

### Dear friends,

As this is my first newsletter of 2021, I want to extend a very happy new year to all. While many of us were happy to say goodbye to 2020, the start to this year has not been without its challenges.

Last week, the world witnessed hateful and unlawful acts in Washington, DC, involving shocking displays of white supremacy, racism and bigotry, all in the name of rioting against the results of a fair and democratic election. TDSB Board Chair Alexander Brown issued a statement on behalf of the TDSB, condemning the actions of these groups and individuals. As members of the TDSB's Jewish Heritage Committee, Trustees Laskin, Lulka and myself took the opportunity to reflect on this incident as well, issuing an additional statement in response. You can read it here.

Discussions at home about these incidents and related issues can be challenging - staff are actively working on additional resources for schools and families to support students. In the meantime, several existing resources can be accessed by families:

 <u>Talking about Race - Resources for Families</u> TDSB Genocide and Holocaust Resources

As always, supports are available to students and staff should they be experiencing trauma including Social Work and Professional Support Services.

#### Ward Forum - January 25

Of course the biggest news in education circles is the continued closure of all Toronto schools until at least February 10, 2021. With this in mind, I have scheduled a virtual Ward Forum for the evening of Monday, January 25 (from 7-9pm). The topic for the evening will be "Elementary Online Learning", and the event will feature a variety of presentations by local Ward 11 educators from each elementary division (kindergarten, primary, junior and intermediate grades, as well as remote learning for students with special needs). Please join us to get a first hand look at the types of online work being undertaken in your children's online classrooms. Check out the flyer for this exciting evening and register here.

#### **Covid-19 updates**

In other news, on Tuesday, January 12, senior staff shared an update with Trustees on various impacts of Covid-19. The agenda included Toronto Public Health information, Covid-19 case numbers (including city 'heat maps'), and the December school closures; Testing; Students with Special Education Needs; Mental Health and Well-Being Supports; Elementary Switching Survey Update & Toronto Public Health Response; Virtual Elementary School DECEs (assigned Early Childhood Educators); Secondary Quadmester Changeover; Virtual School Budgets, and more.

The complete Presentation Slide Deck is worth reading, and the entire meeting webcast is archived for viewing.

#### **Cannabis store**

Finally, I was recently informed that an application has been submitted to open a cannabis retail store in the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood in the plaza at the corner of Thorncliffe Park Drive and Overlea Boulevard. As this location is in very close proximity to four TDSB schools, as well as a plaza that many students frequent as well as walk by on their way to and from school, I have requested that this application be denied in a letter to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario (AGCO). My letter was in good company, as local community groups as well as City Councillor Jaye Robinson also submitted letters asking that this application be denied.

Read on for more news including advocacy work on vaccine rollout for education workers and teachers, the Support for Learners grant (now open to parents of students age 13 and up), Middle Immersion registration, Optional Attendance, and much more.

# In this newsletter...

- <u>Remote Learning Extended</u>
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- <u>Virtual School Staff Directories</u> • Middle Immersion Registration: until January 29
- Applying for Optional Attendance
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- Parent/Guardian Survey: week of January 25
- Before and After School Programming Survey.
- <u>Covid-19 testing sites: Thorncliffe, Flemingdon, Sunnybrook</u> • Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grants
- Mentors Needed January Mentoring Month
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#### Remote Learning Extended until at least February 10 -- Advocacy Work on **Vaccination Rollout for Education Workers**

As mentioned above, the Provincial Government announced new measures this week to curb the spread of Covid-19 and declared that remote learning for elementary and secondary bricks-and-mortar students will continue until February 9 with a return to inperson learning tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 10, 2021.

During the closure period, remote learning will continue, as will in-person supports for students with special education needs who cannot be accommodated through remote learning. If you have a child in an ISP setting who is not able to learn online, please reach out to your child's teacher and principal to see if they can be accommodated in a school setting during the closure.

