Online Submission Form

Created Tuesday, November 12, 2013

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This is an exciting time in education in Ontario. We have spent the last decade working with our education partners to create an education system that is recognized as one of the greatest around the world. Our task now is not to settle for great, but instead to continue striving for excellence.

One of the most significant challenges and opportunities before us is how to best prepare our students for a rapidly changing, technology-driven, globalized world. To do so, we need to broaden our view of student achievement to include even greater emphasis on higher-order skills – such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and entrepreneurship. These are skills that are necessary for developing global citizens who bring the competencies and qualities that employers of tomorrow are looking for, and that our children will need to thrive.

Working with a diverse group of thinkers, we can build an updated vision for the future of education in Ontario that will guide us in our journey.

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this consultation, and for your interest in education in Ontario. Your thoughtful consideration and answers to these questions will help to create a new vision for the future of education in Ontario.

Deadline for all submissions is November 30, 2013.

About yourself:

I am submitting on behalf of a community that held its own consultation.

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Name of community (required)

TDSB Ward 11 Forum

Briefly describe the participants in your consultation; for example: parents, community residents, members of your organization, etc. (optional)

Parents and staff from TDSB Ward 11 schools

Number of participants during consultation (required)

30

What are the skills, knowledge and characteristics students need to succeed after they have completed school, and how do we better support all learners in their development? (1000 word-limit)

• Caring
• Global perspective
• Not afraid to ask questions
• Self-reflecting
• Creativity
• More collaborative, less competitive
• Social skills
• Listening
• Critical thinking
• Strong literacy skills
• Teamwork – how to be a successful team member
• Strong home and school communication
• Make sure both on same message
• Part of curriculum should state clear guidelines for parent involvement (more independent work at an earlier age)
• More support for students to work through challenges
• More problem solving
• More practical skills - student can see how subject taught in school applies to everyday life
• More real life applications
• Encourage parents with clear involvement
• Initiative, collaborative effort and respectful communication skills are probably the most generalizable skills, knowledge and characteristics students need to succeed in life. To develop initiative we need a learner-centred approach to curriculum. To develop collaborative effort and respectful communication skills students need opportunities and guidance for working on group projects (while still respecting that some students are more introverted). Teachers can provide guidance and facilitate reflection so that students learn to build on their experiences and develop values of continuous learning (which support collaborative effort).
• Better instruction in math to improve math skill based on the poor EQAO results. More instruction in math. Make teaching and learning math more fun.
• Critical thinking. With so many sources of knowledge now available how do we evaluate what information is valid? Kids need to learn when and how to think critically.
• Empathy, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and entrepreneurship skills (for creating positive change in our world). These days, more and more people will have 5 + different jobs and they will be required to take various roles in these jobs. I think it of utmost importance for the next generation to see themselves as change makers, having the interest, dedication and skills to make a positive impact on our world. They need to have real life experiences as young people to practice change making. This helps them build confidence and a deep sense of caring for others and the world. If they don't learn them as kids, they certainly won't as adults. Hard skills like literacy, STEM education, etc. can incorporate change making. See startempathy.org and Canada.ashoka.org
• Learn to teach themselves, hard-working, excellent communication skills - all forms, initiative, basic all-round knowledge (math, science, arts) - so that a wide variety of post-secondary areas are open to them
• Social skills and presentation skills – drama, more small group learning, in the older grades more group work (with accountability for all group members) and much much much less movie watching at school. There should be a limit to how much TV a teacher can use in the classroom. I can show my kid movies at home.
• Kids today need to understand how to handle money, credit cards, loans (student), payments, interest. Reading and understand is the most important thing kids need today.
• They need to be media literate and be able to negotiate and navigate in a complex word. We cannot say exactly what skills and knowledge are needed because none of us really know. However, they will need general skills like flexibility and adaptability. As well, they need critical literacy skills in media awareness.

What does student well-being mean to you, and what is the role of the school in supporting it? (1000 word-limit)

