

# Trustee Update

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Hi Everyone,

I hope you have had a chance to get outside and enjoy some of the spectacular fall weather of the last few weeks. I also hope that Halloween, although much different this year, was fun and engaging – our students and staff celebrated the day in some very creative ways! It's wonderful to see the way that everyone is still managing to connect, and finding new ways to do so.

Last weekend, many parents and caregivers connected virtually at the first Virtual TDSB [Parents as Partners Conference](#). Congratulations to the organizers for a job well done, to all the presenters and volunteers, and to the hundreds of parents/caregivers who attended. If you missed the Conference, or want to check out any workshops you missed, all sessions will be uploaded on [www.parentsaspartners.ca](http://www.parentsaspartners.ca) (both Keynotes and the Panel update with senior staff are already available).

In addition during weekend of November 21/22, there will be another virtual Parent Conference organized by the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee ([PIAC](#)). It is titled *Ready. Set. Engage! Navigating the School Year Together*, and will feature both workshops and speakers. [Learn more here](#), and details (including registration-start) will be shared when available.

I am planning a Ward 9 forum for the end of November and will be in touch soon with date, time, and further information.

Be well, stay safe, take care of each other.

In community,  
Stephanie

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## The Pandemic and Public Education

As we move through this pandemic, I have been reflecting about how we ensure educational equity within the extreme challenge that Covid-19 is presenting. There are two articles/programs I found recently that have helped me reflect on how we chart a course for a more equitable future. Here they are:

“Opportunism or Opportunity: Navigating Educational Equity in the time of Covid-19” – by Vidya Shah

<https://www.edcan.ca/articles/opportunism-or-opportunity/>

“The purpose of public education in society” An interview with Charles Pascal  
COVID-19 has proven to be a transformative moment for schooling. And it's forcing big questions about what the purpose of public education should be going forward. To dig into them, Pia Chattopadhyay speaks with long-time educator Charles Pascal, one of the architects of all-day kindergarten in Ontario, to discuss what the way we teach kids says about the world we want, how the pandemic has unveiled shortcomings of our current systems, and the big thinking it will take to chart a course for a more equitable future.”

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/sunday/the-sunday-magazine-for-september-27-2020-1.5735476>



In the current environment, our information is constantly changing. The TDSB website for Return to School resources is updated regularly to meet this dynamic reality. Please visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/Return-to-School](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/Return-to-School) regularly for updates. Each week at a special Committee of the Whole meeting, staff provides Trustees and the public with detailed updates on issues of importance to students, staff, and families around COVID school planning. These update meeting are scheduled for Tuesdays at 4:30pm and are publicly broadcast - you can listen in

by [accessing the webcasts here](#).

The most recent COVID-19 update meeting of the Committee of the Whole (CotW) was on October 27. The entire webcast is archived: [here](#). Most of the information is summarized in the presentation slides: [here](#). The items on the Agenda were:

- Devices Update
- Virtual Schools Update
- Fundraising
- Leadership and Reorganization Updates
- Mental Health and Well-Being
- School Open House/Transition Information Nights
- COVID-19 Cases Update & Pop-up Testing

For more recent information, click here:

October 24 [Return to School update](#)

October 21 Board Meeting update: [webcast](#)

October 20 CotW Update: [Presentation](#); [webcast](#)

October 15 CotW Update: [Presentation](#); [webcast](#)

Some of the information in these presentations is highlighted below, but make sure to check the above links for more information about subjects like Adult Day School, IT Devices, Class Sizes, Elementary dates to switch between in-person and virtual learning, and more.

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### **High Schools: switching between in-person and virtual learning; Virtual School update**

On October 23, TDSB sent an important update to all secondary families about switching between in-person and virtual learning, as well as changes to the virtual learning model for students wishing to start learning virtually for Quadmester 2.

With more than 18,000 secondary students currently enrolled in the TDSB's Virtual Secondary School, the board cannot accommodate any additional students without a significant reorganization of the system — something that would have a negative impact on our in-person schools and result in many courses having to be collapsed or eliminated.

The ultimate goal is to maintain stability for both in-person schools and the Virtual School, and to continue offering the courses that students need. As a result, TDSB will be changing how virtual learning is delivered to students who request to switch to virtual learning for Quadmester 2. While the Virtual School will continue to operate and support its existing students, students who would like to switch from in-person to virtual learning for Quadmester 2 will be accommodated with a virtual option at their current in-person school.

***Switching from In-Person to Virtual Learning:*** Students who are registered at in-person schools who would like to switch to the virtual model will be provided with more information from their school, including a form to indicate what they would like to do. This change would take effect at the start of Quadmester 2 on November 23, 2020.

