

TAB 5

Program Priorities



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The Context for TDSB

Building innovation in the program area and developing program priorities is an evolving process that supports what students need to be successful both at school and beyond. Equity of access and opportunity, fair distribution of specialized schools and programs, and program viability continue to be drivers that underpin the work done in the Program area.

As a diverse system with approximately 232,000 students (October 31, 2021), it is essential that students see themselves reflected in their schools and their learning. Along with that, we need to create learning spaces that are effective, respectful, and celebrate and honour students as well as their families and their diverse communities.

Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Vision for Learning

The Multi-Year Strategic Plan approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2018 sets direction and identifies five system goals:

- Transform student learning
- Create a culture for student and staff well-being
- Provide equity of access to learning opportunities for all students
- Allocate human and financial resources strategically to support student needs
- Build strong relationships and partnerships within school communities to support student learning and well-being

The Multi-Year Strategic Plan is a high-level statement of intent for the TDSB and drives all other work as outlined in our Vision for Learning and Service and connects to Leadership, the School Improvement Process, Service Excellence and Governance. Together, these strategies set direction and provide support for how we work but the real change happens when each unique school and each unique department examines their specific data, determines actions for their improvement, measures impact and communicates progress. The entire system improves when classrooms, schools, and departments focus their improvement efforts within the context of system direction.

The Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy is an important part of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. It advances the system goal to “provide equity of access to learning opportunities for all students”.

The Multi-Year Strategic Plan will be reviewed in the near future. Given that the current plan is nearing the end of its fourth year of implementation, it is time to collaboratively reflect on what has been achieved and which commitments will require more time to address fully (i.e., eliminating

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disparities and disproportionate outcomes for students who have been historically marginalized, equity of access, and ensuring a culture of human rights for everyone).

Staff is proposing that it is time to begin planning for the renewal of the next strategic plan in order to reflect the ongoing and new realities of the current educational landscape, including:

- Indigenous Education
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015
- Pandemic recovery and student, family and staff re-engagement
- The Board's current financial situation; and
- The recommendations in the "Results of the Self-Assessment Tool" by Charles Ungerleider.

Integrated Equity Framework

A key component of the Vision for Learning is the Integrated Equity Framework, a major directional framework that sets out a series of coordinated, strategic actions to focus and align every facet of the Board's work including policies, practices, program, culture through an equity lens, and anchor all of it within a coherent, comprehensive framework of Equity. This equity action plan provides us focus and ensures that the work we are doing at the system level has a direct impact in classrooms. A large part of this work is having conversations and dialogue as well as understanding how bias and perspective can create or remove obstacles.

The TDSB is committed to providing programs through a process that understands the central role of student voice in creating equity, inclusion and enhanced learning cultures.

Program Priorities

The following program priorities will be discussed in more detail below:

- Secondary Program Review
- Building the Workforce of Tomorrow
- French Language Review
- Elementary and Secondary Alternative Schools
- Elementary Academies
- Indigenous Education
- Special Education and Inclusion

Secondary Program Review

How do we the Support Secondary Program Review?

Staff conducted the Secondary Program Review to develop a new vision for secondary program and access which will include fewer schools, stronger programming, and increased access to courses that support all pathways, including apprenticeship and the workplace. Further, the vision supports the revitalization of neighbourhood secondary schools with a breadth of programs, many of which, over time, have experienced significant enrolment declines.

Current and projected enrolments at the secondary panel do not support the number of facilities currently in operation. The vision addresses both under and over-utilized schools since changes to any delivery model will have some degree of impact on all schools in a geographic cluster.

2021-2022 Update

- Eight Pupil Accommodation Reviews were included in the most recent LTPAS document to take place over a 3-year period.

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- The moratorium on Pupil Accommodation Reviews remains in place. Should the moratorium continue through the 2022-23 school year, an application for exemption may be considered if program viability is at risk.
- The Secondary Program Review also includes changes to policy and procedure.
 - The revised Out-of-Area Attendance Policy (formerly Optional Attendance) and the new Student Interest Program Policy were presented to the Governance & Policy Committee (GPC) on April 27, 2022 and approved by the Board on May 25, 2022. Both policies are being implemented, governing applications for admission in September 2023.
 - The Procedure that supports the implementation of the Out-of-Area Attendance Policy was shared at the June 16, 2022 GPC meeting.
 - These new and updated policies reflect the Board's commitment to equity, inclusion and human rights, and support the vision for strong neighbourhood schools.
- York Memorial Collegiate Institute and George Harvey Collegiate Institute are now consolidated in the George Harvey Collegiate Institute building until the completion of the rebuild of York Memorial Collegiate Institute in September 2026.
- Models for visibly promoting Technical and Commercial schools as viable and competitive options for all students in the board, within the constraints of the current website, are being developed. These models support the review of legacy technical and commercial school boundaries that remain in some parts of the city.

