



**Revisiting the Eglinton and John Fisher
Residential Redirections
to Whitney Public School
Virtual Public Consultation Meeting
(ZOOM Webinar)**

**Monday, February 13, 2023
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM**

Meeting Notes

Panelists:	Trustee Shelley Laskin (TDSB Ward 8), Trustee Deborah Williams (TDSB Ward 10), Trustee Rachel Chernos Lin (TDSB Ward 11), Exec SOE Uton Robinson (LC 1), Exec SOE Jack Nigro (LC 4), SOE Andrew Howard (LN 5 – Eglinton Jr PS), SOE Roni Felsen (LN 6 – John Fisher Jr PS), SOE Mary Linton (LN 22 – Whitney Jr PS), Principal Christopher Rzepa (Whitney Jr PS), Principal Ian Wilson (Eglinton Jr PS), Vice Principal Diahann Clarke (Eglinton Jr PS), Principal Jane Wadden (John Fisher Jr PS), Deirdre Munroe (Central Eglinton Child Care Centre, Director), Ellie Cameron (Student Transportation, Manager), Andrew Gowdy (System Planning Officer), Safiyyah Omar-Saleh (Planner), Giovanna De Girolamo (Planning, Manager), Dan Castaldo (Planning, Senior Manager), Zdenka Sucevic (Planning, Administrative liaison), Andrew Chua (Planning Analyst)
Attendees:	125 participants

Item	Discussion	Attachments / Actions / Results
Welcome and Introductions	Andrew Gowdy welcomed everyone and introduced the panelists.	
Opening Remarks	Ward 10 Trustee Deborah Williams welcomed everyone.	

Presentation	<p>Presentation was done by Andrew Gowdy and Safiyyah Omar-Saleh.</p> <p>The presentation can be found on the TDSB Review website:</p> <p>https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Strategy-Planning/Search-All-Reviews/id/179</p>	
Comments, Questions and Answers	<p>Comment #1: I wanted to raise my concern. This is our first child here in Canada, and the reason why we took a condo in 33 Dunfield Avenue is because we wanted Johan to attend Whitney Jr PS with his relatives. They're all living in 44 Dunfield Avenue and they're all going to Whitney. They are already in Whitney however it looks like that with this decision, our son will be the only one amongst his extended family going to Eglinton Jr PS, and this is a matter of a concern for us, because he's a very small child.</p> <p>Question #1: We live within the Whitney school boundary and we have a daughter in grade 1 and a son in grade 5 and we moved to this area because we were moving away from Jackman, who had capacity problems. And we are just concerned that while this is great long-term planning for Whitney, it's not addressing the over-capacity problem that we are facing right now. My daughter, who is in grade 1, the vast majority of her class are not from within the Whitney neighborhood and the vast majority of our son's class are from the local neighborhood, and that makes a big difference in their social life. We want them to have friends in the community that they can connect with regularly, especially for our grade 1 girl who went through a pandemic. She has only one friend in her class that is from the neighbourhood, and most of them get bused out of the neighborhood.</p> <p>My question is: even when you look at the projection charts, Whitney is at 110%, even after these changes and other schools are at 80%. If there is space available now why not mandate that change now versus making it optional? Because, as it was just mentioned, we know that people are moving to those towers so their kids can come to Whitney. So just making this optional, we don't really think there is no evidence that should suggest that people will pick their local schools versus coming to Whitney. So, while this is solving the problem in the long term for our kids that are in the school now, they'll continue to be in this situation.</p>	

Answer #1:

Andrew Gowdy: There are 2 reasons why we are proposing to address the pressures at Whitney in the way that we have. 1) we do wish to minimize disruption on families. It is to the benefit of families who have an ongoing relationship with the school that they are not experiencing another transition at a school. That's why we are recommending that the current families from these residential developments at Whitney stay at Whitney until they graduate, and only the new registrants, the ones who haven't enrolled at Whitney yet be redirected to Eglinton or John Fisher.

The other reason is, we don't want to have all the students from those redirected development show up at Eglinton all at once this September because it is a large number of students - over 130 students – and then we'd be putting Eglinton into the same pressure that Whitney is in now. Over time, Eglinton's enrolment is going to decline, and we want to phase in the enrolments to Eglinton and phase out at Whitney over time, not having either of the schools continue to grow beyond the pressure that they have right now. The projection is for Whitney to still stay fully utilized but not to go above its current level, and that over the next couple of years the enrolment will come down.

Question #2:

Why Eglinton Junior Public School, not rated on the Fraser Institute?

Answer #2:

Trustee Shelley Laskin: The TDSB does not accept the Fraser Institute rankings. We think they're very problematic and we certainly don't judge our schools by them.

Question #3:

Why are you moving a whole group of students to a whole new area, creating more stress to them when they are already went through pandemic?

