Lunchtime Ward Forum – Updated School Reopening Plans Elementary

Trustee Rachel Chernos Lin (Ward 11 – Don Valley West) August 25, 2020 – noon – 1:30pm.

Meeting venue: Webex Online Meeting, hosted by Trustee Chernos Lin

Attendees:

- Trustees: Rachel Chernos Lin (Ward 11)
- **Staff:** Superintendent Andrew Howard, Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson (LC1), Executive Superintendent Sandy Spyropoulos (LC4).
- Parents-Caregivers/Students/Staff/Community members: 200 people attended (of 256 preregistered).

Meeting notes by Wilmar Kortleever, Shared Services Liaison, TDSB Trustee Services

1. Welcome & Introductions

Trustee Chernos Lin started the meeting with the Land Acknowledgement, and welcomed all, including the new Executive Superintendent for Learning Centre 1, Uton Robinson, the previous Executive Superintendent (now in LC4) Sandy Spyropoulos, and Superintendent Andrew Howard.

The meeting is recorded for note taking purposes. We will try to address as many questions as possible, both pre-submitted and through the chat. We will try to get the report out at earliest convenience.

If any questions are not answered, feel free to send them directly to Trustee Chernos Lin at Rachel.ChernosLin@tdsb.on.ca.

Please note everybody was sent a confirmation e-mail with additional information, including the TDSB's continuously updated Return to School website www.tdsb.on.ca/Return-to-School.

* A selected PDF PowerPoint Presentation accompanies this report.

2. Overview Trustee Chernos Lin

See PDF PowerPoint presentation

2a. School Opening & Registration (from slide #2, marked page 6)

- The **start of school is delayed** until September 15, based on advice of Toronto Public Health (TPH), and with permission by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Elementary schools' entry will be staggered over the first week, to safely re-introduce smaller groups of students to school. It will

- give everybody the opportunity to acclimatize and get used to the routines, including screening, hand hygiene measures, and more.
- As plans finalize, **local school administrators will be in touch** with further details about the start of school
- The Registration process starts on August 26. This is for everybody, including those who
 answered the pre-registration phone survey two weeks ago, because there have been many
 changes made since, and we feel that it would be appropriate to start over based on current
 planning.
 - Even if your intention remains the same, **please fill out the Registration** again, because it allows the Board to plan appropriately. Be patient if you have not received the Registration e-mail yet, as they are going out staggered to prevent overloading the servers. If you have not received it in the next couple of days, feel free to contact Trustee Chernos Lin and she will connect you with your local Principal. Families who do not respond will be contacted by phone next week, or by their local school before September 15.
- It is important families let the TDSB know what model they want their kids to do in September, as it will allow for good planning of class sizes, which will need reorganizing from what was done in June.
- Switching is possible, but it will not be on a dime because continually changing classes are disruptive to teaching, as well as detrimental to assessment. The opportunity to switch will be given at natural break points, expected to be around reporting periods, e.g. November reports. (Please note, since the time of this ward forum, it has been announced that there will be three times for switching in elementary around Thanksgiving, November reports, and February reports). This gives the teacher a good period of time to assess where kids are at, which is extra important given that students have not been in full school rhythm since March, meaning there will be gaps and differences between students.
- Exceptions to these switch points can be made, but on a case by case basis, with time built in for the adjustment.

<u>2b. Health & Safety</u> (from slide #5, marked page 10)

- School will look a lot different this coming year because of Covid. Ensuring health & safety of students and staff is our top priority. We are working with guidance of Toronto Public Health (TPH).
- A number of key measures have been implemented like physical distancing, hand washing, respiratory etiquette (coughing into elbow, sneezing into sleeve), as well as screening for symptoms
- **Screening** will happen in two ways: at home (self-evaluation for symptoms, with detailed guidance forthcoming). We are asking people to be vigilant and stay home if showing symptoms, and we need everybody's cooperation on that.
 - We are looking into **staggered entry and exit**, which is especially important in very busy schools, and establishing **parent pick up protocols**. No drop-off of children at the classrooms. **Active screening** will take place at school entry. For staff as well as students.

