

September 28, 2014

Items of Interest from Trustee Shelley Laskin, Ward 11

Website click on [Trustee Shelley Laskin](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/laskin)

[www.tdsb.on.ca/laskin](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/laskin)

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### **A very difficult week...**

With the permission of Chair Mari Rutka, I want to share her e-mail to trustees on Friday... I could not express it better...

“As we come to the end of what has been a very difficult week, I wanted to convey some of my thoughts from the last few days. First and foremost, all of us in the TDSB express our sympathy and sadness to Hamid Aminzada’s parents, brothers, sisters and extended family, to his friends and to those in his school and community who loved and cared for a young man who by all accounts was full of life, honour and potential.

We must also acknowledge the kindness and care of the many in the community who have pulled together in the wake of this tragedy. I had the opportunity to visit North Albion this week and it’s abundantly clear when you walk through the doors that this is a vibrant school. The large Future Aces and Eco-school plaques proudly displayed alongside certificates of teaching excellence, the pictures from the spring prom on a wall of the office, the athletic banner at the school’s entrance, all speak to the work and enthusiasm of this school’s staff and students. In a sad way this week, the closeness of the school and its community is also clear from the flag that flies at half mast, from the sad smiles of parents who are there to write a note at a display of flowers and remembrance in the front hall, from the long paper scroll along one wall upon which hundreds of students and staff have written messages of condolence and wishes for peace.

This sense of community also enveloped the funeral for Hamid that was held today. Principal Naeem Siddiq and many staff and students from NACI as well Director Quan, Associate Director Chang, Superintendent McNamara and I were there to join the many family members and friends who were mourning the loss of someone dearly loved. It was a deeply moving, terribly sad afternoon. I want to thank our Director, and our Associate Directors, Trustee John Hastings, Superintendent McNamara, and especially Principal Naeem Siddiq and his staff for their leadership in the last few days. We will all be thinking of you in the days ahead and will continue to support all efforts to do what is best for our students and community — not just at North Albion, but at all schools across Toronto.”

Let me add that if you have any concerns at all regarding safety within your schools, please contact your Principal who can tell you of the work of your “Caring, Safe and Accepting Schools” Team that is responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive and accepting school climate within each and every TDSB school.

### **North Toronto CI, Hodgson PS & Deer Park PS Receive Grant for School Wellness Programs**

I am thrilled to let you know that North Toronto Collegiate Institute, Hodgson PS and Deer Park PS were recently granted \$28,000 service-learning grant for a mental health and wellness service-learning project from the State Farm® Youth Advisory Board. The 3 school team are one of 65 community organizations to receive a service-learning, youth-led grant across the United States and Canada. According to the press release, “North Toronto CI, Hodgson PS and Deer Park PS will develop a wellness leadership team to deliver mental health and wellness initiatives for their community.” Specifically, Principal Joel Gorenkoff confirmed the rationale of this program is to support student Mental Health and Well-being by:

- Decreasing student stress levels;
- Providing strategies for students to develop resiliency, self-esteem, positive mental and emotional health;
- Preventing mental health challenges from developing into serious issues;
- Promoting an outlook focused on learning and growing instead of the pressure to produce results; and
- Promoting a culture in the school focused around optimism and happiness.

I am very proud of the work in our middle and secondary schools... Below is a brief description of the on-going initiatives at **Northern Secondary School and Forest Hill Collegiate Institute** supporting student mental wellness.

**Northern's WellNSS** Committee is now into its 4<sup>th</sup> year. It is a student led initiative working hard to raise awareness about mental health and reduce the stigma associated with talking about mental health. From its website, "We really want to make certain words part of everyone's daily vocabulary. What does it mean to be mentally healthy vs unhealthy...when is it important to help a friend look for help...how can students at Northern get help...what are some simple strategies to take care of yourself?". Northern has a partnership with The Jack Project & Kid's Help Phone and most recently were involved with Kids' Help Phone and Facebook to launch the new Guide [Help a Friend in Need](#) on Suicide Prevention Day.

**Forest Hill Collegiate Institute** was one of the TDSB schools to pilot the "Stop the Stigma" program three years ago. They do an annual "Stop the Stigma" assembly as part of "Wellness Week". Each year, a courageous young person has spoken to their students about his/her own struggle with mental illness. There is a common thread to the message – the triggers, the downward spiral, the determination to fight on alone, and finally the realization that help is needed and then the change in the direction of the journey toward a more positive outcome. For this assembly, additional counsellors are available if students want to talk and following the assembly there is a "Positive Mental Health Fair" at the school. The final day of the Wellness Week is "Issues Day" in which teachers sign up their classes for specific speakers on a whole variety of topics aimed at the overall health and well-being of our school community.

