

Runnymede School Council discussion with guest speakers Bhutila Karpoche (Member of Provincial Parliament) and Robin Pilkey (Toronto District School Board Trustee)

Wednesday, January 22, 2020, 6:30 pm @ Runnymede Public School.

[Please note that these minutes were taken by parent volunteers on the Runnymede School Council and are not an official transcript of the discussion].

Bhutila Karpoche

- Current job action
 - Teachers from every level and every board are engaged in some sort of job action; we haven't been in this situation in 20 years.
 - Parent and public support provides teachers with hope.
 - There are many ways to get involved, e.g. Parent Council, West End Parents Network, etc. and many groups fighting against cuts.
 - Please be plugged-in and do what you can.
 - It is very important that the government hear from the public.
 - Petition for parents to sign was passed around and can be signed online here: https://www.bhutilakarpoche.ca/stop_fords_education_cuts
- Class sizes
 - This is a common issue for teachers of all levels.
 - For elementary teachers, class size is the biggest issue.
 - The government is pushing hard to remove class size caps.
 - Large classes impact instruction, classroom management and individual attention for students.
 - This is the #1 issue for ETFO.
 - In September, I heard about classes of 40 students, sharing desks, sitting on the floor, etc.
 - We have to push to maintain smaller class sizes.
- E-learning
 - This issue is more applicable to high school.
 - There is lots of research to show e-learning is not good for every student.
 - In many rural areas there may be challenges in accessing reliable broadband.
 - Even in urban centres, we can't assume all kids have Internet access at home, so there are equity issues around mandatory e-learning.
 - Students already spend enough time in digital isolation and they want to spend time in classroom with teachers.
 - Online courses already exist as an option.

Robin Pilkey

- Secondary school review
 - Information about the Secondary School Review is shared through TSDB Connects Newsletters, which you should receive via email or can be accessed here: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Media/News/Newsletters/TDSB-Connects>

- Information about the Secondary School Review can be found here: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Secondary-Program-Review>
- Elementary parents should be paying attention to this review as it will impact your children when they get to secondary school.
- The board is undertaking a review of secondary schools to ensure all students have equitable access to programs and opportunities, as close to home as possible.
- The vision of the Secondary Program Review, which will address both under and over-utilized schools, includes fewer schools with strong programming and increased access to courses that support all pathways.
- In order to achieve that, the Board will consider potential consolidation and/or relocation of schools, re-purposing secondary school buildings to address other system needs, and different models of school organization (e.g. full-year programming).
- The bottom line is that # students = # teachers = # courses available. If the # of students increase/decrease, the number of teachers and courses increase/decrease as well.
- Many TDSB schools are very old.
- Across the school district there are 20,000 empty seats.
- TDSB decided it was time to take a long-term view at high schools in the TDSB.
- There are 4 elements being looked at: access, programs, location, facilities.
- The goal is that at end of this year we will have a 10-year plan to open specialized programs where students are.
- As part of this, we are also reviewing the optional attendance policy for regular and French programming.
- We are looking for parent feedback.
- New French program
 - The Board is eliminating Extended French at grade 4 and 7 and moving to French Immersion with a JK or grade 4 entry.
 - The reason for the switch from SK entry to JK entry is to meet the goal that students can read in one language by the end of Grade 1.
 - Schools that currently have an SK entry will have a JK entry. Schools that have a Grade 4 Extended will transition to Grade 4 Immersion. Grade 6 Immersion entry and Grade 7 Extended French are being phased out.
 - There will be a double cohort year with SK and JK entry so that no year gets missed during the transition.
 - There will be budget savings.
 - In high school they will be able to streamline due to elimination of extended French (i.e. the students from JK and grade 4 entry will be at same level at Grade 9).
 - No anticipated impact to Runnymede's # of French Immersion spots
- Before and after care
 - Common problem in Toronto that on-site before and after care does not have enough spots for all children who need it.
 - It would be difficult for PLASP to also operate in the school as the City won't provide subsidies to 2 programs in one building.
- Bus transportation for gifted programs for grades 4, 5, and 6
 - The TDSB will have bus transportation next year for Gifted and French Immersion programs.

