

Ward 3 Council Meeting
May 10th 2016- Karen Kain School of the Arts (KKSA)
Theme: Spring into Summer: The EcoSchools Movement

Meeting called: 7:00 pm

Ward Council Chair Christie Heath sent her regrets, so PIAC Rep Tina Chan Kim chaired the meeting.

1) Introduction of Host school: Principal Vonda-Kaye Oketch spoke briefly about the school. KKSA serves a very broad catchment area, and offers unique and integrated arts programming for students grade 6 to 8. The school has a focus on the arts, and is also a platinum eco school (going for its third year in a row as certified platinum).

A KKSA parent, Laura Steele, gave testimony about how much her children enjoy the school, and spoke fondly about the integrated programming. Projects often start off small, but are broadened throughout the year to touch on a variety of subjects - visual arts, social science , drama etc.

We also had a presentation from Teacher Beryl Cohen who was joined by two of her students. They spoke about some of the unique programming of KKSA and how the Eco-Club incorporates eco-consciousness into the curriculum. The students have an outdoor garden that they work on, which also decreases their stress and increases mindfulness.

The school also features graffiti art from eco-artist Roadsworth, who helped the students decorate their school as well as the parking lot outside.

2) Eco-Schools Presentation

Richard Christie, Manager of Urban Sustainability at the TDSB spoke about the Eco- Schools program. *Please see attached slides for additional details.*

The TDSB created the Eco-Schools program and later shared it with the province to encourage other schools boards in Ontario to adopt similar eco-conscious programming.

The success of the program relies heavily on passionate teachers and staff who integrate eco-consciousness into everyday school life. If teachers don't really care about the projects, then they will never succeed, but those schools with staff who feel invested, often have the greatest success on changing school culture. It also relies on students, parents and members of the community being willing to adapt to the changes.

The success of the program as a whole also relies on the greater 'Eco-Network' - i.e. other groups outside of the TDSB who are interested in helping offer or subsidize eco programming. One example is the City of Toronto - they have interest in maintaining and growing the city's urban tree canopy, so they provide trees to the TDSB for free. We then use our resources to plant the trees and maintain them on school property.

3) Presentation on Active Transport and Safer Streets Pilot project:

Kristen Evans and Katie Wittmann

One part of encouraging eco-consciousness is to encourage active transportation among students. This is healthier for the planet as well as the kids themselves. There is always work being done to encourage students, to walk, bike, rollerblade etc to school. The Sustainability Office offers different things to encourage this change in a school community and some example include Bike Rodeos (where kids all bring in their bicycles, and learn to make sure their bikes are in great shape by checking tire pressure, oiling gears etc), bike rack installations at schools and safe riding presentations at school.

The Safer Streets Pilot at Second Street Jr. Middle School focuses on school travel planning by taking a look at what challenges surround the school community preventing active transport (i.e busy intersections, no sidewalk etc). Green Communities Canada and the EcoSchools office can later work with the school councils to address these concerns and help access policies that could encourage traffic calming and deter dangerous driving. Many schools need help encouraging safer streets that would result in more active transportation. The group is currently working on a document and website to share with school councils.

4) Panel Discussion:

The panel featured our speakers, Richard Christie, Katie Wittmann and Kirsten Evans (all from TDSB EcoSchools) joined by David Juliusson from Cycle Etobicoke and parent Natascha Monteiro of Second Street JMS.

Discussion about Second Street bike lane and the work being done to make it safer for students and members of the community.

People often illegally park there which forces riders to drive around it by entering live lanes of traffic.

There were different ideas to discourage drivers from parking there.

- Painting bicycle symbols in the lane to clearly signify its purpose
- Painting the lanes a brighter more eye catching colour.
- Have students team up with police to speak with drivers who are caught in the bike lane
- Hand out fake parking “tickets” that are actually fact sheets of why parking in the lane is dangerous for others.

Most of these ideas are focusing on educating drivers or at the very least making them more aware.

Parklawn JMS is looking to add a learning garden or outdoor space to enhance learning, but are looking for something 100% accessible.

The Eco-Schools department can offer information on a variety of playground and landscaping options for each school depending on what their needs are. A consultation is free. Contact Kristin Evers for more details: kristin.evers@tdsb.on.ca .

The Green Bin Program

The Green Bin program in schools (organic composting) was raised as a topic of discussion. Educating the school community of parents, teachers and students about what can and can't go in the Green Bin and how to pack a boomerang lunch is critical to success. Even as it is implemented, there are still misconceptions of what can go in the green bin and what can't. It helps when students are assigned as monitors to help spread knowledge and understanding of the project.

Q from SEAC rep Richard Carter: How does EcoSchools help serve special education students?

A: The EcoSchool department often looks for feedback to serve as many students as possible. They try to engage different school communities to make the program more successful. Special education students are often as enthusiastic and participatory as any other student in their quest to make their schools more environmentally sustainable.

A suggestion was made to integrate EcoSchools initiatives into special education programming. There are many aspects that would make it a seamless fit -for example, developmentally delayed students get TTC training as a way of making them self reliant, but that can be teamed up with the Eco-Schools initiatives.

Another idea to encourage active transport: create an app that can help students plan the safest route to school. It can take into account different traffic restrictions.

Safe walking education for students

Many students have dangerous pedestrian habits that need to be addressed.

Schools can invite their public health nurse or even the TPS to give a talk on this. Both have programs that speak to this issue.

Encouraging EcoSchools

Q: Why doesn't every school have at least some level of EcoSchool designation?

Q: What can be done to further spread the program? Should it be mandated that all school implement Eco schools programs?

A: There are huge financial benefits involved for the TDSB. Trustees have asked the department to look into what we can do better.

There are challenges for smaller schools to implement programs as their staff sizes may be so small that there is no teacher champion ready to lead the way.

5) PIAC report

Tina Chan-Kim gave a report from PIAC, sharing information about the STEM parent conference in late May happening at Richview CI.

6) SEAC update

Richard Carter gave a report from SEAC. Last meeting, SEAC discussed assistive tech and how to enhance the hardware that schools have. SEAC is also working on developing some major motions to guide the TDSB in addressing special education needs and communication with parents more effectively.

7) Trustee Update

Trustee Pamela Gough gave a report. There is a major restructuring happening at the TDSB. It's led by Director of Education Dr. Malloy and it's an attempt to make the largest school board in Canada feel a "little more local". The goal is to make it more accessible for parents and staff.

Details are still being sorted out, but the board will be subdividing itself into four learning centres. Each will have an Executive Superintendent at the helm, with many of the responsibilities of a director, who will supervise a coterie of Superintendents of Schools and through them dozens of principals. Our new Executive Superintendent will be Sandy Spyropoulos, who comes well recommended as being a very knowledgeable, empathetic, and capable manager. Formerly her portfolio was Inclusive Schools, and her areas of expertise include special education, health and well-being of students, and mental health initiatives.

To learn more, see the website: <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/DirectorofEducation/LearningCentres.aspx>

The new structure will also have 4 STEM designated schools, and Ward 3 will have 1 of them : Lanor JMS.

Meeting adjourned : 8:45pm