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Dear friends,

It's been an exciting couple of weeks for students and staff back in our bricks and mortar buildings, with children and students alike very happy to be reunited in person. With a snowstorm coinciding with our first day back, and multiple snowy weather systems moving through the GTA throughout the first week, the snow has presented its fair share of challenges, but our elementary students, in particular, have had a ton of fun playing with their friends in the snow. Twitter was abuzz with pictures of our students enjoying the weather with their friends at so many of our Ward 11 schools!

I'd like to extend a thank you to our caretaking staff for all their work in keeping our walkways, sidewalks, and parking lots clear, and to parents and caregivers who took extra caution in their travels to and from school, especially with buses not running on that first day back. Decisions about running of buses and closing of schools are made by 6am of the school day. Our website has more information about TDSB's procedure for Severe Weather.

Covid-updates (I): HEPA filters coming to all special classes!

On Tuesday, Jennifer provided one of all special Covid-updates at the Board's Planning & Priorities (P & P) Committee meeting. You can re-watch the entire meeting in our Webcast Archive.

Our Head of Facilities informed trustees that the federal funds recently released by the Province will enable the Board to provide HEPA filter units for EVERY occupied classroom throughout our system. Starting first with elementary schools, distribution will begin with Q5 schools, then Q4, and so on in the Quintile-system is determined by Toronto Public Health based on Covid-risk in the community. Distribution is expected to be complete for elementary HEPA filters by the end of March, then another two weeks to deliver the remaining units to ALL secondary schools. Arriving at 1,500 a week, it is going to take a bit of time to roll out, but I know this will be a huge relief to so many families and staff.

Check out the Board website for more information about school ventilation.

Covid-updates (II): Survey Results; Asymptomatic testing; School Switching update

At the P & P meeting, staff shared considerable information in the Feb 23 Staff Presentation. The update covered:

- Elementary Switching update: through an enormous effort from board staff, more than 5,000 elementary students have already been moved from brick & mortar schools to the Virtual Schools, or vice versa. This work will continue this week.
Asymptomatic testing: Every week, the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network, in collaboration with TPH, the testing hospitals and the school boards, determine which Toronto Schools are selected for asymptomatic testing. The Government goal is to have 5% of each board's schools be selected, and 2% of students tested, each week.
Pharmacy Testing for School Staff: The Ministry of Education has also provided important information about new opportunities for school board staff to access voluntary asymptomatic COVID-19 testing at pharmacy locations in Toronto.

The previous Covid-19 update on February 9, contained a presentation by Toronto Public Health, another update from senior staff (with information about school switching, device distribution, and Federal Covid funding), and an update about preparing for the 2021-2022 school year (also see below).

Before moving on to reminders, updates and more, I want to note that my next Virtual Ward 11 Coffee Morning is coming up on March 10th. I hope you can join me for an informal morning of conversation about education, our school system and Ward 11 schools. More details, including registration for this event, can be found below.

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Health & Safety Updates

We remain deeply thankful to all teachers, education workers and administrators in both Virtual School and via Remote Learning who continue to support student well-being and learning. Please remember that Toronto Public Health (TPH) directs and collaborates the Toronto District School Board on health and safety protocols. We have an ongoing, collaborative relationship with them, and with their expert guidance, we have created policies, procedures and specific protocols for the TDSB. TPH spoke directly to our Planning and Priorities Committee last Tuesday, and their presentation and advice is linked below. Some information worth repeating from this presentation:

New TPH Screening Tool for Students

In order to minimize the possibility of COVID-19 from entering our school system, it is essential that students and parents screen daily for any symptoms of COVID-19 and follow the guidelines outlining when to stay home and when to get tested. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has revised its screening tool for students from December, and this new screening is now in effect. Both the TDSB Student Health Pass and the TDSB Health App have been updated and are reflective of changes. In particular, it is now required that staff and students stay home if anyone in their households has a symptom, or if anyone in their household is a close contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19.

Class Size and Cohorts

TDSB has taken measures to enhance the physical distancing in bricks and mortar schools to the extent we could given our funding and deficit position. We have decreased class sizes in schools identified by TPH as having a higher risk of COVID-19 (quintile five) as well as provided additional DECE staff in those same communities to allow for more staff to assist with supervision and physical distancing measures. Class size targets in Grades 4 to 8 have also been reduced this year to allow for increased physical distancing and, where possible, classes have moved to larger areas for more space. But we know physical distancing is not possible in all situations and that is why masks need to be worn.

