

Meeting minutes:

Executive Committee Business:

Motion to approve the minutes from our last meeting: Approved (Lesley + Taralyn)

Motion to approve the agenda for tonight's meeting: Approved (Taralyn + Midori)

Welcome Dr. Monica Francis:

Prior to retiring, Dr Francis worked internationally as a principal in Kuwait and China (private school) and Abu Dhabi (1200 kids of jk to grade 12). Since returning to Canada, has been filling in with the TDSB.

Started career as HS teacher, VP for HS, Principal of elementary (Braeburn) and retired from Calico. Mostly concentrated in the Etobicoke and downtown area (Mill Valley and LTO at Garden PS) and is thrilled to be at Howard. It's one of the best schools and thrilled to see the new schoolyard.

Principal Updates

- Playground – the shed (against the fence) will be moved out – there was a complaint that it was too close to the fence.
- We had a smooth return to school. Our attendance vs colleagues across the board are amazing (staff and students). It feels like we never missed a beat.
- Suzy: the majority of our school has come back in person. Kids seems happy, enjoying their friends, the new yard. Enrollment currently 376. 22 students have chosen to stay home temporarily. Of those 22 students, it's 15 families. We have about 8-10 kids who didn't start mid week last week. It was mostly our JK class kids who came back this week. Teachers are thrilled to be back in the building and working closely with their students.
- New Principal – hoping for after the March Break – this is in progress. Our pension board has negotiated with TDSB that we can double the amount of days we can work, so there will be some consistency and I'll stay in place until we have someone in place here. Suzy and I will both help to transition the new principal, sharing your vision for the school.
- New idea: library needs to be revitalized. Modular furniture for group work, risers for presentations, bean bag chairs for cozy reading, chrome carts. The library is a small space, but there are so many great things we can do. I don't think it would be very expensive to do (unlike school yard) but this may be another project to put on our radar.

Question: can you share any info re covid related cases amongst kids or staff?

Suzy: TPH has given us direction that has changed. Currently at howard, no teachers have reported having covid and we have excellent attendance. We don't have many teachers away. We don't have any kids whose families have shared that they are staying home due to covid. Families and staff are not required to share a covid diagnosis. We don't have a high number of daily absences. We average 40-50 absences a day, and since we've come back, we have not had any spikes. We haven't sent home any cohorts. We do report to the board a 30% absences, but we have not had to do that.

Question: can you clarify: if there is a case in a class, is everyone in the class informed about that case?

MOE stated that isn't required, but TDSB asked all schools to inform parents if there is a reported case within that class. We are not doing the whole building any more, but we will still report to the parents in that class. But we haven't had any reported cases.

Monica: at Howard we don't have high absenteeism, and it was a wonderful transition. We're in good shape so far.

Question: You mentioned a confirmed case – is this through rapid test or through PCR through public health. You can get this for a child who is symptomatic at school, which supplies last. Or if you do a rapid test and you call that info in to the school.

Robin Pilkey: Unlike before, for a case in a class those other students in the cohort are not considered a close contact and will not need to isolate.

Suzy: Yes. Because of masking, the HEPA filters and open windows, and the vaccinations for 5-11 year olds, now they are no longer considered a close contact.

Dr. Dubay also said there is an enhanced screening tool, which helps with the other metrics above.

Suzy: we are finding families are following this screening to a T, families are being cautious and following those requirements.

Robin Pilkey – Ward 7 updates:

I don't have that many updates that your principal and vp have not already shared with you, but I did have a meeting with Dr. Dubay.

- For high school, we are going back to regular semesters as of Monday.
- I have been talking with Superintendent Donsky, and it's great that Monica can stay for longer. There are not that many people on the principal list right now, and we want to find the right fit. I don't think it will be a quick hire. It's important that we get high quality principals who fit with the school.
- Most schools in ward 7 are closed to optional attendance (so those that are out of catchment are not allowed to apply). In ward 7, Keele Public School is the hotspot. Several years ago Mountview was moved out of Keele Public School (phase 1 of trying to address Keele space issues). There are 7-8 large towers also going up in that area. Because of that, a local feasibility team are looking into how we find space for kids at Keele, without having to bus kids. (planning, superintendent, French etc) . A plan has been worked out that additional Keele kids would go to Runnymede and Howard, because Howard has room to grow. To all parents in the school, you'll get a notice to with this proposal and the committee will review. So Howard School council will be looking for volunteers to sit on this committee.

