

**Name of Committee**: Alternative Schools Community Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date**: 02 February 2023

A meeting of the Alternative Schools Community Advisory Committee convened on February 2, 2023, from 7:00pm to 9:00 pm via Virtual Meeting (Zoom) with Jacob Leibovitch and Laurie McAllister (Co-Chairs) presiding.

| **Membership**  **Attendance**: | Sarah Bogatie (Student, Avondale Alternative Secondary School; Secondary School Student Representative); Serge Guschin (Parent, Beaches alternative School, ASCAC Member); Joanne Huber (Parent, High Park Alternative JS, ASCAC Member), Olga Ingrahm (Parent, Alternative Scarborough Education 1, ASCAC Member), Shelley Laskin (Trustee Ward 8, ASCAC Trustee Co-Chair); Jacob Leibovitch (Parent, ALPHA Alternative Junior School, ASCAC Co-Chair); Laurie McAllister (Parent, Avondale Secondary Alternative School, ASCAC Co-Chair) |
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| **Staff Lead:** | Peter Chang (TDSB System Superintendent) |
| **Recorder:** | Anna Catalano, ASCAC Committee Assistant |
| **Regrets**: | Diana Grimaldos (Parent, Mountview Alternative Junior School, ASCAC Member) |

| **ITEM** | **DISCUSSION** |
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| 1. **Land Acknowledgement, Welcome/ Introductions** | Laurie McAllister, Secondary Alternative School Parent Co-Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. |
| 1. **Approval of Agenda**   **Declarations of Possible Conflicts** | The agenda was approved.  No conflicts were declared. |
| 1. **Equitable Marketing**   Information from the TDSB on ASCAC’s 2022 recommendation related to marketing practices. | Laurie provided a brief overview of the Equitable Marking recommendation that ASCAC made to the Program and School Services Committee (PSSC) on January 19, 2022. The recommendation that ASCAC made was as follows:  *The Alternative Schools Community Advisory Committee recommends that the TDSB conducts a review on how the Board can promote more, do more with the same or similar marketing pieces, campaigns, and budgets. Take every marketing opportunity and optimize it to its full potential. Why promote just one option, when TDSB can simultaneously promote more or all options for the same or similar cost and time.*  Ryan gave an overview of what his department typically focuses on which is raising awareness of the availability of programs as opposed to promoting individual schools or programs.  Stacey mentioned that she worked closely with Peter to create a communications plan to promote the new elementary alternative schools’ central application process (EAS CAP) with the purpose of widely sharing the information to the TDSB community. This communication plan included the launch of the revised [Alternative Schools web page](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/alternativeschools/), information distributed widely to TDSB’s System Leaders, Administrators, Trustees so they could include this information to their community through their channel (referred to as *News You Can Use*).  The [Application Process webpage](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/alternativeschools/ElementarySchools/Application-and-Admission) was created to include all pertinent information about the elementary alternative schools application and admission process.  In January, two live [Elementary Alternative Schools Webinar Presentation](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/alternativeschools/docs/2023-01-16-Webinar-PPT.pdf) were held (one on January 16 at 1pm and one on January 18 at 7pm).  Stacey and Ryan opened the floor to questions and or comments that included appreciation for the changes, how to know the reach out was successful (number of applications received), and other types of promotion which do not require access to the internet.  Lastly, they mentioned a Communications Survey would be sent to TDSB parents/guardians/caregivers for feedback.  Suggestions regarding the promotion of alternative schools should be sent to the ASCAC Committee Assistant at [anna.catalano@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:anna.catalano@tdsb.on.ca) |
| 1. **Centralized Application Procedure**   Overview of centralized application & procedure  Questions and discussion | Laurie asked Peter to give ASCAC an overview of the centralized elementary alternative schools application process and background of the motion and its intent.  In April 2021, ASCAC brought a recommendation to the Programs and School Services Committee (PSSC) asking that the Board consider passing a motion to create one universal elementary alternative schools’ application form, as well as one set of clear and detailed admissions procedures for all elementary alternative schools to ensure consistency, equity of access, and remove potential barriers. In May 2021, the Board Motion passed (additional information can be found in the Minutes from the April 26, 2021, ASCAC meeting).  Peter showed highlights of the webinar he did for parents/guardians/caregivers on January 16 and January 18. View the [Elementary Alternative Schools Webinar Presentation](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/portals/alternativeschools/docs/2023-01-16-Webinar-PPT.pdf) for complete details of the presentation.  Each applicant may apply to up to two schools. The system does mini randomizers for every school, for example if a school receives 150 applications, students are placed randomly in the seats that are available. Power School then goes to the next school and does the same. All applicants are held at the school they were placed at until the randomizer goes through all the schools. If an applicant applies to two schools, then the randomizer will place that applicant into one of the two schools. There are two rounds of the random selection process. Students placed in Round 1 may accept or decline the offer. Students who decline the offer or do not accept by the deadline come off the list, and that spot will be made available in Round 2. Only those students who receive and accept an offer in Round 1 or Round 2 will be placed in elementary alternative school.  There were questions about the current design of the procedure, including limiting each applicant to two school choices and the inability of applicants to rank each choice, which is different from the centralized procedures for other TDSB programs. There was concern about the potential for spots being unfilled despite demand, and whether that could reduce projected enrolment and the number of spots made available in future school years.  Laurie asked if the information about which elementary alternative school offers child care could be made more accessible with the application process.  **Action:** For the 2024 Application Process – add information about which elementary alternative schools has child care in their co-location schools  **Note:** Child care and before and after school care depends on space availability and providers. |