Testing for COVID-19

TPH recommends staff, students and their household members that have even one mild symptom of COVID-19 get tested. TPH will continue to recommend asymptomatic testing in schools where necessary and will work with testing partners to coordinate testing in high-risk cohorts. We will provide updates on testing as it becomes available.

Toronto Student Transportation Group Update

Transportation has resumed this past week. Bus routes and times should be similar to those prior to the Christmas break. You can always check up on the Transportation portal on our website at www.torontoschoolsbuses.org. Student Transportation has developed many health and safety practices and protocols in line with Toronto Public Health guidelines and direction. They continue to adjust as new information is available. Every effort is being made to limit contact between cohorts. If buses are cancelled due to inclement weather, this decision is made by 6am.

Thursday, February 25 (1 - 2 pm): Live Presentation: Stronger than Hate -- TODAY!

Please join a presentation by TDSB's African Heritage Committee and its partners the Jewish Heritage Committee, Liberation75, USC Shoah Foundation, and Peel District School Board. Hosted by Dr. Stephen D. Smith, with Special Guests:

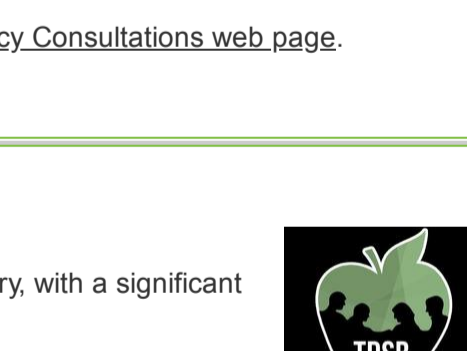
- Max Eisen, Toronto-based Holocaust Survivor, author of the award-winning "By Chance Alone"
Joe Wilson Jr., Author of "The 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion in World War II, Son of Joe Wilson Sr, a member of the 761st Tank Battalion
John L. Withers II, Author of "Balm in Gilead", former UN Ambassador to Albania and son of Lieutenant John L. Withers, a WWII soldier who befriended and saved two Jewish Holocaust Survivors

The 761st Tank Battalion was the first all African-American Tank Battalion in World War II. They were instrumental in helping defeat the Nazis as well as liberating several concentration camps. Holocaust survivor Max Eisen was in one of the camps they liberated. Student participants in this program (Grades 6-12) will explore how stories create the possibility to learn about ourselves and others, and how we can be instruments of change right now. Our world has seen an increase in Anti-Black racism and antisemitism. This conversation will help us consider what we have learned from history, and reflect on how that knowledge can help us take action to counteract hate. More information: Stories are Stronger than Hate: A Call to Action, The Black Messiah

STRONGER THAN HATE
A Presentation from the TDSB's African Heritage Committee and Jewish Committee
Join Us on February 25th 1-2 p.m. for a Live Virtual Program

Early French Immersion - Late Applicant Opportunity - DEADLINE February 26

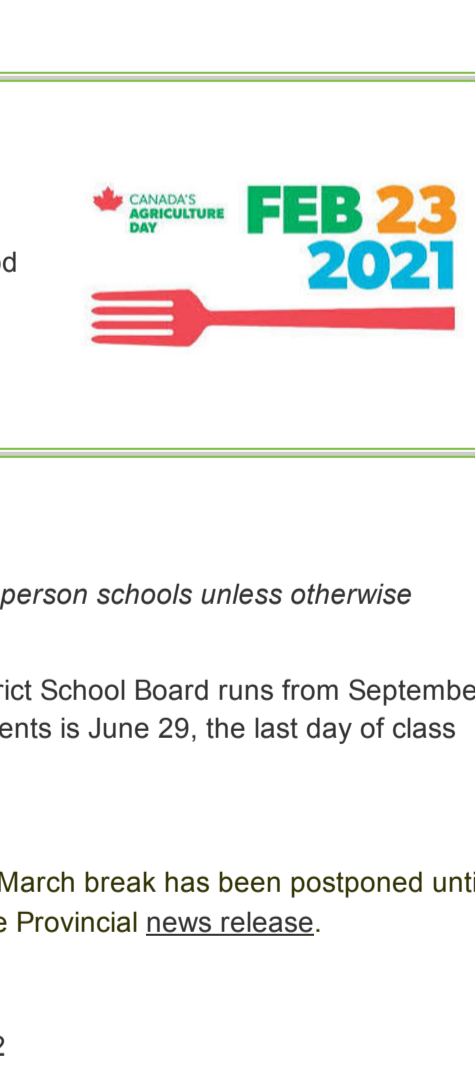
The application deadline for Early French Immersion was November 27, 2020. For a variety of reasons, the application numbers were lower than usual, leaving space in some areas for late applicants. For that reason, families still interested in the Toronto District School Board's Early French Immersion Program (for this Senior Kindergarten, September 2021), the online application portal, "PARS", remains open until February 26, 2021. Consideration for late applicants will be done centrally after all the original on-time applications have been accommodated, and will be based on space-permitting. Late applications that cannot be accommodated will be held on a late waitlist by date of the application.