In Ward 11, we have two congregated schools (Park Lane and Sunnyview Public School), along with several Intensive Support classes in our local schools. I want to extend a very special thank you to the education workers, teachers and administrators who have been coming in to work with our most vulnerable students during this closure. Their exemplary commitment to come in, while the rest of the city is shut down due to rising covid numbers, speaks to their exceptional commitment to our students with special needs.

I believe that our educational workers and teachers should all be prioritized in Ontario's vaccine rollout. Currently, TDSB trustees have posted a notice of motion that asks the Province to prioritize education workers and teachers in the Ontario Vaccination Rollout Plan (and as of a tweet by Minister Lecce last night, this appears to be in the works). However, I feel that our TDSB motion should go further, and ask for further prioritization of all staff working in our highest risk settings -- such as those working in these ISP settings and congregated sites. To this end, I am planning to move an amendment to this motion that speaks to the importance of prioritzing all staff working in our highest risk settings. Stay tuned!

Once schools reopen, the Ministry of Education has indicated that new health and safety measures will be put in place once students return to in-person learning. We do not have full details yet, but some of these will include:

- Mask wearing outdoors;
- · Enhanced screening protocols; and
- Expanded targeted testing.

The announcement of the government is: <u>here</u>. More information will follow. Before and after-school programs can be offered when in-person instruction resumes.

All our schools will continue to support all families to ensure that learning can continue as best as possible during the closure, although we recognize that everyone is trying their best to balance life, work, childcare, and remote learning, among other things right now. While we believe the continuation of learning is important, the mental health and well-being of our students is just as important. We would encourage parents/guardians to review important resources that we have compiled that may help support your children during this challenging period.

We know the current situation is far from ideal for many of our families, but we will continue to support you as best we can during this time. Should you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your child's school.

If the technology you have access to at home is not able to support your child's learning, please reach out to your child's classroom teacher or your school's Principal to request a device.

Additional resources for remote learning are available: here.



Student Virtual Learning IT Support

Support for Learners Grant - Application now available and extended to ALL school

age children The Province of Ontario's Budget has extended their additional one-time payments to help offset the costs of the pandemic. The \$200 payment per child aged 12 and under has now been expanded to include all school age children. The payment is \$250 for children aged 21 or younger with special needs.

The application deadline is February 8, 2021, and can be accessed here.

### **Virtual School Staff Directories**

Please note that Virtual School administrative team directories are available online and are updated on an ongoing basis. A number of new staff have been welcomed to the teams this week.

Learning Centre 1 Elementary School Directory

<u>Virtual Secondary School</u>

# MIDDLE FRENCH IMMERSION Applications Open: Jan. 4, 2021 | Deadline: Jan. 29, 2021

### Register for Middle French Immersion (starting in grade 4)

Please note: This program will replace the Junior Extended French program as the Grade 4 entry program in TDSB starting in the 2021-2022 school year.

For families interested in the Toronto District School Board's system-wide Middle French Immersion program, we offer an online process to apply. For details, please see the downloadable information package

Applications for the program, which starts September 2021, must be completed online by January 29, 2021. An offer of placement in the program (but not a specific school) is guaranteed to all on-time applicants.

To learn more about this new program, Virtual Web Chat Information Sessions are coming up at the following dates and times:

• January 21, 2021 – 7 p.m. • January 27, 2021 – 7 p.m.

To participate in these live web chats, please visit the information meeting web page for the meeting link on the dates/times as outlined above. Previous meetings (like the one on January 14) are likely to be archived on this page as well.

#### **Applying for Optional Attendance**

Students who wish to register for a school for the 2021-2022 school year that is not their designated home school can do so by applying for Optional Attendance. Acceptance at these schools is subject to space availability and program suitability.