Answer #3:

Andrew Gowdy: I think it's important that we clarify the proposal. Any student who's currently at Whitney from those 8 developments, they will be able to stay at Whitney. They're not required to go to Eglinton and their younger siblings can go to Whitney as well with them, provided the older sibling is still at Whitney when they join Whitney.

Question #4:

I would like to ask here, why we can't bring siblings of current students with a bigger age gap, since we already have a sense of belonging to school community and established relationships with school and community?

Answer #4:

Andrew Gowdy: You do have a child at Whitney, but they might graduate before your youngest child enters at Junior Kindergarten at Whitney. Correct?

The rule that younger siblings can go to Whitney, provided the older sibling there is about accommodating the needs of families. It's hard for a family to deliver children to two different schools. As a result, the younger student would be the only one that the family would have to drive to a school. In a student's career in public education, students will be forming many different relationships, as they go from school to school, and they progress up the grades.

Trustee Shelley Laskin: I absolutely understand but for that reason, parents might consider moving the older child to Eglinton and start developing the relationships there with the local schools that they can walk to.

Question #5:

How is the Special Education support at Eglinton Jr PS in comparison with Special Education support at Whitney Jr PS?

Answer #5:

Andrew Howard: Students with individual education plans are supported in every TDSB school, whether it be through a special needs assistant or an educational assistant. The model that I mentioned is an inclusionary model where students are supported within their classroom, and the resource teachers go in and support them, so it's no different at Eglinton than at Whitney. Any child who requires any types of supports due to an exceptionality will be supported at any school.

Mary Linton: Whichever school your child ends up at, the staff are going to be working very hard to welcome your child, and to make sure they get the best experience possible.

Question #6:

If we decide to continue with Whitney, will the bus be available for the next 5 years? This is someone with a child currently in grade 1 at Whitney.

Answer #6:

Safiyyah Omar-Saleh: We're continuing to provide busing for students to Whitney for as long as necessary.

Students who live at these addresses and at Whitney will continue to receive busing services. Also, their siblings who come afterwards will also receive busing services. Of course, granted this older sibling would need to be present at the time the younger sibling begins school. John Fisher's students who live within that those 2 buildings and their grade isn't yet available at John Fisher will receive busing as well.

Question #7:

If we move from one impacted residential tower to another impacted residential tower, will we have to move to Eglinton or can we remain at Whitney?

Answer #7:

Safiyyah Omar-Saleh: Referring to the Out-of-Area Admissions policy, the student would be considered a new registrant. Students who move out of area during the school year may remain at the current school until the end of that school year, or if the next year is a graduation they can continue. Otherwise, they would need to go to their designated school by address the following school year.

Question #8:

If a child currently attending Whitney and parents want to take a long holiday in May until September. Are they allowed to stay at Whitney next school year?

Answer #8:

Giovanna De Girolamo: Decision would be made at the local level by the principal. If you do want to take an extended holiday, if that holiday extends 15 days, you can ask for an excusal and be allowed to return to Whitney. However, that will require the Principal's approval and the length of time can't be so long that a principal would have to work with a classroom teacher to provide some work to take home, so that the child can keep up with their curricular expectations. If the length of time is too long, then that child would be demitted, and upon return, you would be requested to attend your local school by address at that time. It would be a local decision, and a lot of factors come into play. What time of the school year, how long you requesting to be excused for, etc.

Question #9:

I want you to explain a bit the definition of temporary.

Answer #9:

Andrew Gowdy: Temporary really means until space becomes available in the local school. We can't put a timeframe to that. Some parts of the city we're able to get a space available in the local school in a couple of years. In other parts of the city, it takes over 10 years. So, the definition of temporary is until space becomes available in the local school.

Comment #2:

My general comment on the reversal of the decision is that I support, and I think most parents would support the idea of going to the closest walkable local school.

Question #10:

My concern arises from the rationale that's been put in place as it affects and continues to affect John Fisher. Because the rationale for moving the French immersion program to Bannockburn, was due to Eglinton being overcrowded and John Fisher needed to take some English students. The John Fisher French immersion program is now continuing, but the English enrolment that was projected into John Fisher has not met the expectations.

My question is: what criteria are you using? And do you look back at the previous justifications because there seems to be some inconsistencies between what you said a couple of years ago regarding Eglinton and what you're saying now. I'm also going to ask you to provide, long before the P&P meeting that's coming up, actual staffing models and the projected enrolments in each program. I would like to try and focus in on the health and viability of not just the English side, but the French side, which I think may be being sacrificed for this.

Answer #10:

Andrew Gowdy: I think you're asking about the rationale that we used for starting an English track at John Fisher and reopening Bannockburn as a French center and taking a piece of John Fisher attendance area to decrease the French program, and to start English program. How does this decision compare to what we see now on the ground now with the enrolments?