Ward 11 Virtual Community Coffee Meeting: March 10, 9:30 - 11:00 am

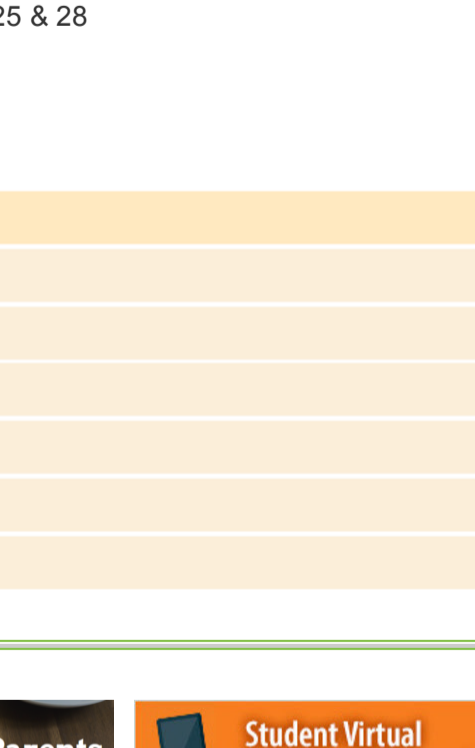
The Ward 11 Community Coffee Meetings have gone virtual! Grab your favourite mug, and join us from the comfort of your own home for a casual conversation about the TDSB and our Ward 11 schools.

To register, please fill out the form. Meeting links and dial-in numbers will be shared with registrants the day before the meeting.



Professional Support Services: Virtual Drop-in Tuesdays (10-11am) and Thursdays (7-8pm)

Connect directly with staff from TDSB Professional Support Services. Join us to explore ideas regarding your child or youth's mental health and well-being. Tuesdays, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Thursdays 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.



Podcast: TDSB The Human Library

The TDSB Human Library: Conversations around Equitable, Anti-Racist, and Anti-Oppressive Practice is a podcast series on topics related to Equity, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Oppression in education. Each 15-minute podcast invites listeners to critically reflect on their pedagogy, reimagine engagement, and partner with the community to improve student well-being and achievement. Now available: Episode 1: NATASHA HENRY - African Canadian Experiences and the Curriculum (audio, transcript) Episode 2: GEN LING CHANG - Understanding and Addressing Anti-Asian Racism (audio, transcript)



Some of the future topics soon to be added include: African Canadian experiences and the Curriculum; Centring Black LGBTQ+ students in the Classroom; Supporting Positive Racial Identity in Early Years; Understanding Judaism and Jewish Cultures.

School Councils: Apply for the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant!

School Councils may submit one request for up to \$1,500 to support initiatives/activities that engage parents/caregivers (including virtual), and builds School Councils' capacity around Human Rights, Equity, Anti-Racism, Anti-Indigenous and Anti-Black Racism. School Councils may collaborate and submit one application, however allocation will remain at a maximum of \$1,500 per school. Eligible Activities/Initiatives include Workshops, Training sessions, Info sessions with guest speakers, Parent Resource creation, and Conversation Circles. Student initiatives, staffing initiatives and equipment purchases are not eligible. The Project/Initiative must be completed by June 30, 2021.

Applications

- are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 1, 2021.
must be submitted electronically using the application and submission form and platform.
will be reviewed and will be approved upon a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore, please apply early, funds are limited!

