

Trustee Update

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4

Great parents
focus near and far

Focusing near and far means that we keep in mind our big-picture goals for our family and children, even as we manage the everyday challenges of family life. It means we don't sacrifice our long-term goals for the sake of a short-term resolution.

Simple Strategies for
Raising Kids who Thrive
[Erica Reischer, PhD](#)

Health and Safety Update

The Minister of Education announced that in-person learning would resume for schools in Toronto on Tuesday, February 16, 2021. For students in the virtual learning model, classes will continue when in-person learning resumes. Deep gratitude to all teachers and education workers and administrators in both Virtual School and via Remote Learning who continued to do their best to support student well-being and learning. Please remember Toronto Public Health (TPH) directs and supports the Toronto

District School Board on health and safety protocols. We have an ongoing, collaborative relationship with them and with their lead, we have created policies, procedures and specific protocols for the TDSB. TPH spoke directly to our Committee last Tuesday, and their presentation and advice can be found [here](#). I am sharing information that may have already been shared, but it is worth repeating.

New TPH Screening Tool for Students - One of the most important things we can do to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our schools, is for [students](#) to screen themselves daily for any symptoms of COVID-19 and also follow the circumstances in which they should stay home. Toronto Public Health (TPH) has revised its [screening tool for students](#), effective immediately. The update is that everyone in a household must now complete the updated COVID-19 screening daily. Both the [TDSB Student Health Pass](#) and the TDSB Health App have been updated with this change.

Testing for COVID-19 - TPH recommends staff, students and their household members who 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 they becomes available.

Class Size and Cohorts - TDSB has taken measures to enhance the physical distancing in bricks and mortar schools to the extent we could given funding and our 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.

Ventilation - The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Engineering (ASHRAE)'s document pertaining to reopening schools recommended increasing air exchanges in occupied classrooms. Prior to the start of the school year, TDSB reviewed all building ventilation and filtration systems to implement a number of strategies to improve ventilation in schools and increase the volume of fresh air to the maximum extent possible. These strategies are ongoing and include:

- Scheduling HVAC systems to start two hours prior to the school day, to flush the school with fresh air.
- Ensuring that exhaust fans are running and keep them running for additional time at the end of the school day.
- Ensuring installation of clean filters installed prior to the start of the school year and inspecting them regularly to ensure they don't become clogged or hinder airflow.
- Increasing frequency of filter changes from four times to six times per year to maintain performance.
- Ensuring that HVAC exhaust grills are clean and that air supply grills are not

blocked or closed off.

- Following recommended maintenance measures for air handling systems including inspection and replacement of filters.

HEPA Filter Units - The TPH document regarding COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation states that *“while there is no direct evidence that air purifiers on their own are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they may be useful as a supplement to mechanical ventilation or if there is no outdoor air exchange in a room.”* TPH continues to stress the importance of self-screening, mask wearing, physical distancing, enhanced cleaning, hand washing and following all safety protocols to reduce the risk of transmission. And as per their advice, schools are encouraged, where possible, to open windows in the classroom, for short periods of time a few times during the day to introduce fresh air into the space.

The TDSB has purchased approximately 4,000 air purifiers/HEPA filters to use in occupied classrooms that are without mechanical ventilation or have limited ability to provide fresh air. To date, 3,563 HEPA units have been distributed to 235 schools, including all the congregated schools. In addition, the smaller capacity Danby units have been redistributed to smaller instructional spaces and Wellness Rooms. Distribution of another 435 units is going to the remaining Wellness Rooms and to begin distribution to the elementary schools in the Q5 areas. On February 1, 2021 the province issued an additional round of funding to support the reopening of schools, which included an additional \$6.9 M available to the TDSB for ventilation. On February 10, 2021, we informed the Ministry of Education that TDSB will be purchasing approximately 10,200 additional HEPA units which will be supplied by the TDSB vendor at a rate of approximately 1,500 units per week. The new HEPA units will be distributed for use in occupied classrooms, based on the quintile model as identified by TPH based on COVID-19 risk assessment.

Fundraising for HEPA Filter Units - Senior staff have reconsidered and wherever TDSB cannot supply HEPA filter units, schools will be permitted to fundraise for the units. These units must be purchased through the TDSB's approved vendors through TDSB Purchasing Department and will be delivered and installed following the system distribution as described above. Donations for air ventilation for the system are also accepted through the Central Equity Fund. Details on this will be provided to schools next week.

Masks - Since September, all TDSB students have been required to wear a face mask or face covering. TDSB continues to provide masks for students at each school to have in the event they do not have access to their own masks or damage or lose a mask during the school day. Read what makes a [good mask](#). The Mask Procedure will be updated to reflect any changes from TPH including the recommendation to wear outside if physical distancing cannot be in place. According to TPH, the best mask is one that fits! Each work day, TDSB staff members will be provided with 2 medical grade masks, minimum Level 1 recognized government standard and 1 face shield (reusable/disposable).

