

## **TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Name: Laurie Tremble**

**Date Submitted: February 28, 2022**

**Name of Conference: Public Education Symposium**

**Sponsoring Organization: OPSBA**

**Theme (if any):**

**Conference Dates: January 28, 2022**

**Location: Virtual**

### **Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:**

#### **Minister of Education**

MOE values the relationship with OPSBA & ACEPO and will continue to work together with us.

Acknowledge all education staff.

Safety of students is priority. Recognize the speed with which boards moved to facilitate the switch back to in person.

Challenges re staffing – in anticipation of higher absences increased the days retired educators could work, access to \$300 million to hire 2350 more staff. Will continue to collect info from boards on the use of these resources.

Additional layers of protection to support in person learning. Increase vaccination with parental consent. Lots of rapid tests. Hepa filters, N95 masks, 3-ply masks for students. Students will need lots of supports re mental health in future to ensure they can reach their full potential.

Thanks to trustees and acknowledge of how difficult this has been but we have been professional and compassionate etc.

Q. What are his key learnings as a leader during this time? A. He mentions the condo school as a great initiative. Trial by fire. Pandemic showed him the importance of in person learning (it's essential and about more than curriculum) and that schools are much more than just places for learning – community hubs, access to services, etc. We need to have a backup to in person so online as a back-up. We've had a lot of learning loss and we have to focus on how to recover. Mental health – schools should be a place where mental health services are integrated.

Indigenous Trustees Council very concerned about indigenous students during pandemic – mental health, learning loss, connectivity. Q. Would you consider creating a group of indigenous

people to deal with these issues? A. Very interested in reviewing the request. Need everyone involved. Have made some investments already (\$36 mil for indigenous mental health).

Q. You've said no place for hate in our schools, will you and your party commit to supporting the work to combat Islamophobia and combat hate in our schools? A. proud to be the first minister to work with Muslim associations. Critical it is developed by the community and for the community. We have to defend everyone's rights to express their faith. It is real and school boards and government play a critical role in fostering the inclusive community we seek. Working with other ministers on providing resources to teachers, zero tolerance policy at OCT with teachers who use racist language, ensure curriculum reflects diversity of Canada, work with other ministries and other MPPs on legislation that affects kids.

Two more questions that will be submitted in writing and answers will be shared with trustees.

### **Randell Adjei, Ontario's First Poet Laureate presents: The Audacity to Dream in the Face of Adversity**

Introduced by Jazzlyn Abbott – OSTA-AECO president

Each of us will face adversity at some point, but the audacity to see the other side of the darkness, how do we have light without darkness, so there is something to learn from audacity

To whom much is given much is required – What we are doing matters. Legacy affects future generations.

Poem – Flowers

We have the privilege of design strat plans, advocating, targeting goals, administering & allocating resources

Some great work in 4 years re indigenous trustees, black ...

Picked out some specific programs from TDSB, DDSB, LDSB, free menstrual products

Tree of Me Activity – Roots – core values, Trunk – core life experiences, Branches – hopes and dreams, Leaves – Fears your overcoming and fears you've overcome, Fruits – your accomplishments, Seeds – what legacy you hope to leave

He was a student who struggled – in trouble, arrested, etc. Not a bad student just dealing with stuff. Met a grade 8 teacher who saw beyond the suspensions, arrests, tried to understand his lived experience and encouraged him to express what he was feeling and experiencing. Gave him a safe space to express himself and be himself. Got involved with advocacy, travel, and RISE. (a group that supports creatives)

Growth mindset helped him recognize that he wasn't stuck as the 'bad kid' and could change.

His role is to advocate for arts & culture, youth voice and literacy, supporting the province with art & public policy. All children are artists until somebody tells them they're not good.

Growth mindset allows you to see challenges as opportunities. Resilience.

Advocating for the whole child – mental health, social & emotional development, cognitive development, physical activity, academic development, creativity, community engagement, life skills & more. When a student feels safe, they can be their best selves

We need to create opportunities for young people to become active partners within their education. Especially those who struggle.

Add support staff who can support teachers to see/hear students.

Need to support teachers so they can support students.

There's not equity between schools. He had to fight to get a writer's craft class whereas other schools had that plus philosophy, etc...

Equity means we don't make assumptions.

Design thinking tool – Empathize – listen to those you serve; Define – after you've done the research; Ideate – ask the right questions, gather a team; Prototype – just start building, remember the why, be ok with pivoting if it doesn't work out, keep those we serve at the forefront and they should help create the solution; Test – and bring back to those we serve to see if we've missed anything. May have to go back to an earlier step and that's ok.

Video – <https://vimeo.com/93738184>

[www.riseedutainment.com](http://www.riseedutainment.com)

How do you suggest reaching out to students who are not high achievers, under-represented? We have to remove biases that those are students that 'need support'. Meet them where they're at, where they're comfortable. Ask questions and see them for who they really are. Understand their interests. Connect your support with their interests. How do we as individuals become safe spaces?