***Switching from the Virtual School to In-Person Learning:*** Students who are currently registered in the Virtual School and would like to return to their in-person school must contact the guidance counsellor at their in-person school by October 28, 2020 to see if a timetable can be created for the specific courses they have requested for Quadmesters 2, 3 and 4. If a timetable can be created, a transfer to the in-person school will be facilitated. Please note that space may be limited and a transfer may not be possible.

For more information, [read the full letter here](#) and [check the TDSB website](#).

### **Secondary Virtual School update**

As of October 20, the Virtual Secondary School counted 719 classroom teachers plus 86 Student Success/Guidance/Resource teachers, for a total of 805 teachers. With only one Virtual Secondary School in the TDSB, this school now accommodates more than 18,500 students.

Classes have reached the midterm point and are settled into routines. Many teachers with the same course assignment are collaborating with one another to ensure consistency in delivery. Student Success teachers are reaching out to non-attendees and will follow up with families. Resource teachers have started developing IEPs for students with special needs.

Plans are underway to begin scheduling students who do not have a full timetable for Quads 2, 3 and 4.

Teachers continue to participate in workshops offered through the TDSB Digital Lead Learners on Brightspace, where they can further develop their knowledge of the various features of the Learning Management System, including the “Grades”

feature.

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## **Virtual School - Elementary Schools update**

The creation of virtual schools to accommodate over 1/3rd of our student population has been an enormous undertaking. Once severely understaffed, more than 400 teachers and 41 Vice-Principals have now been transferred from our bricks and mortar schools to our virtual schools. This massive re-organization has gone a long way towards "right-sizing" our virtual schools. Every class now has a teacher, although we continue to be short a significant number of French teachers. Staff has worked on implementing some creative strategies to ensure the requirements from French Immersion can be met. And, of course staff is continuing to fill vacancies as they arise. As our supply teacher list is completely exhausted, staff continue to recruit for this list as well.

### ***Communication***

One of the biggest challenges staff have faced in the virtual school has been around communication. The addition of 41 VPs, mentioned above, is expected to streamline and improve communication. We are also looking at various ways to engage our parents, like virtual school newsletters and virtual parent sessions (webcasts).

We are trying to create a more personal relationship/connection with parents, and are working with telecommunications to allow parents to call the main TDSB number and be connected to a VP who are assigned to a grade. This may well go to a voicemail system but it allows for a voice at the end of the line and create the much needed connection with families. And with this additional staff, administrators expect to be able to respond more promptly to parent concerns.

In addition, our communications department has created a Virtual School

Twitter Feed - [@TDSBVS](https://twitter.com/TDSBVS) - to showcase some of what is happening in our classrooms every day, as we do in our bricks and mortar schools. Many teachers are now beginning to share what is happening in virtual classrooms across the district. If you are on Twitter, consider following [@TDSBVS](https://twitter.com/TDSBVS).

### ***NEW – Digital Resources to Support Mathematics Instruction in VS***

The Central Math Team has secured access to *Mathology* licenses (English and French) for Kindergarten and Grades 4-6 Virtual School teachers, as well

as *MathUp* licenses for Grades 1-3 (English and French) and Grades 4-8 (English only) Virtual School teachers. These products are teacher licenses, and are not issued on a per student basis.

- Mathology: Teachers will have access to the Mathology.ca (English) or Mathologie.ca (French) platform, which includes curriculum-aligned lessons, activities, little books, assessment tools, and just-in-time professional learning videos.
- MathUp: Teachers will have access to the mathup.ca platform, with grade-specific pathways containing rich lessons, activities, suggestions for differentiation and professional learning resources. Student activities, such as number talks, brain benders, and digital games are also included. French is available for Grades 1-3 only.

We are also exploring digital resources for early and adolescent readers and providing a number of tools for assessment of our students.

### ***Professional Learning***

We are continuing to provide professional learning for educators in the areas of Brightspace, Tech tools, Equity, French, Special Education, English Language Learners, and will be providing upcoming sessions on Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, Guided Reading, Mathematics and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy.



### **Active COVID-19 in Schools Advisories**

The Toronto District School Board is committed to providing up to date information about confirmed cases of COVID-19 in schools (students and staff). This information is easily accessible by clicking on the [COVID-19 Advisories](#) banner on the main webpage [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca).

Please note that all schools where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 will

receive a letter from Toronto Public Health to inform them about the possible exposure. If individuals or classes need to quarantine or self-isolate, they will be informed specifically.

