

Bowmore School Council Meeting Agenda and Minutes
Tuesday, April 8, 2025
6:00pm to 7:30pm
School Cafeteria

1. Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

2. Caring and Safe Schools Discussion

i. Welcome to our special guests:

i. Anastasia Poulis, Superintendent

- TDSB has a Caring and Safe Schools Committee.
- If there is an incident, for example at Bowmore, the first person to be reached out to is Bruno Berto, and he gets involved. This is the process. Bruno is part of our team. There is also Paul Duncan who we connect with.
- Centrally assigned Principals for Equity, Black Students and Special Education

ii. Bruno Berto, Centrally Assigned Principal for Caring and Safe Schools

- P051 - Caring and Safe Schools
- We are here to Support the admin, school and community when there are students in crisis
- Policies and procedures give us guidance in terms of the questions we ask and the supports we put in place
- Progressive Discipline - restorative means to help students and family in a crisis situation
- Sometimes that necessitates different supports, including suspension when needed. Support is always included.
- When an issue arises, a Principal or VP will reach out to us, we will ask questions and get a response team involved when needed, to try to work things out. Parents have a huge part to play. Children and staff deserve to be in safe and positive environments.
- Ensure learning is provided in an equitable way.
- In trying to create a safe working and learning environment, we need to hear voices from all parts of the school and community.
- There is a parent concern protocol, a 4 step process, for class-based issues, more info here: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/contact-us/steps-to-address-questions-concerns>
- We hope we don't get to step 3 where the Superintendent gets involved as the parents, teachers and admin know the child best and know what their strengths and interests are and are best positioned to find out what is getting in the way of their learning. We like to develop positive relationships with the staff, school, and community. Bruno is part of a team, Paul is an advisor Bruno works with. They consult together and work with the administration when there are concerns.
- **Question from Parent 1:** What if the steps are followed and the problem still persists, like bullying? What do we do as a community to get the help these children need which is beyond anyone's control here, as it's disruptive to everyone. We need to hear answers on steps we need to take to stop the bullying.
- **Answer from Bruno:** You are talking about a culture within a school. Safe and positive learning environments are all of our jobs. If we have a situation of, for example pervasive bullying, that would require us sitting at a table and talking about ways to combat bullying. We wouldn't be able to discuss a specific child. When the issue of bullying becomes prevalent in a school, we're talking about things that need to be named and dealt with in a public manner, so the community

feels their voice is heard. We need to monitor and have accountability measures. We won't change the culture of bullying overnight if there is some permissiveness. Many times it's an issue in the community that comes up at the school. We need to know what's going on with your children, you are our partners. We need to ensure bullying doesn't happen. You deserve to have the expectation that your child can learn in a safe environment. Need to have some proactive steps and time to meet to work out the steps and then have monitoring. This forum here is a space to express that kind of concern. The administration and I have heard that. I will talk with Kosta to discuss things. Keep this on the table as an agenda item to see if there has been any improvement. When it's about the culture of the building, we are involved. But when it's about a specific child, we cannot get involved.

- **Follow up question from Parent 1:** What do we do when the problem is still existing and getting worse and it's inside the school, how do we as a group come together and build the culture and help the problem get better?
- **Answer from Bruno:** I don't know the ins and outs of your community. I am learning. The communities that I've served have had very challenging dynamics. In over 30 years, where there is a real commitment to working together, not to get what we want, but to leave the space better than we found it, that's when we get results. With respect to bullying, if you are working in the system, and you are at Step Four and it's still not resolved, the system needs to work harder.
- **Answer from Anastasia:** Bruno and I are here because we want to listen and be part of the work. I am very invested in making sure we come to solutions. But we are talking about kids aged 3-14 and we need to think proactively how we can support them in the manner that we can. There is a Code of Conduct now. Steps are being taken. It's not about parents doing the work on their own.
- **Leah:** turns it over to Parent 2 to read a prepared statement crafted by a group of concerned parents.
- **Tanya reads a statement on behalf of Tanya, Erin, Taya and Siobhan:** This started with a small group of parents and now a wider group of extended parents. Many people sent many notes to me to contribute. This is how the parents are feeling and how we got here, what our students are feeling and what we are hoping for.

Good evening everyone. We would like to thank the Parent Council for giving us the time and space to speak tonight. We're here as a group of parents, originally from one of Bowmoe's gifted classes — but now representing a much larger group of many different Bowmore families — with a school-wide concern around bullying, the school's protocols for responding to it, and the state of communication around these incidents to our parent and caregiver community.