Next Steps

- The landscape for secondary schools and programs across the City may experience a shift over time as the revised Out-of-Area Attendance and Student Interest Programs policies take effect.
- There are several action items that will occur over the 2022-23 school year to implement the policies.
- Staff will undertake program coherence studies for 2022-23. These studies will ensure that Student Interest Programs meet the criteria outlined in the policy. Additionally, the program coherence studies will support the review of delivered curriculum through a lens of equity, ensuring that content is culturally relevant and reflective of the students in the TDSB. The following programs will be reviewed in Year 1:
 - Math, Science and Technology

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- Cyber Arts
- High Performing Athletes
- International Baccalaureate
- CISCO/Nortel (currently a local program)
- Law in Action Within Schools (LAWS) (currently a local program)
- To improve equity of access to programs, staff will also undertake:
 - A review to determine two locations for new centralized Arts programs
 - A review to determine a location for a new centralized High Performing Athlete program

Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

The Premier's "Highly Skilled Workforce Report" of 2016 made recommendations on how the province can build on its world-class skills, education and training systems to prepare Ontario's current and future workforce for the technology and knowledge-based jobs of today and tomorrow.

The report, which is still relevant today, includes several recommendations for education and industry partners. The following recommendations from the report are specifically related to education:

- Building stronger partnerships between educators and employers to drive solutions for skills and talent development, and for experiential learning;
- Increasing access to job market information;
- Expanding opportunities for learning by experience by funding more placements so that every student completes at least one experiential learning opportunity before graduating from high school;
- Promoting both traditional and non-traditional career paths by increasing students' exposure to options including the arts, science, engineering, technology, skilled trades and entrepreneurship; and
- Closing gaps in skills and competencies by finding ways to teach and recognize the skills that students learn, such as teamwork, problem solving and entrepreneurial spirit.

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How do we Support a Highly-Skilled Workforce?

- By expanding the Specialist High Skills Major Program
- By expanding Co-operative Education Programming
- By promoting careers in technology and skilled trades as a viable pathway to students in Grades 5 to 12
- By expanding participation in Skills Competitions

2021-2022 Update

- Due to facility constraints, skilled trades based courses are not available in all secondary schools. In order to better support student access to skilled trade-based SHSM programs, the TDSB has initiated the Facilitated Access to Skilled Trades (F.A.S.T.) application. Students in Grades 10, 11 & 12 who are interested in a skilled trade-based SHSM can apply through a central application, outside of Out-of-Area Admissions, to join programs in schools where space is available.
- Expansion of Specialist High Skills Major Program
 - The Ministry's Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program provides secondary students an opportunity to focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests. It also helps with their career development by exposing them to opportunities in the workforce. SHSM programs are offered in 17 sectors including ICT, Arts & Culture, Transportation, Sports, Construction, Health & Wellness, and Environment.
 - The Experiential Learning Department is working in conjunction with the French Department on supporting schools in developing and applying for the new Not-for-Profit-Education French SHSM for implementation in 2023-2024.
 - There is an on-going review of the distribution and location of SHSM programming across the District.
- Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities
 - The Expansion of Experiential Learning Grant, or Connected Community Experiential Learning (CCEL) Grant, is designed to increase the amount of experiential learning opportunities that students and teachers can engage with, by providing funding to enable student-based experiential learning projects and learning opportunities. Recent TDSB examples include the creation of outdoor learning spaces that

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incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, supporting robotics in the classroom, pollinator and food gardens, and revitalization of existing/creation of new learning spaces that incorporate skilled trades and technology career exploration for students.