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## Health and Safety Measures

The health and safety of students, staff and school communities continues to be the main priority of the Toronto District School Board. Read more about the [TDSB's health and safety measures](#), including daily health screening, mask and face covering requirements and the response plan. Please also note the [revised screening guidelines for students](#).

For more information about COVID-19, please visit [www.toronto.ca/covid19](http://www.toronto.ca/covid19)

Mask/Face Coverings  
**REQUIRED**

COVID-19 Guidance  
what to do after  
the self-assessment

Daily  
 **CHECKLIST**  
For Elementary School

Daily  
 **CHECKLIST**  
For High School

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## Ventilation, HEPA filters, and Fundraising

A week ago, a note was sent to School Councils and Principals from Craig Snider, Associate Director, Business Operations and Service Excellence:  
*"We know that there have been a number of questions regarding fundraising for portable High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) units and we wanted to provide clarification on this issue.*

*According to the [latest information from Toronto Public Health](#), while there is no evidence that air purifiers on their own are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they may be useful as a supplement to mechanical ventilation or if there is no outdoor air exchange in a room.*

*The Ministry of Education has provided \$6.9 million in funding to the TDSB to improve air ventilation in our schools, and this funding is being used to purchase approximately 6,000 commercial HEPA units for all classrooms without mechanical ventilation or with limited ability to provide fresh air. Please see the [list of schools](#) that will be receiving these HEPA units. School not included on the list have sufficient ventilation for students, as currently recommended by TPH. The [Ministry of Education Fundraising Guideline](#) states that schools and school councils are not permitted to fundraise for anything that government funding typically covers. Fundraising for HEPA units or other HVAC-related items for a specific school is not permitted because the province specifically provided funding to school boards for this purpose.*

*For more information about HEPA units in TDSB schools, please see the [Questions & Answers](#) on our website."*

Please note mechanical ventilation does not mean air conditioning - mechanical ventilation is a method of forced or induced ventilation by using mechanical air handling systems, commonly called HVAC systems. In mechanical ventilation, blowers, fans, filters, and ducts are used for transporting and removing air from a space.

Facility Team Leaders will conduct a school-by-school analysis to determine how many units are required for each school on the list. Please note other schools may have adequate ventilation HVAC systems even if they don't have operable windows. Should additional schools be identified, they will be added to the list.

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## **Renewal Needs Backlog**

The Toronto District School Board's Renewal Needs Backlog (RNB) list identifies approximately 23,400 different types of repairs needed in our schools. The total value of those repairs was \$3.5 billion as of September 2020. This is unchanged from last year.

The Ministry hires external consultants to inspect each school every five years and provides the TDSB with updated information. This is equivalent to 20 percent of our schools. The consultant assesses the condition of each school and determines what needs to be repaired or replaced (e.g. floors, walls, heating and ventilation systems) based on life cycle, the urgency of the repairs/replacements and Facility Condition Index (FCI) rating. Generally, the more repairs a school needs, the higher the FCI. In some cases, the FCI is so high that a school is rated

for eventual replacement.

In recent years, when consultants have been assessing school buildings and components, they have been moving backlog requirements into future years, where they find building components still have capacity to perform as intended. The impact of this change has been a reduction in the backlog for the current year, but an increase to the backlog in future years. This is due to the movement of components for the current year into the 4 years following the current year. By way of example, for a low-priority repair such as the replacement of interior doors, the replacement date for this repair is pushed out by another five years, and not part of the current window of deferred maintenance backlog. As a result, there is no significant change in the 5-year projected renewal needs backlog and it now stands at approximately \$5.1 billion.

To learn more about the Renewal Needs Backlog and the Facility Condition Index, read: [here](#). The status for each school can be found on its TDSB webpage (to be found: [here](#)).

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### **Early French Immersion (SK entry): Registration (Nov.2) and Information**

Applications to the Early French Immersion program are made the year your child is in Junior Kindergarten (or is of Junior Kindergarten age) for entry in Senior Kindergarten. It is an entirely online process (information: [here](#)).

To apply for the Early French Immersion Program (SK entry) for September 2021, **applications must be completed online between November 2 and November 27, 2020** (please do NOT wait until the last days as missing the date will likely mean losing a place in French Immersion).

Please note: an offer of placement in the French Immersion program (not at a specific school) is guaranteed to all **on-time applicants** and will be made in the weeks following the close of the application window. Families with an older sibling currently enrolled in the same French program and who will be in attendance next year are still required to complete an online application for the new student. Please select the “sibling option” within the online application.