Because of the current school closures it is necessary for the Board to adjust the Optional Attendance process due to the heightened need to reduce potential Covid-19 exposures. As such, the following process will be in place for the remainder of this school year should your child/ward be applying to a school via Optional Attendance:

- The parent/guardian will complete the Optional Attendance form and will email the completed form to current school principal. The form may be sent as a scan, a photo
- or a screengrab. • The current school principal or designate (VP, office staff etc.) will sign and email the form(s) to the receiving school.
- The receiving school will confirm receipt of the form(s) by way of email reply to the sending school.
- The current school will communicate with families that the Optional Attendance Form was signed, sent and received by the receiving school. • The current school principal or designate will track optional attendance applications
- to ensure that TDSB policies are being followed. All current timelines are still in effect. Forms for secondary schools are due by

January 29, 2021, and for elementary schools by February 12, 2021.

- Elementary Optional Attendance Key Dates:
  - February 12, 2021: Optional attendance forms due at elementary school • March 05, 2021: Deadline for parents/guardians to be informed of the status of the
  - application request • March 26, 2021: Parents/guardians must inform the requested school of their acceptance of the offer

Secondary Optional Attendance – Key Dates:

- January 29, 2021: Optional attendance forms due at secondary school
- February 12, 2021: Deadline for parents/guardians of students to be informed of the status of the application request
- February 26, 2021: Course selection sheets due at secondary schools

More information and forms are available at the TDSB Optional Attendance web page.

Please contact your school principal should you have any questions.

#### **TDSB Alternative & Specialty Schools Information**

Did you know there are 40 different TDSB Alternative Schools across Toronto ranging from grades JK to 12? All of them are free and open to any resident of Toronto, regardless where they live in the city. There are nature schools, art schools and even a TDSB skate boarding school!

The deadline to apply for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year is mid-February. TDSB Alternative Schools are a great option when students and their families want something a little different from their traditional elementary and/or secondary school. Learn more about Alternative Schools by clicking the links listed below:

- Find TDSB Alternative Schools
- <u>Quick Reference Guide Featuring all 40 Alternative Schools (PDF):</u>

<u>TDSB Open Houses</u> (note that online sessions are often posted for (re)viewing)

TDSB also has Academies and Specialty Schools, like the Sports and Wellness Academy and Karen Kain School of the Arts, which are also FREE and open to any resident of Toronto. Click below to learn more:

- <u>Elementary Academies</u>
- <u>Elementary Speciality Arts-Based</u>
- <u>Secondary Specialty</u>

Please note, all of these TDSB schools are designated as optional attendance. This means any Toronto resident may attend them for FREE if space is available; however, TDSB will NOT provide transportation to/from school.

#### Grade 3 Universal Screening (CCAT7) update

Due to the current Ministry of Education's closure of schools, staff are unable to administer the CCAT7 (Universal Screening) test to Grade 3 students in-person on January 15, 2021. To avoid future disruptions, an alternate process is being established. All Grade 3 families will be sent a communication informing them of changes and updates to the testing process.

Student in grade 3 Virtual School (VS) will continue to have the opportunity to write the CCAT-7 test virtually.

The test is to be administered remotely during the week of February 8-11, 2021 with the supervision of the Virtual School grade 3 teacher.

More information is available here or through your child's Gr. 3 teacher.

Parent/Guardian and Student Online Survey – Week of January 25

The TDSB will be surveying both parents/guardians (JK to Grade 12) and students (Grades 6 to 12) during the week of January 25 to learn more about experiences to date related to mental health and well-being, student engagement, and learning.

Please watch for an email with a link to the survey and/or check the TDSB home page for updates. Thank you in advance for your participation!

#### 2021-22 Before-and After-School Programs (BASP) Interest Survey for Students in Kindergarten to Grade

In alignment with the Early Learning and Care Policy (P022), the TDSB recognizes that Before-and After-School Programs (BASPs) are an integral part of Early Years learning. These programs also play an important role in supporting our students, families and school communities.

Under the <u>Education Act, O. Reg. 221/11</u>, school boards are required to offer Before-and After-School Programs (BASP) in all elementary schools serving students in grades JK to 6, where there is sufficient demand or viability. More information about these requirements can be found in the Ministry of Education Before-and-After School Programs Kindergarten -Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines for School Boards.

