

# **Northern School Council Meeting (Draft)**

## **November 24, 2021, 6:30 - 8:30 pm (Via Zoom)**

**Attendees:** Andy A, Jen A, Janice B, Diane C, Rita C, Abby D, Sabina H, Tania O, Karri P, Melissa R, Rhonda S, Claire S, Monica T, Adam Marshall, Jenn Marr, Leslie Usin-Rojas, Diana Goldie, Ron Felsen, Rachel Chernos Lin

**Regrets:** Steve S, Laura M

### **Meeting called to order at 6:32 by Janice**

- Welcome
- Land acknowledgement
- Code of Conduct reviewed

### **Operational Matters**

- Approval of Agenda- Motion to approve: Andy; Seconded: Diane; Carried.
- Approval of Oct 14 minutes- Motion to approve: Rhonda; Seconded: Melissa; Carried.

### **Co-chair Report - Andy**

It has been a busy time with several areas of focus:

- Funding: numerous requests from student activities and clubs. Two are being brought forward for approval this evening, some requests are still pending
- Financials: successful fundraising campaign; details will be presented in budget update
- Specialized programs consultations are happening now
- Changes to school schedule for semester two and extra-curricular offerings as covid measures are relaxed

### **Guest Speakers - Trustee Rachel Chernos Lin; Superintendent Ron Felsen**

Both Rachel and Ron opened the conversation by speaking about several areas of interest for parents. Below is a summary of their comments and ensuing parent Q and A.

#### **Rachel Chernos Lin - Trustee for Ward 11**

- **Switch in Learning:** Email is coming from TDSB for switching to/from virtual/in person learning. The emails will provide info about what virtual learning will look like as there will be changes from this semester. TDSB is looking to remove as much of simultaneous learning as possible as the feedback is that delivering this format is difficult for teachers and students. As well, feedback from the recent survey is that students are feeling a lot of stress and not experiencing good mental health. Decisions on the learning options are being made with health and wellness at forefront.
- **Modified Semester model:** Have heard that this is not working for the majority of students and staff. The really long periods are not conducive to learning and absorbing information. As well, the weeklong break between subjects disrupts continuity. The

community and TDSB lobbied the government to change to a regular semester model (4 classes each day), and it was granted last week. TDSB is in discussions with TPH (Toronto Public Health) to see if we can pivot this earlier than Feb semester break.

- **Longer lunch:** Feedback from staff and students is to make the lunch longer. It is a TDSB priority to keep up discussions with TPH to see if this can be adjusted.
- **Indoor Sports:** we will be moving forward with indoor sports for Grade 7 and up. For teams that play against other schools or offsite, there will be a vaccination requirement which is in line with TPH requirements for the City of Toronto. Tournaments in city facilities (such as hockey) require vaccinations so participants need to be vaccinated. Intramurals within school will continue to not have a vaccination requirement.

### **Ron Felsen - Superintendent**

- **Secondary School Review:** This started in 2017 when the Board examined all high schools in the city and identified a large number of unused spaces between the 6 legacy boards. Schools were built in the baby boomer era. Now, TDSB has 111 schools with 100K available seats. Enrolment is currently only 70K, so some high schools are operating far below capacity. In these cases, it can be hard to run compulsory courses, let alone electives. At one school, grade 11 & 12 physics is combined because there are not enough students to fill two classes. However that is not the case in midtown where schools are full. The goal is to “right size” the system so there are more consistent, diverse course offerings at all schools.

Right now there is a moratorium on closing schools. TDSB needs a plan to close up to 30 under-utilized schools when moratorium is lifted so can redirect funding appropriately. TDSB doesn't have plans to sell properties as demographics change, as population can shift. This review will take years to implement. No sweeping changes in the beginning but ultimately will change the landscape of TDSB.