This year, there will be three virtual (online webchat) information sessions for families interested in the Early French Immersion (SK entry) application process:

- November 2, 2020, 7-8 p.m.

- November 12, 2020, 7-8 p.m.
- November 19, 2020, 10-11 a.m.

To join those meetings, go to [www.tdsb.on.ca/French](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/French) or click [here](#)

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Director of Education Search



### **Kathy Witherow new Interim Director; Permanent Director Search**

On Tuesday, Oct. 6, Dr. Kathy Witherow was announced as the Interim Director of Education for the Toronto District School Board, replacing Carlene Jackson, who was appointed as Ontario's Comptroller General.

Since June 2018, Dr. Witherow has served as the TDSB's Associate Director of Leadership, Learning and School Improvement. She has been an instrumental part of the TDSB's senior management team, helping to lead the safe re-opening of the TDSB's 583 in-person schools and virtual schools during the COVID -19 pandemic.

For more information, please read [the news release](#).

### ***Permanent Director of Education Search***

The Toronto District School Board is in the process of recruiting its next Director of Education. This process is being led by a Trustee Director Search Committee in partnership with Mandrake, an executive search firm. The job was posted on October 7 and applications were accepted until October. 28, 2020.

To learn more about the search process and the role of a Director of Education, please visit [www.tdsb.on.ca/directorsearch](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/directorsearch).

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### **TDSB Participates in Take Our Kids to Work Day!**

Take Our Kids to Work Day (TOKTWD) is a day that lasts a lifetime for students. On Wednesday, November 4, 2020, Canada's longest-running, highest-profile career exploration event is going virtual, offering more options than ever before! TDSB students can learn, explore, and engage in career exploration

activities that could spark their excitement for learning and looking ahead to an exciting career. TDSB is partnering with The Learning Partnership to provide educators with a range of exciting ways for students to participate in Take Our Kids to Work Day. Despite the pandemic, the TDSB is committed to providing our Grade 9 students with this amazing opportunity in all of our classroom settings (face-to-face, synchronously, asynchronously and remotely). This year, Take Our Kids to Work Day can be accessed in real-time or at a later date by accessing the recorded sessions to inspire an exciting, engaging day of career exploration.

Grade 9 students will participate in:

- Pre-activities to prepare students for the day ahead
- A Kick-off Event where they will hear from a range of workplaces and professionals who will share messages of hope and resilience and bring to life the real-world skills that have led to their success,
- Live Take Our Kids to Work Day Breakout Sessions exploring Skilled Trades, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Healthcare and Technology & Finance.

Parents, guardians and caregivers can access this Family Guide to find out how to get the most out of the day for their child whether they participate at their parent/guardian's work, at school, or at home. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to connect with their kids and join the fun during this year's event.

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## **Upcoming PA Day, Progress Reports and Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences**

Below is information regarding the Kindergarten Communication of Learning and Progress Reports, the upcoming PA Day and parent/guardian-teacher conferences for In-Person Schools and the Elementary Virtual School. This information will be shared directly with parents/guardians in an email being sent on Monday, November 2, 2020.

### **Elementary In-Person Schools**

- **Kindergarten Communication of Learning and Grades 1-8 Progress Reports** - The Kindergarten Communication of Learning and Grades 1-8 Progress Reports will be sent home with elementary students attending in-person school between November 16 and 19, 2020.

- **PA Day and Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences - All**  
parents/guardians of Junior and Senior Kindergarten students and students in Grades 1-8 will be given the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher either virtually or by phone. As you know, there is an upcoming PA Day on Friday, November 20, 2020 and parent/guardian-teacher conferences will take place on this date.

### **Elementary Virtual School**

- **Kindergarten Communication of Learning and Grades 1-8 Progress Reports** - The school start date for Elementary Virtual School was slightly later than that for In-Person Schools and we have also recently had a large number of students transition into this environment, based on the opportunity for parents/guardians to request such a change. We are pleased that greater stability has ensued over the past few weeks. Based on feedback received, it also makes sense that students and teachers would benefit from more time to continue their work together and allow teachers to gather further assessment information. To respond to this, the progress reporting period for Elementary Virtual School has been extended by two weeks and the Kindergarten Communication of Learning and Grades 1-8 Progress Reports will be sent home with students between November 30 and December 3, 2020.
- **PA Day and Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences** - On the TDSB school year calendar, there is a PA Day on Friday, November 20. However, due to the change in the progress reporting period for Elementary Virtual School students only, the date of this PA Day has been changed to Friday, December 4, 2020. All parents/guardians of Junior and Senior Kindergarten students and students in Grades 1-8 will be given the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher either virtually or by phone on Friday, December 4, 2020. Friday, November 20 will be an instructional day and students will be expected to attend Virtual School as usual on that date.