- There will be various **physical distancing** measures, including **designated entry and exit points**. That also guarantees we know who is in the building for screening purposes and potential contact tracing if ever needed. There will be traffic-flow identifying **signs**, not unlike what you see in grocery stores and elsewhere, and other signage reinforcing safety measures.
- There will be **handwashing routines** during the day, and a **designated room** to isolate students or staff who fall ill.
- There will be capacity limits for elevators and washrooms, and no assemblies or large group gatherings. We have increased ventilation and airflow. There will also be enhanced cleaning on school buses.
- In **confirmed or suspected cases of covid**, everybody with symptoms will be encouraged to get tested. If symptoms develop during the day, students will be isolated into a designated room this room will be disinfected after use. A call will go home to parents to pick the student up, and staff will be sent home. Schools will keep track of absenteeism.
- If there is a suspected case, TDSB will work with Toronto Public Health for contact tracing, as they are the experts.
- Masks: The Province had mandated mask from grade 4, and encouraged them until grade 3. The TDSB passed a motion requiring all students to be masked when in school, including hallways or classrooms. They can be taken off while on outside breaks, which will be built into the day. Students can wear their own non-medical masks, or they will be provided if needed. Reasonable exemptions will be made for the mask mandate where needed. School-based staff working with students will be provided with all appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- **Cohorting:** contacts for elementary students will be limited to approximately 50 people with classrooms obviously a lot smaller.

Facilities

- Cleaning: Extra caretakers have been hired to do more cleaning. They will perform routine
 cleaning of facilities, and enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces (like faucets, doorplates,
 bathrooms, handrails) at least twice a day. Shared items will be used less than before, and be
 cleaned between users.
- Increased **ventilation and airflow**. All systems were checked over the summer, mechanical HVAC systems are turned up where possible, and there will be more filter changes than before. They will start earlier in the morning and go later into the evening. Windows will be open as much as possible where possible.
- Staff is working on updating the reporting of school repair status reports (which was delayed during covid).

Transport (slide 10, marked page 16)

 We have many kids who take the bus, and it is a big worry for many parents. Buses will operate at higher capacity than one person per seat, which makes physical distancing unrealistic. Masks will

- therefore be mandatory on the bus. Buses will have seating plans, and siblings & class mates can sit together.
- Active safe travel will be encouraged: walking, biking, rolling, as much as possible. Walking maps will be created for every school.

2c. Elementary Model from slide #11, marked p.17)

- Class sizes. Trustee Chernos Lin shared a separate slide (not included) with slightly different class sizes than on slide #11 (marked page 17). In the last two weeks, the Ministry has given permission to dip into school board reserves to reduce class sizes, and TDSB has reopened its budget to spend \$29.5 million to hire extra teachers. Priorities were set to assign those extra teachers, including working with Toronto Public Health to identify the schools most at risk of experiencing a covid outbreak (like areas with dense populations, lower socio-economic situations, and other). Other teachers were assigned to lower class sizes across the system, because the staffing regularly provided by the Province does not really allow for proper social distancing. In TPH priority schools (including Fraser Mustard Learning Academy and Thorncliffe PS in Ward 11) caps will be set at 15 (JK/SK) and 20 (grades 1-8). In all other schools, JK/SK will be capped at 27, grades 1-3 at 20, and grades 4-8 at 27. There are also class averages across the system. Both the caps and the averages are a lot lower than in regular years. There should be no classes upwards of 30. It is not perfect, but a lot better than what we had 2 weeks ago.
- <u>IN SCHOOL LEARNING</u>: In elementary schools, students return for full days. Instruction will be 300 minutes a day.
 - Students will be cohorted, including recess and lunch. Each class will have the Homeroom teacher (plus DECE in larger Kindergarten classes), and limited contact with teachers still providing specific subjects like Core French, arts, and phys.ed though some of those subjects may now also be provided by classroom teachers. The details vary from school to school, depending on the number of teachers and students, which is also dependent on the number of students who choose in-school versus remote learning. A lot of that information will come from the Registration Process happening this week.
 - Timing of recesses, lunch, and bathroom breaks may change because of staggering.
- Superintendent Howard: **Middle Schools/Senior Public Schools** are the most challenging group that we have, because they usually run on a full rotary system like high schools. The Ministry has said we can't run them like a high school in an adaptive model, so they have to be in a full-day, 300 minute model. We are working out what it will look like, including creative solutions that will honour specialty teachers that are available, while at the same time reducing the amount of contacts that students have.
- **Online platform:** these will be put in place, also to prepare in case outbreaks require a switch back ('pivot') to online learning. Google Classrooms or Brightspace will be maintained regularly. The frequency will be determined locally, and continued training is available for teachers.