- The TDSB is part of transportation consortium.
- There may be some adjustment to bell times to help save money on bus transportation.
- There will be a report going to Committee next week and information will then be communicated to parents.
- It is likely that bell time changes will be implemented across the board.
- Bus transportation is a very tricky issue.
- Fee-for-service has not been and is unlikely to ever be considered in regards to busing.
- Cuts to funding for the arts
 - Last year we took a \$67M budget cut.
 - The TDSB has \$2.3B in fixed costs, so there is not as much discretionary budget as people may think.
 - We had to find a way to take \$67M out of \$900M.
 - The largest cut (25%) went to central staffing.
 - We cut 5% of total school budgets via an adjustment to per student amount, the elimination of elementary IB and the elimination of supplemental funding for certain specialized programs and schools (not all specialized programs received this funding)
 - 3% came out of arts funding.
 - Within the 3% arts cut, we cut 25% of the funding for itinerant music
 - A re-organization resulting in some schools losing itinerant music hours, some remaining the same and other schools (17) getting itinerant music hours (who did not have the program previously).
 - Support for the arts still very strong and taking place in schools across the board. For more info on the Arts at the TDSB, please see the TDSB website here: <https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Your-School-Day/Curriculum/The-Arts>
 - Significant parent concern about cuts to arts programs and schools with strong arts programs like Runnymede, having opportunities, programs and teachers taken away.
 - Parents pointed out that the TSBD indicated that equity in the arts entails bringing students up to the same level as students who are thriving. However, this would require an investment in the arts, not cuts. In the current situation, schools and students who were previously thriving are losing opportunities, teachers and programs.
 - Robin responded that regarding the Itinerant Music program, there were schools that were thriving, but they were thriving without music teachers. In budget cut situations sometimes we have to look at how we can do things differently.
 - Robin communicated that what we have it isn't enough. The core issue is that this government does not prioritize the arts.
- Kindergarten Intervention Program (KIP)
 - Support for children with behavioural issues in Kindergarten.
 - Out of TDSB's 26,000 Kindergarten students, 50 are in KIP.
 - The outcomes of KIP were poor and therefore these students will either move into intensive programs or back to regular classes with supports.
 - The board decided that those students would be better off in their home school with supports.

- Board staff from the Special Education department will be working with schools, teachers and impacted students.
- Special Education support is also available for Kindergarten students in the French Immersion program. The implementation of this is the responsibility of the School Administration. Across the board, there is a shortage of qualified FI special education staff.
- Cuts to education
 - Impact to next year's start date
 - Start of 2020-21 school year is unlikely to be impacted by current job action.
 - What the TDSB can do about the budget
 - TDSB could in theory not approve the budget outlined by the provincial government, but this would likely result in trustees being replaced by government officials.
 - [Bhutila] If schools don't balance their budgets, they fear that government will eliminate trustees altogether and replace them with government appointed officials.
 - What can parents do
 - The Government is more interested in listening to parents than trustees.
 - It is very important that parents let the government know that you are not happy.
 - [Bhutila] Contact the following representatives:
 - Premier, Hon. Doug Ford: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org
 - Minister of Education, Steven Lecce: stephen.lecce@pc.ola.org
 - Minister of Finance, Hon. Rod Phillips rod.phillips@pc.ola.org
 - President of the Treasury Board, Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, peter.bethlenfalvy@pc.ola.org
 - [Bhutila] Look at the actions taken by the Ontario Autism Coalition and consider a similar model.
- Report cards
 - Marks are not being inputted into the computer system as we are currently in sanctions.
 - Teachers are doing the work (preparing the marks) but they are not being input into the system.
 - Administrators do not have the time to do this along with their other duties during the school year.
 - Last time this happened, marks were input after school finished in June and additional support staff were brought in.
 - Given the mid-year timing and the cuts to central support staff, this simply isn't possible at this time.
- Math
 - TDSB is not reaching provincial standard in grade 6
 - To address this, there is a new math strategy and professional learning for teachers being introduced, but it is on hold due to current job action.