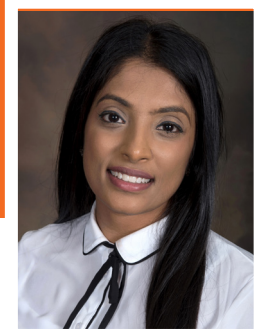




Trustee Anu Sriskandarajah

Ward 22, Scarborough - Rouge Park



Dear Students, Parents, and Community Members,

**Please note that due to the changing nature of re-opening plans this letter is an update as of August 26. Plans noted in this letter may continue to change.*

This year has been strange to say the least. When we started the last school year, I do not think anyone could have predicted the journey we were about to embark on. This past year has been difficult, but we have persevered and we will continue to do so. Our students have showed us adaptability and resilience, and from them I learn every day.

We now embark upon the difficult task of re-opening schools in a manner that will ensure the mental, physical, and social health of all members of our community. The Toronto District School Board is still working to finalize our re-opening. The plans continue to change as we continue to get direction (and hopefully more funding) from the province.

Because changes continue to unfold (in terms of directions from the province and funding) the decision has been made to move the first day of school (for elementary, secondary and virtual school) to Tuesday, September 15, at which point we will stagger the entry of grades over a few days.

The 2020-2021 school year will be like no other. We will continue to work together, grow together, and ensure that safety remains at the center of our discussions. Discussions like lowering class sizes require funding and we need support from our provincial counterparts. We will continue to advocate for more resources.

Trustees have approved more than \$30 million in funding to enable staff to develop a plan that will see the hiring of an additional 366 teachers and the redeployment of 400 central teachers to lower class sizes across the board to help improve student and staff safety in our schools. We have drawn on our reserves to make this possible. However, we have not been able to secure funding from the province that will allow for more teachers that is required to lower class sizes.

As of the current plans JK/SK classes would be capped at 26, Grade 1 to 3 classes would be capped at 20, while Grade 4 to 8 classes would be capped at 27. Smaller caps will be assigned to schools in areas that have been designated as having higher risk of transmission. Secondary students will be in cohorts of 15 and follow a quadmester model. In the case of remote learning, students will be taking part in live online learning throughout the day and see class size caps of 29 in JK/SK, 20 in Grades 1 to 3 and 35 in Grades 4 to 8. To achieve these class sizes, the TDSB has used money from TDSB Reserves (\$29.5M), the Ministry (\$6.3M), and the regular TDSB budget (\$2.9M). This approach balances the urgent need to spend additional funds to lower class sizes, but doesn't get the board into financial issues in the years ahead by using too much of those reserves, much of which are set aside for employee benefits.

This year will be tough, but I believe we will get through it. We will come out of it stronger. Covid-19 has brought to the fore many inequities in our system. Inequities many of us were aware of and experienced, and now hopefully few can deny. So, if we are to find some good in this pandemic, I hope this pandemic changes our education system for the better. I will continue to do this work, together with the residents of Scarborough-Rouge Park.

Sincerely,

Anu Sriskandarajah, Trustee Ward 22

