

# Changes to Education - The Public Consultations

The TDSB is looking at two things:

- 1) **Optional Attendance Policy** - rules on how to attend a school that's not your "home" school
- 2) **Secondary School Review** - size, programs, locations, etc. of secondary schools

*These two topics are closely related, so changes in one will affect the other.*

Parents are being asked to give feedback to discuss the changes being considered, determine other options, as well as identify unintended effects for different people and find solutions.

**Public consultations** in November are one of the methods being used to gather feedback. Two of the four dates have passed. The remaining dates are:

- Nov 26, 7 p.m., C W Jefferys Collegiate, 340 Sentinel Rd, Cafeteria
- Nov 28, 7 p.m., John Polyani Collegiate, 640 Lawrence Ave., Cafeteria

## What's the benefit of Public Consultations?

**The TDSB is seeking feedback – this is your chance to provide it!**

- If you feel that the information provided, or the questions asked of you, don't sufficiently cover your issues or concerns, then attend to seek clarification and provide feedback.
- Help participate in or redefine the conversation.
- Hear others' ideas and concerns that might help you clarify your own thinking
- Online surveys (also being used to gather feedback) can be hard to understand. Attend to ask the TDSB staff to clarify and explain so you can provide accurate feedback.

The TDSB wants to know how the policy has impacted your child's school experience, or how changes to the policy might restrict your child's education. **It is very helpful for them to hear personal stories to understand the impact of their proposed changes.**

## What is being reviewed?

### 1) **Optional Attendance Policy**

This policy was written 20 years ago when 6 school boards were amalgamated in the GTA. It allows students to apply to attend schools other than their "home" school (determined by where they live). This allows some students to choose their school and program or stay with their friends if their family moves. However, the TDSB is concerned that this policy is creating under and over-used schools, and that it is "forcing" schools to compete with each other to attract students.

The reason that there is space available in many schools is because declining enrollment in the TDSB has created about 20,000 'extra' spaces on top of the ~72,000 secondary school spaces currently occupied in the TDSB. TDSB acknowledges that some schools, especially smaller and 'underutilized' secondary schools should close, so that somewhat larger schools can offer a greater variety of academic and extra-curricular programming to students. Provincial approval for this will take several years. In the meantime, TDSB has proposed a number of changes to restrict the "Optional

Attendance” policy, with the goal of channeling more students into local schools, and reducing opportunities, choice, and ability to attend schools or programs that students feel are a better fit. For more detail read the [Draft Policy on Optional Attendance](#).

**Some of the proposed changes include:**

- Reducing the choice to request only one other school (currently a parent can choose two)
- No waitlists even if space becomes available later
- Requiring students in school-based child care who register after January 1 to apply for optional attendance
- Creating new policies for optional attendance for specialized programs

## **2) Secondary School Program Review**

TDSB is also reviewing secondary schools and considering “transformative” changes to all aspects of programming and structure at TDSB’s 111 high schools. (These include neighbourhood secondary schools, Technical and Commercial Schools, Alternative Schools, Specialized Schools, Congregated Special Education Schools, and Adult Education Centres.)

TDSB would like to “create a system of strong neighbourhood schools that provide rich programming and increased access to courses that support all pathways”. While this goal is admirable it is unclear how this will be accomplished effectively in the short to medium term, and how a full range of differentiated programming can be provided in each neighbourhood school.

A different approach could include components of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, “provide more copies of successful programs in more schools”, and “let students and parents - not the TDSB or the neighbourhood that you happen to live in - choose what is a student’s best educational environment”. In one sense, by students ‘voting with their feet’, TDSB already has visible feedback on what schools and programs students feel are working for them. TDSB is now seeking more articulated feedback.

To prepare your feedback on the Secondary School Review think about the following:

- What is the most important part of your child’s high school experience?
- What are the positive aspects/challenges for your child at their high school?
- Why/How did your family choose to attend a school outside your neighbourhood school?
- How far are you willing to travel to attend another regular or specialized program?

## **What happens at the Public Consultations?**

You are seated at small tables, with a TDSB staff note taker. The meetings begin with a [presentation](#) about rationales for these changes, general statements about the scope, and a timeline for completion (approval by June 2020). Then you discuss specific questions at your tables. Table feedback is to be collated by TDSB’s research department and included in the final, public report to trustees.

Note: The questions you will answer at your table during the public consultation are the SAME ones that you could answer in the online TDSB surveys. You can answer BOTH ways.