

**Givins/Shaw**  
Junior Public School  
Toronto District School Board



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Thursday, December 9, 2021

Dear Givins/Shaw Community:

In the spring of 2016, I was informed that I would be appointed the Principal of Givins/Shaw PS. To that point, I had spent my career in Etobicoke or North York as a teacher, Vice-Principal, and Principal and I did not know much about the Givins/Shaw community or the school. I was very excited about joining a downtown school. When I examined G/S' website and saw that the school council held a live - band fund-raiser at the Cadillac Lounge on Queen Street West, I thought, 'I am really going to like this place.' Time has proven my initial instinct to be both prescient, and an understatement.

During my first visit to the school that spring, I was able to meet with the co-chairs of the school council, Dale and Jennifer, and they quickly welcomed me to the neighbourhood and provided me with a parental synopsis of some of Givins/Shaw's strengths and needs. From that initial meeting, a comprehensive plan began to form to address G/S' grade configuration, technological inventory, communication between home and school, and ensuring that our collective actions are always focused on allowing all students to succeed.

Indeed, much of our school's focus for the next five plus years stemmed from that first meeting; as did the strong partnership we have enjoyed between the school, the council, and the entire community. Since that time, the council and school have worked in concert and the students have benefitted tremendously. In many ways, Givins/Shaw has become a flagship school within the TDSB, and we would not have been able to navigate as successfully as we have as a school during the pandemic without this connection between the school and the council. I would like to thank our current executive, with Lorraine and Dale as co-chairs, for their ongoing assistance and input.

The only other relationship that may rival the one between the community and the school, with regards to its positive impact for our students, is the one between the students and the Givins/Shaw staff. The G/S staff is remarkable and continues to get stronger each year. Our ECE's and Kindergarten teachers work as a team to successfully begin educational careers for our youngest learners. Our non-homeroom teachers support all our staff and students and ensure that we continue to strive to address identified needs. Our Lunch Supervisors, Educational Assistants, and Special Needs Assistants work tirelessly to provide equitable student access to the school day. The combined contributions of these incredible people create the welcoming, nurturing, and engaging environment that makes G/S so special and that our students enjoy each day.

However, as the sole administrator at Givins/Shaw, for the school to properly function, I rely heavily on two people: the office administrator and the head caretaker. For the parental musicians in the community, the trio of Principal, OA, and Head Caretaker, constitute the school's rhythm section. If we do our job properly, we inconspicuously keep the beat that allows the teachers to take the lead and riff on it. Working alongside Suzie Keko-Aranilla in the office, and Robert Usai and now Jaslyn McLean as our head caretakers has been, and continues to be, an amazing experience. Each day that I visit a classroom, swear that I am witnessing the teaching equivalent of an Oscar Peterson, Yo-Yo Ma, Thomas Bangalter, or Randy Rhoads solo (it depends upon the teacher), and watch the riveted faces of the students, I appreciate Suzie, and Jaslyn even more.

Of course, all of this begs the following question:

With such great students, community, school, staff, and unquestionably the best coffee and food options in the city, why leave Givins/Shaw?

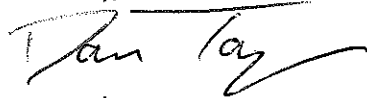
I have struggled to answer this question but for me it comes down to the personal versus the professional elements of my role.

As Principal, you do become emotionally attached to the various aspects of the school's life. You take pride in the successes, absorb the pain of the disappointments, and feel a genuine connection to the families and neighbourhood. One of the reasons I am always outside at entrance and dismissal is that I look forward to chatting with the staff and parents, seeing all the siblings together, and meeting your dogs. It is one of the intrinsic joys of being an elementary school Principal and those with older children can attest that you do not get that same feel in a middle school or high school.

However, in my professional capacity I know that after you have been in a location for more than five years, it would be institutionally beneficial to have someone else arrive to provide a fresh analysis, energy, and focus. It is also important for your own professional growth to experience the challenges that will come with a new school. As Principal, you never feel like your work is done, but you do need to step back and realize when it is a proper moment for a successor and I truly believe that now is an appropriate time and that you are receiving the best person to move the school forward.

I wish your new Principal, Ms. Sonia Antunes, and Givins/Shaw, nothing but the best and I will always remain a Bulldog.

Sincerely,



Dan Taylor

Principal

Givins/Shaw PS