- *Talk about emotions and feelings…girls more likely than boys*
- *Teachers to address issues of emotional health*
- *$$$ into social workers – need more*
- *Consult with other adults – not just teachers*
- *Recognize that some subject content is too advanced – mental maturity not there*
- *Educate parents on different career paths*
- *Need more social support at Middle School*
- *Students need a sense of belonging. For many students this is grounded in the classroom, but extra-curricular activities are also critical - e.g. helping in library, office, on the playground (and yes, participating in sports and clubs too). Also, a good balance of healthy snacks, and breaks from sitting during the day supports wellbeing and inclusion of all students. As for bullying, schools need to recognize and address the equity issues behind so much bullying (e.g. sexism, racism, homophobia, size bias, mental illness stigma…). We need to address the root causes to build inclusive schools. I learned that in some other countries (e.g. Ukraine) elementary students have the same teacher over many years. I like this approach because it supports bonding and we now know that attachment is the basis of good learning. The fact that our kids need to develop a new teacher attachment each year is problematic.*
- *Physical and emotional/social supports. Observing & listening to kids about how they are feeling. Sharing this info with parents and acting as a team to help kids.*
- *See above. Our role as parents, school leaders and the wider society is to enable kids to be their best and practice being change makers.*
- *Mentally healthy and happy this is mostly a responsibility for parents*
- *Social, emotional, and physical health. Respect for everyone at school. Staff and students and parents.*
- *Kids not only need book smarts they need tools to handle the pressures ahead of them when the school framework ends. Student well-being is about the whole child. However, as a Model School Inner City, JR Wilcox is promoting, IMHO, an unhealthy snack program. The snack program needs to be seriously overhauled as the snacks are full of sugar and salt. And, is well-being just about feeding the body? Or, also feeding the mind (like trips to the museum, Science Centre, Art Gallery, etc.). The latter is far more beneficial.*

From your perspective, what further opportunities exist to close gaps and increase equity to support all children and students in reaching their full potential? (1000 word-limit)

- *Students with disabilities would benefit from more technology*
- *Nutrition Programs so no one goes hungry*
- *Student based learning*
- *Recognize non= academic strengths*
- *Support so that at the end of grade 8 certain skills are met before entering grade 9*
- *Make sure that funding targeted for students of families living below the poverty line go to those schools that have high ratio of such families. There is segregation through our school systems (well-to-do vs. low income schools) and we need to counter that with funding to close the opportunity gap. As for schools, like JR Wilcox, which have a healthy integrated mix of families in various economic situations, school staff can play an important role in creating an environment that values inclusion, providing supports for those students with special needs (related to economic or learning abilities), and talking about equity (i.e. teach students their rights so they can take initiative to ensure they get equitable treatment).*
- *More school willingness for student support when identified and needed.*
- *More student centred-learning opportunities such as here: http://www.ted.com/pages/prizewinner_sugata_mitra*

How does the education system need to evolve as a result of changes to child care and the implementation of full-day kindergarten? (1000 word-limit)

- *I was surprised to learn that full day kindergarten classes are so large in numbers, taught by two co-teachers (primary teacher and ECE). I thought students would be getting a half day with the teacher and a half day of ECE programming - in smaller groups. Do these large class sizes really serve the learning needs of 4&5 year olds?*
- *Full day kindergarten is WONDERFUL!! More funding for childcare throughout each stage, not just for kindergarten!*
- *Smaller class sizes for kindergarten...33 kids in a class is detrimental to kids' learning and doesn't help teachers be their best either. Extracurricular programming such as roots of empathy, JUMP math, learning in nature (Evergreen Brickworks). This gives kids supplementary support and aids teachers who might be overwhelmed with huge class sizes.*
- *We need to ensure that there is a TRANSITION plan from JK/SK to Grade 1. Is it appropriate that students go from a play-based learning environment to desks and worksheets? I do not think so. Rather, for the first 2 months, Grade 1 should be much like SK in format with a gradual transition to more structured activities. My daughter spent the first two months of Grade 1 saying she did not want to go back to school. It was heartbreaking.*

What more can we all do to keep students engaged, foster their curiosity and creativity, and help them develop a love of life-long learning? (1000 word-limit)

• *Reward teachers that promote a life- long love of learning*
• *Offer more engaging tools*
• *Learn to use a 'real' dictionary*
• *Encourage to dream big – visionary*
• *Have more extra-curricular options*
• *Identify strengths of students and focus to develop them*
• *Recognize broader range of skills – not just academics*
• *Get out of the classroom more to learn and explore*
• *School should be a true community hub to integrate/overlap with outside groups*
• *Technology is all around – need other sources*
• *Can we get students outside more often? Can special needs consultants teach teachers what they can do outside the classroom, in nature (even if it's just a patch of grass). I feel our students are done a disservice because education is so cut off from nature. On the question of engagement, the curriculum needs to begin with students, their world, and their priorities. We can build working skills from there. When students see learning as an avenue to self-realization they will value learning life-long. By teaching reflective practices schools can also develop students' appreciation for how learning can support them to make the change they want in their lives, in the world.*
• *Again, student centred-learning, Google Sugata Mitra! Ask students, "What do you want to learn about today?"*
• *Be engaged and enthusiastic parents, involved in the local community. We should create support systems for parents. Free local activities for kids/parents to learn together (community garden, community beautifying projects started and led by kids, kids engaging with local leaders/city council reps).*
• *project based learning is key...teaching core skills/knowledge then applying them to real-life situations or delving into a research project that highlights the knowledge learned...this will highlight the relevance and encourage interest in subject matter*
• *Exciting field trips and wonderful holiday programs. i.e. Halloween and Christmas parades. haunted houses*
• *students need hands on experience in all faucets of work out in the workforce. Co-ops are great. on the job training is wonderful. No matter how much education you have, each job, trains u to their structure. Why not have work programs for high school kids in diverse fields*
• *We need to embrace iPads and tablets in other schools rather than fearing them. We need to ensure that the curriculum has as its focus, student-inquiry and is not about filling out worksheets. We need to understand that students learn at different paces and rates and celebrate that, rather than labeling them "deficient" in some way*

