



Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC)

Classism/Poverty Sub-committee

Conversation Feedback and Recommendations

April 2018

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The following is the resulting abridged collection of the perceptual feedback gathered during 6 conversations in York Region from mid-January to the end of February 2018. The conversations were very well attended with approximately 180 parents, youth, community members and advocates. They had the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions about classism and poverty in relation to education in York Region. These fervent discussions took place all across the region and highlighted many of the impacts and effects of discrimination felt by students and their families living in poverty or on low income.

Special thanks to everyone who came out to add your voice to our conversations. We would like to let you know that we will do our best to honour your input. To initiate first steps in a timely manner we presented the following 4 recommendations to the YRDSB Board of Trustees on April 17th, 2018.

Respectfully,

Kristine Carbis
Classism Sub-Committee Chair

The discussions were initiated by the following 4 questions:

1. How does low income or poverty impact students and their families in schools
2. What discrimination do students and their families experience due to poverty/classism?
3. What changes need to be made at the following levels? Classroom, School, School Board and Community
4. Is there any other things that the questions did not capture that you would like to ensure is included?

Table of Contents

Agenda Item	Page #
Recommendations	4
Realities: Low Income families face many challenges including	5-6
Discrimination resulting from Assumptions and Bias	6-7
Geographic Considerations, Employment and Other Obligations on Students, Access to Technology and Internet, Stigma and Assumptions Associated with Clothing etc., Streaming, Post-Secondary and Training	7-10
Impacts of Classism: Mental Health Impacts, Social Exclusion	10-12
Food and Nutrition	13-14
School Cash Online	14
Fees and Other School Costs: Specialized Programs, Sports and Extra-Curricular, Supplies, Yearly and Graduation Photos, Activity Fees, Tutoring, Trips: Trips to Europe, Electives, Grade 8, Transportation	15-19
Fundraising	20-21
Changes That Need To Be Made At The Following Levels? Classroom, School, School Board, Community?	22
Classroom	22
School: Equity Councils within Schools, Student Voice, School Council	22-23
School Board: Teacher and Staff Training, Developing Community Partnerships and Advocacy, Curriculum, Data Collection, Communications and Transparency	23-26
Community	26
Are there any other things that the questions did not capture that you would like to ensure is included?	26
Questions That Came Up in the Conversations?	26

The following recommendations support the priorities in the York Region District School Board Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021 as set out below:

(6.2) Build capacity in staff by developing, offering and supporting professional learning opportunities to all employee groups in the board regarding equity, accessibility and inclusivity.
(YRDSB Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021, page 23)

(3.1) Use a school-wide approach that values families and community partnerships in order to enhance student engagement and achievement.

(3.1h.) Ensure students, families and staff have access to supportive community resources as appropriate for use in schools and workplaces.

(3.2) Ensure the perspectives of various individuals and groups in the school community and the broader community are included and expand community outreach efforts to foster new partnerships.

(3.2c.) Develop and support a process to review existing community partnerships within their schools and departments to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community and are in line with Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (i.e., inclusive of all identities – low income and poverty (YRDSB Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021, page 15)

Recommendations

Staff and Professional Development

- In order to educate all stakeholders: staff, school and councils, we recommend the York Region District School Board plan, mobilize and deliver learning resources focused on classism.

Fundraising

- Partner with Classism sub-committee on full review of **all** Fundraising Policies
- Re-establish centralized fund/Foundation for gathering and redistributing fundraising dollars within the York Region District School Board
- Minimum of 10% of fundraising dollars from all schools to go to a centralized fund to be distributed through above re-established fund.
- Create Board-approved criteria for vendors who wish to come in to the school to fundraise.

Fees and Other School Costs

- Partner with Classism sub-committee on full review on **all** policies regarding school fees such as
 - School Cash Online - Create a piece on 'Payment Options' that would be recommended to be on all forms and requests for money listing payment options in a language that is sensitive to families on low income.
 - Community Use of Schools and fees associated for community partners offering programming and/or services for our families
- Create Board-approved criteria for community partners who wish to come in to the school to offer programs and/or services for our families.

Community Partnership and Advocacy

- Classism Sub-Committee members be allowed to create and distribute a summary (with the support of staff) of the feedback collected at the consultations to be shared with community and community partners to advocate for change for families in York Region at the local, municipal and provincial levels of government.
- York Region District School Board explore opportunities for community partnerships to support students and families living in poverty and on low income.

Realities - Low Income families face many challenges including:

Many families struggle with living on a low income. Meeting their basic needs such as housing and housing costs, feeding and clothing their family, getting back and forth to work and getting their children back and forth to school can be overwhelming.

- Many families have both parents working or work multiple jobs and not there to get their kids off to school and/or finding the time to assist with homework can be a challenge
- Being a single mom myself I used to go through the humiliation of subsidized daycare and my daughter was treated different because she was on the “subsidized list”
- Homework–parent engagement around homework–parents working shifts or long hours are not able to assist
- Need to work on pre conceived notions for example if we don’t hear back from families we decide that they are not engaged. Maybe they are working or on nightshift. Nothing to do with parent engagement or their lack of commitment to their child’s education.
- Time is an issue-if they commute by bus, night shift, commutes far away.
- Newcomers face further challenges both financially and culturally. In areas that most consider wealthy areas because of the size and cost of homes, there are multiple family generations living in one home.
- Newcomers and refugee families face big challenges due to lack of funds and trauma. Access to job opportunities are limited due to racial and class bias and credentials not being recognized
- S. Markham is home to new immigrants. They rent basements or have extended families in one home
- Intersectionality; we know schooling can be a ramp to extricate kids from poverty but if they can’t participate in the wide range of opportunities then this impacts them
- Language is a further barrier to students living in poverty, how are we communicating home with these families.
- Families can’t take time off work to get children to appointments; lose pay or lose their job
- Lack of nutrition, sleep, care, lack of readiness for learning - Lack of supervision from a caregiver
- Discrimination, lowered expectations, pitied
- Funds for a school trip or pizza money; my step-daughter is a single mom and without the support of me and my husband she couldn’t let her child participate. We shouldn’t put families in that position
- Single parents give up a lot for their children; don’t eat or buy things for themselves
- For some families they have to decide between groceries and school activities
- Diversity – the social context of each family is different (single parent families; medically fragile parents or grandparents; low income intersects with other identities)
- In society, you are not supposed to push back; the school board is sort of a governmental figure/ authority figure; people/parents often won’t speak up
- There is a general thought that families in YR are doing well but Making Ends Meet says that there are 70,000 families who are struggling to making a go of it and their children are in our schools (Region of York Stats on low income across the region) **Correction to the statistics – Making End Meet report was based on the 2006 census and it that if your family of 4’s income was less than \$70,000 you were having a difficult time making ends meet.**
- Families may have to move to different areas and in turn have to change their children’s schools. Precarious housing is a major reason for transience.