One of the things that transpired was the pandemic, and the pandemic had an impact on enrolments across the city. It differed school by school and neighborhood by neighborhood, but we did experience a decrease of 11,000 students across the whole city, and enrolment at the John Fisher has come down. But the overall goal and plan that we have for the area by using John Fisher to accommodate that growth in the Yonge Eglinton area and to assume a portion of Eglinton's junior English catchment area that still holds true. This is a long-term plan that we're working towards. So, we're not going to see the students materialize overnight. It's a phase in, and it'll take a few years for John Fisher to have the strong English track that we had envisioned. But all the rationale that we use for establishing John Fisher as that dual track -- it holds true today.

Question #11:

There is an unprecedented growth going on in the area. I understand that it's a problem but I think it would be desirable to avoid having to reverse decisions and be consistent. The screenshot that you showed regarding the effect on John Fisher by the redirect of the 2 buildings, I think, is marginal. It's like 3 students per year, and that would be subject to people making a choice to go back as opposed to not going back, and so I don't think it's going to have any effect on John Fisher.

My other suggestion is to try to get a handle on what the choices are that people are going to make, will your department be circulating a questionnaire to current Whitney students to ask whether they would go back to Eglinton or John Fisher because I think that will answer one of the participants questions about what will happen to Whitney. In the meantime, I think if you asked the question, you might have better information to present to the committee.

Answer#11:

Andrew Gowdy: We're going take that into consideration. Just from the email and phone calls that we've been receiving we think that many parents are going to want to stay where they are, they're not going to want to experience the disruption and the transition. We still wish to have those two developments go to John Fisher. It is a small number of kids, but it is returning those developments to their closest school. We don't want to put too much pressure on John Fisher because of the limitations that John Fisher is, how many kindergarten rooms the school has.

We haven't opened Bannockburn as the new French centre yet. So, until that happens, we don't want to add too many Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten kids to John Fisher in the English track. You'd also asked about information on schools in the area like enrolment by Grade and track and the class sizes that information is available on the TDSB Accommodation Review website. There's a section called "Helpful Information", and there's lots of context there. There are actual enrolments by grade, utilization rates, class size data, etc.

Question #12:

We're moving to 5 Soudan in the summer, and we have 2 children. One is currently in Grade 3 French immersion, and the other one is starting JK in September. Where will these kids go for the French immersion? On the website it says Winchester, which is far away. Is it possible for the children to go to a local school -- John Fisher?

Answer #12:

Safiyah Omar-Saleh: 5 Sudan is one of the redirected developments that will continue to be temporarily redirected to Whitney. Feeder path for French from Whitney goes to Winchester.

Trustee Shelley Laskin: Please email your Trustee Deborah Williams and the Trustee will follow up with the French department.

Question #13:

I want to be crystal clear on the impact of existing students. So, for example, if I'm currently renting a place at affected address and if my landlord terminates lease for next year, and I need to change address and my kid is not graduating within one year. Can my child stay at Whitney?

Answer #13:

Safiyyah Omar-Saleh: Move or change of address is considered a new registration, that means that child would go to local school assigned to that address not to Whitney. This is the same across the system.

Question #14:

So even if it's the landlord to terminate the lease and its way out of my control, my child would be forced to move to a new address and new school?

Answer #14:

Andrew Gowdy: Yes, that's correct, it's not necessarily the reason why they've changed the address, it's the fact that they've moved, and they're at a new address, and that address is assigned to a particular neighborhood school.

Andrew Howard: The move could be a wonderful opportunity to meet kids who live in the same building who live in the buildings next door, who live in the community that they can walk to and from school with, and form relationships and play dates. While maybe a bit of a challenge initially with the transition, I think the end results would be probably more positive for the student in the sense of formulating friendships that they could cultivate because they live close by.

Question #15:

I believe that phase 2 of the construction at Eglinton PS will start soon. Would my kid be able to walk to school then, during construction? I believe that the Board approved the reconstruction of Eglinton Junior last year in June.

Answer #15:

Andrew Gowdy: We are at the very beginning of the process of working out the agreement with the developer and seeking Ministry approval. Then we would be into implementation, and the implementation would require using a holding school. Eglinton Jr PS will be transported to the former Vaughan Road Academy at 529 Vaughan Rd and the school would stay there for the duration of construction. This replacement school will be a part of the mixed-use development.

Question #16:

The final opening of that new building will be out there towards 10 years. When will the relocation of Eglinton PS to the holding site take place?

Answer #16:

Andrew Gowdy: We don't know the specifics yet; it depends how fast the design and approvals can be put in place. I don't think anything would be happening within 2 years, for sure. We will be keeping the community informed, as we continue to work with the developer in the city.