How can we use technology more effectively in teaching and learning? (1000 word-limit)

• *Teach teachers how to use technology by giving them more support*
• *Use technology to communicate with parents i.e. – send homework via email*
• *Cool Math Games was an introduction to violent games for my child. I resented this experience my son had in grade 2. I question whether teachers really know what sites they are sending students to for "learning". My grade 7 daughter came home to show me a "cool" YouTube video that her teacher had introduced the class to that day. I was excited about this and went online with her at home. The video was a sophisticated 5 minute Coke ad that was produced for "viral" release (i.e. students show other students, who show teachers, who show students, who show their parents...). According to my daughter, there was no analysis of this video as an "ad". Both of these experiences raise my concerns that teachers do not have adequate supports to use technology effectively. Computer and internet technologies should only be used when there is a clear educational purpose and when the media aligns with other school values (e.g. non-violence, critical thinking).*
• *The school needs proper and sufficient computer equipment to increase the children's technology comfort level*
• *Technology, like any other media needs to be used in light of thinking critically... we don't want kids to think, "Well I read it on the internet so it must be true." This is just as wrong as, "well, I read it in the newspaper/in print so it must be true." Whatever technology it is, there is not replacement for the skill of critical thinking.*
• *Give all kids access to computers (see Google's $200 computer) and ensure balance with tech learning (and learning through tech) with other forms of more tactile learning. Tech should be connected to real life examples of positive ways of using technology to help people.*
• *using technology more effectively does not necessarily lead to better teaching or learning...keeping the students engaged does*
• *There is very little place for technology in the younger grades. They don't need computers...programs...games etc. They need teachers and books and being read to by real people. Technology should be used only after grade 3 or 4. Don't rush the kids. They will be on*

computers for the rest of their lives. Teach them the basics without the use of computers.
• Every student needs a tablet. This should be a reality - not something that the Board just talks about as a goal. It's 2013 and I have not seen a single iPad or tablet used at the school ever. Having said that, I do think there needs to be some caution around Wifi in the schools - as we do not know the health effects of exposing children (who are still growing in mind and body) to these radio waves for 6-7 hours a day. However, iPads and many Apps on them run without wifi/internet. Teachers need serious professional learning on these tablets before they are distributed to the students however. We also do not want children watching movies on tablets (or using them like TVs) either.

In summary, what are the various opportunities for partnership that can enhance the student experience, and how can they benefit parents, educators and our partners too? (1000 word-limit)

• Learning is more than a teacher in a classroom…i.e. Co-ops…Scientist in the School
• Educate parents as to what partnerships are available….while being wary of certain ones
• I am not sure what partners you refer to? I believe that supporting schools to develop local partners is a positive thing. I am not comfortable, however, with large scale corporate sponsorships, for some of the reasons that I raised earlier.
• Extra-curricular activities that are educational and affordable for all children.
• Start with growing strong partnerships with the kids. Kids will draw their parents in with their enthusiasm. Parents in turn can draw in external resources. A strong and successful teacher/kid/parent base will show potential corporate and/or cultural partners that their contributions will be part of a positive result. We need to form a school that is attractive to, and ready for, partnerships.
• Also, more collaboration with local community, local orgs, making a difference in the kids' immediate community.
• They are our future and have fabulous ideas/skills to create the change we need!
• I do not think bringing corporations into our schools brings any value to student learning. I think that the Board needs to be very careful what business partnerships they want to pursue. Partnerships with the City of Toronto, however, (e.g. Parks and Rec) and other city agencies should be embraced fully.

Additional Comments

Looking forward to the implementation of the results!

Thank you for taking the time to help us build the next phase of Ontario's Education Strategy.