- Many of the “hidden homeless” in York Region are youth. They are accessing different housing opportunities (couch surfing, etc.) and working daily to survive and are still trying to manage their education.

This impacts the students in various ways. A few of the quotes from parents show some of the not so obvious ways.

“I am a sole support parent. I would drive from Newmarket to Richmond Hill for work. The kids and I would leave by 7AM and get home around 7:30 pm, bedtime being 8:15 pm. This left me no time to follow up on homework. We were lucky to get a bath in every other day. I recently lost my job and now face the possibility of not being able to afford to drive my kids to school or afford their lunches.”

“My daughters are never able to participate in extra-curricular or events like the book fairs. I had to tell her the money I’d give her for the book fair was for groceries that week. I gave my girls each \$10, in lieu, I did not buy myself enough food for the week.”

“My daughter is bullied because her lunch is sent in a Ziploc bag, not a lunch bag.”

“If my son loses hats/mitts/lunch bag sometimes I don’t have the money right away to get it again.”

“There is stigma and you realize you are carrying it and it becomes frightening that your kids are identified by that stigma.”

Discrimination resulting from Assumptions and Bias

- Calls to CAS result where schools feel parents are neglecting their kids when it is a matter of poverty (inability to pay for enough food, adequate housing, etc.). Parents may be judged for being a bad parent
- Budget constraints – learning opportunities are available to those who have available resources – people who don’t have as much are not able to participate i.e. tutoring
- Financial discrimination – some families may not have access to banking, chequing accounts, overdraft/ credit cards
- Low expectations for students, restricting potential; often done out of not wanting to push students.
- Comments made by adults and peers – bullying. Judgement of any student for any reason has the same affect
- Social class divisions in the high school setting based on from where you were bussed from
- Students who do not participate in class parties – teachers try to give food and resources to students with kindness and good intentions but it can make them feel worse
- Food Drives asking kids to bring food to school for charity and their family could be one of the families that gets help from the food bank
- Privacy and confidentiality not respected
- Barriers to accessing curriculum
- School to Prison Pipeline – why bother going to post-secondary as you are going to end up in prison anyway (attitudinal at a young age)

- I know when my son was young, what scared me was if I went to the school to complain, then things got worse for him. It really ties your hands-parents want to make things better for their kids
- Discrimination re programs (associated costs preclude involvement) – need to get them there private bussing, tutors, French Immersion, Arts program; low-income students automatically excluded from these opportunities.
- First Nations – lack of “welcoming environment”
- Judgmental comments about what impoverished families can afford –ex nice shoes, the healthiness of lunch foods.
- How can we address these things in our classrooms ex. teachers who talk about their experiences without being sensitive to the life experiences/styles of their students ex. talking about the cottage, going to a restaurant etc. while children in the class may have stayed at home all weekend. This impacts learners by creating a hierarchy where one lifestyle does not meet the standards of the teacher
- The lack of opportunity that some kids experience-even if it’s just a pizza lunch, can be a huge deal; so can field trips. Money should not be something that stops someone from getting an education.
- Students might dress nicely but they don't have money to eat for lunch. Sometimes appearances can be deceiving
- Misunderstanding that families of lower income have less parent involvement, and value education less
- Teachers – not representing the diversity of students – can represent but may not feel empowered enough to speak out on issues – becomes the person who speaks up for families.
- Be mindful that there are people of diverse backgrounds – regardless of geographic location
- Don’t want to put parents in a position where they have to explain to school staff or their own children why they can’t afford things
- Students remain silent about being poor and marginalized and the challenge is, because of the silence, how do we know who the kids are. It means teachers really have to know their kids and what their needs are. The teachers must be aware of the barriers in the school and their classrooms – do not set something up if all students cannot access the opportunity
- It’s important to know your learners so that teachers can identify who will need help financially. This can become more challenging in a high school; this can happen in the transition meeting from Gr. 8.
- It is not about identifying who those living on low income are. It is about knowing they are always present in any classroom. If we said we had to identify the LGBTQ students in order to support/include them, this would be recognized as completely inappropriate.
- Parents/caregivers disinterested in school events- cynical of attendance because of those barriers.
- The assumption is that affluent families know how to advocate for their children and that parents or caregivers living in poverty don’t know how to advocate

Geographic Considerations

- Poverty and Classism exists in ALL schools – it is not specific to any ONE area
- Access to supports and resources, including but not limited to pediatricians and mental health supports, vary in geographic areas. Families are being blamed when they cannot access care.
- Transfer policy – requests for and approval of transfers out of “undesired or stigmatized” areas.
- Discrimination based on where they live. “They can’t afford to live anywhere else” Geographical constructs are created - the ‘patch,’ Georgina, etc. Students get called “hicks”, “skids,” etc.” Highly offensive, discriminatory labels. One student described it as demeaning to be labeled in this way.

- A lot of challenges for newcomer students. I provide basic information. Low education is associated with poverty, even in the Chinese community. When I talk to parents at another high school they know all the information, but kids here, their parents are working multiple jobs and not home and kids start skipping school
- 9 of the 22 P Plus schools are in Georgina, the impact on the school is that School Councils can't raise the funds or find businesses to partner with
- Georgina – teachers that are brought in from the “city” that don't understand their communities
- Geographic location impedes finding work. Have to drive and may not have access to transit
- Access to Social Services – in Georgina there are many services that are not accessible. Transportation/ location can be a problem. How do we get more social services/ community programs in the schools? There are still barriers for families to access services i.e. transportation/ forms/ appointments/ waitlists

Employment and Other Obligations on Students

- Many high school students are taking part-time jobs. This means that they are working 30 or more hours a week; this perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage. They may have to work during school hours and some will skip school in order to work and make money. They can't afford university or extra-curriculars, they can fall behind on their schoolwork and so can't be eligible for scholarships.
- Affordable childcare –sometimes students have to stay home and take care of their younger siblings (\$1700 month for child care). No child care or after school programs at some school sites
- Students in charge of younger siblings. Many poverty stricken families cannot afford childcare for younger children and have their high school aged children care for their younger siblings. This means that they are unavailable for extra help after school. We could ensure more lunch time extra help is established.
- Many students hustle to make ends meet-they get involved in illegal activities like marijuana. In high school, girls engaging in “sexual activity” for money; pics on line, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Access to Technology and Internet

- Assuming students have access and technology eg computers at home – Wi-Fi access
- Public Internet access – it is variable in different locations.
- Flipped classrooms require students to do work at home and this often requires high speed Internet, computers and computer programs. Families may not have access at home leaving students to rely on computers at school or at the public library. This is a big barrier as students may not be able to submit an assignment over the weekend or access online platforms for homework etc. and they can't get to the library or have time to use the school computers
- Student surveys by phone. Some don't have devices. Students don't want to “out” themselves as “needing a device,” don't have own phone so lack of privacy
- Removing the burden from students to self-identify as not having resources.
- Access to technology is one thing – access to Wi-Fi is another one we need to consider and explore

Stigma and Assumptions Associated with Clothing etc.

