

TRUSTEE GERRI GERSHON & TRUSTEE SHELLEY LASKIN
JOINT WARD FORUM
February 29, 2016
Meeting Notes

Welcome to Wards 11 and 13 and to the parents, staff and community of Ward 14 – Trustee Gershon paid tribute to Trustee Sheila Ward

Welcome to Sunny View – Principal Ted Goldring and Chair of School Council

MEET THE DIRECTOR

With TDSB Director: Dr. John Malloy – now with the TDSB for 2 months!

Below are a summary of his comments along with the Q & A session after:

- We need to hear from you!
- Has been meeting with all groups: Trustees, staff, parents, students, senior team (superintendents) and will continue to do so – asking **3 Questions** in particular:
 - 1. What do you believe will enhance engagement in TDSB?**
 - 2. Where should we be focusing our efforts for the next while?**
 - 3. What advice would you like to offer me as the new director?**
- Recognizes the difficulty of reaching everyone – encourages parents to use TDSB social media – **TWITTER: @TDSB #tdsb Facebook: toronto.dsb**
- Looking into creation of virtual town halls
- Believes the TDSB is to provide directions that is best informed by hearing from all groups
- TDSB's most important work is with students
- The answers to the **3 Questions** makes me know it is important to determine what does it mean to support our schools to enable them to keep the focus on students
- And important to try and determine what is 'just enough' direction to allow our schools to support students
- Schools can't deal with distractions – they need to be able to keep their focus on students
- We have many resources available – (not just technology)
- What can we do to leverage those resources to provide our schools what they most need? It is NOT just about technology – technology can do many things but it can't get our students into the community – into the world
- In the last few years we have come to know a lot about learning
- We need to transform learning to be greater than what a student can learn/do on their own – when they can learn from each other and together come to a better solution/result/learning

Wants Each School to have Three Goals

1. Schools to have a learning goal
2. Schools to have a wellbeing goal – where student's health, mental health and safety are met

3. Schools to have an achievement goal – where students who need different supports or learning are provided with those in a positive way

Read a book just prior to starting at the TDSB – *Why Should Anyone Work Here? By Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones.*

The importance of creating an organization where you gain as much as you give. This is important in a large diverse system. Important for all – not just staff – but also students and families.

Questions and Answers

Q: When are decisions made about cancelling buses or closing schools in bad weather?

A: The Director works with board Transportation staff about the buses. They are the experts and really are the ones who are best able to determine when it is safe/unsafe to use buses.

Have asked staff to make the decision by 5 am in order to get the word out – through media.

- Parents can make the decision not send their own child if they feel it is unsafe.
- TDSB almost never closes schools. Some students have no alternative but school.

Q: Two questions:

i) Somali Task Force: when will it be implemented/or started? Parent supports it to be implemented as discussed.

ii) In past more students were hired by the TDSB in the summer. Fewer seemed to have been hired last year. Why?

A: Director will look into the Somali Task Force and follow-up with Superintendent Jim Spyropoulos who is working on this and we understand the importance this can make to a student, family and community.

Q: Ideally, how much time should a Parent Council be working on fundraising?

A: Ideally, a lot less! But that is not realistic. And ideally, Parents Councils would spend most of their time supporting/improving/encouraging/developing parent engagement.

Q: Who has the Director spoken to? Is it just staff?

A: NO – staff and senior team, students, parents, community. And it is on-going. Met just today with staff on the use of technology to communicate.

Also need to point out that given the size of the TDSB both in numbers and geography, it is crucial that our Superintendents who are out in the communities ask the same **3 Questions** (see page 1) and bring back what they are hearing.

Superintendents working with the Principal are a key to our success. Together they can bring together knowledge of individual schools and communities, bring about change, identify resources, and nurture and provide the environment our students and staff need.

Q: Can't you just use surveys?

A: Surveys aren't immediate enough – it doesn't provide an answer if you have a question – it is hard to provide feedback to those who complete them – it can be a long process. And it is important to close the loop... surveys ask for feedback but once responses are received – the responder often doesn't hear of results or actions taken – that does not serve anyone.

Q: Sometimes the board passes a policy and it doesn't appear to be implemented equally. Shouldn't it be?

A: Yes, but we are a human enterprise and sometimes flexibility is needed, and sometimes it is the implementation is seen differently by different people – Important that when there is a disagreement with how a policy is implemented that it be handled in a respectful manner.

Q: This is about Individual Education Plans (IEP). Sometimes students have them due to a learning style – it can be a discouraging process for students – they are struggling – and they can feel left out. How can they be better included?

A: Already working on a better TDSB Inclusion Strategy. It is a major commitment to provide a better environment for all our students.

