds to parents took advantage of the opportunity to ride the gravity wave and come tumbling down to earth.

Laser Tag was super popular too. Next year we'll need to add another one to accommodate all the people who wanted to try.

Pie the Pita, *Bait the Bateman*, and *What Juhasz You Gets*, all drew big crowds and lots of players. Thank goodness we went to Costco for the whipped cream!

to connect with those who put their lives on the line every day for us.

All in all, it was a good turnout and a great success. It happened because so many staff, students, and parents, were generous in giving time, effort and ideas.

There are too many people to thank by name for organizing and working the party. But, to be fair, some key people need to be singled out:

- Paul Broomberg, who designed the site and oversaw the installation
- Mitch White, who calmly handled all the logistic details, stayed cool, was always helpful, and managed the money
- Lindsay McLeod, who gathered and organized the parent volunteers
- Kim Reid, who gathered and organized the student volunteers
- Tony Pita, whose unflagging support broke



photo: Robert Ganz



photo: Ken Elman



photo: Ken Elman

Hundreds of last-minute raffle tickets were sold and the half-and-half draw put almost \$600 into the lucky winner's pocket.

All three candidates for federal parliament were there doing a meet-and-greet, while Isabelle Morin, our former federal representative, spoke briefly about the value of community and the importance of the youth vote.

The mounted police were present for much of the event and drew a big crowd of children, teenagers, and parents, wanting to meet their handsome horses, Sunny and Chef. We were also fortunate to have both the Montreal West fire department and the regular in-car police on site. It was a great chance for the community

through all hurdles

- Ken Elman, who provided e-support
- Sarah Goblot, who created all the ads, flyers, messages, and take-aways that got our message out to the community
- Bonnie Feigenbaum, who organized the visits by the candidates, the Montreal West council, and other key people
- Erica Brown, our master of ceremonies, who got the police and fire services to attend, and who, along with our new vice-principal Steve Manstevich, selflessly ensured that all traces of the police horses' visit were erased so that the field could be used for children's soccer the next morning



photo: André Knox

- Pat Nolan, who ran a successful parent baking table and oversaw the liberal application of whipped cream where it was needed
- Patrick Marcovecchio, who helped arrange the food for the party and supplied hundreds of BeaverTails through his food truck
- Michael Mendelson, who is the perfect guy to run the bar (he doesn't drink)

A few pictures have been posted on the Royal West Academy Foundation facebook page, so feel free to tag yourself. A video will follow once we figure out how to edit it.

Thanks to everyone who attended. Planning has already begun for next year's event! Any suggestions you may have to make the 2016 edition even better should be directed to yours truly at kirkkelly@sympatico.ca. Hope to see you there!

Interview: Mr. Max Ohayon

By Petros Koziris

Royal West Academy is a school with very gifted students. We are often put under a lot of pressure from the high-level academic program. We have to balance our schoolwork with our ECA activities and don't always have time to get to know our teachers as well as we would like to. So for that reason I decided to interview Mr. Ohayon, a science and math teacher who has been at RWA since 2011. I had him in Secondary II and found him to be a very interesting person. He's funny and I found out things about him I wouldn't have learned otherwise.

I started by asking Mr. Ohayon what his favourite hobbies are, and he told me that he enjoys any type of physical activity. He

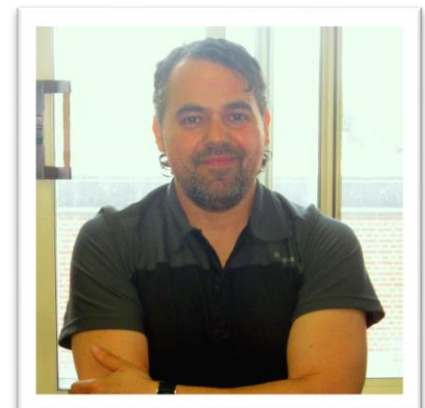


photo: André Knox

likes to swim, cycle, play hockey, and tennis. But he is open to any other sports. Other than physical activities, reading, movies, and spending time with friends is also fun. “But above all,” he said, “being a father to two wonderful boys is the best part of my life”.

Mr. Ohayon’s favourite movies are *Midnight Express* and *A Clockwork Orange*, two of the best films he has ever watched.

We know everyone has a phobia—yes, even teachers! So I decided to ask Mr. Ohayon if he has any phobias. He responded, “I would say maybe being closed in a small space. I don’t know if it would qualify as claustrophobia, but I don’t like being confined in a small space.”

Mr. Ohayon’s preference for music is heavy-metal rock from the 80s—he likes 90s, 70s, and 60s too. He says pop and disco are also good but he likes mostly rock music.

In Secondary II, I remember Mr. Ohayon talking about different places he had been to for vacation, which triggered me to ask where was the best place he had ever travelled to. He replied, “I would say Israel. Off the Mediterranean Sea. I didn’t quite make it to Greece, but that’s one of the places I’d like to go. Israel would be the nicest place.” Telling me that Greece is one of the places he would like to visit made me smile, as it is something that you often hear from people.

I would like to thank Mr. Ohayon for accepting to do this interview. I learned a lot from it. Getting to know your teachers better makes a school environment that much more fun.

The Governing Board Report

By Mr. Kirk Kelly, Chair, Governing Board

Meeting of June 10, 2015

Some background: the seventh Governing Board meeting held on May 25 was purposely pushed to late in the school year in the anticipation that the Ministry of Education would have decided on the school board budgets for the 2015–16 school year and, in turn, the board would have had a chance to allocate the funds it received so that Royal West Academy would know what resources were available for the coming year. A key role

of the Governing Board is examining and approving the school’s budget.