This will also facilitate students who need to stay home when sick. For longer absences, the option of moving to the Virtual School for Remote Learning can be discussed as well on a case by case basis (if outside the designated switch periods).

- **Supports** (slide 14, marked page 20): arrangements are to be made for students to leave the classroom for support, and maintain limited contacts. Itinerant educators will have a schedule that limits moving from school to school, and their number of contacts. They may work partly remotely.
- **Kindergarten** (slide 15, marked page 21): Kindergarten students will follow the existing program, which is play- and inquiry based. Health and Safety protocols will be in place, including cleaning of materials.
- **Subject Delivery:** TDSB is creating manual/guideline which includes subject specific areas like phys.ed., drama, and art, and how to deliver them safely. It is in part locally specific, if spaces like gyms, libraries and cafeterias are to be used for classes.

VIRTUAL MODEL (from slide 16, page marked 22)

- This will be very, very different from the Spring.
 - Daily attendance will be taken. 300 minutes of learning opportunities will be provided, both synchronous (live learning, online, with a teacher) and asynchronous (at your own time). Large group instruction will be 40-50% of the day, dependent on grade level. Guided instruction can be provided in small groups or individual, and independent work will be given out. All dependent on the age of the students. There will be a virtual cohort homeroom that includes DECE (for Kindergartners), and specialty teachers.
 - The focus of the Curriculum will be as usual: the Ontario Curriculum and the Kindergarten program.
- **Expectations** (slide 17, page marked 23): this will be where the Remote Learning in the Virtual School will look very different from the Spring. Dependent on the grade, there will be whole group instruction (2-4 sessions per day), guided instruction & independent work (2 or 3 sessions per day), and synchronous (live virtual) check and connect (2 or 1 session(s) per day).
- French Immersion/Extended French: will be available in Remote learning.

Executive Superintendent Sandy Spyropoulos: Remote Learning will be delivered through a defined Virtual School, with its own budget, teachers, a Principal, and all the support staff including Guidance. In the previous pre-registration survey, 20% of students indicated they wanted to do Remote Learning, which would come down to 62,000 students.

All students with an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or an ISP, including **gifted**, will also be supported in the Virtual School, with a Special Education teacher. The delay of the start date gives us the opportunity to hire those teachers, in addition to some of our current specialized teachers who may be opting for remote teaching like our students are choosing remote learning.

Students remain part of the home school they are currently registered in and their Ontario Student Record (OSR) will remain there.

Grouping online students: No promises can be made which students can stay together when choosing Remote Learning, but we are going to try our best to group students together by school into the Virtual School.

Graduation: students in the Virtual School will still graduate with the students in their home school. Should Toronto Public Health decide that schools need to be closed, the students in the Virtual School will stay together. The students who are in-school will pivot to remote learning as a group separately.

2d. Special Education (slide 21, marked page 35)

- Students with an IEP will be supported both in-school and in the Remote Learning environment.
- In Remote Learning: support will be available digital (with SEA devices and equipment) and non-digital (if families choose such). Students who would have resource assistance or withdrawal assistance in-school, will still have a teacher assigned to them in the Virtual School to support their learning.
- **Transport**: school buses for special education will run the same as other school buses: at full capacity, with masks and assigned seating and enhanced cleaning. Siblings and class mates sit together. Special Education busing is the first to start.
- ISP (Intensive Support Program), excluded gifted, classes will be capped at 6-16, and come to school daily
- PPE will be provided by the Board for students and staff in ISP settings.
- **SEA claims** (devices that support Special Education needs): all students who accessed devices in the Spring got to keep their devices (if still in the TDSB). School Principals will process additional SEA claims

3. Questions & Answers

(partially complete as the recording was interrupted)