- Access to resources [clothing, pencils and pens, stuff they need for class]

- Spirit days – going out and getting something – buying something and having something to wear, it is a competition. As part of my daughters school Carnival Days they had a “Wear your favourite sports jersey Day” What if you don’t have any jerseys? They are around \$100 each?
- Students who don’t have the uniform or limited clothing may feel left out because they can’t change their clothes every day
- Comparison re type of clothing, talking about costs and trips creates discomfort
- Pressure to keep up with labels and status or experience exclusion. Children pick on others who don’t have new things (clothes, backpacks etc.)
- “We were talking at our school about keeping kids in at recess when it is really cold; when we told the principal that some kids don’t have the kind of clothes that will keep them warm the P didn’t seem to understand this.”
- Why are students not participating in a physical activity because they do not have the right kind of footwear?
- Dress and hygiene - low income students may not have access to the clothes of inclusion and/or laundry facilities on a regular basis which sets them up for stigma and ostracism
- Fear of being ‘outed.’ “Nice coat” where did you get it? Sometimes students do not want to share this with their peers if it is a “hand me down” or donated clothing
- Have coat exchange/ boot exchange/ skate exchange programs to help people. Need to be available to everyone
- These expectations can leads some students to make poor choices about how to get the money in order to fit in and be included.

Streaming

- Streaming – not necessarily as overt – questioning students on their choices can be a subtle way of discouraging them from aiming for more challenging courses.
- Families face discrimination through what’s known as the pedagogy of poverty when they receive less learning or diluted curriculum across subject areas especially in reading/writing/science/math etc. This sets them up to enter the inter-generational cycle of poverty.
- There is an abundance of research, Canadian and otherwise, that speaks clearly to the impacts of streaming low-income and racialized students into lower academic courses. Impacts long term financial outcomes
- The Gr. 9 math teacher was not prepared to make the accommodations needed for my son to be successful; now he is being told he can’t take the U/C course
- “In Gr. 13 you got very different advice from the guidance counsellor than somebody who could afford post-secondary; it didn’t make a difference what your grades were.” There is a bias on the part of guidance counsellors
- When my daughter arrived from Pakistan her language was not strong and so she was put in Applied in all her courses. She had to do the courses over again so she could go to university
- Have to ask the important question about why do we think students are not academically inclined and if students are indicating that themselves, why? Is it because they aren’t up to the challenge or have just decided it is a fruitless endeavor to strive academically?
- Students have made choices to close doors to post-secondary (or have been guided to believe that was their best option.
- I see a trend in my community that the majority of the poverty stricken families - their children are in applied courses. When you speak to them; they are very intelligent. But when it comes to academics;

they fall between the cracks. You are really talking about lower expectations based on income and class status.

Post-Secondary and Training

- Perception that post-secondary is not an option and that it gives you a better life. Set up for failure before even getting started. At home it may not be part of the conversation – just not seen as an option
- Students having challenges behaviorally/ socially don't see they have options. They don't see a way out
- Students who do not want to go to post-secondary – there is judgement of current circumstances by those in different circumstances
- Students develop negative associations with school and it impacts their future abilities, post-secondary education choices and/or career.
- Helping students to build their confidence i.e. girls trades programs, is key
- Grade 9 – there is already a mindset that post-secondary is not an option for the student
- Providing access and information – how OSAP can help students realize post-secondary experiences. Talk about the opportunities for bursaries or scholarships. Student Assistance is for any post-secondary institution
- Access to postsecondary education a barrier. Process complicated for acceptance and entrance. Travel costs and other expenses are challenges as well.
- Informing our students of their options!! Offering creativity/ goal setting to help students identify what their skills and abilities are. Talk about other options, other pathways eg trades, business start-ups and tracks.
- Post-secondary – trades - entrepreneurship – not valued by the dominant/mainstream society – especially in education (Educators focus on education as the “key”) Need Trades/Career voices at our Career Fairs. Metal Shops; Auto Shop; - not being used at this time – could be open to the community for skill trades programming
- Bring a college to Georgina so students don't need to leave to go away to school-much cheaper and transportation is a huge challenge
- Bring an Accredited Skilled Trades Program to Sutton DHS

Impacts of Classism

Poverty and classism impact students in a wide variety of ways, many of which are unseen and hidden. Students and their families are really good at visibility management because they feel the need to hide the fact they live on a low income for fear of being bullied, fear of having CAS called and/or being seen as a “Charity case.” Students may not share things with their parents because they don't want to further stress them out. The kids grow up very quickly and this impacts them in our schools. What they will often do is mask the fact that it's not poverty. They'll say things like “I didn't want to go” or “that's stupid”.

At the school level, families have said they feel they are unwanted members of the community and school community.

- It is stigmatizing to have to ask the school for funds. When trying to support students we are unintentionally putting them in a place where they have to disclose.
- Schools can inadvertently put pressure on parents for students to perform/ behave better. Parents reinforce this pressure on their children.

- The Culture of the school and the class can affect them. In some schools there isn't a lot of stigma or discrimination due to poverty; but, in other schools it is significant.
- There is a culture of resiliency fostered at some schools by staff who truly understand the needs of their learners – staff can make ALL students feel like a million bucks if they have a supportive and inclusive stance that suspends judgement.
- Students experience being left out of things or are excluded
- Meritocracy – viewing people from the perspective that if they had just worked harder or pulled themselves up by the bootstraps things would be okay.
- Kids often don't want their parents to come to school, let alone intervene. Many times parents don't go to the school because their child talks them out of it as they are afraid how it will impact them; Fear of retribution came up numerous times

The perception of others makes it hard for some students to keep their dignity. The student's awareness of the biases of others adds to their sense of not feeling connected to the school community, which makes it difficult to bring the learning to life. It could be classmates, teachers who ask "why don't you have the money?" even other parents. This leads to negative thoughts towards students, lowering of expectations for those living in poverty, and in turn opportunities being restricted or taken away.

Some examples that attendees spoke about at the conversations

- People living on the street – why do they have a dog? If they have needs why are they providing food for a pet?
- Assumptions that people in poverty or low income do not deserve anything expensive or a "privileged item." Anything beyond the basics is questioned.