Alas, it was not to be.

Reluctantly, the decision was made to hold an eighth meeting on June 10 to review and pass the budget which we were sure would be ready by then.

Come June 10, still no budget. The Ministry was still deciding on funding. We were told to go ahead and review the funds in Fund 3. Other monies would follow later.

So what’s “Fund 3”?

Imagine a household where grocery money was in one envelope, metro and bus money in another, and money for house repairs in yet another. Now, to make it interesting, imagine that it is forbidden to go into any fund envelope unless the money in that envelope is spent only on what it was intended for. So if you need to take the bus but there is no money in the bus ticket envelope, you walk—don’t even think about taking \$4 out of the grocery envelope. Now to make it even more fun, imagine that there’s little logic in what can come out of one fund and what can come out of another—like a separate envelope for diced tomatoes and another for tomato paste. Making spaghetti sauce becomes a whole new challenge.

This is how the government insists schools manage their money. The money that comes to a school comes in budget envelopes called “Funds”. You can probably see why there is a strong and growing movement to have more power devolved to the schools so they can occasionally take some grocery money to buy bus tickets.

Back to Fund 3: so why could we allocate Fund 3? Because it’s the fund that contains the monies that come directly from families, in the form of school fees. So we allocated it.

Now you never hold a meeting just to do one thing, right? Once the stones are out, might as well kill a few more birds ...

So, the Portal Subcommittee gave us an update. Their final committee report recommending Schoology as the portal solution for RWA had come to the attention of



the EMSB. They were invited to present the report to a committee of senior executives. Their report was very well received and the EMSB executives decided to adopt Schoology on a test basis at four to six other schools across the Board. Kudos to the committee; the board's decision really speaks to the quality of the work they did.

We also reviewed the very little progress that had been made on the creation of a Life Skills course at the school. No course is planned for the new school year. However, a parent mentor who teaches the Life Skills we want, as part of larger course she gives at CEGEPs and universities, came forward and volunteered to teach those for free at RWA. Given that many extra-curricular activities at RWA get their start by students coming forward and asking for an activity to take place, we decided to encourage students to come forward in the fall and ask for a Life Skills course. We felt that this might be the best way to break the logjam around getting it going.

Royal West Academy's Governing Board had been approached by the Central Parents Committee (CPC) to allow the distribution of a paper-based survey at our school looking for parent feedback on the quality of education and the services offered by the EMSB. If you saw any news coverage of the survey in either The Montreal Gazette or The Suburban last spring, you know that the survey had become a major source of controversy and contention between the CPC and the EMSB. I won't go into details except to say we had a general feeling that no party came out of this affair looking better than they did going in.

After heated discussion, a majority of board members decided to refuse to distribute the survey because its timing in the exam period was wrong, its content was suspect since we had had no input into the survey content, and there was no desire to take a position in the middle of an unappetizing debate between the CPC and the EMSB.

To ensure that parents contacted by any RWA organization have formally given their permission to be contacted, the board voted to have the parent permission form that is filled out each year include a specific question whereby parents would give their permission to be contacted by the school or by a school

organization by email or phone. Those who did not give permission would continue to receive all notifications from the school via forms sent home with their children.

Finally, the Board wanted to recognize the incredible contribution of Dr. John Simms who has served as a community representative for many years. Dr. Simms is a seminal figure in the history of Royal West Academy. With his experience as the director-general of the English school board and his spell as mayor of Montreal West, he was a convincing figure on the committee that successfully pushed for the founding of RWA.

The governing board named Dr. Simms its first ever Lifetime Honorary Member and appointed him to the Governing Board for life or for as long as he wishes to serve. We hope that Dr. Simms feels this a fitting honour. He has given so much to our community and to Montreal West. We felt this was a way to recognize his contributions.

That's it, that's all. Eight meetings, 28 members in total over the last school year. I want to recognize the contributions of the SLA co-presidents, the staff and teachers, the principal and vice-principals, and the parents elected by the families at the school. They and hundreds of other parents and alumni volunteers make Royal West Academy a very special community.

But don't take it for granted. It's only special because people care. So get out and do something to make it even more special.





CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 5	RWA Foundation meeting @ 7 PM
October 5	Governing Board meeting @ 7 PM
October 12	Thanksgiving Day
October 16	Pedagogical day (afternoon only)
October 19	Pedagogical day (federal election)
October 20	Home & School meeting @ 7:30 PM
October 23	Pedagogical day
October 30	Free Dress Day
November 2	RWA Foundation meeting @ 7 PM
November 3	Secondary I parent seminar @ 7 PM
November 11	Remembrance Day
November 16	Pedagogical day
November 16	Governing Board meeting @ 7 PM
November 26	Pedagogical day
November 27	Pedagogical day
December 1	Home & School meeting @ 7:30 PM



LOST AND FOUND POLICY

Please be advised that the Lost and Found boxes are cleaned out on the 15th of each month. While labeled items are returned to their owners, several bags of unclaimed unlabeled items are removed and donated to charity every month. So if you are looking for lost items, make sure to look for them before the 15th!

The Lost and Found bins are located in three areas at Royal West Academy:

- outside the new gym
- outside the guidance office
- in the main office under the teachers' mailboxes

In the meantime, please label all your belongings!

RWA



News

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