

JOINT WARD FORUM
TRUSTEE JENNIFER ARP + TRUSTEE GERRI GERSHON + TRUSTEE SHELLEY LASKIN
January 23, 2018
Meeting Notes

Welcome to the parents, staff and community of **Wards 8, 11 and 13** by Trustee Shelley Laskin whose ward hosted tonight's meeting at Deer Park Jr/Sr Public School.

Welcome to Deer Park Jr/Sr Public School parents and staff and Principal Carmelo Nanfara for providing a warm welcome to everyone.

Each Trustee spoke with some specifics for events in their wards.

Trustee Laskin – held elections for PIAC representative for Ward 11 – Rachel Silber was the acclaimed candidate – still requires alternate and hopes to hold that election at next Ward Forum on March 1st which will feature planning and budget presentations

Trustee Gershon – announced that everyone should stay tuned for change of dates for her next community coffee and that her ward will also begin the election process for PIAC representatives

Trustee Arp – spoke to the upcoming events in her ward.

MEET THE DIRECTOR

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

Below is a summary of Dr. Malloy's comments along with the Q & A session after:

- John thanks everyone for coming tonight.
- Over the last two years he has met with thousands of students, parents, and staff and community groups. Areas across Toronto are unique – each presenting challenges and opportunities. He continues to visit schools every week and meets with city, provincial and federal staff to make the needs and issues of the TDSB known.
- Works closely with Trustees, Principals and Superintendents.
- Committed to a culture of Shared Leadership – believes that when decision making is hierarchical you lose knowledge.
“Shared leadership is about true collaboration. By working together, by thinking through complex issues together, and by sharing our learning along the way, we are able to create something more amazing than anything we could create by working alone.”
- Each school has been asked to identify three issues of their choosing – John and Superintendents are to working with each school to help each school 'get where they need and want to be'

Equity Framework

Coming to Board Committee is the **Director's Report** in response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF). John talked about the media coverage and parent response to the EETF when it was released last year. He clarified that the EETF was a report by a third party.... it was **not** a binding document. The Director's Report along with the direction of the TDSB Trustees and the Multi-Year Plan will be.

NB: The Director's Report is now available online for all to read at www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/docs/Response%20to%20Report_Jan2018_V3.pdf

The Director's Report will go to TDSB Trustees for discussion on January 31, 2018 and, if approved, will provide the basis for Years 2 and 3 of the Integrated Equity Framework and be the foundation for the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, both of which will come to the Board for discussion by June 2018. While there will be a system plan it will respect the unique communities across Toronto.

The Director's response was based on connecting and engaging with parents, students, staff and communities over many months.

"Each and every one of our students deserves the most effective program to excel and barriers need to be removed which prevent them from achieving. Students deserve a quality education that meets their specific needs, honours their voices, and effectively prepares them for life after high school. The voices of our students should be at the centre of everything we do as an organization."

The themes that will be in the report will look at:

- Professional learning of staff needed to deliver that learning required in every school
- Support for early learners especially in literacy and math
- Look closely at Special education and how it is delivered and recognizes the voices of parents
- Make sure that TDSB policies support students "getting where they need to be"
- The reality of the TDSB funding and that our decisions will have to reflect the \$\$ we have
- Noting that improving access to great programs does not need to cost more

On a personal note John said that after two years he is thrilled that he continues to meet and work with people who are deeply involved and committed to providing students with an intense education. He has worked in many settings over many years – and this has not always been the case.

Questions and Answers – this was a very busy evening – below please find our attempt to capture the spirit of the Q and A – it is not intended to be a verbatim record.

CONGREGATED GIFTED CLASSES

Q: There were MANY questions voiced about Gifted education. In particular, concern that Congregated Gifted classes would be phased out and that only students with complex exceptionalities would be placed in congregated classes. This was asked in many different ways.

A: Congregated Gifted classes will not be changed.

YES, they will continue to be offered. Reminder that location is being done by geography and there is no optional attendance – for example last year additional congregated classes were established at three secondary schools to make access easier.

NO, students do NOT need to have complex exceptionalities to be placed. The wishes of the student and the parent will be respected. The Director will make sure that message gets to staff.

YES, once identified students can opt in at a later date. And **YES**, he will make sure that message gets to staff.

REPEAT: YES, if identified Gifted they will be offered a Gifted placement.

We need to change the culture so that parents do not feel pushed and to get to where they want to be.

