

January 27, 2020

Dear Northern Parents,

In the past few months, we have had many discussions with TDSB administrators and trustees to get more information about proposed changes to Optional Attendance and Secondary Schools.

Unfortunately, we do not have very positive news.

We heard confirmation that TDSB's over-arching goal is to "transform secondary schools" so that the vast majority of students attend only their "neighbourhood", "right-sized" school. Each of these newly transformed schools will supposedly be able to offer a full range of options to fit every diverse student's academic, social, emotional, and other developmental needs. To achieve this, TDSB plans to change sizes of schools, eliminate commercial and technical boundaries, change other boundaries, significantly reduce and possibly eliminate optional attendance, and change specialty programs, attendance policies and locations in as yet undisclosed ways. In the future, a student's placement would be determined by where they live and schools could largely offer undifferentiated programming.

We think this does not sufficiently reflect the significance of "fit" for academic achievement and wellness and very divergent career paths for the majority of students, a significant number of whom currently attend a diverse range of programs and schools under Optional Attendance. Furthermore, this plan most penalizes those whose "neighborhood" school is not the best fit for their educational needs.

TDSB says trustees are scheduled to approve final plans for all these changes in June, to be implemented over the next 8-12 years. If plans of this transformative scope can be finally approved in ~ 4 months, we believe there must be much more specific plans in progress now that have not been publicly disclosed.

We feel there has been insufficient consultation and transparency on sweeping change that will potentially negatively impact our schools. *We need parents, teachers and students across the TDSB to send feedback, so student needs can be understood clearly by decision makers.*

The opportunity for feedback on any part of these issues ends January 31 (for Secondary School Review) and February 3 (for Optional Attendance).

These are major changes, so please engage and forward this information widely.

Respectfully,
The Parents of Northern School Council

P.S. For additional context and history, [click here for our most recent summary of changes, presented January 16](#) by the Education Committee of Northern School Council.

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Where to Send Feedback

Use these links to write about any of your own concerns, or use something from our lists below. If you find the survey questions confusing, use the comment boxes or email address to discuss what matters to you!

1. Secondary School Review: [TDSB Secondary Program Review - Public Feedback](#)
2. Optional Attendance: February 3: [TDSB Optional Attendance Policy - Public Feedback](#)
3. Email for both topics: secondaryreview@tdsb.on.ca

Some suggested starting points for feedback:

- I think the feedback timeline is too short, instead I think...
- I think the feedback forums are one-sided, instead it should...
- I don't have enough information to give meaningful feedback, instead I need...
- I think there need to be more in-person dialogues that include teachers, students, parents, and TDSB staff about changes and solutions because...
- I think programs that are currently successful should be maintained in their current locations, in their current size or expanded, not moved because...
- I think TDSB should consider expanding currently successful schools as a solution because...
- I think optional attendance in its current form effectively addresses the need for equitable access to all good programs because...
- Optional attendance has allowed my student to succeed academically because...
- Having choice between different secondary school programs has been significant to my student because...

Or ask for specific, concrete reassurances that:

- the TDSB understands the significance of “fit” for student academic success and mental health and wellbeing
- change will be achieved only by adding new options for students
- current, successful programs and schools will not be reduced or moved
- parents and teachers will have an opportunity to give feedback to concrete, transparent plans before they are approved