### **Mental Health Belongs to Us**

We are pleased to launch the first issue of the TDSB "Mental Health Belongs to Us" newsletter. This will be a monthly publication that will be shared with schools on different topics dealing with students' mental health and well-being. I am pleased to attach it.

### **Volunteering in our schools... Police Record Checks (PRCs)**

Last Spring, the Human Resources and Professional Learning Committee asked staff to relook at their proposed revised policy on PRCs as it was too onerous for parents and potentially discouraged parent volunteerism. As you know, the Board truly values the tremendous contributions of our parent and community volunteers who give so much of their time and effort to make our schools better places. Your efforts make a tremendous difference for students and staff. Under Regulation 521/01 of the Education Act, school boards must obtain police records checks (PRC) on all existing and new employees, service providers and others who come into contact with students. While the legislation does not speak specifically to volunteers, **it has been the TDSB's practice to require police records checks on volunteers who have regular contact with students** (including community-based coaches working with school teams). The intent of the legislation is to make sure that our school and our classrooms are safe places for students. I am pleased to let you know after much discussion the past practice regarding the use of volunteers remains - it is "status quo." That is, no screening for pizza lunch, fun fair and field trip volunteers, etc.

Parents who wish to volunteer need to speak to the Principal or Vice-Principal about the role and the school's expectations. Should you wish to regularly volunteer, the office will provide you with a form to complete. When complete, most schools will ask you to return it to the office with \$15 cheque and the office will forward the form to the Police Record Check Office at the TDSB. Please note the police send the form directly back to you, NOT the school. They send it to the name and address on the form you complete.

Once you get the form back and you wish to volunteer, you need to send the original to the TDSB Police Record Check Office. When you speak to your Principal or Vice Principal, please confirm the practice at your school. That's it! The check is done. Once a records check is submitted, each year if you want to continue to volunteer you do not have to complete a new form. Instead, you need to make an annual offence declaration (on another form that declares no charges that year!) by going to the TDSB website – it doesn't take more

than a minute to do this. Again, please contact your school's Principal or Vice-Principal with any questions regarding the process. And thank you!

**Congratulations Nancy Rawlinson! Provincial elementary teacher of the year! We are so proud... (From the ETT Media Release)**

Nancy Rawlinson, a Grade 2 teacher at Davisville Elementary School in Toronto, was honoured with the OTIP Teaching Award for Excellence in Teaching in the Elementary Teacher Category at a ceremony in Toronto... A parent volunteer states this about Nancy's classroom: "If you walk into Ms. R's class, you realize immediately you have entered a special place. You feel drawn into it. You want to stay and explore. You want to learn. She has created a world in her room that will inspire a child to dream and reach their true potential. There is something for everyone in her class—so every child will feel that they have a place there." Nancy layers the student's learning—reading a book leads to another project such as creating puppets, writing, and sewing and to another project such as teacher interviews or writing messages of support for a funding project. Nancy is actively engaged in the OISE web project, The Balanced Literary Diet. Students in her class make personal chalkboard clipboards, teeny tiny books, and flip book group projects; create simple characters out of foil; and have lots of hands-on learning such as cooking, sewing, and making wool. Nancy capitalizes on the cultural diversity of Davisville by bringing parents and community figures into the classroom. Students come to understand and celebrate each other's differences. The Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP) and the Ontario Teachers' Federation co-sponsor the OTIP Teaching Awards for excellence in teaching in the publicly funded school system. Three awards are presented: secondary school teacher, elementary school teacher and beginning teacher. Anyone can nominate a teacher in Ontario's publicly funded schools, including public, Catholic, and francophone school boards. More information and a video honouring Nancy are posted on the Teaching Awards website: [www.teachingawards.ca](http://www.teachingawards.ca)

**Media Release - Years of Action Plan Supports Strong Performance 2013-14 Results Confirm TDSB is on the Right Track (Released September 24, 2014)**

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) continues to see strong performance in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) and the Grade 9 EQAO Mathematics Test according to results released today by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Over the past five years (2009-10 to 2013-14), the percentage of Grade 9 students who performed at or above the provincial standard (Levels 3 and 4) increased 8% in Applied Mathematics and 1% in Academic Mathematics.

Over the same five-year period, the TDSB sustained a high level of achievement in literacy at the Grade 10 level and increased 1% (81% to 82%) in the percentage of students who were successful in the OSSLT. The TDSB continues to see steady improvements year over year and is committed to addressing the achievement gap by supporting all students who are working towards achieving the provincial standard and beyond.