What they hear impacts the well-being of all students

- It can lower self-esteem and sense of safety and security.
- Students see themselves as being different from other kids. What they bring for lunch, what their running shoes look like make them feel different. This can create assumptions and biases based on their economic status.
- They could become cynical and pull away and possibly even drop out.
- It affects student attendance, especially in high school.
- Shame – both student and parents feel shame when they cannot afford to support children
- Affects their dignity and pride. Feel like they do not have anything to offer
- It affects the family dynamic when children are upset with parents/caregivers for not paying for items? Students may carry resentment and animosity towards families for their situation and can also be divisive in the family, such as blaming your mom.
- Family life is so important to child development and poverty puts a huge strain on families
- Opportunities open to you if you have money and if you don't, you feel a sense of embarrassment or exclusion
- Extra activities that some kids are able to have, make those who don't have feel left out and unable to experience them
- They will have negative feelings about themselves; their confidence, their hope for the future
- Do not feel themselves represented in the institutions - and it is harder to build relationships
- Do not feel like your peers
- Often see themselves through the eyes of others who limit their potential
- Students are affected by system, believing that parents don't care

- Other students noting that they have less. “My son is 8 and he is starting to notice things. eg. Asking ‘Why doesn’t Tim get pizza on Friday?’ ‘Tim doesn’t have a lot in his lunches.”
- Kids who are poor are silenced; for example, they will sign up for a girls’ group but not for a poverty group. They are stigmatized but they won’t speak up.
- Having to tell their stories over and over again is yet another barrier for students and their families
- Alienation is a big piece of what we see
- They will see the people who are “successful” and feel that they are the “other”
- Overall Health – physical and mental
- Trauma results from living in poverty, experiencing the shame of living in poverty and discrimination

Mental Health Affects

- There is an intersectionality of mental health concerns and poverty but many parents are unable to get kids to appointments because they are working or don’t have the bus tickets or cannot afford the help. Lack of accessible resources, eg mental health, pediatrician, and the times for appointments may not be convenient for families and especially for students who work
- Poverty causes a great deal of stress and anxiety in the home and the children pick up on that. Students isolate themselves from their parents/caregivers. Children are aware of what parents cannot afford and feel guilty. They question their own value. Feel that they are not worthy to attend trips, luxuries in schools. Burden of being poor. As a parent you live with sorrow, guilt and sadness. For students who see this, they then carry grown up problems, as much as you try to protect them from this
- Anxiety raised in a child- to bring home the letter for a donation when it cannot be afforded
- Strategies to cope with their feelings of despair that become risky (drugs, alcohol, smoking)
- Traumatized students are identified as students with ADHD, Students are labelled as needing identification and then marginalized further because of these labels

Social Exclusion

- Students will stay home on certain days in order to avoid the shame and stigma (gift giving; class parties; fundraising as a class)
- Is a form of discrimination-if you aren’t wearing the designer clothes or are part of the team
- No money – lack of social interaction with coffee and lunches with peers
- When students cannot engage in X-BOX online gaming or engage in proms, etc....it becomes hard for kids to be social in what is now “socially acceptable and normative ways”
- Not being invited/ included in social events has an impact on student well-being
- The pressure to have luxuries, to have things they can’t afford, they can’t participate in the activities that other teens participate in like shopping so they have fewer friends.
- Students choose courses that are not associated with funds. They feel that there is a lot that is available but they can’t access it or take part due to costs.
- Other students noting that their peers have less
- Lack of activities and opportunities for students in poverty
- Home visit by administrations/social workers – forces the family to admit that there is a disclosure of low income. – it was humiliating for the family (unintentional impact) – needed to meet at a coffee shop but there was concern that there was no money for the coffee
- Part time jobs – Students cannot enter social situations because they are working jobs.
- Students who do not have a cell phone to interact socially with their peers

Food and Nutrition

- Every school should have food available at all time that is accessible and stigma-free
- Some students don't go to school because they don't have meals to sustain them
- Realistically some provided with only one meal a day. Mental health is affected by lack of nutrition
- Because of the commute to the city, kids are up at 5:30 and go to daycare. They eat their lunch at recess so they are hungry by noon
- Healthy foods are more expensive so lunches don't always represent what is considered healthy by teachers. Comments or sending lunches home because they aren't deemed 'good enough' leads to embarrassment and shame
- Have to do a lot more when students are feeling hungry, and not getting a good night sleep, can be challenge
- "As a full time Student Success teacher for 10 years, I can speak about my students. I have some who come every day and are hungry; I don't have the budget to support these students and the food they need"
- "We need to look at all initiatives through an equity lens that includes classism ex. food shaming when students bring cookies to school; these are cheaper than fruits or vegetables"
- Lunch in high school is so expensive, so students leave the school to buy it; but this is also when students buy drugs.

Food Drives

- Food goes to food bank, People giving are accessing food bank. Doesn't make sense
- Are we teaching charity and not teaching anything about social justice when it comes to schools? Donations to the food bank teach nothing about social justice and helping students understand the real reasons why some people are poor and others are not is an important piece that is largely missing.
- Puts families in a difficult position when students are asking to bring food from home for the food drive, when they need what they have.

Nutrition Programs

- Nutrition programs should be offered to **all** students (to alleviate stigma). Teachers could be involved with these programs to help build relationships with students.
- Have snack, lunch and breakfast programs in all schools and available to all students. Wouldn't it be great if we could fund student lunches? This can provide a stop gap. All other developed nations other than Canada have publicly funded lunch programs.
- The snack programs can be a challenge - adhering to policies, cultural norms, and providing food that students want to eat
- Province provides small amounts of funding to schools who want to run a nutrition program but the amounts have gotten smaller since more schools are opting into the funding. It is very hard to sustain the necessary funding to keep a program going, in schools that have more lower-income programs so sometimes schools have to stop their programs.
- Could look at ways YRDSB could contribute to the cost of these important nutrition programs – Learning Opportunity Grants, might be one option for a portion of funding. Perhaps, divert some of the money used for paying for lunches/food for staff, events to support the costs of student nutrition programs

- Region and School board could contribute to cost of nutrition programs as they do in TDSB. City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health have heavily invested in student nutrition programs for the past 30 years.
- “My daughter goes to Jersey and they have a breakfast program; last year they said “if you can’t afford to eat, then come: and people didn’t because they were embarrassed. This year they have offered it for people who are busy in the morning and there is much more participation.” “Start the day in a communal way together versus being rushed with their families or a restart for our kids”
- “Schools do have breakfast programs but making sure we are not setting up barriers or face stigmatism to gain access to the food i.e. not in the office where they have to sign a sheet so we have numbers for reporting to the powers that be” is funders.

