

Ward 8 Forum – January 21, 2021 – Draft Meeting Notes

Special Guest - Michelle Munroe, Co-ordinator Parent and Community Engagement

Topic: Critical Parent/Caregiver Engagement Questions for a Critical Moment

This conversation will delve into the ways in which we could seize this period of uncertainty, and racial reckoning to influence and challenge traditional engagement thoughts and practices and imagine future possibilities.

Trustee Shelley Laskin welcomes all to the zoom meeting.

Announcements:

Sick Kids update on re-opening of schools:

- Toronto Public Health (TPH) & TDSB Senior Team continue to meet to discuss potential health and safety changes in preparation for reopening
- February 9th – special COVID meeting re: reopening

Trustee Chernos-Lin – brought forward motion Seconded by Trustee Laskin

- All Staff working in our schools, currently exempt from closure, serving students with Special Needs in congregated settings or intensive support programs – from bus drivers to office staff to teachers should be vaccinated ASAP and receive asymptomatic testing. Motion to come to Board on February 3.

Sharing:

Superintendent Andrew Howard

- Great work that Admin and Staff moving forwards for remote learning – to pivot
- Making sure curriculum is robust – learning continues
- Uncertainty is challenging
- Parent Interviews re report cards February 11th/12th – not mandatory

Superintendent Ron Felsen

- Pleased to be back working with the schools and community
- Thanks admin, teachers and parent/caregivers for their support of students
- Understands remote learning is challenging

Superintendent Denise Humphreys

- LN4 doing really great things
- She is an advocate for her communities
- Reach out to P and VP – you may be saying it but know that you are not the only one. Parents know their children best

PIAC (Parent Involvement Advisory Committee)

- Working on additional communication for online parents
- PIAC meets 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7pm – last meeting had about 65 attended

FSLAC (French as a Second Language Advisory Committee)

- System-wide large drop on SK immersion applications – down 20%
- Could be Covid-19 related and the fact that there is now a Grade 4 Immersion
- Shelley mentions that drop is not noticed in majority of Ward 8 schools
- Andrew Howard says not a lost cause for those that may have missed the deadline to register and suggests that parents reach out to principal to discuss getting on waitlist

Michelle Munroe – Parent Engagement Office

Michelle's presentation is now posted on Trustee Laskin's website

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/ward8/Ward-8/Trustee-Ward-Forum>

“Thinking about school councils in a new way” We were grateful to have Michelle Munroe, Central Co-ordinator, Parent and Community Engagement present. I will add her presentation and notes from the meeting to my website, but in the meantime - key learnings -

- Bylaws: Implement school council bylaws to provide parameters for meeting in a consistent way - keep them relevant to your school community. Show parents how your school works. Key components include dealing with Conflict of Interest, Conflict Resolution and Election Procedures.
- Conflict: Regulation 612 - ask that you create an outline on how you want to resolve conflicts for your school community. Everything works well until there is a conflict! Bylaws support that

Q – I think the implementation of proper school bylaws will be the great equalizer to a degree, but not everyone's motivation to join is the same ie. the benefit of our students

A – The idea of bylaws is to provide parameters. Provides direction and information in a consistent way – can be 3-4 pages or 50 pages. Keep them relevant to your school community. Show parents how your school works.

Shelley has documents on her website to share for bylaws – no one needs to reinvent the wheel - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/ward8/Ward-8/School-Council-Information>

Q- Bylaws are imperative. When there is conflict is there an ombudsman?

A - Regulation 612 - ask that you create an outline on how you want to resolve conflicts for your school community. When to reach out to the Principal for instance. Everything works well until there is a conflict! Prepare for it – is inevitable.

Q – How to engage parents that are hard to reach? How to promote parent engagement?

A – Let parents know well in advance that their voice will be heard. Everyone will have the opportunity to speak. Remember that parents need to feel comfortable. For meetings involving Support Teams, Ron adds that the best meetings are when people know they don't have to go it alone. Bring in the student, grandmother, friend. Bring in the community. Bring support.

Q – Please explain acronyms – SST, IPRC etc.

A – Shelley to research a ‘Fact Sheet’ – please see here -

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership-Learning-and-School-Improvement/Special-Education/Brochures>

Ron makes an effort not to use acronyms in parent meeting.

Q – What should High School Council mandate be? Fundraising – i.e. Teacher appreciation lunch.

A – no fundraising money is to be used for staff. All for students.

Research shows that parents need to be engaged during these high school years.

Suggest that ‘seasoned’ parents of grades 10/11 mentor grade 9’s.

Many parents miss 8/9 transition nights – they need to know about alternative schools/ optional attendance/ program options. Need a ‘what parents need to know” info.

Q – I struggle with parent empowerment. Child in grade 1. Feels locked out of child’s education. Child wanted to pee at 3:25 after dismissal and refused entry back into school.

A – It is a journey – continue to speak to Principal – ‘here is the experience I am having” - Escalate if needed. Keep pushing though it can be frustrating. Covid has forced us to shift. Parents have great assets to bring – can bring such value. Stay engaged.

One of Michelle’s favourite quotes:

Maya Angelou –

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”.

Please send idea for topics you would like discussed at our next Ward Forum.