Cleaning and Disinfection - To support the enhanced cleaning of our schools, starting in the summer, we increased caretaking hours and hired more caretakers. Caretaker duties now include the enhanced cleaning tasks, such as cleaning and sanitizing all high touch surfaces twice daily, as recommended by TPH and the Ministry of Education.

For the latest TPH information, please click here <https://www.toronto.ca/COVID19schoolinfo>.

Toronto Student Transportation Group Update

Transportation resumed for all our students on Tuesday, February 16. Bus routes and times should be similar to those prior to the Christmas break. You can always check by logging into the Transportation portal on our website at www.torontoschoolbus.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. Please review with your children prior to them starting back on transportation.

Pharmacy Testing for School Staff in Toronto

The Ministry of Education has provided important information about new opportunities for school board staff to access voluntary asymptomatic COVID-19 testing at pharmacy locations in Toronto. Please see the [letter](#) that was issued to all staff.

Committee Meetings This Week

The Toronto District School Board is committed to developing opportunities for our wider school community to connect and engage in conversations about education issues. Meetings will be broadcasted live to the public. Click here at the start time to view <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/Live-Webcast-of-Meetings>.

Delegation requests will still be accepted during the closure of all schools and administrative sites at the TDSB; however, oral delegations to address a committee of

the Board will be presented by phone. To submit a delegation request (written or oral), please refer to the information found here <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Leadership/Boardroom/Delegations> and email delegates@tdsb.on.ca. If your request is approved, further details will be provided to you via email.

Community Advisory Committees and Statutory Advisory Committees:

There are 12 TDSB Advisory Committees which provide advice to the Board on a variety of topics. All TDSB Advisory Committee meetings are accessible to the public. Parent, student and community participation is strongly encouraged. Please contact the assistant or staff lead for each committee if you would like to attend or would like more information: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/Advisory-Committees/Community-Advisory-Committees>

Human Rights Office Annual Report 2018-2020

The TDSB's first [Human Rights Report](#) was part of the PSSC agenda for February 17, 2021.

In June, 2019, the Toronto District School Board unanimously voted on a Motion – [Dealing With Incidents of Racism and Hate](#). As a result, the TDSB developed the [Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools](#) (PR728) procedure to set clear expectations about the processes to be followed and the Board's responsibilities in situations where there are acts of racism and hate. The procedure supports the Board's [Human Rights Policy](#) (P031). As part of this Motion, the Board requested that the Director present an annual report documenting incidents and actions with regard to dealing with racism and hate in schools and how students learned from such.

The Motion was an important step in ensuring that TDSB schools followed a consistent process for dealing with incidents of racism and hate and that these incidents needed to be tracked. Challenges experienced in the TDSB are often mirrored from societal challenges and human rights are no different - incidents of racism and hate in TDSB schools has increased at an alarming rate. Anti-Black racism exceeded all other incidents reported by a wide margin; however there have also been worrying increases in other areas - homophobia, antisemitism, and racism targeted at Indigenous peoples.

What is most important is what we do with this information - this Report lays out a comprehensive plan to address the serious issues identified, through four specific areas: systemic accountability, capacity building within the organization, more effective



outreach and engagement, and the creation of more effective incident and resolution processes.

For the 2020/2021 school year, the TDSB implemented the ***Racism, Bias and Hate (RBH) Portal*** – an online system which enables detailed incident reporting on racism and hate incidents involving or impacting students in schools. It also provides a record of responses to such incidents, in the form of action plans and communication strategies, while allowing for the identification of any potential lessons learned, good/best practices, future preventative measures required, and any other systemic considerations. Tracking incidents of hate and addressing them is important, but using them as learning opportunities to educate and make system change is critical to ending systemic racism.

As it states in the Report, *In order for every one of our students and staff members to flourish, we have a duty to create schools and workplaces which are free of discrimination, harassment and hate. This is what every student and staff member at TDSB deserves. More importantly and significantly, it is their right.*

TDSB Participates in Ontario's Budget Consultations

On Friday, February 12, the Toronto District School Board submitted the following information as part of the Government of Ontario's Budget Consultations (2021):

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest and most diverse school board in Canada, and we have unique needs when it comes to what is required to best support our students and communities. Our students need safe and modern learning environments, appropriate special education supports, targeted supports for mental health and well-being and access to reliable and up-to-date technology. And, especially during these unprecedented times, it is even more critical for school boards to receive adequate financial support to help address the widening gaps in student achievement and learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget consultation submission highlights five key areas for the TDSB:

- Special Education and Mental Health Support
- Technology
- Pandemic Impacts
- Capital Needs
- Education Development Charges

To read the complete submission, please click here:

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Portals/0/docs/Pre->

Early French Immersion – Late Applicant Opportunity

As you know, 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, for families still interested in the Toronto District School Board's Early French Immersion Program (begins in Senior Kindergarten), the online application portal, PARS, remains open until **February 26**. Consideration for late applicants will be done centrally after all the on-time applications have been accommodated, space permitting. Late applications that cannot be accommodated will be held on a late waitlist by date of the application. To apply, please click here - <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Elementary-School/School-Choices/French-Programs/Application-Process/PARS>.

