



Establishment of the Renaming Schools to Celebrate the Diversity of Toronto Reference Group: Update

To: Governance and Policy Committee

Date: 2 June, 2021

Report No.: 06-21-4098

Strategic Directions

- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

Recommendation

It is recommended that the report on the establishment of a Reference Committee be received.

Context

On April 21, 2021 the Board decided:

Whereas, the Toronto District School Board has 583 schools, located in every community across Toronto; and

Whereas, school names are an opportunity to teach students about their community's history and place and their community's leaders and heroes; and

Whereas, there are few new school naming opportunities due to the small number of schools being opened each year; and

Whereas, few schools are named after celebrated Indigenous or Black Leaders or Leaders of colour; and

Whereas, some school names do not reflect the values of contemporary Toronto; and

Whereas, some schools are named after people with a racist legacy; and

Whereas, policy P047, Naming of Schools and Special Purpose Areas and procedure PR592, Naming of Schools and Special Purpose Areas create impediments to review or

change school names and themselves might be characterized as systemically racist policies;

Whereas, based on the Board's policy review schedule, review of policy P047 is currently under Phase 3 of the policy review process;

Therefore, be it resolved:

- a. That a special purpose reference group comprised of students, parents, TDSB educators, community members, appropriate qualified experts and individuals involved in anti-racism work, be established:
 - i. to inform the consultation process;
 - ii. to propose amendments to policy P047 and procedure PR592, Naming of Schools and Special Purpose Areas, so that school naming or renaming can be made from time-to-time to reflect the diversity of the City;
 - iii. to provide a proposal for a city-wide review of all school names so that TDSB schools reflect the diversity of Toronto's success.
- b. That the reference group present a report to the Governance and Policy Committee no later than June 30, 2021.

The Toronto District School Board serves more than 246,000.00 students and their families within 583 schools. We are committed to creating learning environments where students are focused and engaged from the moment they enter. The name of a school is critical to fostering a sense of belonging and purpose for all students. Many names of TDSB schools are not reflective of Indigenous histories or the current racial, and cultural composition of our students and their families whom we serve. As such, The Toronto District School Board has taken a bold and necessary step toward addressing this inequity.

Guiding Principles

Engaging in a process to rename a school is an acknowledgement of the need to reimagine the relationship between the school and the community. It considers both the historical and present-day significance of both the people and the space. This process is occurring at a time when there is a broader societal shift toward honouring the importance of "naming" spaces and its association to the land and Indigenous histories.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Actions Completed

Following the resolution above, staff has taken the following steps to establish the reference group. A meeting with staff from the Indigenous Education Centre was held to seek their input and guidance. The participation of all three Student Trustees on the reference group has been confirmed, as well as the participation of the following Academics: Dr. Susan Dion, Dr. Carl James, Dr. Vidya Shah, and Dr. Natasha Henry. Ongoing communication with the Policy Coordinator, and the Strategy and Planning Department will also continue.

As a result of the Board decision to proceed with the Establishment of a School Renaming Committee for Queen Victoria Public School, staff will ensure ongoing communication is maintained throughout their consultation process to guide and inform the work of the reference group.

Staff also collaborated with TSAA to create an Expression of Interest to establish a group of 10 Administrators to support the work of the reference group.

In order to establish a clear process for community participation, a **Draft “Expression of Interest”** was created, seeking two community representatives from each Learning Centre. This document will go out in the coming weeks with a response back by June 2021. (Appendix A)

Next Steps:

Staff will Finalize the membership of the reference group with the addition of community members with an **anticipated completion date of June 2021**.

Staff will continue to engage with the Indigenous Education Center to create a list of the top three schools prioritized for renaming. **The anticipated completion date is September 2021.**

In light of the above, the Reference group will not be ready with a report for the Board by June 2021. Staff suggests that based on the work involved it is projected that a report for the Board would be ready by October 2021

Resource Implications

Staff will engage in ongoing communication with the Finance Department to provide updates with potential financial implications.

Communications Considerations

Communications staff will be included as part of the reference group in order that appropriate messaging is communicated to all stakeholder audiences.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

P047 and Procedure PR592, Naming of Schools and Special Purpose Areas

Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft Expression of Interest for Community Participation on the reference group

From

Associate Director, Curtis Ennis at Curtis.ennis@tdsb.on.ca or at 416 397-3187