TDSB Child Care Services team will be conducting a parent BASP Interest Survey to determine if there is sufficient interest in developing a new BASP in schools that currently do not have a program. More information about the survey will be posted at <u>www.tdsb.on.ca/BASP</u> by January 15.

If your school does not currently have a BASP, the Child Care Services team will contact you directly. If a BASP already exists at the school, staff is requested to share information about this program with interested families.

COVID-19

**Testing Site** 

Thorncliffe Park -

Open to any resident in the surrounding neighbourhood who wants to be tested for COVID-19.

nity hotline

Open 7 days/week, 1:00pm – 7:00pm

Bring your health card, if you have one.

COVID-19 testing is available for all ages.

Updated November 30, 2020

647 477 1640

Drop-ins welcome

(-)

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TNO Youth Centre – 45 Overlea Blvd., Unit 108A NO ACCESS FROM INSIDE MALL – ENTER FROM BACK PARKING LOT

and neighbourhood resources

#### Covid-testing sites: Thorncliffe, Flemingdon (both extended through December!), and Sunnybrook

In and near Ward 11, there are several places to get a Covid-test, including:

Sunnybrook Hospital (LOCATION MOVED: Vaughan Estate - 80 Armistice Dr).

Open daily 9 am to 7:30pm Info (including pre-booking your

appointment): <u>here</u>. Thorncliffe: TNO Youth Centre (45 Overlea

Blvd., Unit 108A) Open every day for the month of January;

Health Access Thornelife Park TNO fice East-FPN East Toronto Health Partne Hours: 1 – 7 p.m. You may also book an appointment in advance at

this site by calling 647-477-1640. Last test at 6:45 p.m.; to ensure you receive a test, please arrive before 6:45 p.m.

Thorncliffe: Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre (48 Thorncliffe Drive) Open January 4–8, 11–15, 18–22 and 25–29 (every Monday to Friday);

Hours: 1 - 7 p.m. You may also book an appointment in advance at this site by calling 647-477-1640. Last test at 6:45 p.m.; to ensure you receive a test, please arrive before 6:45 p.m.

Flemingdon Park: Dennis R. Timbrell Resource Centre (29 St Dennis Dr. Open January 2–3, 8–10, 15–17, 22–24 and 29–31 (every Friday to Sunday);

Hours: 1 to 7 p.m.

You may also book an appointment in advance at this site by calling 647-477-1640. Last test at 6:45 p.m.; to ensure you receive a test, please arrive before 6:45 p.m.

Flemingdon Park: Angela James Arena (165 Grenoble Dr.) Open January 4–6, 11–13, 18–20 and 25–27 (every Monday to Wednesday);

Hours: 1 to 7 p.m. You may also book an appointment in advance at this site by calling 647-477-1640. Last test at 6:45 p.m.; to ensure you receive a test, please arrive before 6:45 p.m.

In addition, various pharmacies offer free testing, by appointment, only to people meeting certain criteria. More information: here (full info) and here (for the locations).

# Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant

The TDSB has received funding under the 2020-2021 Ontario Priorities and Partnerships Fund for the PRO Grant. The Board was allocated \$131,563.00 for projects focussing on the identification and removal of barriers that prevent parents and families from participating and engaging fully in their children's learning, and that demonstrate a commitment to respecting the role of parents in students' educational experiences. All funds must be spent and reported to the Ministry by August 21, 2021.

Following conversations with the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), the funds will be allocated to support the following initiatives:

- School Council Anti-Black Racism, anti-Indigenous and anti-oppression application
- initiatives (\$52,500@1,500/Council) info to follow.
- Virtual Parent/Caregiver engagement tools and supports (\$20,000) Conversation Series 2.0-Going Deeper (\$35,000)
- Enhanced Multi-lingual Supports (\$24,063)

For further information please, contact Michelle Munroe, Coordinator of Parent and Community Engagement at michelle.munroe@tdsb.on.ca

# Mentors Needed! January Mentoring Month

Forwarded on behalf of MENTOR Canada/Lytton Communications:

January is Mentoring Month. Please help us encourage caring adults in your community to become mentors.