As part of the [Years of Action plan](#), a number of innovative initiatives and strategies are being implemented to help students succeed. The [TDSB math strategy](#) will mean 10 new coaches to support classrooms and transition teams to support students moving from elementary to secondary math programs. The plan also continues to build on existing successful after-school literacy programs and workshops.

**Quick Facts**

- Read how the TDSB's [Years of Action](#) plan supports every student, every school, every day.
- Visit our [mathematics website](#) for resources to help students.
- Read our [English & Literacy](#) and [Mathematics & Numeracy](#) Fact Sheets for more information.

**Changes to the French Immersion and Extended French Application Timelines**

This is important information around a change in the timelines for the application process to Early French Immersion (SK entry) and Junior Extended French and Middle Immersion (grade 4 entry). The timelines for applying to these programs for September 2015 (which are significantly different from recent years) are as follows:

- **Early French Immersion: November 3, 2014 to December 5, 2014**
- **Junior Extended French or Middle French Immersion: January 5, 2015 to January 29, 2015**

For further information please visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/french](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/french)

### **October is International Walk to School Month**

Celebrate International Walk to School Month and challenge your students to actively travel to and from school. Important Dates for International Walk to School Month:

- IWALK Week: October 6-10, 2014
- International Walk to School Day: Wednesday, October 8th
- Winter Walk Day: February 2015

For More Information, Registration, Ideas and Printable Resources, schools are encouraged to go to:

<http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/international-walk-school-daymonth>

### **This week's committee meetings**

Please note the full agendas can be found on the Board Website at

<http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/AgendaMinutes.aspx>

- **Program & School Services Committee – Wednesday at 5pm, Committee Room A**  
At Wednesday's meeting there will be updates from the French-as-Second-Language Advisory Committee, Inner City Advisory Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, and the Student Nutrition Advisory Committee. There will also be a report on the Action Plan to Support the Success of Students of Somali Decent, Coordination of System Surveys and Improving Student Success in Mathematics.
- **Planning & Priorities Committee – Wednesday at 7pm, Committee Room A**  
There are a number of interesting issues at the P&P Committee. They include the Toronto Ward Boundary Review, the staff report on the Establishment of an Office of Integrity Commissioner and the consideration of a Motion on the Termination of Agreement With the Confucius Institute.

### **Nominate an Outstanding Principal**

The Learning Partnership is seeking outstanding principals who are doing something truly remarkable. According to the Learning Partnership, "Canada's Outstanding Principals" demonstrate innovation, have an entrepreneurial spirit and are creative in finding solutions and opportunities. Nominations are invited from school boards, colleagues, parents, teachers, students and all community members. Please consider nominating one of our outstanding leaders. Peggy Aitchison, Principal of FHCI received this honour two years ago. Get Started – click on <http://cop.thelearningpartnership.ca/> - Deadline is November 3, 2014.

### **School success: what does it include and how should we measure it? (From People for Education)**

Whether you're an interested citizen, a parent, an educator, an employer or a student, People for Education wants to know what you think. We're polling the public about our ground-breaking initiative to change the way we measure success in education so that it reflects the full range of skills that graduates – and our society – really need. So far, nearly 3000 people have participated. Don't miss your chance! **The survey only takes 10 minutes, and it closes on September 30th.** Just click the link to participate:

<http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/measuring-what-matters/survey/>

### **Resources from "Tweets" you may find interesting**

@OttawaCSPA: How to get more parents involved at school? 7 Steps 4 Building an Engaged Community via

@PeopleforEd @jacquistrachan <http://t.co/rrKfFPChE8>

@SuperCouncil: Is your school community equitable? This list can help you out. <http://t.co/y49nbZTuZt>

@EcoSchoolsTDSB: Hot off the presses our updated guides with a brand new look! Countdown to #kickoffs @tdsb <http://t.co/qGrmlipTsW>

@TVOParents: Do you have an overemotional or touchy child? We have expert advice.

<http://t.co/Ccehrn19IK> #ChildMentalHealth @HincksDellcrest

@TVOParents: When To Worry About Your Sad Child: Tips for Ages 6-11 <http://t.co/fv0F17TfDA>  
@HincksDellcrest  
@michelelocke: Top 15 Things Your Middle School Kid Wishes You Knew <http://t.co/NAfv8ISeOC> via  
@HuffPostParents

### **In the News**

[My son's school boundaries are changing: Here's why I'm okay with it](#)

Globe & Mail (September 26) by Kate Hammer

Want to pick a fight with parents? Mess with the catchment boundaries for their kids' elementary school. In five years as an education reporter I've had more e-mails than I can count from parents who bought a certain house in order to attend a certain school and who are outraged at the Toronto District School Board for changing that plan. The board tackles between two and four boundary changes every year, and rarely without a fight. News of Toronto's latest proposed boundary change didn't come to me through my Globe and Mail e-mail account. I heard it from a neighbour while I was playing with my 17-month-old son on the sidewalk outside our home. We live on a swath of land in the city's west end that has been swept up in one of the most controversial boundary changes in years. Families who live in the blocks east of Roncesvalles Avenue and north of Queen Street West were informed by letter Sept. 18th that the board intended to change the school boundaries in order to address a crowding problem. Their children will attend Parkdale Public School rather than Garden Avenue Public School...