- **Optional Attendance:** This policy was established in 1997 when the boards amalgamated as a way for students to attend different schools. It was originally used by a small portion of students, but as schools and specialized programs have developed, this policy is being utilized more than expected (52%) and shifting attendance significantly between schools. This policy hasn't been looked at since its inception, so there will be a new policy presented in the 2022 that makes it a centralized process with the choice of 2 possible schools for optional attendance, likely determined by lottery. Specialized schools will have a separate application process altogether.
- **Specialized schools:** The goal is to create new programs and modify existing specialized programs so that students can access the programs they want in their area. Their location, operating procedures and admission practices will all be reviewed, modified and centralized. Equity is their priority. There were consultations on the [draft policy](#) this week. There are two informational videos: [Overview of the Secondary Program Review](#) and [Specialized Schools Programs and Policy Info Video](#) and a [recording](#) of one of their consultations which provide Q and A with TDSB staff. **[A parent](#)**

**survey that closes Dec 17 is available to voice input.** Questions can be sent to [secondaryreview@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:secondaryreview@tdsb.on.ca), [Trustee Chernos-Lin](#) or [Superintendent Lorraine Linton](#), in charge of the SSR.

Gifted & French are not specialized programs. Arts / IB / TOPS / Elite athletes, etc are specialized programs. Northern doesn't have specialized programs.

TDSB is also encouraging the creation of local programs that are only available to students attending the school. Northern has many of these (AP, art). They were developed organically due to size and interest by staff & students. The goal is to see this happen in schools across the TDSB.

## Parent Questions

- **Attended the recent consultation meetings for the specialized programs review. It is a complicated topic and would like a longer discussion, perhaps a ward forum, to promote more education as there are details lacking and many people are new to all of this. There was discussion around the right sized school where the target attendance is set at 1000. Is that the aim for Northern?**

The secondary school review is not going to reduce the attendance of Northern from 1800 to 1000 as that would mean Northern is under-utilized. The TDSB goal is to have buildings being used at 90% of capacity which gives some flexibility for enrolment surges. Northern is currently at 96% capacity. With this approach in mind, mid-town schools will not be impacted by right-sizing. (Ron)

Other areas might need to combine two schools for efficiency. That would involve parent review and consultation. SSR is a 10-30 year plan. It will not profoundly affect Ward 11 in the next few years. (Rachel)

The TDSB hasn't closed very many schools in recent years. There was one in 2013, Borden (2016) and Vaughan Road (2017). Even if the Board wanted to close 30 schools, there are only the human resources to handle 2-3 schools a year given the time required to do so. (Ron)

- **One change that will impact Northern is the review of the technical schools and boundaries.**

A legacy of amalgamation is that the six technical schools (including Northern) have very large catchment areas. Currently, attending a technical school is based on address, which creates unfairness from an equity of access viewpoint. One option to make attendance more equitable is to use the optional attendance policy (lottery) instead of address. This change is part of the Long Term Program and Accommodation Strategy. (Rachel)

During the baby boom years, schools were built in threes - technical, commercial, collegiate- in each of the six smaller school boards. But boundaries haven't been revisited to address current needs. (Ron)

- **When will the technical boundary change take effect? I have an older daughter in tech stream and the younger daughter joining in tech stream next year.**

It will take a while to phase in. If it impacts elementary students, they can apply via Optional Attendance (lottery). The review of technical boundaries was paused in March 2020, and

the process will likely have to start all over again as there are new principals in most of the technical schools.

- **Interested in the consultation relationship between the board and the city with respect to new development. What's the connection between TDSB and the city? Is there a good, free flow of info or is it a struggle?**

The TDSB's real estate division is the Toronto Lands Corp (TLC) subsidiary. Any time there is an application by a developer to the city, it goes to TLC for comment. There are usually 1-2 per week, especially in the midtown core. TLC generally lists all the objections.

Currently, TLC is working with developers at Yonge and Eglinton (southwest corner) to see if there are possibilities for a podium school.

However, the real problem lies with the province. They have lifted the majority of restrictions for development, and its laws create inequitable issues for the TDSB, which is significantly larger than all other Ontario boards.

For example, there is a mechanism for growth to provide funding for education which is called EDC - Education Development Charges. However the law is written so that it is hard for the TDSB to qualify: a board needs to be at 100% capacity for 5 years. TCDSB has been collecting but TDSB is not. Since amalgamation, TDSB has areas of intensive growth but also areas of declining enrolment.

