**COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUMMARY MEETING NOTES**

Committee Name: Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC)

Date: September 18, 2017

Time: 7:00 pm

Attendance: Boriana Karan (Equinox – via teleconference), Rebecca Holzman (HPAS), Giselle Gordon (The Grove), Kowthar Omar, Nicole Fritz (Mountview), Anne Keary, Olivia Baker (student)

TDSB Staff: Jennifer Story (Trustee, Ward 15), Ausma Malik (Trustee, Ward 10), Liam Rodrigues (SEED), Manon Gardner (Executive Superintendent), Grant Fawthrop (Principal, Sec. Alternative Schools West), Denis Lopes (Principal, Sec. Alternative Schools East), Kathy Keroglidis (Vice-Principal, Sec. Alternative Schools East), Manny Moura (Vice-Principal, Sec, Alternative Schools East), Paul Johnson (Parkview), Rachel Rosen (SOLE), Ravi Negi (Inglenook), Sally Sinclair (West end Alternative)

Regrets: Adam Shalaby (The Student School), Monica Rosas (Alpha II)

Recorder: Gillian Venning

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| **ITEM** | **DISCUSSION** | **ACTION ITEMS** |
| Welcome & Introductions |  |  |
| Call to Order/ Confirmation of Quorum | Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Liam Rodrigues.  Quorum was achieved |  |
| Approval of Agenda | Motion to remove item #8 from the agenda (Governance). Reason for request to remove is that there is no representative present from any of the three schools that brought up issues related to Governance.  Motion seconded and passed, item #8 removed  Motion to approve revised agenda by Liam Rodrigues, seconded by Rebecca Holzman. |  |
| Approval of Summary Notes – May 15, 2017 | Motion to approve summary notes. Seconded. Notes approved |  |
| Declarations of Possible Conflicts | NIL |  |
| Developing Improved Communication   * Website, posting of items, contact lists | Communication of current committee membership changes and vacancies:   * Boriana Karan will be elementary parent co-chair for 2017-18 * Prafulla Prabhu will be secondary parent co-chair for 2017-18 * Kowthar Omar no longer elementary teacher co-chair * Liam Rodrigues no longer secondary teacher co-chair * Caillie Feldman no longer student co-chair * Concern brought forward that information about alternative programs is not making its way to the communities, parents/guardians are asking for information and finding they have nowhere to look * Request from Liam: Can we strike a subcommittee within the group to discuss this in more detail - ideally the subcommittee would be able to meet in between formal ASAC meetings * Rebecca: at last meeting we discussed using a FB book and creating a space where various types of communication could happen, has any of that materialized yet? * Trustee Story: various ways to approach the communications piece – reminder that any motions of ASAC must go to PSSC to be moved forward, suggestion of requesting support from Communications to assist in the work of an ASAC subcommittee * Discussion about developing and maintaining a simple way to get information about Alternative Schools shared with as wide an audience as possible * Trustee Malik: historically, what have been the barriers to getting an ASAC/Alternative Schools communication platform off the ground? * Discussion and response to Trustee Malik’s question: issue is that administrators of pages/groups leave the committee and the updates are no longer happening. Another challenge is getting enough volunteers to manage these outlets * Rob, Rebecca, Olivia, Liam volunteer to be part of the Communication Directive subcommittee, Liam to suggest follow up meeting date with this group |  |
| Directives/Dialogues Following Alternative Schools Review | Manon Gardner   * Alternative Schools Review verbal update report is tracking to PSSC on October 5 (not final because census data has not yet been included) * Final report will come in November * Alternative Programs enrolment (see embedded document for full details) * Elementary Alternatives 2016-17: 1974 students * Elementary Alternatives 2017-18: 2028 students (at September 15, 2017) * Secondary Alternatives 2016-17: 1871 students * Secondary Alternatives 2017-18: 1808 students (as of September 15, 2017) * Feedback from consultation with parents: overall very positive, pleased to have been asked their opinions and suggestions for next steps * Final report will be posted once it has been passed through PSSC then by the Board of Trustees   Verbal overview of Alternative School Review shared by Manon Gardner at the Program and School Services Committee meeting on October 5, 2017:   1. Challenges as well as considerable strengths were discussed in the consultation sessions in early 2017.  The unique structure of the TDSB alternative school system is more akin to academic literature on “small schools” as opposed to charter schools/magnet schools. 2. Discussion at the consultation sessions seemed to indicate that many participants thought that there were challenges with the communication about alternative schools, with the public and internal stakeholders.  Perhaps the multifaceted nature of the TDSB system—as noted, quite different from alternative schools described in the academic literature-- may have made this communication more difficult. 3. While the number of students in TDSB alternative schools, at around 4,000, is less than 2% of the TDSB population, our secondary cohort studies have found that generally 5% or one in twenty secondary cohort students-- attended an elementary or secondary alternative school at some point over their time in the TDSB.  This example shows that the TDSB alternative schools have a broader impact on the system than might be seen by looking only at the enrolment over any given year. 4. Analysis from our long-term cohort studies has found that the outcomes of students who attended elementary versus secondary alternative schools was so different, that any discussion of future directions should look at the panels separately.  (Few students attended both elementary and secondary alternative schools). The secondary alternative school was generally the second or third secondary school attended by the student. 