How do you get students involved in advocating against disparities between schools? Need to inform students how they can help, find an issue that the students care about and can galvanize them around that. Again, focus on their interests.

### **Matthew R. Morris – Moving Forward with Anti-Racism in Every Classroom**

An educator for over 10 years. Want to tell the truth today.

Big fan of hip hop – Nas – It ain't hard to tell

Racism is not exclusive – it is ingrained in everyone. It takes constant reflection to recognize and act on our biases.

Step 1: Examining our allegiances – the things we value, how systems/people look, how and what systems/people communicate, what opinions and ideas we form based on these value systems. This fosters our biases.

We have difficulty breaking out of our traditional roles in the education system

Video – Chris Emdun - In my humble opinion

If we don't understand our own process of privilege we will continue the gaps. WE have to disrupt the status quo.

Step 2: Acknowledging the Truth – how do we move from the language of acknowledgement to action? The pd doesn't answer this question. Three truths we need to start with.

1. It's not about Representation but more about Relevance. You can have relevance with the community even if you don't represent it.
2. It's not about Curriculum but about Culture. Culture of a classroom eg.
3. Assessment (of students, staff, surveys etc.). Means nothing if it doesn't lead to some action towards improvement

Step 3: “Freestyling” a plan. Essential question – what does the honest pursuit of equity and anti-racism look like within schools?

You need to have flexibility in your plan.

Three Ts – Trust – they won't trust us with their brains if they don't trust us with their hearts. We need to be in the community to connect with them. Can't reach out the same way we've always done. We need to connect with social media for example

Transparency – meet people where they are,

Teaching – how educators deliver the curriculum. Decentralize power in the classrooms and in the whole system. More of a horizontal system than vertical. Must transfer power to students. E.g. staff should have embedded time to understand their community so they can validate their students and their lives.

Assessment – how do we gather our data? Are we using the same methods as a decade ago? Co-construct the curriculum with parents and students. Stop putting the ceiling where the floor is – need to have expectations. Critical race theory is something we need to consider in Ontario to create capacity for educators.

Step 4: “Action through action” – Take action, dialogue about the action taken and the subsequent action needed. Walk your school community and see where your students live. Are their community programs that keep student energized? Where are the conflicts, the gaps in services? The end goal must be action that disrupts the status quo.

Learning gaps – low expectations plus high surveillance leads to gaps that multiply. Being sent home from school (suspensions etc.) lead to learning gaps. Happened before the pandemic and the pandemic highlighted it because suddenly white kids were experiencing it.

Mobilize your privilege

Tangible examples – Putting older students, members of community in position to mentor younger kids. Within a school but between panels too. Gives validation.

Create programs that build upon collectives. Connect to tangible rewards beyond report cards.

Keep school doors open past traditional hours. Connect with community programs to make this happen. Keep kids connected to the safe space at school.

Create capacity for everyone involved in education to understand the communities they serve.

Q. How to move forward with the community/school piece? Funding can be used as an excuse to limit this. A. Not necessarily events that cost money but work in partnership with superintendents and school admin to foster an environment where the community is welcomed into schools during 9-3. Glassrooms vs classrooms (allow you to see in). Is there an empty space that can be used during the day. Be more inviting.

Q. Risk taking, culture of trustees and policy work is very careful and deliberate. Being brave and failing is not our normal approach. How do we honestly take risks and ‘freestyle’? A. Do it in your last year, re-election year. Transparency – can create more of an environment that accepts risk. Place students first.

Q. Where do you see opportunities for trustees to advocate for some of the changes you recommend? Educators are scared of trustees. We have power. Our communication with educators is kind of missing. Trustees should be in school more, talking to teachers. Build relationships.

Q. How to empower students to build the supports that will serve them? A. Collectives in schools are important. Groups of students. Every school has a few adults in the building who are willing to dismantle systems. Find those adults to ally with the collectives.

Q. How can we disrupt the narratives around racialized identities to get to a point where our identities are recognized? A. Important to emphasize aspects of culture that youth are immersed in. Those youth in positions of power need to use their voice. Use social media. You can’t disrupt the status quo using status quo methods, e.g., assemblies. Start with the vehicle people are already engaged with.

### **Keynote Address and Q&A with Nicholas A. Christakis, Sterling Professor of Social and Natural Science at Yale University & Author of Apollo’s Arrow**

The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live

COVID will become endemic

There will be lots of people with disabling conditions resulting from COVID.

We’re at the end of the beginning of the pandemic.

Plagues are a feature of the human experience. So this is not unique to our species but it is new to us. It's in our religions, literature etc. We have medical experience and knowledge that we failed to heed.

The economic disruption is not our fault but the fault of the virus. They happened in the past as well even without a central government closing things.

Some things have always accompanied plagues. Denial, fear, anger, superstition, lies, blame, loss, grief.

What do we do in response to this?