**A Progress Report on the Enhancing Equity Task Force – June 2017**

As the person who is facilitating and documenting the Toronto District School Board’s Enhancing Equity Task Force, I want to provide an update on where things are right now.

What has become very clear is that there is little need – or desire – for more research into equity issues. There are a number of reports done in recent years that have helped identify exactly what the problems are. What we do need to answer now though, is: What is keeping us from making progress?

The work of the Task Force is focusing on what actions we must recommend to ensure large scale, comprehensive, systemic change. Here’s where we are:

**Four Task Force Working Groups by Learning Centre Well Underway**

These working groups are made up of representatives from the four Learning Centres, community members and education staff. They are aware of the existing investment in equity and recognize the need to explore and understand what is keeping the Board from making progress. The first round of meetings explored what the conditions are that contribute to success in making equity based changes in education. The second round of meetings examined data and research briefs prepared for the Task Force by the TDSB Research Department as well as recommendations coming from the Board’s Community Advisory Committees. Some groups mapped out the system as they see it to identify where they believe the challenges are and start to imagine the systemic solutions that will be required. The third round of meetings focused on developing specific recommendations to achieve those solutions. All four groups brought their ideas to the Summit held in June. Teams have identified the value of bringing together people from different parts of the system to work together in Learning Centres on equity and are keen to be a part of implementing changes that emerge. All four groups have asked for a fourth meeting this fall.

**Hosting Eight Joint Ward Forums**

In May, every school was invited to send a team to a forum. The purpose of the sessions was:

* To hear from participants the ideas they have about creating the conditions for all students to succeed;
* To introduce equity and why achieving equity for all is critical for student wellbeing and achievement; and
* For school teams to make a plan lead a conversation about what is happening in their school and to gather data that will establish a baseline on equity.

More than 1,300 people participated. Summary notes were generated for each session and shared with participants. They will soon be available on the TDSB Enhancing Equity Task Force website. We had great feedback on the format of sending teams from each school and number of the forums had strong student participation which was very powerful for people. People noted the value of having a team from each school to get different perspectives and work together going forward.

Whether schools could participate in a Ward Forum or not they are all invited to engage in a conversation about the culture of equity in their school. Each school is asked to gather the different school communities (parents, students, teachers, administrators, support staff) to explore the culture in their school using the Culture of Equity Feedback Form. Some schools have already completed their conversations and submitted their baseline data. The deadline for submission is October 9, 2017. Schools will get their data sets and be able use the information to help them plan together for enhancing equity in their local school. To find out more speak to your administrator.

**The Summit**

The Summit in June was an opportunity for the Working Groups to bring their ideas together with the Trustees and members of the Task Force Planning Group and other leaders to jointly share what they are learning, look for common themes and shape draft recommendations together. There were over 150 people in all. Perhaps the strongest part of the day was hearing stories directly from students via video about their experiences in the system with discrimination and racism. It was a powerful reminder of why we are engaged in this work and why change is needed. We found there were many common themes emerging and our work now is to build agreement on strong, bold and clear actions to move the Board ahead on equity.

**Draft Report**

The draft report will be written in July, with the emerging ideas and recommendations distributed for public consultation in September and October. The consultation will lead to a final report that hopefully has wide agreement on the important and relevant actions that should be taken.

This work has been guided by the Planning Group, consisting of community and school board members, academics and Trustees. It acts as my reference group which meets monthly and sets general strategy. We are on time and doing what we think is important to be successful.

There are several Community Advisory Committees – the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee and the Special Education Advisory Committee – which have brought forward important recommendations for the Task Force to consider. I believe there may be other groups with good ideas, and we would like to hear from them. Please contact me at liz@metastrategies.com .

You can follow the work of the Task Force on the TDSB website at [www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/HowtoGetInvolved/EnhancingEquityTaskForce.aspx](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/HowtoGetInvolved/EnhancingEquityTaskForce.aspx)

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