5. Questions were raised about the admission process.A scan of the literature has shown that little to no study has been put into the school admissions process (alternative or otherwise) within Canada. In terms of the United States, they have 13 different types of schools with various methods of admission (Flavin, 2016). Charter schools (requiring an application) and magnet schools (specializing in a certain area) would be most similar to alternative schools in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Most of the literature refers to admissions processes for underachieving students to alternative schools. According to the literature, lotteries are the most prevalent form of admissions process other than standardized testing. In terms of equality, according to literature, randomized lottery ensures that there is no bias and every student has an equal chance of being selected. 6. While the geographical concentration of most alternative schools in the general centre of Toronto might suggest a broader geographical distribution, it is unclear from the consultation that this could take place until some of the issues around communications, staffing, and access have been fully discussed and resolved. 7. A further analysis of the 2016-17 Student Census data will endeavor to follow up on the strengths of the TDSB alternative school system in terms of belonging, as raised by Parekh (2013). | Alt. Program Enrolment |
| Elementary Lotteries | * Each year, many parents/guardians whose children are not accepted share that the lottery process is very unfair * Already concerns from six different schools related to the lottery process for 2017-18 * Concern from parent member: lottery process takes place so late in the year that many parents who decide on alternative pathway have already missed the opportunity * Trustee Malik: lottery brings up broader question of equity; we need to apply the integrated equity framework to this process. If growth is not part of a bigger plan for alternative programs in the TDSB, then we need to do more to make sure the lottery becomes completely equitable – it would be better if we could offer more spaces. Question: how can we engage the expertise on equity to help us find an approach that can work in alternative programs? * Manon: the Alternative Schools Review focused on benefits, expansion, pathways and professional development. * Liam: it would be ideal to introduce some checks and balances related to the elementary lotteries (perhaps an initial lottery and a late lottery)? * Liam: As a group, we should look at models and policies related to equity admissions in other academic institutions that have worked well and apply some of these successful strategies to Alternative Schools in the TDSB |  |
| ~~Governance~~ (struck from this agenda after receiving consensus from group members) |  |  |
| Promotional Events for 2017-2018 | * Ideal plan for 2017-18 is to have one or two promotional events that are fully inclusive of all Alternative Schools * Rebecca: impression is that parents would like it better if there were multiple events due to geographic considerations * Event audience at the elementary level is each community in general * Event audience at the secondary level is students/parents/staff and community members * Trustee Malik: we need more opportunities for word of mouth sharing about alternative schools. Can we turn these promotional events into outreach sessions and walk people through what an alternative school is actually like? * Trustee Malik: propose a motion to address the apparent lack of TDSB guidance staff knowledge about alternative programs; we need to be more intentional in making sure they are trained. Be it resolved that guidance staff are trained and aware of all alternative options available in the system. We need to identify and close this gap. * Manon: At present we have met with new Guidance Program Coordinator to discuss training all elementary itinerant counsellors (EICs) and other staff who support transitions for students * Sally: once a month secondary guidance meetings are used as a platform to advertise available programs (issue here is staff turnover). Can we implement something similar at the elementary level to make sure all staff have this important information? * Rachel: seconds Trustee Malik’s in making sure information about alternative programs goes to as wide an audience as possible every year * Trustee Malik: at the secondary level, much of the choice about programs is from the students themselves, not parents – we need to do more to inform the students. Our promotional events should be more student based – engage students in the planning process of these events and make this more of a word of mouth process. Manon to follow up on that request. * Rob: there has been a great effort to make information known to guidance staff in schools. In many cases, these are the people who will accompany students to the alternative programs when making the transition. Word is getting out and it would be valuable to use students to make it go further * Grant: secondary enrolment in Alt 9 programs has been growing over last few years. This can perhaps be attributed to the Secondary Alternative Caravan, Alt 9 pamphlets sent to every secondary school in the system, all schools receive emails about programs as well. Challenge right now is that schools are trying their best to re-engage students as opposed to referring * Liam and Rachel to look at creating an event(s) to invite schools to in order to build awareness of alternative programs – will also consider developing a series of events annually (fall/spring) |  |
| Alternative Schools Policy | * P062: up for review in 2017-18 * Trustees vote on policy but not procedure * Trustee Story: we have policies on a schedule for review but there is nothing stopping amendments to a policy ahead of schedule if we bring it to the Governance committee |  |
| Other Business | Question to Manon for next meeting: Is there any research on how many elementary alternative students actually follow the alternative pathway through to secondary schools? |  |
| Next Meeting Date | October 16, 2017 @ 7:00 pm, 5050 Yonge Boardroom  Next informal meeting: week before next formal ASAC |  |
| Adjournment | Adjourned at 8:52 pm |  |