School Cash Online

- The “School Cash Online” discussions raised a lot of questions, such as “Is it optional?” Why is there a 4% fee associated with using it?”
- Great to have the option there for families. It is convenient but not accessible to everyone
- Easier for the school. Reduces staff workload and means not having cash on site at the school
- Pressure to move to cash online; implicit bragging rights for schools converting to the new system
- Often we make decisions without making the conscious effort of asking these questions
- Forces people without bank account or credit card to disclose their situation.
- Becomes cumbersome for families to access it. Trickles down to the children themselves as an excuse not to participate
- Kids/families are still having to disclose
- Have to pay online- need a credit card- discriminate against our low income families
- Parents have to disclose that they don’t have a computer or a credit card or even a bank acct in some cases which is very stigmatizing
- Ensure that families know that they are not REQUIRED to use it
- More information should be sent to parents indicating that they can pay with cash and also that help is available, as required.

Fees and Other School Costs

- Seems like our schools have become a marketplace. Aiming marketing, be it for fundraising, school pictures, lunches etc. at our children and youth. How many times parents are asked for money - for lots of things (pizza; field trips; yearbooks; picture day; athletic wear; secret Santa etc.)? Students feel stigmatized for not being able to participate.
- We are in a rich country that is also very materialistic and consumer driven. It’s about having more and getting more. Are we teaching this to our students?
- If we are truly thinking about those who cannot participate - then we really should interrogate these situations to understand and consider everybody who cannot participate.
- Most families want to contribute. Some may wish to contribute in kind ex. gardening at the school
- Costs should be consistent across York Region
- Musical instruments and enrichment funds are not available. Mouth pieces needed and without them students don’t have the ability to practice and perform at home
- Physical Education – uniforms, cost money and if students don’t have them they can lose marks; going to the ROC for field trips; etc. make it really hard for students to access (you have to pay online)

- Some students can't afford to go to prom-it is a whole level of school culture; so this too marginalizes students
- Often cultural celebrations like Valentine's Day have costs attached; also are we affirming all identities ex. Lunar New Year
- Gifts for teachers – there are cultural expectations that there are gifts for teachers especially at the elementary level. Very costly and while appreciated, often not really wanted.

Specialized Programs

- Athletics, Arts, and other specialized programs are available for only a few. They come with a cost that alone would deter families from enrolling their children in. Students who want to participate but are unable to because of financial challenges feel left out and can feel frustrated and not engaged at school. There can be unintended consequences and impact of these programs.
- "As a board we need to look at programs that "reward" those already rewarded. i.e. Bill Crothers (Athletics) or Unionville HS and Huron Heights (Arts). If we look at enrolment we can see how many students are from low-income backgrounds are enrolled, or not. Families who can afford training and lessons ahead of time are accepted into these specialized programs."
- Need special clothes, shoes, transportation back and forth to events and money for food and other things while there. Have to be able to transport themselves to get to the Arts schools
- We know that a great opportunity for all students is to give them access to the arts
- French Immersion is a good example of parents choosing a certain types of academic programs
- Lack of low income and other marginalized students in gifted programs or French Immersion
- School-based speakers and enrichments for certain courses come at a fee to the parents. This is exclusion.

Sports and Extra-Curriculars

- Sports and being part of a team can have a high impact on self-esteem and give students a sense of belonging, but the fees exclude many families. These need to be available after school along with uniforms, equipment, transportation to games, etc.
- Sports teams, clubs, field trips, music, dances-all the things that make school interesting and engaging mean kids miss out and they miss a lot. These are milestones-Gr. 9 trip, prom-yet some students miss out on these highlights. A student may care more about these things than a gym uniform. It can cause discord amongst kids.
- It is a lot for newcomer populations to buy equipment etc. and others costs to get access to sports.
- Kids are not getting access to sports/ extra-curricular (hockey, baseball) Impacts their friendships and other's perception
- I know a young girl who was very into athletics but there were so many fees for the athletics programs at the high school she could not get involved. She ended up dropping out in Gr. 10 because she could not find anything to interest her.
- The school can help students but it puts the responsibility onto students to disclose their situation and need but can be very stigmatizing. Other organizations can help with access to funds but they must complete forms to engage them
- Students miss out on opportunities; gym uniforms, extra-curricular. There are so many pieces beyond the classroom that can come with a cost. This widens the gap for both well-being and achievement

Supplies

- Access to resources [clothing, pencils and pens, stuff they need for class]

- “If you can afford to go to Staples to get the markers and Bristol board then you are ahead of the student who can’t;” This affects students’ self-confidence
- “I can’t get those resources and can’t do as well as Bob so why even bother?”
- Projects – materials – there are lots of “Dollar Store” requirements

Yearly and Graduation Photos

- Graduation Photos are so expensive. Why are these packages even more than regular school photos?
- Corporations – sitting fees for graduation photos – who does that benefit? The provider gets the funding and there are no kickbacks/benefits for the school to help those who cannot afford this opportunity
- Some companies provide free sitting – the providers should be approved based upon the ability to equalize the sitting for everyone

Activity Fees

- Gr. 12-there are many costs-Student Activity Fee; prom, the dress, school events-these all add up
- “In high school; it is so difficult to pay the \$50 fees they ask in Sept for every student. This year; I will have 3 children in high school... school fees, gym uniforms, club membership fees, sports team fees.... If I cannot afford it; my kids will lose out on playing on sports teams or joining clubs which will enrich their lives”
- Threat of not getting student timetable if don’t pay high school fees (being held because of non-payment of activity fees)
- Need to reinforce the policy that parents cannot be asked to pay fees/timetables. Needs to be consistency on how to help those that are low income
- It is public education- why are we charging a fee?

Tutoring

- Tutoring is widely available but not for all. Is there tutoring at schools, Welcome centers? Peer tutors are not available as they used to be in the past
- Standardized testing doesn’t accurately reflect the students’ knowledge when they don’t have access to additional resources (tutors, therapists etc.). Extra academic advantage if you have money for things like Kumon, etc.
- Students with disabilities have more access to therapy and programs if they have access to money.
- Why is there a need for students to have extra lessons? Parents’ perception that kids need extra tutoring. Is it a competition?

Trips

The cost of field trips is a challenge for many families and as a result exclusive. Sometimes students would rather be suspended than admit they cannot go on a trip or not able to afford it. It perpetuates a sense of lacking for students who cannot participate. There are assumptions the trips are affordable and that students are never left behind and that the systems is set up so that families are not put in to financial hardship because of the cost of trips, but it happens. As noted earlier, families will do anything to make sure that their child is able to participate so that they are not ostracized by others or seen as “needy,” or “different” at school, to their peers, other parents and teachers. Families have also come up with excuses so that the child doesn’t have to go, such as appointments on the day of the trip, and will keep their child home that day, rather than say they are unable to cover the cost. There have also been

instances that students who can't attend trips have to stay back and sit in a room by themselves or join another class because their parents cannot arrange to care for them because of that cost.