The law also says EDCs can now only fund the purchase of land. This works well in the suburbs but not in the city where there is little land or cost is prohibitive. TDSB generally doesn't need more property (exclusion is midtown) but the cost of land is so expensive that the board needs to renovate and grow vertically.

As a result of these policies, TDSB doesn't have the dollars for the capital improvements it needs. Even if it did, the province has a program where a board can only apply for 10 projects each year. The TDSB is the largest board in the province (500+ buildings) but we are treated the same as a school board with only 30 schools. (Rachel)

- **Can we get amenities, if we can't get a new building?**

We work with developers with each new application but developers have no requirement to give Board anything. (Rachel)

There is Section 37 money, which helped the creation of the new parkette on north side of the school. However the funding available through Section 37 is drying up. (Ron)

- **Could you comment on the TDSB decision making process and why it has moved away from data driven decision making? How does the SSR and Specialized programs integrate with the Multi Year Strategic Plan? How are multiyear strategies linked to quantitative objectives for student success?**

The goal is equity of access for all students and TDSB relies on data to make decisions. The report for the SSR is full of data ([www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review)) and has projections for 15 years into the future. Specialized programming is based on student voice and choice. (Ron)

Electives are about students' choice in school and the electives tend to get students excited to come to school. It is important to make sure they have programs they connect with and data shows student achievement comes from that. For specialized programs, applications haven't been created with equity lens and TDSB wants to make access equal for all by

removing fees and adjusting the application process. All students in TDSB should have equal opportunity. (Rachel)

- **With the opening up of sports, will overnight field trips be considered?**

Field trips are remaining local (day trips) for the moment. Overnight field trips are on hold until additional Covid-19 case data can be evaluated.

- **Will assemblies restart?**

The latest instructions are that they will continue to be virtual. (Ron)

## **Principal's Report - Adam**

- **Fall season sports.** It was wonderful to have these going on and lots of students involved. There was strong price of place that returned with sports being played again.
- **Hybrid teaching.** Technology classes and PE are not hybrid at Northern. This was a decision made at the start of the school year. By taking this approach, it allowed PE teachers to be more involved in the sports teams.
- **United Way Fashion Show.** This is a very important tradition for the students and school. The date has been moved to the spring in hopes that things are more open then. The backup plan is to present a spring outdoor fashion show. Many students participate in this event in various ways.
- **Staffing changes.** There is a shortage of teachers and contracts are posted weekly. This is a board wide challenge. Schools will have LTO positions that are filled, but then the teacher receives a contract somewhere else. The school is working hard to keep consistency at the front of class for students.
- **PD Day.** It was really good for staff wellness. Some of our best teachers have been coming to the office to talk about going part-time because they feel they are letting kids down under the current system. There is a lot of stress as they don't feel as effective in their role. Time was spent on the PD Day talking about and addressing this.
- **Pathways to Math.** Feedback from department heads (Jen Malloy, Stephanie Kendall) is that excitement is building and the content is worthwhile for everyone in the course.
- **Locker update:** Students received locker numbers during period 1 class last week. If a student has a lock available, staff will cut the zip tie on their locker so they can use it. Having unassigned lockers tied shut avoids extra workload for the janitorial staff.
- **Extracurriculars:** There is currently a limit of 2 in-person activities (clubs and sports). Trying to see if this can be adjusted.  
Arts & clubs are up and running. Music and drama present some challenges but working through it. A complete list of clubs is available [here](#).  
For sports, the Athletic Association coaches are meeting on December 1 to finalize plans. Looking at Volleyball, basketball, ice hockey, curling, badminton, indoor soccer, swimming

and skiing/snowboard. Gym space will be tricky but will get it figured out. OFSAA opportunities are planned for spring.