Note: A very powerful read... and very well said... worth reading the whole article!

### **Events of Interest**

#### **The "SOS Parenting Toolbox: Strength. Optimism. Strategies."**

The Hincks-Dellcrest Centre is offering a Parent Seminar Series called the "SOS Parenting Toolbox: Strength. Optimism. Strategies." There are four sessions beginning October 1st. Topics include Constructive Parenting Strategies to respond to Anger, Anxiety etc.; Supporting Children with OCD; How to Stop Backtalk and Strengthened by Storm. The Hincks Dellcrest Centre is a non-profit children's mental health centre supporting children and their families. For more information call: 416-924-1164 ext. 8707 or [www.hincksdellcrest.org/Institute](http://www.hincksdellcrest.org/Institute)

#### **TDSB's Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) Presents:**

##### **Return to Learn: Coming Back to School After a Concussion Information Session**

Featuring: Dr. Neilank K. Jha, Neurosurgeon and Chairman, Konkussion Program, and Ruth Wilcock, Executive Director, Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA)

Date: **October 02, 2014** 6:30 pm at 5050 Yonge Street, Boardroom

Register by email to [outreach@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:outreach@tdsb.on.ca) **ONLY** if you require child minding!

For information visit: [www.torontopiacc.com](http://www.torontopiacc.com)

#### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of Education: Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics**

**Saturday November 8, 2014**, 9:00 am at Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, University of Toronto District School Board, 35 St. George Street, Toronto Ontario

For information visit the Spanish Speaking Network (SSEN) at: [www.SSEN.ca](http://www.SSEN.ca)

#### **People For Education's 18th Annual Conference**

**Saturday, November 8, 2014**, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto

This year's Making Connections conference features keynote speaker Paul Tough, the author of How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character, as well as a range of panels and workshops covering financial literacy, education funding changes, entrepreneurship, community schools, sex ed, and more. Register <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops/come-to-our-conference/>

## **PIAC Presents: The 8th Annual Parent Involvement Makes a Difference Conference**

**Saturday November 15, 2014, 8:30 am** at Earl Haig Secondary School

For information visit: [www.tdsb.on.ca/parentconference](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/parentconference)

## **Embracing Family: Workshops for Parents and Caregivers of LGBTQ Youth**

Workshops run all year and can be booked for different sites

For information contact: [Embracingfamily@delislelyouth.org](mailto:Embracingfamily@delislelyouth.org)

**Coming soon! ... Schedule of workshops “All you Need to Know About Running an Effective School Council Session”**

### **Dates to Remember**

- **Humewood is turning 100 years - and need your help to celebrate** Contact them at [Humewoodcentenary@gmail.com](mailto:Humewoodcentenary@gmail.com) **Save the Date – Saturday, October 18, 2014!**

### **2014-2015 School Year Calendar**

TDSB's school year calendars are on Google Calendar (add to yours!). Elementary: <http://t.co/SRsxJzPYgL>

+ Secondary: <http://t.co/s1sWVP0naB>

Thanksgiving	October 13, 2014
Board-wide PA Day	November 14, 2014
Board-wide PA Day	December 5, 2014
Christmas Break	December 22, 2014 to January 2, 2015 (inclusive)
Last day of school	December 19, 2014
School resumes	January 5, 2015
Elementary PA Day	January 23, 2015
Secondary PA Day	(Semestered Schools only) January 29, 2015
Board-wide PA Day	February 13, 2015
Family Day	February 16, 2015
March Break	March 16 to 20, 2015
Good Friday	April 3, 2015
Easter Monday	April 6, 2015
Victoria Day	May 18, 2015
Elementary School PA Day	June 5, 2015
Secondary School PA Day	June 24*, 25, 2015
Board-wide PA Day	June 26, 2015

\* High School Semester Change: The first day of second semester is 30 January 2015. The seven days noted for secondary school include a PA day only for semestered schools on 29 January 2015 and a PA Day for full-year schools only on 24 June 2015.

Before scheduling events, please check the TDSB Days of Significance Calendar

[2014 - 2015 Days of Significance](#)

If you no longer wish to receive these weekly e-mails, please let me know at [shelley.laskin@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:shelley.laskin@tdsb.on.ca)