

May 2, 2019

Dear Trustee and Chair Maria Rizzo:

My name is Omari Bellot and I am the Co-Chair along with Co-Chair Cary Auwaerter of Our Lady of the Assumption School. It has been brought to our attention that a number of parents are expressing grave concerns over the academic welfare of their children due to the budget cuts in the 5th Block and ESL programs. The news that these programs are cut from our children's program in addition to further cuts in the ESL classes resulting in a loss of 2 full time ESL teachers to one half time teacher is very unacceptable.

Over 35% of the school population are ESL students at OLA. How can one half time teacher possibly support our children who are learning English for the first time? Which students' needs are going to be prioritized? We don't understand how the TCDSB website can stress on excellence through equity and inclusivity in education when this is a contra indication of what the Board stands for.

The parents are happy with the program that the teachers at OLA provide which not only focuses on **academic achievement**, but also provides a **safe and inclusive experience** for students just arriving in Canada. The budget concern was raised at our last CSPC meeting. Principal Ms. Garlow said that our school is unique in that most of our students have been recently reunited with family after many years of separation and are trying to fully immerse themselves in an environment where they are trying their absolute best to understand a different language. She shared that our ESL classes provide an environment where students share their experiences and struggles of immigrating to a new country. This is a community where they all have something in common and a **community** in which they feel that they **belong**. Isn't this the theme of the TCDSB Pastoral Plan ***We belong?***

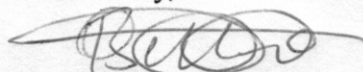
Listening to teachers' concerns that the government places much importance on the EQAO test and the grade 10 Literacy Test in order for students to receive their high school diploma, I would like to stress our deepest fears that a half time ESL teacher is **not adequate** for our children to succeed in these tests or graduate from high school.

We understand that the **early years** in elementary school are the most **critical** to learning a new language and our children should have the support of professional teachers to help them acquire English in Canada, a country they now call home.

You are our Trustee and representative of our needs. We turn to you hoping you will support our parent community and the learning of our children. We work very hard and many of us hold down two to three jobs to provide a good life for our children.

Thank you on behalf of OLA CSPC and the parent community.

Sincerely,



Omari Bellot
Co-Chair - OLA CSPC

Cc; Principal Ms. Garlow