Our small group started as a strong and positive support network for our kids - sharing updates and weekend plans - but through that open dialogue, another pattern emerged. Families began quietly — but consistently — sharing troubling experiences around school safety, bullying, and their issues communicating with the school around these incidents.

At first, we wondered if we were just missing information — perhaps there were protocols we simply weren't aware of in place, especially as most of us are new to the Bowmore community.

But the more we listened, the more we realized these weren't isolated situations — and more than half of the families in our class had similar experiences – with some situations beyond typical schoolyard conflicts — pointing to repeated patterns of bullying, unclear or completely missing communications, and confusion around the actual safety procedures being put in place.

We tried to address these concerns collaboratively by requesting a meeting with Administration — but were told this wasn't possible due to the TDSB Privacy Policies in place and that we could only communicate one-by-one, individually.

We absolutely respect the importance of privacy for individual students and families — that is non-negotiable. But maintaining privacy cannot equate denying the ability to address larger issues at hand, or used to infinitely isolate events.

As we expanded the conversation beyond our class, we learned we weren't alone — many families from all ages, Kindergarten through Grade 8, shared the same experiences, the same concerns, and the same frustrations. Spanning not just this term, or even this year, but going back for multiple years.

To summarize generally, here is what we have heard from many Bowmore families, over and over again:

- Students feel unsafe moving through their school — even in pairs or groups.
- Students are witnessing bullying or violence with little to no visible subsequent prevention activities or communicated follow-up.
- The first time parents are hearing about serious incidents is at home, from their own children — but rarely from the school admin directly.
- Teachers and staff are being put in difficult, and even dangerous positions, without adequate support.
- And most alarming — students are starting to believe they must handle these situations themselves, because they don't trust that the school can or will.

As a parent and caregiver community, this is deeply concerning. We want to be very clear — we respect and appreciate the work that Bowmore's teachers, staff, and Admin team have put in so far. We understand that the teachers developed and presented a plan to the Admin and Safe and Caring School Committee at the beginning of this year to address some of these issues - but the community at large never heard about this (until this morning), and we also never heard if it was adopted, let alone implemented (once again, until this morning). The timing of this delivery, only hours before this well-known and well-advertised meeting speaks volumes towards why we are here tonight.

We know this situation is complex. We know resources are stretched. But that is exactly why we are asking for a whole-school-community approach — with whole-school-community communication — because this is a whole-school-community problem.

By continuously dealing with issues one-by-one-by-one — the school Administration and TDSB seems to have effectively become blinded to the larger overall community ramifications the ongoing situations have created. That said — we are not here not to just to raise alarm bells. We are here to propose and inquire about possible next steps - ones that we hope will actually be put in place and utilized immediately. We have taken our lead from measures that other TDSB schools have already implemented successfully — centred on safety, inclusion, and shared responsibility.

We are hoping we can collectively move forward around the following areas:

1. Developing a Whole-School Culture of Safety & Inclusion

From this morning's email, we appreciate the shared community values outlined in the Code of Conduct and the emphasis on respect, belonging, inclusion, and speaking up. We would like it confirmed that this updated policy provides for consistent, school-wide reinforcement of safety and respect values — through classroom discussions, assemblies, and staff-wide training in bullying prevention, equity and inclusion, and trauma-informed practice.

In addition to the formal student code of conduct and contract - we hope that there are some hardline points of reference and discipline, that is widely and consistently communicated, and actively reinforced, across the entire school population. We want to ensure this protocol meets the needs of TDSB equity and inclusion mandates, and works for the full community, so that it can actually be enacted and not just talked about or plastered on a website page. If this means bringing in additional, professional voices to the table - we want to know that is happening, and when, and what a timeline would be for putting things in action.

2. Provide Clear Response Protocols & Follow-Through

From this morning's email, we are glad to see a tiered progressive discipline framework included and appreciate the emphasis on restorative approaches and student support plans. However much of this framework was already in place and being utilized already we want to know what will be different - because what is in place now is clearly not Working. We are hoping transparent follow-up to all involved will be added — so that students and their families know their concerns are being taken seriously and action is being taken. We would also like to understand how the school determines when individual issues constitute an acknowledged repeated pattern of problems, and how those situations will be escalated or addressed more proactively so they provide a solution and not a band-aid. We would also like to know what the current safety protocols are for high-risk areas like washrooms, hallways, and recess yards. Finally, we would like to ask that a step is added to current protocols that ensures parents/caregivers are the first people contacted when any issue requires the involvement of the Admin, not the last.