Over 15,000 Canadian youth are waiting to be matched with a mentor. Many of these young people have been deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and are struggling with barriers to education, employment and equity.

MENTOR Canada is a coalition of organizations that enhance and expand youth mentoring. We are working together to expand access to mentoring and empower every young person to fulfil their potential. MENTOR Canada is funded by the Government of Canada Youth Employment Skills Strategy (ESDC) and BMO Financial Group.

For more information, please visit the website at <u>www.mentoringcanada.ca</u>, <u>watch the</u> video, and/or download a complete toolkit.

# Sikh Heritage Month: Invitation to Participate in Planning Committee

The TDSB is proud to celebrate 14 Heritage/History Months throughout the school year. The TDSB website has a complete listing of heritage/history months that the TDSB recognizes.

This is a call-out for individuals to join the Sikh Heritage Month Volunteer Planning Committee to develop system-wide activities for students, staff and the TDSB community. The mandate of the volunteer planning committee is to provide learning opportunities for students, staff and the TDSB community, as well as to enrich the curriculum resources through a collaborative approach of TDSB staff, community members and Trustees.

Details of the first Sikh Heritage Month Planning Committee meeting is noted below. We hope you will be able to be part of our planning committee.

Sikh Heritage Month Planning Committee

Date: Monday, January 25, 2021 **Time:** 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Zoom: https://tdsb-ca.zoom.us/j/94744308878

Should you require additional information on Sikh Heritage Month, please contact Peter Singh, Executive Officer, Information Technology and Information Management and Senior Team Lead for Sikh Heritage at peter.singh@tdsb.on.ca or contact Dani Carnevale, Service Co-ordinator at dani.carnevale@tdsb.on.ca.

# **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 athe calendar with all Agendas, Minutes and documents (posted each Friday before the upcoming meetings).

The schedule for the upcoming weeks is as follows:

- January 20th 4:30pm Finance, Budget & Enrolment Committee
- January 26th -- 4:30pm Planning & Priorities Committee -- Covid Update (Tentative) January 27th - 4:30pm - Planning & Priorities Committee
  - February 3 4:30pm Regular Board Meeting
  - Feburary 10 4:30pm Governance & Policy Committee
  - February 17 4:30pm Program and School Services Committee
- All previous meetings are available for viewing in the webcast archive.

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.

#### 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.

Secondary Quadmester Calendar

- Quad 2: Nov. 23 Feb 4
- Quad 3: Feb 8 April 20 + exams April 21 & 2
- Quad 4: April 23 June 23 + exams June 24, 25 & 28

# PA Days & Holidays Remaining

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

### Worth Repeating...

(still-current links from previous newsletter)

#### **Programming:**

• Transition to High School Parent Information Sessions (recordings)

- <u>Post-Secondary Information Session</u> (recording)
- **Covid & Safety:**
- Reduce the Spread!
- Winter Well-Being Covid: Stay Healthy during Flu Season
- Other:
- Have your say on the Budget of TDSB and the Ontario Ministry of Education
- January: Tamil Heritage Month
- <u>Central Nutrition Pantry Opens for TDSB Students and Families</u> <u>Supporting United Way & Toronto Foundation for Student Success</u>

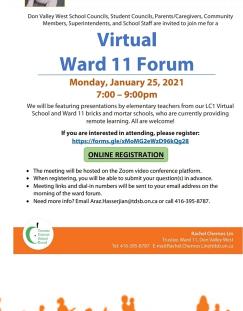
As always, I encourage everyone to keep checking the TDSB's website (tdsb.on.ca) and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) regularly as more information is released and updated.

In closing, I hope that all elementary families and staff will enjoy their PA Day tomorrow, and I hope to see many of you a week from Monday at our Virtual Ward Forum on the 25th of January.

Stay healthy, stay safe,

Warm regards, Rachel

Rachel Chernos Lin TDSB Trustee, Ward 11, Don Valley West, Rachel.ChernosLin@tdsb.on.ca



Trustee Rachel Chernos Lin



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