The discussions about trips at the conversations were addressed from several different perspectives. There are numerous reasons for trips at school; experiential, traditional, enhancement to curriculum, etc.

- Most students want outings away from home and are not necessarily concerned with the location.
- Schools need to protect students who cannot afford to participate in field trips; but by not having the trip or not letting them participate, the student then misses out on an important experience
- Eliminating trips altogether is not the answer either, even in the name of inclusivity; working with community to understand what they want and can work to support the inclusion of all students is important.
- Have to consider the history of the school, what they have done in the past, and what is lost for students when something is cancelled. Need to look at how to continue some events that have costs and make sure they are inclusive of everyone. It is inequitable that some schools can hold these events without even thinking about it and others can't host them or take the trips because of costs; Capacity to fundraise and capacity of parents to pay for electives or extra-curriculars, ends up determining the experiences that students get to have setting up vastly different educational experiences for students, neighbourhood by neighbourhood
- Can we consider experiential learning and trips without the large costs and whatever is decided upon, is made available to everyone?
- We often do not ask students what they want to do. Do we empower students to give advice on the various field trips? What is available and free?
- I also want to suggest frequent reviews of the policy that the only outings are outings that everyone attends. I understand the need for fairness but these are opportunities that other schools do have .eg. ski trips, Toronto sites etc. It always seems only poorer people/schools have to be fair to all, while other schools are willing to manage other reasons students may not attend. eg cultural differences, family strife, health limitations, etc.
- Transportation may be limited, mobility may be limited
- There was a notice for \$42 for a class field trip just before the winter holidays – the timing was difficult for families to afford the excursion.
- Need to make having these conversations a priority.

At the school level some schools are asking students and families what trips to do and are presenting options to the students, getting them all excited and telling them to ask their parents to decide which ones they would like their child to go on. This results in the child asking the parent to go on the trip they want and if parent cannot afford it causes problems at home between parent and child. This adds to the stress levels at home and causes even more tension and loss of trust between the family and the school. Seeking and getting input is not easy although important.

When looking at all of this, a good question to ask is: Are the families and students we are serving being taken advantage of? Where are the costs of these trips coming from? Is it travel agents? Is it a marketing ploy?

Trips to Europe

- Who are participating in the trips to Europe-only a family of means can afford these. Conversations with other families about the equity of such a trip is a difficult conversation

- International Trips - \$3000 trip to Iceland as an example. Posters are up around the schools visibly showing the students and so many can't afford it
- Need to ask our students what kind of experiences they want and where can they get that versus exclusive experiences out of province, country

Electives

- Electives are also a challenge-If you can't afford skiing you end up painting or cooking. This is very classist. This is also an example of streaming
- Electives can be costly – need lower cost options. Winter Electives for tubing, skiing, etc. is unreasonable (bussing; winter gear; etc.)
- Students feel excluded – will miss school if they cannot be included eg. Skating events

Grade 8

- Is there value to an overnight trips/graduation trips
- Becomes more of a rite of passage. Also is a celebration and social event for students.
- “My son's Gr. 8 trip was to U of Waterloo-there was a tour of the university. It was great to inspire post-secondary learning.”

Transportation

- An example of a student who was facing multiple barriers, tried to ride transit for free, was apprehended and faced a fine of over \$200. Her School SW took one day to attend court with her to support her in pleading her case. Is this a good use of our staff time and is there not a way of preventing students from facing these challenges and costs in the first place?
- Student Fares should be paid for students attending school on public transit; school busses for students on the transit line were cancelled around 10 years ago to save costs at all levels. The costs fell to the families to pay for their children and youth to take transit to school. One family has 4 students in high school and live on the transit line. It takes them over an hour to walk to high school and in the winter it's just not feasible. It costs them \$32/day to get to and from school so at least \$640/month to take transit just to get to and from school
- One school in our board takes \$30,000 out of their own budget to pay for student fares throughout the year; when the region moves from transit tickets to only transit passes, this won't even be possible for schools to assist students in this way.
- Local transit fares are very expensive. This is a real burden for low-income parents particularly those with more than 1 or 2 children attending high school
- Kids not getting to school because of the cost of public transit
- Transportation is a barrier for students who want to participate in Co-Op, SHSM or even French Immersion and other special programs, or to go to the library for computer access or to study, getting to jobs, community service hours, etc.
- Family does not have access to vehicle to get the student to the school when they miss the bus
- Assumption that if you miss the bus there is someone who can pick the student up – it can make it unsafe for students
- Getting students to school is difficult if they have to travel 7 km to get to school
- Access to services is compromised depending on where families live and how they get there i.e. cost and lack of public transit options can make it untenable. Eg. Pefferlaw – no access to public transit

- Transportation is a barrier to get to school/ social assistance/ programs. Family is having to put aside part of their monthly budget to get their students to school. The costs can be more than housing costs.
- Impacts attendance – not being able to afford busing and don't come to school – family can't afford it
- For families on assistance, we've heard that OW caseworkers are telling them that students can and should get their transit tickets from the schools implying that they are easily available.
- Social workers, school staff, etc. pay out of pocket to help students with the cost of transit tickets so they can reach school.

Fundraising

- "I wish some schools were more mindful of how many fundraising requests go out; one school had a different day of the week for a different fundraiser; families also asked to contribute financially to the school at the end of the month"
- Our school and the community are big on tradition and this is something that makes people want to keep doing things"
- "We stopped rewarding kids who sold lots in the cookie dough fund raiser, my son sold the most and he got picked on because he won the prize; he now does not want to draw attention to himself and doesn't want people to know what he has"
- "We have fewer parent volunteers coming to support events so we can't do everything we used to. Also cost of vulnerable sector screen is a barrier to some families; funding needed to assist some schools with this cost for volunteers."
- There was a lot of conversation and concern about fundraising. There were numerous comments about fundraising creating a 2 tiered system and huge disparities between schools. Many also talked about schools sharing fundraising dollars and creating a centralized "fund" to redistribute funds to schools that are in need.
- YRDSB used to have a community foundation/ or something similar to Learning Enrichment Fund in TDSB but got rid of it; might address some of these concerns around addressing two-tiered system and disparities; ability to redistribute funds where they are most needed
- Fundraising is much more challenging in some neighborhoods; consider a portion/percentage of School Council fundraised dollars go into a central pot to support less affluent schools
- It would be great if a percentage of the fund-raised dollars could go back to kids in the school who actually need the funds
- The difference in fundraising means that there is a difference in the resources that a school can buy. Creates 2 tiered system
- Discrepancy of school fundraising even in our board ranges from under \$3,000/year to over \$150,000/year; same in all boards. Can fundraising go to neighboring schools? -can some schools 'adopt' a school and share the funding and fundraising with other schools. Sharing between schools can be seen as charity and be stigmatizing for receiving school.
- What is the Board's response to the Fundraising gap?
- Why do schools have to fundraise? Why doesn't the Ministry provide funds for these things?
- Staff are spending time on fundraising to support our schools, is that what teachers are to be doing? Well-being of staff is being impacted. Is this what we should be putting this much energy in to?
- Fundraising has become institutionalized. We need to question how many fundraisers we do and why we are doing it. Are we fundraising for the corporations or for our students?
- What is the impact of fundraising on our kids? Teaches students consumerism.