- It is challenging to make a registration decision because we don't have all the information, how should I proceed? A lot of information people are looking for is dependent on local school situations and numbers. Which won't be known until after Registration. A chicken-and-egg problem, but Registration needs to happen as soon as possible now so school planning can be finalized.
- What will Lunch Supervision and lunch look like? it is recommended and preferred that students stay at school and eat in class, to keep the cohorting as tight as possible. Parents are however allowed to take students home for lunch.
- Allergy season is coming and it might be hard to tell the difference between covid and allergies? Some allergies show similar to Covid symptoms. Especially at the outset, we should err on the side of caution, be careful and sensible.
- Will there be the same gifted teachers for online? There are no guarantees that current gifted teachers will be the ones teaching in the Virtual Schools. All will have the proper Special Education certifications. But they could be newly hired teachers.

- What is the HVAC/Ventilation situation? Inspections were done over the Summer and
 improvements have been made. Schools will identify classrooms without ventilation or windows,
 which may then not be used and may have to move to other locations in the building.
 For major improvements, additional funding is required, and the Board sent several letters to the
 Province asking for more Covid support. We hope they will come back to the table. However,
 larger projects are of course best done over the Summer when nobody is in the building, so those
 cannot be done anymore.
- Temperature Checks: did Toronto Public Health (TPH) instruct the Board not to do these? TPH provides guidance, and the TDSB follows its guidelines and recommendations as much as possible. Temperature checks are not on the TDSB list of measures. According to TPH, temperature check is not the most effective tool, and can give a false sense of security
- Instead of virtual learning, can I opt for non-digital virtual learning (paper packages): This is in development, more details will be made available.
- Why not split the school day in two sections, from 8-12 and 2-6, to limit class sizes? The Board actually proposed a model like that initially for high schools. The Province would not allow it, because there would not be enough opportunity to deep clean between cohorts. On top of that, the province has directed all boards to be back full time for elementary. It is very complex, also to make it fit obligations in the collective agreements.
- Concerns about School buses: the situation is not ideal because of the decision to run buses at full capacity. A big problem that remains is a shortage of bus drivers, perhaps even larger than before because people may opt out because many of them are older and may have underlying risk factors.
- Mental health: This is a major focus of the Board. Additional staff has been hired to help both students and staff. Everybody is encouraged to check out the Conversation series organized by the Parent & Community Engagement Office, which has some terrific speakers and subjects. Most of the sessions have been archived for (re)viewing. https://www.tdsb.on.ca/Community/How-to-Get-Involved/Conversations-Series.

4. Closing

Trustee Chernos Lin thanks everybody for attending, especially Superintendents Howard, Spyropoulos, and Robinson. Please feel free to direct further questions to her by e-mail at Rachel.ChernosLin@tdsb.on.ca. The meeting report and hopefully some Q&A from the chat will be made available.

Lunchtime Ward 11 Forum – Updated School Reopening Plans - PRIMARY

Q&A CHAT ANSWERED ONLINE BY SUPERINTENDENTS

Q&A CHAT ANSWERS: Registration, Class placement

Q: What is the plan to tell parents what class/teacher/room their child is in? The current approach to post lists on the first day of school causes much anxiety and also crowding in the schoolyard as people stand around lists looking for their child's name. What is the new plan this year to lessen both anxiety and crowding? Can we please get the information in advance of Sept 15?

Q: Is there an option to get a notification before school starts on which class the kids will be allocated to avoid the rush of first day? This is for in person. This is a tough year for kids and knowing which class, teacher they will have will help them in the transition

A: Principals will be communicating class placement for students prior to September 15 once a determination around virtual vs in school is confirmed.

Q: Will we get an email for registration?

A: You will get an email for registration beginning tomorrow, August 26.

Q&A CHAT ANSWERS: Health & Safety & Facilities

Q: Hi, will each student be screened before school entry? could you please elaborate? Will a temperature scan be done?

Q: temperature screening is one of the first and basic checks to be done for covid, however the Toronto Public health drected the tdsb not to do that?!

A: No temperature checks will take place at the direction of Toronto Public Health. Students will be using hand sanitizer, wearing a mask, identifying that they have taken the self assessment.

Q: What about older schools without HVAC (hot water piping)?

A: All schools have been assessed and checked by facilty services. They have alterations made where required and will have more dligent checks and changing of filters on a more regular basis.

