

What has happened since the stabbing and shootings in November?

February 2020

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We have met with a lot of families, youth, and residents of Thorncliffe Park and listened to their concerns about violence and bullying in the community.

In response, we have begun to work on solutions to these problems. Solutions for the problems right now, and solutions for the future. **We need parents and youth to work with us on these solutions. Youth and parents who are involved will make the solutions durable, and make the community better for everyone.**

Regarding the stabbing and shooting, we have worked with councillors from TNO and elsewhere who have talked with the Syrian and Afghani and other communities who were fighting. After discussion between the 2 groups, lead by youth from both sides, the groups have decided to make peace. Some youth have told us they know that discussion, understanding, and negotiation are better ways to solve problems – and they have said hopefully this can happen earlier, before small problems become shootings.

The school has made some changes. The person who did the stabbing is no longer at the school. There are more adults in the halls watching what is happening. The school wants to do better.

We hope that the parents have noticed less violence as a result of these efforts.

But this is just a start. The schools, TNO and other agencies are doing more. As a community, we need to work with them to get the solutions we want. Parents and youth have many ideas about what really caused the problems, and what can be done. **We need to meet as a group to agree on what we will do next.**

The next 3 pages describe what we heard in conversations with parents. Please review this, and we will schedule a meeting with a large group of parents to plan the next steps.

Themes from Engagement Meetings with Syrian Parents on Youth Violence

February, 2020

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These are all comments, concerns and ideas shared by 10 Syrian parents. We will have a meeting to discuss this. We need to make a list of problems we want to work with the community to fix. Only when we have a list and strong group of parents who want to work on this list will we be able to work with the school and other groups in the community to make a change.

As a member of the Syrian parent community, we want to know if what is written here looks right to you. Do you have other ideas? Do you disagree with things written here?

We will have a meeting soon, in Arabic, to discuss this and make our list of most important problems.

History

On how violence would be handled back home

We left Syria to be safe, and then there is violence here in Canada. In schools in Syria, this would not happen because of strict rules and authority of teachers. And if there was conflict, it would be resolved quickly by the school and the community.

The educational context of many of the youth, especially boys

Many of the boys had very little school prior to coming to Canada, and have a different background than people in the school. The youth don't all know how to be in school and deal with things in Canada. Then when an incident happens, like a stabbing or shooting, they miss even more school due to safety concerns

Underlying Causes of Youth Violence

The youth get into trouble because they don't have anything to do. At the school, they don't feel respect or have adults they respect, they get no guidance, and they feel no one listens to them. Principals, vice-principals and teachers don't take the youth or parents seriously. Then youth don't like the classes, don't like the teachers. For the youth who can't really read or write in English, despite being here in Canada for 3 or 4 years, they don't understand the school content, it's too hard. They don't learn things at school that are relevant to their life. Then they get bored. Maybe they don't have friends in their classes sometimes and would rather be elsewhere.

So, the youth can just leave the school, go across the street, to the market. Spares are a problem, skipping classes is a big problem.

Here are some other underlying causes suggested by parents:

- Youth have no where to go after school. They need jobs. But if they don't have them, they meet after school, outside, at the park, and bother people
- Bullying, and lack of school response, or school tries to hide what is going on and doesn't share with people in the school and work together to resolve the problem
- Social media: youth post things which bother other youth. There's online bullying
- Student jealousy around fancy clothes of other students
- Drugs and drug dealing

Response to Problems

- Youth don't understand they can't do these violent, bullying things, that they are losing their future. They care even less about education after violence happens.
- Youth feel threatened by the weapons, avoid school due to fear, or might get their own weapons. Parents feel the school is not safe and then they keep youth at home
- Principal says it's not the school's problem because the violence is outside the school. Principal doesn't seem to take the youth seriously. But the problems start in the school or come to the school, how is it not a school problem?
- Police: what are they doing? They seem to do nothing. They don't listen, why aren't they arresting the people involved right away? Police just sit in their car at the school.
- We have meetings about the problems but nothing happens. Solutions take too long, and we don't know what they are. We aren't told what is happening.
- Parents: we don't know what to do. We talk to the youth and the school, but we are confused

Solution Ideas from Parents

- Move youth to different schools
- Need things for youth to do after school, like programs, or jobs
- Mentors, people youth can look up to at the school and in the community
- Classes that don't feel irrelevant or too hard or too boring
- Classes that teach youth how to read and write
- Parents talking to youth. Maybe sharing ideas: telling youth what they can do to avoid these situations: not skip class, stay in school, walk away from fights
- Teachers and administrators need to learn how to handle bullying and violence, not just the youth
- Parenting workshops -- but need to be more than just one day. Needs to be ongoing
- Parents volunteering in the school, being involved in the school, even if it is something small like visiting the school
- More security in the school, more people walking the halls
- Need to stop things at the beginning so they don't get so big that it becomes shootings

- Respect: if youth, teachers and administrators, parents respect others, they will get respect back
- Solutions need to come fast.. maybe the easy ones first
- Prevent youth from going outside so easily
- Place to eat and have fun inside the school, when not in class, so they don't leave and get into trouble
- School uniform