- Parents and schools just fundraise because it's what everyone has done for as long as they can remember; don't stop to think about why this is necessary?
- Re-iterates and draws attention to the reality that some have and others do not, while rewarding those who have more; normalizes this and the competition/consumerism that goes along with it. Even if it is possible, you're asking the same people to give over and over. It is unfair to ask
- Those parents with fewer social network connections, don't have access to winning the 'grand prize' for raising largest amounts; kids with access, win the competitions. Taking away fundraiser awards (student awards for amount raised). If you don't have a social network, can't raise funds.
- We can't buy the products our kids are selling and have to find ways to sell it to others at work etc.
- What is with fundraising for hot lunches at special times of the year such as Turkey Dinners? This is brought in by a for-profit business at a lower cost. What is the benefit to the school? Is it worth it?
- Re-think fundraising that rewards students for raising the most; Fundraisers and companies such as Jump Rope for Heart are the ones that benefit most. Kids forget what they're raising the \$\$ for. Want the prizes and they end up in the landfill anyway. Parents actually referred to these prizes as landfill items.
- Ideas range from banning Fundraising in schools altogether, to doing fundraising without using students to do it to looking to community or community of school fundraising
- Can fundraising be moved into the community? Done outside the school to support each child without the children having to do it.
- Heard that the Board will match the amount that a school will raise in fundraising for specific items. That just encourages more fundraising and increases the gap between the schools that can fundraise and those that cannot. i.e. matching dollars for technology.
- You are asked to participate in fundraisers; it feels awkward and you have to disclose personal things that you are not comfortable disclosing with others
- Some schools ask classes to do theme baskets that can be raffled off as fundraisers. People are not ostracized if they can't contribute something; if two classes don't have much, we will combine the class contributions. The other students can see that other students haven't brought things in and this can result in bullying and be centered out. The baskets are also hard if you have 3 or 4 kids in different classes
- What can we learn from other boards/jurisdictions or organizations like People for Education who have been studying this issue for a long time?

Changes That Need To Be Made At the Following Levels? Classroom, School, School Board, Community?

All activity and language needs to be viewed through an Equity and Inclusivity lens to ensure it is in alignment with YRDSB Vision, Mission and Values of Equity and Inclusivity. It is important to understand that every community experiences issues of poverty differently so we need to address it differently. Poverty is everywhere and it should be assumed that there are always students in our schools that are living on low income. Every school will have unique needs. They should be able to have adequate resources to make their programs equitable. It is important to make what families need universal – without requiring them to have to “out” themselves, say they are poor or are in need. We need to help people understand the notion of intersectionality, where poverty intersects with other social identities such as race, ability and/or gender which serve to further marginalize individuals or communities.

Classroom

- As leaders, teachers need to be able to rethink their practices and decisions in order to ensure that all students are comfortable and included in their classrooms. Some teachers favor more academic students. Teachers need to make it clear that they are a safe person for students to come to.
- Raise teacher’s awareness of what is happening with kids and build relationships with them. This includes knowing your students, along with having meetings with them up front and building trust with them.
- Know your school community, understand the resources they need and investigate ways to assist, especially access to technology resources. This includes creating opportunities to access and share resources.
- Some families are not able to afford extracurricular programs such as Kumon. Ultimately, teachers don’t know all the students that are struggling.
- Another suggestion for teachers is to take the time to block off and make the calls to parents along with learning more about their families.
- Goal setting for students is crucial as their mindsets need to be expanded way. Success needs to be celebrated more as it is important for kids to see themselves represented, valued and included in their classrooms.

School

- **Equity Councils within Schools** - We have a number of student groups within schools such as GSA’s, etc.-the leaders of these clubs are looking at the shared human rights across these clubs. More schools need Equity Councils. Students might join a GSA but they won’t want to be “out” about their poverty; this is embarrassing. Mandate to have gay straight alliances in schools - but if it isn't mandated it is hard to get those things happening.
- **Student Voice** - Let’s hear from the kids – what is it like for them to live this experience? This is crucial as their voices are so important. We should elicit voices from students/staff on innovative approaches for students who live on low income.

School Council

- School Councils have to change their perception of how to spend fundraised money. The School Council should stop labelling-parents who don’t come to school council as often as other parents. Parents do care but this is how they get labeled. Student Council also needs to be educated about the effect of this inequity on students.

- We need to organize affordable fundraisers/ activities that are accessible to all students, along with reallocating resources such as computers, Wi-Fi, bus services and more. We also need to allocate our funding to mental health support systems in schools.
- Students need more communication and understanding about poverty and classism.
- We need to figure out how schools can be encouraged to affirm the identities of our students. This includes teaching them about collaboration, compassion, care and inclusivity.

School Board

Teacher and Staff Training

- Education and Training begins with the Leaders. Senior team/Trustee awareness and understanding of privilege and power in a systemic approach is necessary for real impact to occur.
- The outcomes are dependent on how well the administrator understands and commits to the equity training.
- It depends on the school and the culture of the teachers and administrators in that building. The administrator sets the tone and what they are prepared to do in terms of distributive leadership
- Educate teachers re equity for all.
- More and more the Board is realizing classism and poverty need to be addressed.
- Have those 'hard to have' conversations to explore biases and what success is for students.
- As an educator I have to acknowledge my own privilege and my own biases before I enter the classroom.
- Self-reflection is so important-how do we move ALL staff to do this kind of self-reflection.
- Our system has been developed by people in the middle class and they assume all participants share their values, perspectives and privileges.
- Equity work being done in secondary schools is not yet where it needs to be. Teachers make assumptions about students, eg 'kids are lazy when the problem is, they don't have access to technology' 'why are they eating food at school' and 'why aren't they participating in after school activities ex night performances in drama program'
- Staff professional learning about the community would be helpful. Take the teachers on a field trip after school so they can understand the nature of their community.
- How can we remove these barriers or how can we grant access to students in a way that preserves dignity.
- School needs to develop relationships with families so that they see the school as a hub providing support
- All of our staff need to be educated about classism, bias and privilege - teachers, secretaries, EA's.
- Some of the participants identified with students. How teachers talk about students in high need schools was shocking and difficult.
- Teacher lens to change to be more mindful of learners and community and see beyond all identities.
- Do not make assumptions that students are ready to learn
- Be mindful of cultural and financial experiences and restrictions
- Staff training is needed. I felt that I was not treated with respect by a teacher because of the way I looked
- It should not be "us vs. them"; there needs to be more understanding of issues like low income and immigrants for teachers. No pity
- How do we make poverty something that teachers are able to talk about and understand?