Question #17:

If my kid is in JK or grade 1, they could potentially be going to 529 Vaughan Road school for half of their time in elementary?

Answer #17:

Andrew Gowdy: Yes, that's true. They would be moving with the entire school. So, all the staff and all the other students. They'd be transported to 529 Vaughan Road. We've done it with Davisville, and we're going to be doing it with Hodgson MS.

Trustee Shelley Laskin: I've been communicating as things develop for this new project. There is information on the website. So, if you want to email me, I'll make sure you have all the up-to-date information. But the key understanding here is the Ministry has to approve any capital project that we have, and that takes some time. So even if we have the agreement with the developer, we still need to wait for Ministry approval. So, we are talking many years out.

Question #18:

Will open houses be available at Eglinton Jr PS and John Fisher Jr PS?

Answer #18:

Jane Wadden: John Fisher will be offering an open house to all new families in June, so that will most likely be JK. And SK students in both the English and the French stream. Eglinton will be offering an open house for families as well. Please email the schools for information.

Question #19:

Is there a backup plan for Whitney if the number of students who enroll for Whitney continues to increase the school's enrolment pressures?

Answer #19:

Andrew Gowdy: The plan is to continue with using the staff room, which is a classroom size space and to use the computer lab, which is similarly a classroom size space. We're going to make some improvements over the summer to make the computer lab more appropriate as a classroom. There are also two classrooms in the basement, one's used as a music room. Those would be the flex spaces that would be used if the enrolment goes above the projection that staff prepared.

Question #20:

My child goes to Whitney currently, and I wish to enroll him in before and after school program. Will the redirection play any role in him getting admitted to childcare at Whitney?

Answer #20:

Andrew Gowdy: In this situation, this family lives in one of the buildings that's redirected to Whitney but it's going back to Eglinton or John Fisher. The student is currently at Whitney and wishes to apply to the before and after school program at Whitney and because they're currently a Whitney student, then they'd be able to stay at Whitney until they graduate.

Question #21:

How much would TDSB save on busing with this proposal?

Answer #21:

Andrew Gowdy: We're proposing that transportation still be offered. But in theory, transportation will go down over time. So as the students phase out of Whitney, transportation should go down. We know that we're going to be very active in this part of the city for 4 years to come, until we have new or additional pupil places built to respond to all that growth, so we're likely to continue to use transportation as a tool. It's hard to quantify if there's going to be savings at the end of the day here. But when a bus is no longer used which could happen over time in this part of the city, then there is a savings to the board, and it's going to be approximately \$55,600 per bus.

Question #22:

I would like to request that you extend the reverse of the redirection until September of 2024.

Answer #22:

Andrew Gowdy: We're proposing that this does happen for this September, and that's because we don't want Whitney to grow any more than it has right now. The concern about extending it for another year is that there will be more students coming to Whitney and could grow beyond that flex space that I described in the basement, and we could be into portables. There isn't really a good place to put portables on the Whitney site. It's a small site, and portables would be placed on the play field. There is a baseball diamond with a small track that goes around it, and we'd be putting portables within the track right on the sports field. So that's a situation that we're trying to avoid. Since there's a solution available that's consistent with our vision of the neighborhood school, and kids can make their own way to the school, and there is a solution and space at Eglinton we feel that this is really the appropriate solution for this September.

Deirdre Munroe: We have a space in a childcare at Eglinton PS. All info is available on their website. Eglinton PS is a beautiful school with wonderful staff.

Question #23:

One of the trustees mentioned that all schools are equal, and there is not too much of emphasis on the ratings. That may be true but the point here is that parents are taking houses, buying properties, paying high rent on condos in areas where the school ratings are high.

Can this be moved on to the next year to give parents like myself enough time to determine where they want to be. The point that I'm trying to make here is that this is sudden. So maybe you want to consider moving this to the next to give enough time to all parents here to figure out their plan of action.

Answer #23:

Trustee Shelley Laskin: I really need to say that Fraser Institute rankings have absolutely nothing to do with the quality of education you're going to get at your local neighborhood school. I want to make that crystal clear.

The other point I want to make is redirections have always been temporary, and the Board always has the right to go through processes to change boundaries because that is the way we can manage enrolments. So, anybody that buys a house anywhere in this city or lives in a condo or rents property isn't exempt. These are Board processes that we need to use to manage development. There's 26,000 units being built in this area, and we are trying to ensure we have a system of neighborhood schools, so kids can walk to school and build communities.

	<p>We certainly have no ability to create space in advance for those developments because that is not how we're funded by the province as a school board. We are trying to ensure that all the kids can walk to their neighborhood school because research after research has shown that that is the best possible place for them.</p> <p>We do our best in Eglinton School and John Fisher School in Whitney School. They are warm, welcoming communities.</p>	
Adjournment:	8:10 p.m.	