NB: by 'identified' that means identified by a recognized practitioner

SPECIAL NOTE: If a parent does not believe they are being heard with regards to their child's placement they should go to their Principal and then their Superintendent. John repeated this several times.

Q: Please can you change the term Gifted to something else?

A: "Giftedness" is a provincially legislated term. TDSB cannot change the language.

Q: The language on the TDSB website and in some documents is not clear. Specifics were given.

A: John will take that back to staff to work on.

Q: Why are secondary students only being offered partial placement in Gifted? Is this part of phasing it out?

A: NO! At the secondary level not all classes will be gifted. In Secondary Schools, the placement for students identified Gifted is Special Education Class with Partial Integration. Students take some of their courses in Gifted classes and they are integrated with students in regular classes for remaining.

The model at the secondary level is 4-4-2-2 (in Grades 9 and 10 there are 4 subjects offered in the congregated setting (usually English, Math, Science Geography/History); and 2 each in Grades 11 and 12 (Math and English).

Q: Can you please say YES or NO whether you are getting rid of congregated Gifted classes?

A: NO – NOT getting rid of congregated Gifted classes. No plan, intention or thought to do so.

Parents are referred to the TDSB Special Education Plan

www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/EarlyYears/docs/SpecialEducationPlan.pdf

EQUITY

Q: A few questions about the EETF were not specific to congregated Gifted.

These related to beliefs that:

- EETF is all about destreaming and that insufficient consultation with other ministries and stakeholders has taken place. Asking that consultation continue.
- Excellence will be lost in the push for Equity
- Asking will the coming **Director's Report** be as clear as John is being tonight?

A: A reminder that the EETF was a third-party report – it is NOT the action plan for the TDSB. The Director's Report is going to the TDSB Board and asks for direction to proceed, consultation will continue and a Multi-Year Plan will be presented to the TDSB Board in June 2018. The Enhancing Equity Framework is not about destreaming but is about meeting the need of families who are not satisfied while recognizing those that are. We need to make changes so that more families are satisfied and students can have satisfactory outcomes.

YES – the Director's Report will be clear and explicit.

OTHER CONCERNS

Q: Parent has real problem finding a school with before/after childcare for child entering JK. In their area it is not available, however their local French Immersion has it but they have to wait for SK – so child will have to switch schools. They have been exploring optional attendance but it means long times on buses for them with their child. Please help.

A: Director is very aware of the problem. TDSB is pursuing the ability to operate their own before/after school care where it is not available. Working with both the city and the province on a solution. This may not be ready for this September but please stay connected.

Q: Asking for more advanced and stimulating programs to be offered in the early years.

A: Director's Report will have a focus on Early Years program. John spoke of need to help the youngest as early success in literacy and math makes an enormous difference to future success.

Q: Asking for more support for students who struggle.

A: John fully supports. Wants to focus more on strengths of students. The Director's Report will be about providing learning opportunities that start with a student's strength and needs.

Q: French Immersion Curriculum – is it going to be reviewed?

A: Director has asked the board to proceed with a review – noting that the province sets curriculum but that the delivery model is at the board level. Also notes there are currently tough challenges as there are simply not sufficient French speaking teachers available. It is a challenge being faced across the country.

Q: Facilities – what is the TDSB doing about facilities? More schools are needed, buildings are old, no air conditioning, portables can be a problem, etc. Are creative solutions being examined?

A: Trustees and staff are advocating their needs both at the province and the city. Staff have to prioritize their needs within the available dollars. Health and safety always takes priority however there are ways to improve the learning environment at schools. Creative partnerships are being developed. Outdoor learning opportunities are one possible solution (though not available everywhere), new forms of mobile equipment are being brought in, improving the aesthetics of a school may not be costly. Putting in Air conditioning in all our schools cannot be done. We have a plan in place to make it easier to cope with high temperatures e.g., cooling centres in all schools, programming techniques, more trees, use of outdoors where possible, hydration, etc.

Q: Important that students not have to go to other schools to get what they need. Strong local schools are a must.

A: We are looking at school supports and making them more inclusive. We are finding ways to have more teachers, aides, and staff in schools.

9 PM – Trustee Shelley Laskin concluded the meeting – thanking everyone for attending. Trustee Laskin reminded everyone that Trustees are accessible through e-mail to answer additional questions/concerns. The Director, trustees and staff stayed to talk with individual parents that had specific questions.