Q: French Immersion: in the past one schools had two incoming Extended Immersion classes for Grade 4 – this year it was only one and some students had to start F.I. at a different school. Why? Isn't this a bilingual country?

A: Core French is provided to all students in every school. We are committed to providing French Immersion and Extended French, but due to space needs sometimes there will be disappointment. The students were offered a place in the program. More information about this particular situation can be best answered by the area Superintendent who is here and available to talk to you.

Q: This is about Immigrant children. In particular, those who have parents who may not have the skills or education to help them as they get older. Many of these students are struggling and still getting passed into the next grade. As they get to high school they are really struggling – they need help.

A: Yes, they do. And it is on our agenda. We are working on this – to get them the help they need - early.

Q: The education system doesn't appear to be very progressive. What are you doing? Where is the innovation?

A: In fact it is happening. Just last week 500 teachers gathered on a Saturday and spent the day learning, innovating, working on using new technologies, building, networking. And this is not the first time – and not the last. We are creating the conditions where all the amazing teachers can bring that back and share with others.

Q: What about the cuts to Special Ed and ESL last year? Is that going to happen again?

A: School-Based Staffing Budget going to board next week. We are working very hard so nothing proposed directly impacts our schools. No reductions to Special Education teachers or supports are recommended.

Q: Northern Secondary School has a great Gifted ISP (Intensive Support Program). I'd like you – and everyone else – to come to see it!

A: Thank You! That's great! Love to see it in action.

BUDGET FORUM
Balancing the 2016-2017 Operating Budget
Presentation & Questions/Answers

Presenter: Craig Snider, Comptroller, Budget Revenue & Financial Planning

To go through the presentation and get more information on our 2016-2017 budget please use the links below:

LINKS

Trustee Forum Budget Presentation:

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Budget/Balancing%20the%20Operating%20Budget%20Ward%20Forum%20Presentation%20Feb%2026.pdf>

TDSB Financial Facts 2016:

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/AboutUs/Budget/FINAL%20Financial%20Facts%202016.02.05.pdf>

Have Your Say:

In addition to TDSB Trustees holding budget forums across the city where you can ask questions directly, we are hosting online budget forums and also an online Budget Survey which you can complete at:

<https://secure.tdsb.on.ca/survey/survey.asp?id=1757>

You can also contact your Trustee by email or phone and let them know your concerns.

Q: Education Development Charges (EDC) – has there been any progress?

A: EDCs are an amount that new home/condo owners pay upon purchase – there are very specific criteria as to when a school board can levy these and how these funds can be used. Currently the TDSB is unable to levy EDCs, unlike some other school boards, due to current regulations which require a school board to have no unused student space. TDSB has met with the city and the province. The province appears receptive. But no decision has been made.

Q: How is the TDSB solving school enrollment and what are the issues around school closure of low enrollment schools?

A: If a single school has low enrollment but is surrounded by schools that are full, then it makes no sense to close the school – it is a non-issue. If a school with low enrollment is amongst a cluster of other schools with low enrollment then a discussion needs to begin. And due to high enrollments in some area there are also many schools currently involved in reviews to look at possible program changes, boundary changes, etc.

There is a new policy coming that will help to guide work on using unused classroom space. It is to help to make decisions about how/if/when/who can make use of this space – what makes sense? What is safe? What is beneficial?

Q: What about the difference between TDSB staff salaries and what the Ministry allocates? Is there still a difference? Will new collective agreements make it worse?

A: Yes. There is still a differential, but because bargaining has changed and the province is involved the Ministry will provide \$ for \$ for any agreement increase.

Q: Transportation contracts – if you are going out for new contracts do you have to contract for a certain number of students? If there are fewer students do you still have to pay?

A: NO! Our busing contracts are not structured that way.

Q: Supply teachers being used for teachers to take professional development. Where is that money from?

A: Some of it is sweated – where the Ministry provides \$\$ for teachers to be trained. Sometimes it comes from money we set aside or receive for very specific training.

Q: Will the proposed cuts be public?

A: The TDSB's operating budget is now stable due to hard and difficult decisions made by Trustees in the past. There is not a list of proposed cuts as we have experienced in the past. Our decisions will be public but we believe we can manage the changes. A lot of work has been done by both the TDSB and the province to stabilize and help us to know the funding that we will receive and to manage any changes. That does not mean the budgets are adequate or the gaps have been addressed but the differential is 0.5% of the total budget. The Capital Budget has serious and significant issues with regard to facility renewal.

Q: Special Education Funding – what's happening with it?

A: Special Ed. Funding Grant has changed – it is not rationalized across the province. It is no longer claims based which was extraordinarily time-consuming, difficulty for families, students and staff. It is a totally different process. The total amount of money has not changed but the province is distributing it differently based on a complex algorithm. The TDSB's grant for Special Education is being reduced.