

## **Ward 15 Forum with Trustee Jennifer Story**

**30 May 2017**

### **The Why and How of Fundraising in our Schools**

#### **Welcome and introductions**

#### **Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands**

#### **Roundtable discussions**

##### **Why fundraise?**

- Engagement (to some extent we would still get that if events were free, but for some it's the only way parents can feel involved)
- Is it sometimes busywork, to keep parents active but not micromanaging staff?
- We can always do more or have more facilities / opportunities
- They think that is what school councils do / it's always been done
- Schools are underfunded
- Many technology requests

##### **What would happen if we stopped?**

- There would be less technology / fewer opportunities
- This is a conversation school councils should be having with their principal – what is the administration's perspective on this?
- School budgets are small. Some schools raise more money than the Board-funded school budget. For those schools the impact would be significant.
- Some suggested a move away from reactive spending. Instead, starting each year with a plan and creating goals for larger items (i.e. getting teachers / staff / school council to convey their larger goals such as "I want an orchestra" rather than asking for "1 glockenspiel every year"). Then school council can fundraise towards the larger goal.
- Could we redirect the blood, sweat and tears of parents / guardians away from school-based fundraising and towards pushing government to fund education properly (rather than restrict private \$\$ in to the system)?

##### **How much is raised per student?**

- Equinox raises roughly \$75 per student. Some in the TDSB are up to as much as \$300-500, although this includes grant applications as well as parent fundraising.
- One mom tracked the "asks" that came through school and school council (including charity, etc.) over two years and it was around \$750 per child per year.

- One of our high schools sends just one letter in the fall asking for a contribution to their discretionary fund which pays for those who can't afford to pay for themselves (e.g. trips, sports, uniforms, etc.). They raise roughly \$1 per student.

### **What role, if any, should the Board play to level the playing field?**

- What about the phrase that a high tide raises all boats? Are we fundraising for my child / my school / whole community?
- In an ideal world fundraising would be unnecessary and schools would be properly funded. The Board is in the midst of an equity review. What does it mean to the quality of education and outcomes if one school raises \$100,000 and another just \$3,000? Question -- Is that nothing or does it make a difference to outcomes and create measurable inequities? If anyone wants to explore this question more deeply or create a working group to explore proposals, caps, limits etc., please contact Jennifer.Story@tdsb.on.ca.
- The Board's three pillars of Achievement, Wellbeing, and Equity should apply to fundraising as well as in other areas. Fundraising improves equity within the school, but the definition of equity needs to be consistent. Parents should be more meaningfully engaged in the question of equity. The census sent out this month is not sufficient because it is asking for one response on behalf of all parents.
- Is there equity within the classroom? It is clear where one child is always refusing the 'ask' – how does that feel? In some schools if the envelope comes back empty, they put a wristband for the funfair (or whatever) in it, but there is no policy about this, it depends entirely on the individual school council and school administration's view of social justice.
- The onus is on the principal to ensure equity. An equity committee is not realistic on all councils, but should be incorporated into the practices within schools, collaboratively with administration and school council.
- It isn't right or fair to ask children, or even parents, to self-identify as unable to pay.
- Pressure on technology is top-down. If these are essential to learning, the Board should pay for it. A number of parents have taken concerns about this to Trustee Jennifer Story who has passed them on to the Director of Education, John Malloy. He is looking into it, but states clearly that principals should not be placing expectations on school councils to realise \$\$ for tech. Schools cannot reasonably or fairly build programs around technology use that require school council fundraising.

### **Questions from the floor**

- **Equity** Different schools have different views about sharing their funding with other schools privately and the Board at this point is not considering any obligation to do so. Model Schools, a program of support for lower-income, higher-need schools, is currently under review within the TDSB that will be published in September. The goal is to enhance equity here, not exacerbate inequities. The central Business Development department currently doesn't have a centralised way to receive information from school councils to know what we want but if, for example, a school council wants to host free movie nights, they have business contacts which could offer

that. School councils should contact Suzanna Siou with requests. There were suggestions that in order to be TDSB-approved vendors, companies should be required to donate a certain percentage of the profits by way of free services.

- **Sponsorship & donations** There is a difference. Sponsorship requires school councils to give something back, usually advertising, and the Business Development department has a tier system set up -- which school councils should get access to in order to ensure we are being consistent across the Board. Donations are legally allowed only to receive a tax receipt and thank-you letter; anything else is technically not allowed by virtue of provincial regulation. The department produces an annual report, "The School Budget and School Generated Funds Report," available publically, which shows various figures including per-student numbers for schools. There is a clear slope to the graph, but public funds from the Ministry do, to a great extent, even those figures out. All sponsorships should be vetted through the principal who passes many of these to the superintendent and/or Business Development department. For example, a large company might sponsor something in one school as a way into dealings with the TDSB as a whole or in order to obtain information such as demographic information from the school. The same is true of grants, which must always be signed by the principal – the Business Development department has a list of those which are already approved. Trustee Jennifer Story will send out a PDF.
- **Accountability** School councils can 'bank' its raised funds with the TDSB. There are clear ledger accounts, and clear controls and authorities that must be followed, showing the path of the money. Of 520 schools, 300 have separate school council bank accounts. Some school councils also use the School Cash Online system to collect money. There were some glitches as it started up but improving rapidly.

### **School-generated funds guidelines**

The school-generated funds guidelines are currently being revamped. These are currently only best practice, not rules. There will be consultations in the fall and they will likely become policy some time next school year. Marisa Chiu happy to take questions by email ([marisa.chiu@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:marisa.chiu@tdsb.on.ca)).

### **PIAC review**

The PIAC's role is to be involved in consultations and negotiations with the Board and to ensure that parent voices are heard. The report from the school council survey last year has been published and a lot of information is available on the website. PIAC is pushing for better support from the Board for the principal and superintendent to do their bit and to ensure that parents are represented on school committees, not just staff / admins. The #1 obligation and purpose of school councils should be to be involved in School Improvement Planning, not to fundraise. Anyone involved in the PRO should note the deadline has been extended to 15 June. PIAC is involved in an 'Enhancing Equity' task force. It appreciates that the survey is far from easy, but does ask that school councils do their best with it as a

first step. Anyone interested in serving on PIAC should contact Trustee Jennifer Story. Nicole is retiring and they need a new representative for the Ward.

### **French as a Second Language Advisory Committee**

The Board is currently reviewing French program policies and procedures, including entry points, lotteries, and all other aspects. In other boards, there have been big changes, including 100% French immersion for all students in kindergarten; for others, a half-day program for immersion (provincial minimum requirement). Again, there is a vacancy for the alternate position and anyone interested should contact Trustee Jennifer Story.

### **Close**

Trustee Jennifer Story thanked all for attending and noted that Ward 15 always has a great turnout at Ward Forum meetings, which shows parental and school involvement in the area.