- Education for the teacher is also needed – ex. financial literacy
- We need to create education modules for teachers to better understand the impact of poverty, and the impacts of discrimination/classism and intersectionality
- For all staff, Equity training doesn't include everyone –it includes teachers and administrators-but what about EA's, DECE's and those who work hands on with our kids. These support staff also need equity training. If equity training is not a Ministry focus then it is very surface and does not go deep. Once it is Ministry mandated then there is money attached to it and there will be funding for training
- Awareness for students/teachers/administrators/trustees of economic issues facing many families in YRDSB
- Training in schools for teachers and staff around poverty and classism
- The stereotypes and biases that teachers have towards low income situations can impact program
- More professional work with staff. There are biases/ judgements and how do we work through that.
- Teacher intent is always good; we don't always talk about how we include all learners in activities
- Professional learning on how to engage families who are low income; how to avoid bias; stereotypes;
- We need some system training on "classism" at the school level for all educators and administrators
- Public awareness is needed to address false stereotypes
- Board should review Fees and Fundraising Practices; Ask Ourselves: What are our goals in education for the development of young people?
- More information in terms of LOG (Learning Opportunities Grant) would be beneficiary. As we know Toronto District School Board was only using about 40% of their LOG funding which is targeted to low-income students and equity initiatives, so we need to know where YRDSB stands and how the funds are being used.
- Offer bussing to low income families for children who otherwise need to pay for public transit. . We could work with the Region of York/Province to make transit to and from school for students, free.
- Having support/focus groups with participants within the school community so they can get together and discuss concerns, needs and suggestions. We can also provide funding for learning and behavioral challenges.
- Educating families about what the school board can and cannot support would be helpful.

Developing Community Partnerships and Advocacy

- Developing stronger partnerships with community and resource providers
- Students need access to various services so permit fees need to be removed for community groups and parent run programs in our schools.
- The process of finding potential partnerships such as Social Workers and professionals need to be more accessible and available.
- As a board we can advocate for more affordable housing at other regional tables
- Have Board push back re: cuts to housing, mental health and impact on our students, along with providing access to certain membership and clubs to families in poverty.
- Advocating to MPPs and local council to raise awareness
- Administration needs to make it a priority for staff to advocate for certain issues

Curriculum

- Equity and Inclusivity should be embedded into various aspects of the curriculum (English; Civics; Social Studies; History; Science – how do we ensure that we do this in a natural way?)

- Being explicit in curriculum in creating awareness eg. selection of novels in an English class; field trips to learn about poverty; inviting guests in that can talk about these issues – Union groups, anti-poverty groups, minimum wage campaign advocates.
- Have all schools have access to same programs.
- Programming/ curriculum that is about these questions – Why is there poverty? And what is social justice? Teachers can be intimidated by taking on these subjects for reasons such as, they don't personally feel like they have enough knowledge about poverty and also it can be perceived as too political.
- Economic (systemic roots of poverty) and Financial Literacy
 - Only teaching about financial literacy can create the impression that poverty is an individual problem and driven by bad decisions or faulty decisions about money
 - Educational opportunities-the school project that allows students to feel engaged ex. on poverty in Canada
 - More attention on financial literacy at school – Fall 2018 –financial literacy is coming to the grade 10 curriculum. Economic literacy gets to the system's role in poverty and inequity/inequality.
 - How do we teach about money? Value to financial responsibilities? Teach about economics and the system.

Data Collection

- Need data in York Region regarding the poverty that exists – only way to shift systems/policies and priorities is to share data and be transparent
- Intentional collection of data to determine needs to inform steps as a school system eg. money for nutrition. Needs to be collected to inform decisions more effectively, in schools by social workers, etc.
- Every Student Counts Data will help us identify how low-income students are doing vs other students and how low-income intersects with other identities to restrict outcomes i.e. Increased drop-out of students; when we have this data and understanding then we can take action to address it
- Data determines how much money we get from the Ministry to address the needs of low-income learners; i.e. Learning Opportunity Grant. Need clarity on how this money is directed in our system as recent findings in TDSB indicate that less than half is targeted towards the students it is intended to support.
- Follow up on the Climate Survey – get a range of students – those who experience poverty or low income and their allies
- Allow sharing of reports and/or data with community partners to work with local, Municipal and Provincial partners

Communications and Transparency

- Communication needs to be consistent across the Board
- Make the communications compulsory for all. Not based on whether a principal or whoever decides, deems it necessary to send out. Need to bring people together (eg. Community conversations) However not all schools sent out flyer
- More communication about events. I get notices a week in advance when, in my family, I would need one to two months in order to save up for extra-curricular.

- Follow up – A teacher accused my son for an action that he had not done and told another student not to hang around with this kid because he is “bad news.” I was then informed that I could not be told what the discipline was for that teacher
- Parents need transparency; they have the right to know about feedback when there has been a complaint
- Parents don’t trust the school board because there is a lack of transparency.
- “At my son’s school since late November, my son has been telling me that the police are there and there has been no communication to the parents. The image of this school has changed a lot. The students and families are stakeholders and deserve to know what is going on in their school”

Community

- Schools Need to Know Their Communities. Teachers need to learn about their community to provide students with the reassurance that their teachers know about and care about the community –what the needs are; who can we connect people with.
- Community resources must be more in tune with the reality of kids in schools and sensitive to their needs. We need stronger advocacy to create changes in our community.
- Change the perception that people do not struggle in the suburbs
- Access to better services closer to the city than here in Sutton, Same shelter system but lacks services and access to services/opportunities because of the geographical location.
- We want parents to be involved and sharing their perceptions with their children

Are there any other things that the questions did not capture that you would like to ensure is included?

- The issues depend on where you grew up; the system we have here is such that we should not face poverty
- These marginalized voices will not come to the surface unless we intentionally seek them out and make it safe for them to speak.
- *We need to get back to the village and talk to each other*
- It is everyone’s responsibility to address classism – we all need to take ownership of the vulnerable students who are marginalized and stigmatized by income

Questions That Came Up in the Conversations?

- What can be done at the Ministry level?
- What structures do we have in place so that families don’t have to “out” themselves if they can’t afford something?
- We say education is the key to make chances/opportunities. How do you give students and their families a choice/voice and honour them?
- Do we know things that are taking place that show discrimination?
- What are we doing to perpetuate classism?
- Dress Down Days – UWTYR – Why is this endorsed by our Board?