### **Secondary Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences**

As shared previously, and consistent with Ministry guidance, there are no mid-quadmester report cards. We asked all secondary teachers to share information about a student's progress with students and families during the week of October 19-23 using available digital tools (e.g. MarkBook, BrightSpace, Google Classroom).

For the first quadmester, there will not be formal parent/guardian-teacher conferences. During the time period of November 4 to November 11,

parents/guardians and teachers who would like to connect to discuss student progress in a course will set up a mutually-convenient time to do so. In order to allow greater access and opportunity for parents/guardians to speak with teachers (given the different structure of the daily schedule in secondary schools), teachers may use up to two afternoon “synchronous” periods to schedule these opportunities with families and asynchronous learning will occur during this time.

Teachers will continue to provide regular communication to students and parents/guardians and special consideration should be given to students who are not yet meeting minimum course expectations and who are at risk of not earning a credit.

As a reminder, at the end of each quadmester, Ministry Report Cards that include final marks, comments and learning skills will be completed by teachers for courses that students have completed during that period. More information about the administration and distribution of the Secondary Provincial Report Card will be shared soon.

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## 2021 Prime Minister's Awards

Please note the announcement of the nomination period for important Awards:

**The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence** - These awards honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines for their remarkable educational achievements and for their commitment to preparing their students for a digital and innovation-based economy.



The poster features the Government of Canada logo at the top left and the Canada wordmark at the top right. The main text reads '2021 PRIME MINISTER'S AWARDS' and 'NOMINATE AN EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATOR TODAY!'. It lists three nomination categories: Teaching Excellence, Teaching Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), and Excellence in Early Childhood Education. The nomination deadline is January 12, 2021, at 11:59 A.M. (Pacific Time). The website CANADA.CA/PM-AWARDS and the hashtag #PMAWARDS are provided. At the bottom, there are two photographs: one of a woman in a red shirt and hat, and one of a man in a yellow shirt holding a microphone. A feather graphic is positioned between the two photos. A small caption at the bottom right identifies the individuals as 2018 and 2017 Certificate of Excellence recipients.

## The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence in STEM -

These awards recognize inspirational Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) teachers at the elementary or secondary school level who keep students engaged in STEM learning and who help develop the culture of innovation that Canada needs today, and in the future

[For more information on those two awards, please click here.](#)

## The Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood

**Education-** These awards honour outstanding and innovative early childhood educators for their leadership, exemplary early childhood education practices, and their commitment to help build the foundation children need to make the best possible start in life. [For more information, please click here.](#)

*Nomination packages must be submitted to the Prime Minister's Awards program office by January 12, 2021 — 11:59 a.m. Pacific Time*

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## Heritage and History Months

In November, we honour **Indigenous Education Month**: this month reminds us to centre First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives, histories and contemporary realities. In classrooms across the TDSB, it is an opportunity to learn about treaties, Indigenous leadership, achievements, and resistance.

Over the course of this month, students, staff and community members recognize a number of important days to deepen knowledge, to learn together about our shared history, and to build stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. For more information:

[Indigenous Education Month](#)

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## School Year Calendar 2020-2021

The official school year calendar for the Toronto District School Board runs from September 1 to June 30, inclusive and has now been approved by the Ministry.

- The last day of class for elementary students is June 29
- **Secondary Quadmester Calendar**
- **Quad 1: Sept. 17 - Nov 19**

**Quad 2: Nov. 23 - Feb 4**

**Quad 3: Feb 8 - April 20 + exams April 21 & 22**

**Quad 4: April 23 - June 23 + exams June 24, 25 & 28**

## PA Days & Holidays Remaining

Board-wide PA Day November 20, 2020

**Winter Break** Dec 21, 2020 - January 1, 2021

Elementary PA Day January 15, 2021

Secondary PA Day (Semestered Schools Only) February 5, 2021

Board-wide PA Day February 12, 2021

**Family Day** February 15, 2021

**March Break** March 15 – 19, 2021

**Good Friday** April 2, 2021

**Easter Monday** April 5, 2021

**Victoria Day** May 24, 2021

Elementary School PA Day June 4, 2021

Secondary School PA Day June 29, 2021



The top section of the footer features a row of orange silhouettes depicting various people, including families, students, and individuals with disabilities. Below this is a horizontal bar with segments of green, yellow, and blue. The Toronto District School Board logo is centered in the blue segment.



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