- **Assemblies:** It is really important to bring these back to build culture and community, key priorities for the school. It was noted that school gyms are opening up to external bookings Jan 17 which might mean more flexibility for the school.
- **Indoor spaces for lunch/masking.** Students have to be masked when inside and not stationary. They are allowed to take their mask off when eating lunch inside. School has stepped up enforcement of masking. No additional indoor spaces are available to offer for lunch time.
- **Vaccine Disclosure:** 885 students (52%) have voluntarily disclosed their status. Any help parents can offer to encourage their child to complete this would be appreciated. This reduces the frantic emails received by the school when a Covid case is discovered.
- **Next semester roll out:** The schedule still needs to be established. Options include the same schedule every day or a rotating order to reduce the impact of extra curricular activities late in the day. This decision will be made with staff and parent input. Establishing a longer lunch period is also a priority. There is a chance that the new schedule could start before the end of this semester. But the goal is to get it done with proper planning to reduce confusion and impacts (not disrupt EQAO testing plans for Jan).
- **Taking a fifth year at Northern - who is eligible and how is it done?** This is handled on a case-by-case basis. Priority is given to students who haven't completed the required courses for graduation. Students who are upgrading have many other avenues to take a course again which include night school/summer school/e-learning and adult learning. In the past, once there were accurate numbers for the student body in September, the school would make whatever space available to students who want to come back for a 5th year. As a full year school, traditionally, the requirement was that the student had to take a 6 courses each year (no part-time load). However, if the school continues with semesters, options will change.
- **Parking garage.** Rachel Chernos Lin has stepped in to help and has a meeting on Friday with the key stakeholders. Adam will provide an update as soon as there is one available.
- **Elevator.** This is approved as a project and is in progress. Hoping to have it operational for Sept 2022. Hall monitors are available to support students who need help on the freight elevator.

## **Committees**

Interested in joining a committee? Visit our [website](#) or email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com).

### **Treasurer's Report - Sabina**

Financial update: The voluntary contribution campaign ran Sep 10-Oct 15 and raised \$13,175. For comparison, last year's campaign ran Jan-Feb 2021 and raised \$9575. Available cash as of October 31, 2021 was \$30,241.

Several student enrichment grant requests have been received and approved:

Ceramics \$250

Ethics \$200

Rocketry Club \$200

There were two motions put forward for funding requests.

Robotics Club request \$2695 - proposed \$1500

Post Secondary Application request \$1500 - proposed \$1500

Model UN Club \$2200 - in discussion

### **Motion #1 - Provide support of \$1500 to the Robotics Club.**

Motion: Andy; Seconded: Sabina; Carried

Some discussion was had as to why support only \$1500 and not the full funding request of \$2695. Reasons for this included:

- Want to take an equitable approach to all funding requests and other requests are still to come
- The club is exploring other funding opportunities with the foundation, SAC, and the school.
- Traditionally \$1500 tends to be the limit for one individual request

Adam mentioned that the school will be investing in this as it is a key piece to keep tech growing. Having this in our gifted programming in Grade 9 as mandatory rotation is important and exposure to this will help grow the program quickly. Robotics is an alternative to athletic competition. Steven Wong is the teacher who has expertise in this area.

After the discussion, it was decided that with the other funding opportunities available, the motion would stand.

### **Motion #2 - Provide \$1500 for Guidance to purchase 10 vouchers for post-secondary applications**

Motion: Andy; Seconded: Sabina; Carried.

Guidance will provide these codes to students as needed to cover cost of post-secondary applications. This eliminates the need for guidance to pre-pay and be reimbursed later.

### **Roehampton Residence - Tania**

The Roehampton Residence Committee is parents who attend the School Safety meetings between the city, Toronto Police Services, TDSB (administration, trustees and property divisions) and local school councils. Together, we have developed a school safety plan to ensure student safety since the Roehampton Residence, a homeless shelter, opened last July at Mt Pleasant and Eglinton.

Through these meetings, we have addressed and resolved many issues. At this point, the current plan is running smoothly, with few incidents reported. So we have decided to change our meetings from bi-weekly to monthly and receive weekly incident reports by email.

We expect the lease for this shelter to be extended for a third year, ending in 2023. If you have any questions or concerns, email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com).

### **Academic Resource Committee (ARC) - Tania**

Academic Resource Committee is parents supporting parents of students with learning differences.