Q: seasonal flu symptoms are same as Covid symptoms. Would kids/staff require tests each time a child has one of Covid symptoms? Is Public health ramped up for increased testing?

Q: Will fly shot be mandatory this year?

A: Flu shot is not mandatory as that is at the discretion of each individual family.

Q: If the board is providing masks, does this mean a new mask will be handed out daily? Q: one mask provided per day per child...what about young children that will likely play with masks, drop them on the floor, take on and off for meals etc...one mask may not be sufficient?

A: If students require masks, they will receive them daily.

A: Masks for children will be provided each day and that may mean more then one per day. Schools have been sent thousands to start off the school year,

Q: Are these masks disposable or reusable?

A: The masks given to students from the school are disposable.

Q: Would outdoor spaces be used for classes?

A: Teachers will try to get student outside for learning as often as possible.

Q: I would like to know what drop off and pick up of kids will look like. Can kids be playing in the outdoor area between first and second bell like in the past? Or drop off is exactly at bell time.

A: Information around pick up and drop off will come from individual school principals in the next couple of weeks.

Q: Will teachers in each class not pre-screen each child prior to entry into the classroom?

A: Students will get pre-screened at the entry of the building not entry of each classroom.

Q: Will middleschool kids like Hodgson be able to leave at lunch still or will they remain in class for lunch?

Q: Can Middle School kids go out or go home for lunch?

Q: Hi! Just wondering if kids will be permitted to go home for lunch... for both elementary and middle school?

Q: Second everyone's question re: going home for lunch? Not a huge issue, just curious.

Q: Will grade 7 and 8 be allowed to leave/mingle at lunch? Seems like a concern given that high school was designed to avoid having students mingle/go out together at lunch

A: Students are being encouraged to stay at school for lunch. If a parent wants their child at home they will not be told no, but we are encouraging all students to stay at school for lunch.

Q: Will schools with pools still have swim?

A: Schools with pools will not be operating as part of the gym program. Changerooms will not be used.

Q&A CHAT ANSWERS: Elementary Programming

Q: Will there be catch-up for the learning between March-June 2020? We had almost none.

A: Teachers will be assessing student learning at the beginning of the year and will fill in any gaps that were missed during school closure last year.

Q: I would like to understand why it is 27 students in JK/SK and 20 in Grade 1-3?

A: There is a mandatory cap in grade 1-3 that is set by the Ministry. The cap in kindergarten is 29. That is the reason for the discrepancy in non-TPH schools.

- Q: Will the student in before and after care be grouped in the same classes? How does the before and after cohorts work?
- Q: What happens with schools who have before and after school programs as those children will not be on their class cohort during that program and therefore exposing their cohort classes to a greater number of students during the day.
- Q: Will their be an effort made to keep bused students or before and after school care children together in class cohorts?

A: Principals, when determining cohorts will take into consideration students that are in child care and attempt to cohort them where possible.

Q: can you please be specific regaridng subject- teachers: is a grade 8 math or grade 8 science considered specialist? or would the English teacher teach math and science?

A: In middle schools, many teachers are specialist in one area such as math. The expectation is that these teachers who are trained to teach can do so in all areas. What some middle schools are trying to do is to maintain the specialst and be creative about the delivery.

- Q: What happens to bricks and mortar students if there is a second wave? Will they move to the same remote learning model as the remote students or will they have some hybrid remote learning model like we saw in the Spring of this year?
- Q: so if a second wave happens or there is an outbreak only in our school, will the education continue online with their own school teachers?
- Q: What if the whole board is directed to pivot to remote? Will remote learners still be stuck in classes of 35 or will they be re-integrated into classes with a teacher from their regular school and students from their community?
- Q: What virtual learning model do bricks and mortar students transition to in the event of a second wave shut down
- Q: What about the students in regular school, Will the education continue online with their own school teachers?
- Q: In case of second wave will the remote learning the bricks and mortar students get with their teacher follow the same model as the virtual learning? If not what will be the difference?
- Q: with second wave, inperson group from home school also goes remote, can u switch from virtual to your inperson group who is now remote?
- **A**: Students who are in virtual school will remain in the virtual school if a second wave were to hit. the students in bricks and mortar would pivot to remote learning with their in school teachers.
- Q: School space can be resolved with 50% school occupancy by creating two learning sessions: morning and evening.
- Q: In order to maintain safe distance why doesn't TDSB consider two periods each day from 8:00 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 17:00? So first cohort will eat lunch at home after finish of school each day and second cohort will have lunch at home before arriving at school?
- Q: Great question from XXX, can we split into 2 time frames per day? 8-12 and 2-6?
- Q: This way we resolve the lunch issue and kids being kids during lunch
- Q: Second Sorin, this ensures 50% building occupancy
- Q: Yes, we will need to clean more but this is something the parents Committees can help with

