

**Name of Committee**: Equity Policy Community Advisory Committee (EPCAC)

**General Meeting**: Monday, October 25, 2021

A meeting of the Equity Policy Community Advisory Committee convened on Monday, October 25th, 2021 from 6:42 pm to 7:59 pm on Zoom with Parent Co-Chair Aleem Punja presiding.

| **Members in Attendance:****Staff Present:** **Observers:** | Aleem Punja (Parent Co-Chair), Dennis Keshinro (Community Co-Chair), James Li (Trustee), Pablo Vivanco (Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre), Sharon Beason (Parent)Jacqueline Spence (System Superintendent), Irit Kelman (Manager, Human Rights Office), Ryan Eaton (Human Rights Assistant) Vivienne Thompson, Derik Chica |
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| **Regrets**:**No Response:**  | Dan MacLean (Trustee), Catherine Maloney (Parent), Sophia Ruddock (Parent)Tesfai Mengesha (Success Beyond Limits), michael kerr (Colour of Poverty-Colour of Change) |

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| **ITEM** | **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS /** **RECOMMENDATION/MOTION** |
| **Call to Order, Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands, Reading of the Meeting Norms and Approval of Minutes** | The meeting was called to order at 6:42 pm. Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands and Meeting Norms were read. The agenda was approved. |
| **Approval of Minutes** | The minutes from the September 27, 2021 meeting were approved. |
| **Approval of Future EPCAC Meeting Dates** | Future EPCAC Meeting Dates were approved. |
| **Trustee Co-Chair Update** | Trustee James Li gave an update to the committee on behalf of Trustee Co-Chair Dan MacLean.The Program and School Services Committee (PSSC) looked at the 2021/2022 Parents Reaching Out Grant which is a government grant provided to school boards by the Province of Ontario. This grant is to help parent councils be more engaged in the community. Last year the sum of the grant was $130,000 and this year it has been increased to $253,000. The amount of $170,000 will be made available to school councils to help address topics such as anti-oppression, anti-black racism, and anti-indigenous racism in the schools. The councils are required to spend the money before the end of June 2022. Caring and Safe Schools’ annual report was also presented at PSSC. Of particular interest was suspension rates. The suspension rate has dropped 45% from 2016 to 2019, meaning fewer students are being suspended. The focus now is to help the students learn from their mistakes and to grow through educational means as opposed to punitive measures. However, the distribution of suspensions has not changed. In 2016, out of all students suspended 36.8% were Black students. In 2019, that number dropped to 32.7%, yet Black students make-up only 11% of the student population. Even with fewer students being suspended; Black students are more likely to be suspended than other students. East Asian students account for 1.1% of all students suspended, and white students account for 22.4% of the suspensions. The Board will need to work a lot harder with the Black student community to decrease that number and get to the root cause of the problem. Other relevant suspension related data: the family makeup of TDSB students: 78% consist of two parents; 19.7% live with mothers only; 2.1% live with fathers only. Yet 45% of students suspended are from families with single mothers. Other data indicated that students from low income families, lower SES, and Black families are disproportionately suspended. Trustee Li suggests this committee dig deeper to see how we can help. The Board is in the middle of consulting on changes to the Specialized Schools and Program Policy. The [website](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review/Specialized-Schools-and-Programs-Policy) has links to the draft policy and dates and registration links for Live Consultation Webinars The Optional Attendance Policy will be brought to the Board in the spring of 2022 and to be introduced for the 2022/2023 school year.Finance, Budget, and Enrolment Committee – enrollment has dropped 3.9% in elementary schools, as it does year after year. Secondary school numbers have dropped as well. The enrolment drop has caused a budget deficit which the Board cannot close. Solutions are to either increase class sizes or cut the expenditure from somewhere else. The Trustees have passed a motion to write to the province to ask them for money to help close the financial gap. A member asked the reason for the drop in enrollment. Trustee Li responded that it could be from a combination of the following reasons: parents holding kids back from kindergarten; going to another school board; immigration has dropped due to the pandemic; fewer international students; and there has been an exodus from the major cities into the suburbs and into Atlantic Canada.Question about the drop-out rate and connection to marginalized communities. A member raised the concern in the gap of curriculums as they do not reflect all communities. An issue is that new immigrant students are coded as ESL regardless of English language knowledge, Therefore, the point of registration is identified as a point of inequity and systemic issues. The committee was interested in obtaining more information about how newcomer students are welcomed and integrated into the school. Jacqueline Spence will follow-up with the Guidance department to request a presentation. |
| **New Membership Working Group** | The New Membership Working Group (NMWG) was provided information on a spreadsheet regarding the responses from the Parent and Community applications. Response rate was lowMembers noted they would like more information on the EPCAC website to encourage more individuals to join or to observe. Staff committed to posting meeting dates, the agenda, and live links.The NMWG will provide a timeline or milestones at the next meeting to choose the new members. |
| **Staff Update from CAC Admin Team Meeting** | There is review of the Community Advisory Committee structure. More information to come. |
| **Vote for PSSC Meeting Co-Chair Representative – re EPCAC Report** | Trustee Li to present the report at next month’s PSSC meeting |
| **Discuss Goals for the Year** | Committee began to discuss its goals. It was suggested that any reports or reviews into which the committee can contribute its perspective to be brought to future EPCAC meetings. Committee asked about the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on achievement and well being of students; how do we help them out from here onward; is the board doing work on impact post-pandemic? Staff advised that the Research department is doing that work. Jacqueline will reach out to research to find out where they are at.TDSB’s Research Department will be joining the EPCAC meeting on December 13th, 2021 to present and seek input on the upcoming student census.  |
| **Other Business** | A request was made to include information on the committee’s website including general information, reports, a heading of ‘Equity Policy Now’, a link to equity policy, links to previous reports and PowerPoint presentations provided by guest speakers, letter to minister for pandemic findings, appropriate Halloween costumes, provision of menstrual products,. Brian and Sharon to provide a list of suggestions for the [EPCAC website](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/Advisory-Committees/Community-Advisory-Committees/Equity-Policy-Community-Advisory-Committee). |
| **Adjournment** | The meeting adjourned at 7:59pm  |