3. Encourage Community Engagement & Shared Responsibility

We are happy to hear from this morning's information that there will be growth, continuance and consistency in gathering together our Safe and Caring Schools Committee, which most definitely needs to be meeting far more regularly than the "one time" it has met so far this year. We hope this will mean the maintenance of regular communication with families about safety initiatives and encourage more active engagement of parents on the committee. We would like to ask that regular safety updates be presented at the

monthly School Council meetings so we can work together and be informed throughout the whole year and not just when issues arise.

4. Provide Monitoring & Accountability

As per this morning's information, references were made to the implementation and communication of the Code of Conduct. With this in place, we would like to know that it is paired with the implementation of mechanisms to monitor its effectiveness and ensure Accountability. Would safety climate surveys be explored? Or other reports or tools that would monitor student safety and well-being? What would be the process for annual reviews of the safety plans in place? And how would we ensure that student and staff voices will inform this process? We feel that providing the full community visible and communicated tracking, of not just incidents — but also the overall progress of our safety initiatives — would benefit the whole community, so everyone can see where we stand and how we are improving.

5. Tell Us How We Can Help

We understand resources are tight — but parents and caregivers want to help. We just don't always know how. What do you need? Where can we help? What do we need to rally support for? We are here — ready to work alongside you.

We recognize the complexity. We recognize the challenges.

But we also recognize that right now — despite the processes already in place — we have a whole community of students who are either afraid for themselves, fearful for their friends, anxious about their environment, or concerned that they have a target on their backs. This is not what our children should be feeling when they step onto the school grounds. The current processes and policies as is are NOT working.

We hope that by openly communicating as a community and working together — respectfully, collectively and collaboratively — we can begin a movement of change towards a safer, more supportive environment for every student and staff member at Bowmore. Thank you.

- **Response from Bruno:** This meeting here will be followed up with staff too, as they need to hear what parents are concerned about. Planning needs to happen. Every school should have a Safe and Caring School Committee with a parent voice. You have a right that it's public facing, and meets regularly. If bullying is the concern, that committee needs to make it actionable, with Kosta and the admin team working with the school. The admin and management side of it, we're here because we want to effect change in a positive way. I am here to navigate support. I'm happy you outlined 5 specific areas. This goes back to admin to start making actionable pieces. There are things that can happen right away. We can come up with immediate, short term, and longer term pieces. I appreciate what you have to say. They are actionable and you should see some results coming from that. That committee is a critical committee. The staff working with admin. Parents can work to support the school in anti-bullying initiatives that make sense for your community. Sometimes when we have children in crisis we should support them and that doesn't mean they aren't held accountable. I know you may not hear exactly what you want to hear but we all need to work together. If you have a question, send it to Kosta and he will send it to me.
- **Question from Parent 3:** We'd like to hear from Kosta, as we've been told that privacy issues prevent us from being informed, so we want to hear that it's landed.

- **Answer from Kosta:** I want to say that it is a privilege and an honour to serve Bowmore. We know that this year with our Principal not being in place, it's been a challenging year. Your voice has been heard tonight. It's very important and I value everyone's voice - staff, students, families. This is our top priority. That's why in my very first week I met with my staff in the Safe & Caring Committee, Equity Committee, Urban Indigenous Education Centre, and Leah on the School Council. I know we need to work together for that shared vision on how to create that safe & caring atmosphere and learning environment that's conducive for all students. If you want to become part of the sub-committee of Safe & Caring Schools, we want to follow up on that. This is a big community. They all deserve high quality education. Bowmore has amazing staff, they are supportive, they are taking safety concerns seriously and we are working together. If you want to shift culture, its building capacity, to work together so there's understanding of progressive discipline. If something serious happens in the building, the top priority is safety, then we talk to Bruno, we may reach out to the Manager of Social Work. I want to emphasize that, because we are dealing with children. How do we help that child learn from their mistake and grow from it? There are policies, accountability and transparency. I understand that due to privacy concerns, the reality is not the perception. I have four children, my youngest is in grade 8. When I send my kids to school, my expectation is that they come home safe and learn. When there is an issue, reach out to me. We always follow up with that family. But we cannot follow up with the whole community. Jackie has been amazing in dealing with these issues. If you reach out to us with a concern, we will follow up with you. It may be the following day, because there's over 1,000 children. The timing of the Code of Conduct, I thought it was perfect timing so you know that we are hearing your concerns, and that we immediately took action.
- Here are a list of actions we can take to address concerns