A: Unfortunately, we are not allowed to go with an adapted day in elementary as it must be a full 300 minute day.

Q: Are we still going to have split classes in an in-person model?

A: Yes, split classes will still be part of in school models...a lot will depend on the students numbers based on virtual vs bricks and mortar.

Q: If second wave were to hit and inclass student need to pivot to remote learning, will remote learning mirror synchronous/asynchronous session requirements of virtual curriculum? Q: Will remote learning curriculum be synchronized with in-person?

A: There is no guarantee that in school curriculum and virtual school curriculum will directly align. This is why we are looking at transitioning only during natural times when units of study would be completed.

Q&A CHAT ANSWERS: Virtual School

Q: If students are home more due to illness diligence (eg any stuffy nose etc.) will teachers be providing some type of help (eg. google classroom) to help students at home keep up with work? Q: Also, with increased stay at home due to extra cautiousness, will class/course lessons and assigned work be available online so students can stay up to date with work?

Q: @Andrew Howard, when you say that students at home will receive work as they normally do, what do you mean by that? If they are self-isolating for 2 weeks due to non-school exposure, how would lessons/work be given? There is no "normal" for this. Thanks.

Q: If a child is required to isolate for 14 days, how do we ensure that they don't fall behind, given that they won't be participating in remote learning during that time?

Q: Is there any cap on how many in class days a child can miss due to symptoms? Meaning, a child opts for in school, and then misses a significant portion of classes due to coughs/sneezes/etc. Can this child stay indefinitely in school + make do with the google classroom asynchronous option, or would there be a threshold where they would be sent to virtual school?

A: If students are at home for illness and are enrolled in person they will receive work as they normally do from the classroom teacher. If there is an extended absence, that will be a conversation with the principal regarding virtual option etc.

A: Teachers send home work when students are absent in a normal year. Lessons would not be possible unless the absence was deemed to be extended and we were looking at moving to a virtual option. These would be done on a case by case basis.

Q: Can we make a request for a group of students to be placed in the same cohort, either in person or online?

A: Virtually, the Board will try to group students by school into the same cohort. With respect to in school cohorts, the administrators will do their best based on information they were working with at the end of the year and based on who is or who is not attending in person.

Q: The number of class size for grade 4 to 8 in virtual school is alot bigger than 'all other schools'. (35 VS 27) Is this cap finalized or it may go down? Thank you.

A: Virtual school caps will remain as shared by Rachel...these will not go down unless #'s for virtual vs in school changes dramatically.

Q: Would connection to home school still remain if virtual option?

Q: So virtual school would not be part of our community?

A: Connection to home school will still remain if a family chooses the virtual model.

Q: Thx for confirming home school connection to remain...Would they be deregistered from home school if virtual? Will child retain their spot in specialized programs.?

A: Students will not be deregistered from home school and will not lose their spot in the specialized program.

Q: is there remote option for French immersion?

A: Yes, there is remote option for French Immersion and Extended French.

Q: thanks for confirming that FI is in remote, is this the same for SK where children are just entering into french immersion for the first time?

A: SK French Immersion will also be offer remotely.

Q: In reference to extended absence, Covid or non, it was noted that a switch will be offered to online learning. Is this mandatory? If so can the student then be switched back to in-person? Would online and in-person be run concurrently covering the curriculum to make the move smoothly so that the student doesn't miss out or duplicate?

Q: Will remote learning curriculum be synchronized with in-person?

A: There is no guarantee that in school curriculum and virtual school curriculum will directly align. This is why we are looking at transitioning only during natural times when units of study would be completed.