



BOARD - December 05, 2011

Opening Remarks - John Malloy

Thank you Mr. Chair.

On behalf of Executive Council, our staff and our students, I would like to congratulate Chair Simmons and Vice Chair Barlow as they begin their new leadership roles.

I would also like to thank our entire Board of Trustees for your dedication to our students, to our staff, to our parents and to our communities.

I would also like to thank Trustee Bishop for her dedication and hard work serving our Board last year as Chair.

All of us are here because we are dedicated to our students. They are the reason for everything we do. I had the good fortune to participate in the Student Forums last month. Our students' reflections have very much influenced the message I wish to bring this evening.

First of all, our Strategic Directions continues to provide our foundation.

All students achieving their full potential, remains our ultimate goal.

Providing a relevant responsive education is our mission.

Respect, Creativity, Excellence and Citizenship are our values.

And of course, we believe that we can reach our ultimate goal for our students by focusing on Achievement, Engagement and Equity.

So, how do we make our Strategic Directions come to life? This is where your important work comes in Trustees -- you provide direction to the staff to realize the ideals communicated through Strategic Directions. You make financial and policy decisions which support this direction. You bring the voices of our many different communities of Hamilton to this Board table -- where multiple voices have the opportunity to create a focused and unified direction.

We thank you for all the work you have previously accomplished in this regard and the work you will do moving forward.

And now, I wish to focus on the voices of our students who provide the back drop for the challenging work that lies ahead of us this year.



Our students want their schools to be engaging places where they build strong relationships where they feel safe and accepted. They look to the staff in our schools as the people they can turn to for assistance both in their classes and beyond. They want choice in terms of what they learn, when they learn and how they learn. Access to technology and collaborative learning spaces are key for our students. Our students want to succeed and they want to be sure they are truly understood by their educators at each and every school. They would like access to different programs, and the ability to show that they have fulfilled their learning goals in different ways.

Some of these requests challenge us to think differently about how, when and where we educate our students, which, brings me to my significant point this evening.

Though challenges may be ahead in the decisions that need to be made, there is also an amazing opportunity. Trustees have the opportunity to provide direction to ensure that the voices of our students are heard.

Our Program Strategy intends to provide Access, Opportunity and Successful Outcomes for our students who would have the opportunity to engage in programming that allows each student to be successful. Though student achievement is improving, we can continue to improve student achievement and well-being by thinking differently about our programs, and our buildings. Further, by creating learning communities where students who possess different learning needs, styles, and strengths, and where students from all backgrounds come together, we will be providing effective opportunities for our students.

Thank you Trustees for providing this direction and for making difficult and challenging decisions on behalf of all. Our staff will engage with you and with our students, parents and communities to make the dreams in our Strategic Directions a reality in this new-year.

In conclusion, a student at the Forum said to me, "We are different people, with different interests, strengths and needs. We learn differently yet in school so much is the same why is that?"

We are at a significant time and place in Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Doing something differently so that our students achieve, so that they grow in confidence and self knowledge, so that they become resilient, creative, and capable, so that they engage each other in vibrant school communities so that they make a huge difference in our world when they walk into the world from their parents' homes and our schools -- is there any better legacy than this?

We look forward to the opportunities of working together with you, our Trustees, in the year ahead.