Bowmore - Caring and Safe School

Progressive discipline

Our approach to making schools safe and accepting focuses on:

1. Promoting positive student behaviour
2. Providing early and ongoing intervention
3. Preventing inappropriate behaviour
4. Addressing inappropriate behaviour with appropriate consequences with educational talking points

<https://schoolweb.tdsb.on.ca/bowmore/Code-of-Conduct>

1. **Verbal Warning:** A teacher or staff member may provide a verbal warning to a student to address minor behavioral issues.
2. **Written Warning:** If the behavior continues, a written warning may be issued to the student, which is typically recorded and shared with administration and families in the form of an [Office Referral](#).
3. **Think/Reflection Sheet:** Students will draw / write about the incident and explain their actions. [Reflection sheets](#) will be kept by the office and teacher to track behaviour and look for patterns.
4. **Loss of Privileges:** Students may lose privileges such as recess, extracurricular activities or other privileges within the school setting.
5. **Restitution:** Students may be required to make amends for their behavior, such as cleaning up a mess they made, apologizing, participating in a Restorative Circle, community service, or repairing damage they caused.
6. **Parent/Guardian Meeting:** A meeting involving the student, parents/guardians and school staff to discuss the behavior and develop a plan for improvement.
7. **Behavior Contract:** A behavior contract outlines specific expectations for the student's behavior and consequences if those expectations are not consistently met.
8. **IST/SST/Counseling or Referrals for Support Services:** Students may be referred for counseling with our school Social Worker to address underlying issues contributing to their behavior.
9. **In-School Suspension:** In some cases, students may be temporarily removed from the regular classroom setting and placed in a supervised environment within the school.
10. **Progress Monitoring:** Ongoing monitoring (ABC Chart) of the student's behavior and progress, toward meeting expectations, with adjustments to interventions as needed.
11. **Off School Suspension** (20 days pending investigation based on 306/310 violations). A pupil in junior kindergarten, kindergarten or grade 1, 2 or 3 shall not be suspended under sections 306/310 of the [Education Act](#).

- We are building capacity with students. We want to start a peer program. Help students build social and emotional skills. We will address these issues with kids in an assembly. There will be posters with common language. Parents can also start using that vocabulary (start, start, continue). When we start using this language, it will also train the brain into behaviours. It will take some time to shift the culture but we are committed to this work.

- We have put in place a second hall monitor and met with the Superintendent to get support.
- Education piece is critical. On Friday we are starting a new committee called the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.
- This week Jacquie and I met with the Equity Leadership Team as we want to do Equity work.
- Something new, which was launched a couple years ago is a student learning strategy combating hate and racism. Building capacity with staff. June 2026 - we want to have a celebration with all the school clubs.
- Working together we can accomplish this. It really is about community and bringing everyone together. There will be bumps along the way. If you'll have me, I am happy to support you. And now you have someone to call. I want you to know that you can reach out to me anytime. I never shy away from a difficult conversation because I know as parents you're concerned about your children and you want to advocate for your children.

- **Statement from Parent 3:** Kids are frightened to go into the bathroom due to a vandalism and cleanliness issue, as a result of adults not being able to go into the bathrooms.

- **Response from Kosta:** Leah and I can meet with parents to follow up on that.

- **Statement from Parent 4:** Parent involvement is not an issue. If you read TDSB policies there is language of "TDSB enforces" used - we would like to see TDSB enforce a policy, where parents don't need to be involved.

- **Response from Kosta:** The tricky part is, for example, if there is an incident reported, we immediately investigate, when that justifies a specific discipline measure, that measure is enforced. The problem is that this is about trust. When I give consequences to a student, I am going to have a conversation with that child's family and the other child who was involved. But I cannot give the other child's family information as to what those consequences were. That's where you have to trust me that consequences were enforced. If I can ask one thing of this community, is to give me some time to earn your trust. I wasn't the Principal, I was the Vice Principal, if I can ask you to give me some time to earn your trust where we can implement this with our staff and parents.

- **Response from Parent 4:** If TDSB policy is enforced, it will create a good culture.