On Nov 2, we hosted a presentation by Sarvie Riahi titled, "Self Care: Recognizing the Signs of Burnout & How to Take Care of Yourself". We had almost 100 requests for links, and it was a practical session for parents and students with reasons and tools for helping to manage relationships, responsibilities and stress better. The [recording](#) is posted on the School Council website.

The same evening, we had a Q and A time with Amanda Kearney, the Special Ed Learning Disabilities Curriculum Leader at Northern. She explained how to reach her, where to get help, and other supports available at Northern for students and parents with learning differences.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Dec 7 at 6:30-7:30 pm. Our topic is, "Is your student struggling with math?" The Northern math dept heads will run a Q and A session, and we will also share resources, parent and teacher tips, and have a time for parents to connect as well. All students and parents are welcome. Please send us any questions or suggestions for future topics at [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com).

### **Gifted Advisory Council (GAC) - Melissa**

GAC held their annual study skills session. It was very successful with over 150 request for links. Each year the session evolves. Last year new material was added for the pandemic that related to how to cope and learn from home. This year the focus was on the whole student and self care. There will be more events from GAC in the new year.

### **Education Committee - Melissa**

The biggest issues going on right now are Secondary School Review and Specialized programs. There is a TDSB produced [video](#) about the Specialized program changes for anyone looking for background information. Parents are encouraged to participate in feedback ([survey](#) and [email](#)) as TDSB will make changes based upon input. Anyone who is interested in participating in this committee, please email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com).

SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) - TDSB went out to the community advisory associations for feedback on a census which they are planning for next year. There is a meeting on Nov 25th for further input. Feedback comments from SEAC so far include:

- There are a lot of questions on identity, well being, accessibility. Need to ensure questions are not suggestive and that the focus of the census is on the big picture.
- Parents may not find questions appropriate for all ages. Suggested that for Grades 1-3, parent fill out census on behalf of student; Grades 4-12 students provide responses directly with informed parental consent (instead of parents needing to opt-out).
- There should be an option to skip/prefer not to answer a question. Student responses are linked to LOI information (shows postal code). This raises a questions of privacy for the respondents.

### **Safe & Caring Schools - Julia**

Received concern about drug related incidents. Can confirm no drug related incidents this year.

Concerns about washroom supply of soap, paper towels. Adam mentioned that the school has had 100+ soap dispensers vandalized this year. In some cases have provided small soap dispensers but then soap is poured on the floor. Supervision is not permitted in washrooms. Suggestion to install sanitizer dispensers on the outside entrance to washrooms instead.

Students requested proper mats at the entryways to reduce floors from getting wet in inclement weather as that means there is no dry place to put bags down. Adam mentioned mats will be put in entryways soon, as it is done seasonally each year.

Committee has established equity as its priority. Looking to organize an equity walk and training for staff and parent rep. Also looking at conflict resolution training.

Students have discussed having a safe space for reporting bullying/discrimination/inequity. Some students feel more comfortable speaking to a peer instead of going directly to staff. Want to modify their existing spaces so they feel more welcoming and arrange to meet with a student rep at assigned times during the week. The student rep would then speak to the appropriate staff member.

### **New Business**

- **SSON (School Statement of Needs).** School Council is required to update this document annually. This document describes what parents think the school needs in a principal, in case there is a search for a new principal. 2 volunteers are needed to review and add feedback within the next 10 days.
- **Wellness Committee.** This committee hasn't started yet and is in need of some volunteers! The committee organizes workshops and sources information/resources for parents/students to post on the school council website. A key focus is mental health and safety.

- **Education Committee.** Looking for participants to discuss changes in educational policy and engage parents.

If interested in any of these opportunities, email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com)

### **Upcoming events**

- PIAC Bridging the Gap Nov 27/28th
- Is Your Child Struggling in Math? - Dec 7 at 6:30. Email [nss.school.council@gmail.com](mailto:nss.school.council@gmail.com) for a link

Motion to adjourn meeting: Andy Seconded: Janice; Carried.

### **2022 Remaining Meeting Dates**

- Thurs Jan 13 - 6:30pm
- Wed Feb 23
- Wed, April 6
- Wed May 18