| 1. **Enrolment Allocation Caps**   Update on ASCAC’s 2022 recommendation  Questions and discussion | Laurie gave a brief overview of the request ASCAC made about the enrolment allocation caps. Following is the recommendation that was presented to PSSC:  *The Alternative Schools Community Advisory Committee (ASCAC) recommends that the TDSB conducts a review for TDSB staff to remove existing barriers and consider all operations and specifications, including building space capacity and wait lists, to maximize enrolment numbers for all elementary alternative schools so they may serve as many students as feasible. Furthermore, ASCAC requests the Board to provide a rationale for the allocated enrolment numbers for elementary alternative schools*  Additional information can be found in the Minutes from the December 13, 2021, ASCAC meeting.  At the April 2022 ASCAC meeting, staff from the Planning department attended the meeting and mentioned that a process was being considered which would consider the number of applicants from prior years, current number of applicants in enrolment projections and space availability to determine how more spots could be made available at no cost. There were no updates to report. It was confirmed that the enrollment allocation caps are not administered in accordance with a particular TDSB procedure.  **Action:** Peter will continue to follow up with the Planning department to see what more can be done. |
| 1. **Secondary Alternative Schools** | Laurie mentioned that staffing for secondary alternative schools is based on a formula that is used across the TDSB and it’s based on enrolment. Due to low enrolment, secondary alternative schools are not given enough staff to offer courses the students need to enrol and graduate.  A recommendation was made to PSSC in April 2022, that program viability be considered as the primary driver for staffing at secondary alternative schools, rather than projected enrollment, until the secondary alternative schools’ program review is completed, and its recommendations are implemented. This recommendation was approved by PSSC and received final approval by the full Board. For the complete recommendation please see the Minutes from the February 7, 2022, ASCAC meeting.  Laurie asked for an update on how this type of recommendation is implemented by staff following its approval. Peter confirmed that staff continue to have conversations with central staff to ensure that secondary alternative schools are offered as much support as possible for the students.  There are no deadline dates to apply to secondary alternative schools. There was discussion regarding student needs at secondary, and application deadlines as barriers to access when students need secondary alternative schools. Peter mentioned that deadline dates will be reviewed when drafting the secondary alternative school procedures. Sarah mentioned that deadline dates are needed for structure but there should be flexibility at the secondary alternative school level.  Laurie asked if there are any formalized re-engagement processes in place and how do the secondary alternative schools fit within these processes.  Currently, there is a System Superintendent who has the portfolio for Re-engagement Strategy and Virtual Learning. Re-engagement is done on an ongoing basis by the staff at the secondary alternative schools. |
| 1. **Student Census - Motion** | Laurie mentioned that this item would need more time to address it properly and would like to defer this item to the next meeting. |
| 1. **TDSB Board Updates** | Trustee Laskin provided a few significant updates as follows:  **Budget** – it will be a very difficult budget this year because the TDSB has a 40.4 million dollar deficit from this current year that is being covered by reserves, but school boards cannot continue to use reserves. The province still owes the TDSB 69.5 million dollars from COVID related costs. Visit the [Developing the 2023-24 Budget](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Business-Services/Budgets-and-Financial-Statements/Developing-the-2023-2024-Budget) webpage for more information about the budget process and upcoming budget meetings. Trustee MacLean also spoke to the challenges of the budget.  **Mandatory Indigenous Education in Grade 11** – at the February 1, 2023, Board meeting, Trustees with the Toronto District School Board have approved a motion declaring the Grade 11 English course: [*Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices*](https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum/secondary-first-nations-metis-and-inuit-studies/courses/nbe3u/introduction) the mandatory Grade 11 English course.  Trustee MacLean, Ward 2, echoed what Trustee Laskin mentioned about being enthusiastic about the passing of this motion. The learning objectives are the same as the previous Grade 11 English course, but students will also develop a greater appreciation and understanding of the Indigenous history, experience, and way of being. |
| 1. **Open Floor** | Meeting participants were welcomed to ask questions, provide feedback and or let the Committee know of any concerns they may have.  Sarah, a secondary alternative student, and ASCAC Student Rep thanked Peter for his visit to Avondale Secondary Alternative School. Sarah stressed the significant and positive impact the school and its staff have had on the students Peter met on his visit, described how many of them were struggling before attending Avondale, and how transformational the school has been for them. |
| 1. **Adjournment and Next Meeting** | Meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm  Next meeting: Monday, March 27, 2023, from 6:30pm to 8:30pm via Zoom |
| 1. **Future Meeting Dates** | Monday, May 29, 2023 (last meeting) |