

STUDENTS FIRST ONTARIO: 2022/23 SCHOOL YEAR-END REMARKS

IT'S BEEN A LONG YEAR...WITH LOTS OF LEARNINGS!

The 2022/23 School Year was a wake-up call for many parents who had previously thought they had a shared understanding of the education system at the Halton District School Board (HDSB) and beyond. Now, more than ever, we affirm that:

- **PARENTAL VOICES MATTER & MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

Because of the interest and engagement of many concerned parents, we initiated change at the HDSB and facilitated a return to some of the principles of democracy that many of us had taken for granted – open inquiry, discussion/debate and freedom of information/transparency. There were many successes, and notably, with the passing of the [Better Schools & Students Outcomes Act](#) in the Ontario legislature on June 8th, parental rights and engagement are more firmly codified. It's a good first step and many parents are motivated to see where this will lead. A recent [tweet](#) by Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce shows promise of getting back to the foundational elements of a quality education. It should be noted that the HDSB leadership shared some opposition to Bill 98 in a [letter](#) to the Minister. Canadian parents are uniting and expect our leaders to act in the best interests of children. **Connect with your MPPs and Minister Lecce to show your support and ask them to implement change.**

- **THIS IS BIGGER THAN ONE TEACHER, ONE SCHOOL or ONE SCHOOL BOARD**

The situation at OTHS caught the attention of many and provided a valid reason for many parents to start looking deeper into what is happening in our education system. There have been many [protests](#) this year and parents are insisting that they have a voice when it comes to presenting certain information to their children as 'fact'. Documents like the [York Region DSB Gender Expression & Identity Guidelines](#) or a similar version at [Hamilton-Wentworth DSB](#) are being publicly scrutinized and will require robust public debate. **Policies that hide information from parents are being challenged** – New Brunswick has recently upheld the primacy of parental notice and involvement through [Policy 713](#). Ontario will be challenged to follow suit. The same discussion is happening around the globe – the [UK is initiating changes](#) and parental rights are being reinstated. The tide is slowly turning - we hope.

- **WE NEED BALANCE IN OUR SCHOOLS & A RETURN TO THE FUNDAMENTALS OF EDUCATION**

More people are looking closely at the strategic focus of our Ontario School Boards. Many are shocked to see that they are saturated with 'social justice activism' initiatives as the *primary* focal point – instead of foundational learning for the youngest, most vulnerable and malleable members of our society. Parents from HDSB schools have shared their concerns with Students First Ontario about the new, Marxist-inspired critical theory practices like **Intersectionality (group identity based privilege/oppression power hierarchies)** that are currently informing and being operationalized at the Halton District School Board, as noted in the [2023/24 HDSB Operational Plan](#). This appears to be true of many School Boards across the

province of Ontario and in Canada. This will require more investigation and future public consultation and debate. We encourage you to read through the Operational Plan to understand what is happening in your Board. **Highlights include:**

- training and education on dismantling white supremacy (viewed as a pervasive system that serves as the foundation of Canadian society),
- graduation coaches by intersectional identity,
- efforts to awaken a “critical consciousness” in students, etc.

We have learned that this is the domain of [Critical Social Justice](#) activism (sometimes pejoratively referred to as “[woke](#)” due to the raising of consciousness to this worldview) and it appears to be deeply embedded in our school systems, supported by Teachers Unions and incorporated into other bureaucratic systems in the province. **Parents are poised to insist upon more open inquiry and investigation into this phenomenon.**

WHAT’S NEXT FOR STUDENTS FIRST ONTARIO?

This started as a project to unite parents at OTHS to get involved in the education system, open up dialogue and uphold democracy. **Students First Ontario** is proud to have been recognized as an important voice in the public discourse and a catalyst for parental engagement. We are optimistic that our network of parents will:

- Continue to connect more parents together who want to have a voice in discussions about the education system that affect their kids, families and our communities
- Continue to offer a principled, strategic and effective voice for liberal democratic principles in support of student and parental rights – with a commitment to open inquiry, transparency and accountability in education
- Expand our focus to include more concerns being raised by parents that have been brought to our attention as a result of this project
- Preparation and release of our comprehensive 2022/23 School Year-End Report in late summer to capture all of the information we have gathered throughout the year

SUMMER READING LIST – PARENTS RECOMMEND SOME INFORMATIVE BOOKS

- [The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions & Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure](#) by Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff
- [Agency](#) by Ian V. Rowe
- [The War on the West](#) by Douglas Murray

Have a wonderful summer break and get recharged and ready for a purposeful and important 2023/34 school year in September!