2021-22 Staffing

At our Tuesday meeting, Senior staff confirmed that we know students are best served when connected to their local school and while we are hopeful to offer in-person learning for all students in September 2021, we know that, should the pandemic continue, some families will continue to seek virtual learning options for health and safety reasons. As a result, our contingency will be to have virtual learning available, but delivered via local home school (as opposed to a separate virtual school entity). In order to maximize access to program in secondary schools, different models of delivery will be explored, including 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. Please note that the Staffing Allocation will come to a special Finance, Budget and Enrolment 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, Through Qs and As at the meeting it was confirmed that staffing would rollout similar to pre-COVID.

Policy Consultations



The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is committed to open and inclusive policy decision-making and values community input and participation through consultation. Consultation is a two-way communication process between the Board and external participants, including students and their parents/guardians, school councils, advisory committees, community members, different levels of government, service agencies, professional organizations and union partners. The objective of consultation is to gather public input regarding options, alternative courses of action, as well as to identify unintended effects for various participants and to find solutions. Please see revised the [Policy Review Schedule](#).

Current Consultations

Parent and Community Involvement Policy - Objective: To establish a framework for building and supporting parent and community involvement in the Toronto District School Board. We are currently reviewing [P023 – Parent and Community Involvement Policy](#) and are inviting feedback from our community as we develop the first draft of the policy. Learn more, and share your voice, at www.tdsbengage.ca

Specialized Schools and Programs Policy - [Draft New Policy](#) - Objective: Video: [Improving Access for all Students: Overview of the Secondary Program Review](#) - 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. Learn more: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review> and email: secondaryrevie@tdsb.on.ca

PRO Grant Applications Now Open

School Councils may submit one request for supports 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. **Applications are due no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 1, 2021.** Applications must be submitted virtually using the application and submission form and platform. No hard copies will be accepted. **Applications will be reviewed and will be approved upon a first come first served basis. Please apply early, funds are limited.** Click here for details and the application form - <https://tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/School-Councils/Parents-Reaching-Out-Grants>.

February is Kindergarten Registration Month

Come Learn With Us!

Registration for all TDSB Kindergarten programs began on Monday, February 1, 2021. Children who will be four by December 31, 2021, can start Junior Kindergarten in September, 2021.

If you have questions or are unable to complete the online registration independently, please contact your child's home school to make a virtual face-to-face appointment (via Zoom or Google Meet) to complete the online registration process. If you know a parent whose child will be coming to JK in September, please forward this information to them.

Read more here <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/EarlyYears/KindergartenMonth>

Revisions to Optional Attendance Process

For detailed information on Optional Attendance please see <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/News/Article-Details/ArtMID/474/ArticleID/1581/Optional-Attendance-for-September-2021>.

If you have any additional questions related to the Optional Attendance process, please reach out to your current home school principal.

Elementary Optional Attendance – Key Dates:

- 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:

- February 26, 2021 - Course selection sheets due at secondary schools
 - March 1, 2021: Course selection sheets due at secondary schools via myBlueprint
-

School Year Calendar 2020-2021

The official school year calendar for the Toronto District School Board runs from September 1 to June 30, inclusive and has now been approved by the Ministry.

The last day of class for elementary students is June 29

Secondary Quadmester Calendar

- **Quad 3: Feb 8 - April 22**
- **Quad 4: April 23 - June 28**

[Days of Significance Calendar](#) - please check before scheduling events.

Note: Passover 2021 will begin in the evening of Saturday, March 27 and ends in the evening of Sunday, April 4. **Ramadan 2021** will begin in the evening of Monday, April 12 and ends in the evening of Wednesday, May 12.

Virtual Ward Forum

Thursday, February 25, 2021

7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Ward 19 Scarborough-Guildwood School Council Chairs, Parents/Guardians, Community Members, Superintendents and School Staff are invited to join Trustee Zakir Patel for an opportunity to

Chat with Interim Director, Karen Falconer

The meeting will be hosted on a Zoom conferencing platform. Registrants will be sent a meeting invite with a link and call-in details for the meeting.

[Please click on this link to register for the meeting](#)

We regret that we will be unable to answer your live questions during the meeting. Please submit your questions in advance to Zakir.Patel@tdsb.on.ca. We will attempt to answer as many questions as possible on Thursday.

We sincerely look forward to seeing everyone!

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TDSB Update

Sign-up for [TDSB Update](#) and stay informed about recent Board decisions and district-wide news.

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