For more information, including requirements, check the TDSB PRO Grant webpage.

ETFO and TDSB create resource to address Anti-Asian Racism

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and Toronto District School Board (TDSB) have partnered to develop Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators, a resource to empower educators to take action against anti-Asian racism. Read more in the report of the launch event on February 9.



TDSB's first Annual Human Rights Report 2018-2020

This brand new report was discussed in detail on Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at the P Planning and School Services Committee meeting. If you listen to the recording, please note the report comes up about 2.5 hours into the meeting and lasts for the remainder of the meeting (it was a 6 hour meeting). Challenges experienced in the TDSB are often framed from societal challenges, including in the area of human rights. The incidence of racism and bigotry has increased in the greater community and this is also reflected in our schools. Anti-Black racism exceeds other forms of hate but there have also been concerning increases in homophobia, antisemitism, and anti-indigenous racism, along with a prevalence of incidents targeting those with disabilities. This report contains critical data and a plan of action to address, prevent, and remedy the impact of incidents in our schools. In order for our TDSB students and staff to flourish, we have a duty to create schools and workplaces that are free of discrimination, harassment, and hate.

Associated Board Policies and Procedures:

- Employment Equity (P029)
Human Rights Policy (P031)
Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034)
Equity Policy (P037)
Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051)
Accessibility Policy (P069)
Workplace Harassment Prevention and Human Rights Procedure (PR515)
Reporting and Responding to Incidents of Racism and Hate Involving or Impacting Students in Schools (PR728)

TDSB Meeting Schedule

All TDSB Trustee Committee meetings are publicly broadcast and public delegations are welcomed. On the TDSB/Boardroom Website you can find the live webcast schedule, as well as the calendar with all Agendas, Minutes and documents (posted each Friday before all opening meetings). The schedule for the upcoming weeks is as follows: March 3 - 4:30pm - Planning & Priorities Committee To see links to agendas of all Standing Committee and Board meetings, included those listed above, please click here. All Committee meetings allow any member of the public to submit a delegation either in writing or in person (currently virtually). More information about the process is on the Delegation Process web page.

2021-2022 Staffing and School Models

At our most recent Planning and Priorities meeting, senior staff informed us that the Ministry of Education has advised us to plan for a normal year in terms of staffing. At the same time, we are cognizant of the fact that the pandemic will not be entirely resolved, and we will need to be planning for that contingency as well as planning for ways to address gaps that have ensued as a result of the pandemic. One of the issues senior team raised with trustees is the recognition that students are best served when connected to their local school. While we are hopeful to offer in-person learning for all students in September 2021, we are aware that some families will continue to seek virtual learning options for health and safety reasons should the pandemic still be a concern in September. As a result, our contingency plan is to have some degree of virtual learning available, but delivered via local home school for elementary students (as opposed to the 4 separate virtual school entities as we had this year). In order to maximize access to program in secondary schools, different models of delivery will be explored, including the retention of a virtual secondary school.

The staffing allocation process will include consultations with trustees, staff and union federations. Please note that parents/guardians and staff will also be engaged in late Spring about learning models (in-person or virtual via local home school) relative to the status of the pandemic and Enrollment Committee on March 2, 2021, and then move to the Regular Board Meeting on March 10, 2021. School Allocations will be rolled out during the latter half of March. It was confirmed that staffing would rollout similar to pre-COVID times.

2021-2022 Budget Process

The TDSB has begun the 2021-22 Budget planning process by reviewing and adopting strategic drivers and providing feedback to the Ministry of Education on the Funding Guide Implications. Staff have also reported on the current financial implications of COVID-19 and the Board has formally requested that the Ministry reimburse the cost of the pandemic to school boards.

Policy Consultations

The TDSB reviews policies on a 4-year cycle (or as needed based on changes to legislation or linked policies). Staff are currently seeking public feedback on the following policies: New Consultations: Human Rights Policy (P031) Deadline: April 5, 2021 Draft Revised Policy Email: Anu.Sharma2@tdsb.on.ca Objective: To protect, promote and advance the human rights of all TDSB members to learn, function and work in an equitable, accessible, respectful and inclusive environment free of discrimination and harassment on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination specified in this Policy and protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code. To enhance the capacity of the TDSB to meet its positive human rights obligations, including to proactively identify, address, and prevent all forms of discrimination, including individual and systemic discrimination.