- **Kosta:** I have to be aware of my power, because schools can also cause trauma to a child. It always has to be respectful. I understand what you're saying, we are talking about human beings, and children. Sometimes just a child coming into the office can be a scary experience for them. Policy is important to me, and I want you to hold me accountable. We have to be mindful that this doesn't become a conversation in the public sphere.

- **Parent statement 5:** We want to have a way to see how things are improving. What do you suggest?

- **Kosta:** There is a vision and plan. We have reached out to staff and families. We need some time. I really trust our team.

- **Parent 5 follow up:** I think it would be useful to issue a School Climate Survey to see where it is at and where it is going.

- **Kosta:** Parents can come to the next Safe & Caring committee, and think of one action item we can implement immediately. It can be the Survey if that's what parents want.
- **Parent 6:** Part of the problem is inconsistency in admin. Having you in this position is great and that you want to effect change. What does the title "Acting" Principal mean? Are you here to stay?
- **Response from Anastasia:** "Acting" is a term currently being used because it has not gone through the board process. The Board of Trustees have to vote through promotions. There is a commitment to remove the "Acting" and make him the permanent Principal. Similarly to me, I am in an Acting Superintendent role.
- **Parent 6 follow up:** What is the timeline?
- **Anastasia:** My intention is by the end of this school year. We can't put someone in a position unless the Board of Trustees voted on it. I want to address the rotating administration for a vacancy position. Right now Kosta's VP role is vacant and we have Retired Principals who can work a certain amount of days. Our intention is to have a permanent VP role. I don't have a date as that is a process to find the perfect fit. The immediate priority is the permanent principal position, that takes precedence. I cannot take a teacher from a school to put them in a VP role. It's easier to put a VP in a Principal role than a teacher in a VP role.
- **Parent 7:** There is no consistency in the office.
- **Anastasia:** Absolutely, this is across the TDSB. Just know that Bowmore is my priority. This is a broader issue. Because Kosta knows the school and Jacquie continues to be here, regardless who comes in, they will be supported by this team.
- **Parent 8:** Can we bring in an Emergency Parent when teachers are out sick? Can we find someone to teach Grade 7 French so Jacquie doesn't need to?
- **Anastasia:** We have found someone to teach Grade 7 French.
- **Parent 1:** I like what I see here. Having a hall monitor, for example, helps a lot of schools - to remediate students roaming the halls and creating havoc. Bathrooms are a problem. It's not just a janitorial issue. Guiding kids back to their class, and stopping the kids who are causing the problems in the bathrooms. It says we are watching and we care.
- **Anastasia:** We have two safety hall monitors, that person is here and we took them from a high school. The washroom issues across the system are a big problem. When we talk about safe and inclusive places, we are also talking about washrooms. But actually naming washrooms as a space in a school which will hold the same level of discipline and accountability. I am raising this topic for all administrators, as I think the washrooms are left out when we talk about safe and inclusive places. That might be the first step in addressing this situation.
- **Leah:** Next meeting is Tuesday, May 6. Please come early again. We will talk about Bowmore Cares at the next meeting. Please read the Bulletin. I will give committee updates there.

3. Presentation on Bowmore Cares (Vasoula Vasilopoulos): to be presented at the next meeting

4. Council Committee Updates:

ii. Carnival Committee (Jess Dexter)

- Call out for a Volunteer Coordinator - it is about 10 hours a week in the three weeks leading up to Carnival. All templates exist. If interested, please let us know. We start planning April 24.

iii. Literacy Committee (Claire DeVeale)

- Literacy volunteers needed for the Literacy Program with Graham Seater or Shannon Connors for a French immersion program.

iv. Grad Committee (Angie Winstl and Katie Gaustad)

- Graduation: Purdy's fundraiser was a big success. We raised \$2,300 for graduation. Pick up is **Monday Apr 14 from 2:30-5:30pm & Tuesday April 15th from 2:30-5:30pm in the School Lobby.**
- Hoodies coming out.
- Graduation is June 25 at Monarch Park.
- Chips and freezie sales will come out soon.

v. DPA Drive (Veronica Logue)

- DPA call out. If you know of anyone who could provide us with a discount or free sports equipment, please reach out.

~~5. Opportunities to get involved:~~

~~vi. Council Budget Committee~~

~~vii. Staff Appreciation Lunch~~

6. Final questions or comments

- **Leah:** There are so many ways to get involved, big and small. What we've seen tonight is that we have an incredible community. I want to thank Bruno, Anastasia, Kosta and Jaquie.

viii. Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 6, 2025