- Expansion of Co-operative Education Programming
 - The SPEEL (Special Education Experiential Learning) program and Project SEARCH provide cooperative education opportunities for students with low-incidence exceptionalities to support increased access to employment upon graduation. The Experiential Learning Department, in collaboration with the Special Education and Inclusion Department, has partnered with community agencies (e.g. Discover Ability and Abilities Centre) to enhance Cooperative Education Programming which supports the transition to employment for students with special education needs.
 - The Experiential Learning Department is supporting schools in the development of work-site visits and work experiences that prepare all students for Cooperative Education placements and support career exploration prior to Grade 11.
- Promoting careers in technology and skilled trades as a viable pathway to students in Grades 5 to 12.
 - The Experiential Learning and OYAP Departments are working in collaboration with Science, STEM and Robotics Department to increase awareness and participation in career exploration of technology and the skilled trades through professional learning opportunities for educators, community outreach, the provision of learning resources for classrooms and facilitation of student participation in activities through skills competitions, work experience opportunities, partnerships with industry and post-secondary institution partners.
- Expansion of Participation in Skills Competitions
 - The skills competitions provide SHSM students with the opportunity to receive a certification and reach ahead for the SHSM components. Students in technological education courses are provided with authentic learning opportunities where they apply their learning from the classroom. The skills competitions help prepare students for future career opportunities.
 - As the TDSB re-engages in Skills Ontario competitions post-pandemic, staff will capitalize on the opportunities, student interest in SHSM programming and careers in the skilled trades to continue to increase participation in skills competitions (secondary) and challenges (elementary).

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Next Steps

- In November 2022, students can apply for Semester 2 registration through the F.A.S.T. application and in February 2023, students can apply for admission in September 2023.
- Supporting the development of a STEM action plan which includes a focus on the skills and learning required for a career in the skilled trades.

French Immersion and Extended French

How do we Support French Immersion and Extended French?

- French is one of Canada's two official languages and it is a language used widely around the world.
- Proficiency in French is a valuable skill and an element of student achievement.
- Teaching and learning French-as-a-Second Language strengthens English language skills, enhances reasoning, problem-solving and creative thinking skills and develops understanding and respect of other cultures.

Having over 91,000 students in Core French and another 29,000 students in French Immersion/Extended French programs comes with system successes and challenges. We are proud of the Board's successes in retention rate, inclusion of students with special education needs as well as accessibility and transportation. At the same time, challenges include multiple entry points, equity of access, and transportation.

2021-2022 Update

- An information seminar for Trustees was held on May 5, 2022, where the next steps in the process to increase Equity of Access to Early French Immersion Programs were shared.
- This work is captured within an Accountability Plan that outlines the actions taken to date as well as the path forward.

Next Steps

- Initiate three Local Feasibility Team processes to identify new sites in currently and historically underserved areas to open in September 2023.
- Identify opportunities to make efficient use of Early FI resources in areas that have larger enrolment where there is more flexibility in program offerings.

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- Initiate two Local Feasibility Team processes to identify new secondary pathways for French programs to increase equity of access.
- Conduct a Program Area Review during the 2022-23 school year to explore the creation of an Early French Immersion Centre in the Downtown. The Program Area Review will explore creating a French Immersion Centre at Dewson Jr. PS.
 - This review will consider adjacent Early French Immersion programs.
 - The regular track at Dewson Jr. PS could be consolidated with Montrose Jr. PS.
- Beginning in the Fall of 2022, staff will begin the process of shifting from a series of associated catchment areas to an address-based system. This change will require revisions to Operational Procedure PR 597 once complete.
- To provide staff with the tools necessary to increase equity of access to Early French Immersion programs, additional procedural changes may be necessary. The impact of the shift to an address-based system will be reviewed to determine if additional procedural changes may be necessary.
- After reviewing the impact(s) of these changes, consider other changes which allow for higher growth of programs in areas that are underserved relative to areas that are currently well served by the current distribution of programs.
- Moving forward, staff will continue to engage in Local Feasibility Team processes to identify areas of Toronto for potential new Early French Immersion programs.

Elementary and Secondary Alternative Schools

How do we Support Elementary and Secondary Alternative Schools?

Alternative schools are safe, highly engaged, smaller school environments. They use non-traditional hands-on approaches to learning the required Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum. Each school has a distinct identity and focus such as democratic education, holistic learning, physical art, mindful living, entrepreneurship, social justice, community outreach and more.

These schools are ideal for students seeking an alternative to mainstream education and who want to take an active role in their own learning. They are committed to innovative and

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experimental programs and require volunteer commitment from parents/guardians and other community members.

2021-2022 Update

- The four Year-Round Alternative Centres have been renamed to better reflect program delivery.
- A review of Secondary Alternative Schools is expected to begin in Fall 2022.
 - Will include an environmental scan of the Secondary Alternative Schools, including demographics and history, and
 - An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by students, staff and communities connected to Secondary Alternative Schools.

Next Steps

- Revisions to the Alternative Schools Policy (P062) are underway and will be presented to the Board in the Fall of 2022.
 - Admission procedures for elementary and secondary alternative schools will complement the revised policy
- Review of enrolment projections and space capacity for Elementary Alternative Schools is also underway.