Question: How many kids would be coming to Howard? What is the capacity at Howard?

Robin: over time, roughly about 120 kids but that number is kind of hard to say how many immediately. 577 is the max number of kids we have space for at Howard.

Taralyn: Kathy Narraway has volunteered – and if any other parent wants to volunteer, please email us.

Question: how would the increased number effect the French / English rebalancing?

Answer: the only factors are that they child has to be the correct age and you have to apply on time. So if this proposal is accepted, and that's an if, every child is offered a spot whether it's at the school or another close by. But I don't think you should expect that there would be more French classes. I would expect the parent rep at Howard to have this question as well. There will also be reps for Fern too, because these kids would grade and go to fern.

For secondary schools, there are some pockets where two schools are considered home schools. Once of the overreaching goal of our long term plan is to assign just one school. Currently Howard has Bloor and Parkdale Collegiate (from the English).

Question: on the capacity limit, that's based on existing infrastructure?

Robin: Howard is a confined site, there is only room for 1 portable. But at this point, that's not required for this plan

Question: Howard's high school would be parkdale, but do you mean Fern?

Yes, Howard kids would go to Fern and then go on to Parkdale, for English. For French it continues to be Humberside.

Robin: also to highlight, the reporting that we are required to do now is pretty much useless. So when you have an absence of 30% it doesn't mean it's all covid related.

Question: can you talk about how the school will handle extended absences?

Robin: if you have chosen to stay home, it's not virtual. It's not hybrid learning in elementary schools, so the teacher would be providing asynchronous learning. If people have chosen to stay home, they won't have the same access to their teachers etc. Principals can provide more detail here. WRT switch that can happen on Feb 4. We have the highest in person attendance of any ward in the city. Of the 65000 kids in this learning center, there have been about 120 kids who have decided to switch to virtual. I think this also reflects the level of covid that we have in our neighbourhood, that we know of.

Monica: A couple of teachers voiced their concerns, and our teachers will have work posted on brightspace or google classroom. In the current environment, we don't want kids to have gaps in their learning. Our teachers are great at communicating with parents. And now the quarantine period is only 5 days. We also had devices that we sent home.

Other info: there has been no resolution between TDSB and CDSB for Bishop Morocco and the new Loblaws development. At this point it's not moving quickly.

Finally, the playground looks fantastic and it adds so much to the neighbourhood. I congratulate you on this project. And any questions, just email or on the fb group.

Grad Committee:

Jen: We have a good number of volunteers who have reached out – at least – so now we are well underway.

Sam: Candice has offered to host the after party in her backyard. Could Suzy give us some context?

Suzy: we went offsite. No gatherings on school property. We had a virtual clapout, and it was livestreamed. After that, about an hour later, we got together at sorauren park, and families cheered them on. We setup a few tables for diplomas, and gave out blue t shirts. It was small but exciting. We are all hoping that we can get back to a typical grad style this year.

Sam: at what point would we have to make a call?

Suzy: in the last two years, they planned and planned early: yearbooks and grad photos. They had plan A, B and C.

Candice: I was the co-chair 3 years ago. It didn't take us more than 6 weeks / 2 months to get everything done. We had a lot of guidance from years past, with a standard procedure. It was really smooth, fun and easy to put together.

Question: curious about dance-a-thon – is this something that could happen in May or June? Will this be discussed at some point?

Suzy: if it works that protocols have been listed, we're ready. We're going to pack it in.

Candice: I would volunteer to lead this.

Candice: Island school for grade 5s and 6 – which happens in June – is there a chance this will come back?

Suzy: that planning happens long before now, so I'd guess that this is not happening this year. Even if things open in the spring, the island school may not pull it all together to invite students. There are lot of forms and liabilities.

PIAC update (Alice):

- In the last meeting: 300 additional HEPA filters and recommendations for providing medical masks for kids (may not apply to us as we already supply).
- Extracurriculars are still suspended.
- Staff shortages are still projected board-wide – managing this with on call teachers, teacher candidates, and combining classes with health protocols in place.
- We didn't get the PRO grant this year, despite collaborating with other ward 7 schools. But PIAC has funding that wasn't used (event budget that has not been used) so they will put that in the budget but there is some hope that we can use this.

PIAC put through a motion to address anti-black racism in our ward, and how to integrate parents voices. We had a meeting and it seems hopeful that they are taking that into consideration.