- Workplace Harassment Prevention for Non-Human-Rights-Code Harassment (P034) Deadline: April 5, 2021 Draft Revised Policy Email: Ros.Salvador@tdsb.on.ca Objective: This Policy is designed to promote a healthy, respectful and supportive work environment. It highlights conduct that may amount to non-Code workplace harassment (i.e., harassment that is not covered by the Board's Human Rights Policy or the Human Rights Code) and outlines the system's shared responsibility for fostering a harassment-free workplace. The goal is to prevent non-Code workplace harassment from taking place and, where necessary, to investigate and respond to instances, potential instances, and complaints of such behaviour in a fair, timely and effective manner.

Ongoing Consultations:

- Parent and Community Involvement Policy (P023, Policy review) Objective: To establish a framework for building and supporting parent and community involvement in the Toronto District School Board. Learn more, and share your voice, at www.tdsbengage.ca
Specialized Schools and Programs Policy (New Policy) Objective: To affirm the Board's commitment to providing focused, specialized programming in both local schools and in district-wide specialized schools or programs, and to improving access for all students to these programs. Video: Improving Access for All Students: Overview of the Secondary Program Review. Learn more: https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review and Email: secondaryreview@tdsb.on.ca

More information and survey links on the TDSB Policy Consultations web page.

Introducing the Student Senate

Student Senate elections took place online in January, with a significant increase in voting lists year (~3000 ballots cast). For a full list of Student Senate members, including Student Trustees, please visit the Student Senate web page.

Winter Walk Day

In February we usually celebrate Winter Walk Day. With the pandemic, virtual learning means we need to look for alternate ways to be active. It is still important to get outside and engage in "active transport" (walking, wheeling, running, cycling, skating, skiing) to get ground. For more information, check out the site of Ontario Active School Travel.

Canada Agriculture Day

Canadian Agriculture Day is recognized on February 23rd. Learn more about farming, agriculture, and food production across the country on the AgricultureMoreThanEver.ca website.

School Year Calendar 2020-2021

Note: Virtual Schools follow the same calendar as in-person schools unless otherwise noted.

The official school year calendar for the Toronto District School Board runs from September to June 30. The last day of class for elementary students is June 29, the last day of class for secondary students is June 28.

March Break postponed to April

The Ministry of Education announced last week that March break has been postponed until the week of April 12th due to the pandemic. Read the March news release.

Secondary Quadrimester Calendar

- Quad 3: Feb 23 - April 20 + exams April 21 & 22
Quad 4: April 23 - June 23 + exams June 24, 25 & 28

PA Days & Holidays

Table with 2 columns: PA Days & Holidays, Date. Rows include Good Friday (April 2, 2021), Easter Monday (April 5, 2021), March Break (April 12-16, 2021), Victoria Day (May 24, 2021), Elementary School PA Day (June 4, 2021), Secondary School PA Day (June 29, 2021).

TDSB Brightspace, Brightspace for Parents, Student Virtual Learning IT Support logos

Worth Repeating...

(still-current links from previous newsletter)

- Programming: Switching between Virtual School and in-school learning (elementary) February 3 Board Meeting -- Advocacy Work & Covid Updates Join the Conversation(s): Parent Conference Recordings Parent/Caregiver Engagement: Community Support Workers create Community Hub Kindergarten Registration has begun! Transition to High School Parent Information Sessions (recordings) Post-Secondary Information Session (recording)

- Covid & Safety & Mental Health/Well-Being: Covid-testing sites: Thorncliffe, Flemingdon, and Sunnybrook Reduce the Spread! Winter Well-Being Covid: Stay Healthy during Flu Season Hearts & Minds Newsletter Other: African Heritage Month & Chinese Heritage Month

I encourage everyone to keep checking the TDSB's website (tdsb.on.ca) and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) regularly as more information is released and updated.

As always, should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I hope to see many of you at my upcoming coffee morning on March 10th! And until the next time, stay healthy, stay safe! Warmest wishes, Rachel, Trustee, Ward 11, Don Valley West, Rachel.ChernosLin@tdsb.on.ca

TORONTO Public Health, COVID Alert app, Need Food, Housing or Financial Support? 211Central.ca

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