Elementary Academies

2021-2022 Update

- The elementary academies were introduced in 2012 to increase the number of choices available for families.
- A total of nine programs were established: four 'standalone' schools; Boys Leadership Academy, Girls Leadership Academy, and two Vocal Music Academies
- Five involved a rebranding of existing neighbourhood schools to infuse a theme; health and wellness or sports and wellness

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- Standalone programs were accommodated at schools with available space, transportation was not provided.
- Enrolment at the four standalone academies has declined since 2014, only two years after they were introduced.
- Only one standalone academy remains in operation.

Next Steps

- Staff are recommending that a system-wide study of the Elementary Academies begin during the 2022-23 school year.

Indigenous Education

We recognize that the persistent achievement gap, identified across Ontario for Indigenous students, when compared to their non-Indigenous peers, is rooted in the destructive events and histories of ongoing colonization and colonial structure.

2021-2022 Update

The TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan will be reviewed. Among the factors that will be considered are Indigenous Education as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, 2015.

On June 29, 2022, the Board of Trustees passed the following motion regarding the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action.

Whereas, the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Council met on Tuesday, May 17, 2022;
and

Whereas, the Elders Council passed a motion that was unanimously supported by the representatives of the Indigenous communities of Toronto (UICAC); and

Whereas, it is the stated goal of the Toronto District School Board to ensure that Indigenous staff and students are not deprived of their rights and are provided with a learning and working environment that is free from racism and discrimination of any kind;

Therefore, be it resolved:

- (a) That the Toronto District School Board commit by resolution to the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, including the United

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Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the governing framework for reconciliation;

- (b) That the TDSB acknowledge that Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) are distinct with inherent rights, laws, and institutions;
- (c) That the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples be embedded in policies, bylaws and Board governance structures;
- (d) That Truth and Reconciliation be set in the Board's strategic directions.

Next Steps

- Continue to move forward with the identification of a capital funding sources for the construction of a new, standalone Kapapamahchkwew Wandering Spirit School with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre.
 - The new Indigenous school is being submitted to the Ministry of Education for special consideration due to the unique nature of the project. This project does not align with the categories that define eligibility for funding laid out in the Ministry's capital priorities process. The funding previously allocated for the project in 2018 reflects the standard approach to capital priorities funding allocations whereby a set of benchmarks are applied. This project needs to be reviewed and thoughtfully considered through a lens that respects and honours the voice and self-determination of the Indigenous communities.
 - A standalone facility exclusively used by Indigenous programs and services is required to provide a truly decolonized environment where Indigenous programs can exist without the interference of other user groups with colonial practices.
- Continue moving forward with the Boyne as a site of Indigenous Land -Based Pedagogy led by the Urban Indigenous Education Centre and guided by the Elders Council.
- Continue to engage community through the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee.
- Provide mandatory training to all formal leaders on The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Integrate professional learning about anti-Indigenous racism, trauma informed approaches and cultural safety into all leadership development opportunities learning from and working with Indigenous peoples and perspectives.

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- Initiate and lead Indigenous Education Administrator Collaborative Inquiry in order to support the enhancement of Indigenous Education in schools, as well as support to inform School Improvement Plans.
- Support school leaders with the creation of Indigenous Education foci in School Improvement Planning.
- Continue to build upon the Indigenous Aspiring Leadership Network for First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff.
- Develop and implement focused professional learning inquiries for Principals, Vice Principals and teachers on creating conditions for enhancing Indigenous student well-being and achievement within Grade 7-10 classrooms.
- Create and provide ongoing access for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to Indigenous Student Leadership Groups.
- Develop structures, in collaboration with the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee and the Council of Elders, for peer and community mentorship programs.
- Continue and enhance system-wide referral process through the Urban Indigenous Education Centre.
- Establish communication processes to ensure the presence of an Indigenous advocate (e.g., UIEC Student Success Team member) at all IPRC meetings that involve First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and families.
- Create supports for non-Indigenous Special Education staff to work with Indigenous holistic approaches.
- Continue to build and enhance professional learning for all staff in trauma informed practices and cultural safety from Indigenous perspectives.
- Provide professional learning for all central Special Education staff on anti-Indigenous racism.
- Work with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre and the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee to identify barriers and develop strategies for removing systemic processes that impede First Nations, Métis and Inuit well-being and learning.
- Provide professional learning for Caring and Safe Schools Centrally Assigned Principals and Advisors on Indigenous Education contexts, anti-Indigenous racism, and Indigenous approaches to restorative practices and student engagement.

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- Provide professional learning for school leaders on Indigenous Education contexts, anti-Indigenous racism, and Indigenous approaches to restorative practices and student engagement with a focus on decision making.
- With the support of families and community partners, support Principals and Vice Principals in developing whole-school Indigenous approaches to restorative practices.
- Work with community partners to create an Indigenous focused pre-Kindergarten program for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and families.
- Support the mobilization of Indigenous community members and Indigenous Early Years educators with expertise in Indigenous approaches to Early Years education in order to create and implement professional learning for all early years educators.
- Work with the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee to develop and share strategies to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit families with formal school-entry processes.
- Provide culturally-relevant resources and access to the Council of Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous language speakers.
- Create Early Years curriculum writing opportunities that centre Indigenous perspectives.
- Provide all Early Years practitioners (school-based teams – Designated Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten teachers, administrators) with professional learning on how to engage with and support Indigenous students and their families/caregivers with reference to an anti-Indigenous racism framework.

Special Education and Inclusion

How do we Support Special Education and Inclusion?

The Vision of the Toronto District School Board, as outlined in the TDSB's [Special Education Plan](#), is that students with special education needs be welcomed, included and supported within well-resourced neighborhood schools. Some students with unique strengths and needs may require more specialized or intensive programs and supports. It is our goal that these intensive programs and supports will be available in sites that are equitably located throughout the District.

The Vision includes a commitment on the part of the Toronto District School Board to make, where possible, facilities fully accessible to students, families, staff and communities. [Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities](#).

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A further commitment is made to continue to search out effective practices as evidenced in research and practice in partnership with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the departments of the Board to better serve students.

The Integrated Equity Framework for Special Education and Inclusion includes the following Equity Goals:

Students are successfully included, supported, and empowered when:

- All students experience a sense of belonging and social citizenship (e.g., membership, inclusion, shared power and value (Parekh, 2014)
- The learning environment is modified to fit the student, not the student to fit the environment (Parekh & Underwood, 2016)
- All identities and cultures are celebrated within the learning environment (Parekh & Underwood, 2016)
- The right to participation and establishing a positive climate where social engagement and friendships can be promoted is prioritized (Underwood, 2013)
- Deficit thinking is rejected and students are not organized within and outside the classroom by perceived ability (Parekh & Underwood, 2016)

Next Steps

- Continue our commitment to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students, especially students with special education needs. This includes our ongoing commitment to human rights, equity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and our commitment to combating anti-Indigeneity and anti-Black racism. This commitment is the foundation of the TDSB Equity Policy. It is the basis of everything we do and underpins all programming across all grade levels.
- Continue to implement inclusion practices:
 - We will work to optimize professional learning that promotes inclusive models of education and that deepens awareness of anti-Black racism, critical disabilities and culturally relevant teaching practices.
 - We will work to confront and challenge unconscious bias within our schools, and work closely with principals and superintendents to interrupt, interrogate and strategize to ensure that Black students are treated equitably. This strategy will be closely informed by data and shaped in close collaboration with

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all stakeholders.

- We will implement a variety of communication strategies to provide parents/students and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) with information about services and programs offered by Special Education and Inclusion and the Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECP).
 - We will implement a variety of communication strategies to provide parents/students and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) with information about services and programs offered by Special Education and Inclusion and the Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECP).
- Increase employment opportunities and outcomes for all students with Low Incidence Exceptionalities (Intellectual Disabilities, Physical Disability, Low Vision, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Health/Medical) by:
 - Reviewing data to better understand the post-secondary pathways of students with special education needs;
 - Supporting school leaders and liaise with community partners to explore creative ways of increasing the number of students served through the Special Education Experiential Learning Program and continue to seek out opportunities for additional partnerships with business and various levels of government;
 - Continuing to provide staffing and collaborate with partners in Project SEARCH to support our school to work transition initiative;
 - Working with support staff to better support students with Developmental Disabilities in experiential learning settings; and
 - Leveraging the Continuous Intake Co-op (CIC) Program and investigating additional co-op opportunities for students with Intellectual Disabilities.
 - Congregating Special Education Sites will be reviewed in Phase 2 of the Secondary Program Review (2025-26).
 - This review will explore further opportunities for inclusion into the network of secondary schools across Toronto
 - This review will consider K-21 models, where appropriate
- Intensive Support Programs will be reviewed (ongoing)
 - Will align with student enrolment changes in these programs
 - In following with the TDSB commitment to inclusion, our focus will remain ensuring appropriate levels of service based on individual student needs