



Toronto District School Board

Review of Professional Support Services

Final Report: Findings and Recommendations

January 2012

Deloitte.

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Project Background and Report Introduction

The objective of the Professional Support Services (PSS) review is to conduct a program evaluation focused specifically on the following objectives:

- Review the services being delivered by Professional Support Services to assess that they are relevant to the Board's diverse community, student achievement priority, leading practices, and the Director's Full Services Schools initiative
- Assess the application of the learning and leading practices from the Student Support Leadership Initiative, the Leadership Action Team, and other staff initiatives
- Identify the scope of resources needed to fully serve students and sustain effective collaborative partnerships

In addition this review, TDSB PSS Leadership are separately developing a full inventory of services, in response to a request by the Board of Trustees.

This report presents the findings and recommendations for the Professional Support Services Review:

- The findings, opportunities and recommendations presented in this document have been identified through stakeholder engagement, comparison to leading practices and data analysis.
- It is important to note that the strengths, challenges and opportunities highlighted throughout this report represent common themes that emerged during consultations.
- Supporting survey findings and related analysis have been provided through separate documentation to the Steering Committee.
- In the Appendix, additional PSS discipline-specific findings are presented
 - Where discipline-specific findings duplicate the overall findings of the review, they are not presented again in the Appendix

The following Evaluation Framework guided the review, and reporting of findings and recommendations for Professional Support Services

Professional Support Services
Provide consultation and direct services to referred students across the Toronto District School Board to optimize the educational outcome for all students

Evaluation Themes

Access & Equity

Coordination

Quality

Psychology

Social Work and Attendance

Speech Language Pathology

Occupational Therapy & Physiotherapy

Child & Youth Services

Evaluation Criteria

- Are services appropriate and timely for students?
- Is there variation by area in delivery, access or by student populations?
- Have service volumes and PSS program capacity changed, and what is the impact to students accessing services?
- Are there alternate service delivery models to provided improved access, while achieving outcomes?

- How are different services for the same student being coordinated? Is there duplication?
- Are services coordinated through students' life-stage transitions?
- How do services align with other TDSB initiatives?

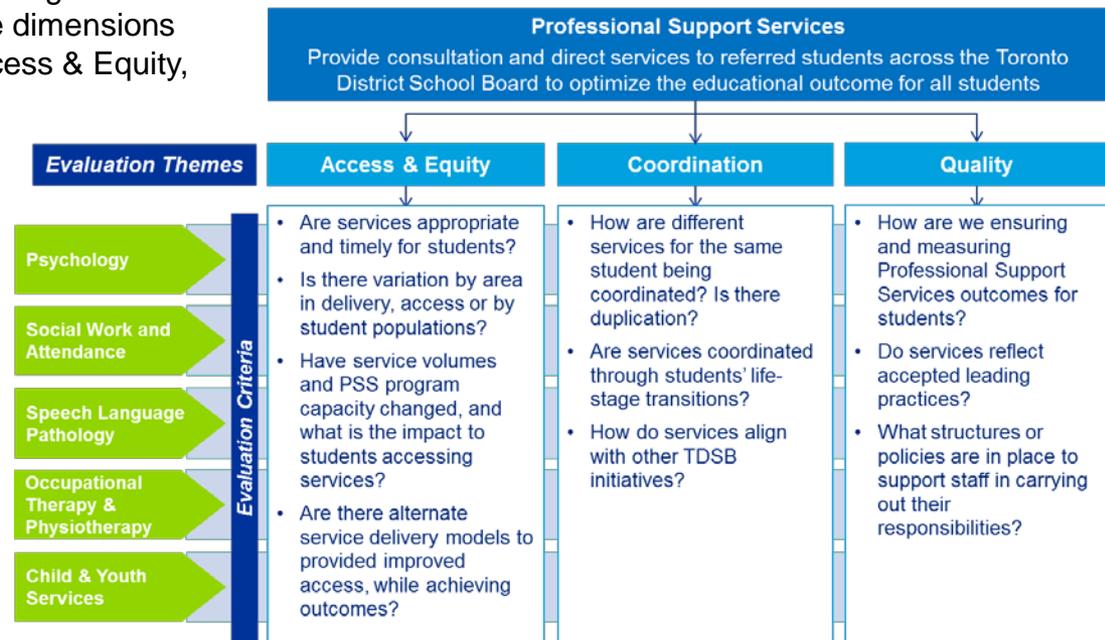
- How are we ensuring and measuring Professional Support Services outcomes for students?
- Do services reflect accepted leading practices?
- What structures or policies are in place to support staff in carrying out their responsibilities?

Executive Summary

Introduction

The following should be taken into consideration when reviewing the findings and recommendations of this report:

- Information was gathered based on the evaluation themes and their associated goals and objectives
- Findings are primarily based on the qualitative comments collected from the over 1,000 stakeholders involved in the interviews, focus groups and online survey, with comparison to known leading practices and data analysis insights
- Data and documentation provided by the school board, as well as that collected through stakeholder surveys, were also analyzed to understand activity trends and broader opinions regarding PSS services
 - It is recognized through discussions with TDSB PSS and Research Department leadership that data quality issues exist across the different sources of data, which impacts the utility of available service data for this review
- To provide insight into recommendations, a summary of key strengths and challenges are first presented for each of the three dimensions of the evaluation framework, of Access & Equity, Coordination and Quality:



Access and Equity: Strengths

Strengths

- The delivery of PSS offers the opportunity for students to access services to which they may not have been exposed in the community.
- Onsite PSS staff develop long-term working and peer relationships with students, staff and parents which enables them to have a richer view of the children's needs.
- A proportion of PSS groups have developed effective, standardized communication materials and processes to inform educators, administrators, and parents of the services offered in the school environment, and promote appropriate access to the PSS resources.
- The provision of PSS enables the TDSB to support their underserved populations and position students for success in academic achievement.
- PSS provide an established emergency crisis management suite of services and a well practiced process to support students in urgent need.
- Effective mechanisms are in place to review students requiring PSS and to prioritize the collective needs within the schools.
- While there is high demand for PSS, professional staff offer mitigating strategies to educators and parents to support students' needs while waiting for formal support services, where appropriate.

Access and Equity: Challenges

- Despite outreach efforts of staff to families and the broader community, a proportion of parents, educators, and administrators indicate that do not fully understand the breadth and depth of services offered through PSS.
- Most stakeholders agree that early identification of issues students face is key to effectively supporting their needs, however, there are variable perspectives with regards to how this should be executed.
- While a standardized formula that encompasses a number of relevant variables is employed each year to determine appropriate PSS resource allocation, most stakeholders are unaware of the inputs considered and perceive there is inequity among schools.
- It is reported that the multidisciplinary team within a school prioritizes students waiting for services, however waitlist management of the collective needs across the Board appears limited.
- A proportion of PSS staff and educators perceive the approach to conducting targeted psychology assessments for students with gifted support needs during dedicated timeframes results in inequity of service delivery.
- It is reported that the reductions in the number of Attendance Counsellors result in managing an increased case load, which proves challenging to addressing attendance issues effectively.
- PSS groups employ several tools to monitor service utilization, however, stakeholders report challenges in capturing metrics that are reflective of their work.

Coordination: Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- PSS staff implement the philosophy of a multidisciplinary approach to address a student's needs holistically.
- Both formal and informal communication mechanisms promote timely and effective coordination between staff.
- In some cases, providers optimize their efforts as well as the student's experience in collaborating on assessments and treatment plans.
- In a proportion of areas, close relationships are cultivated between PSS staff and external service providers. Support service staff maintain an awareness of changes in external service providers to best leverage community resources for students.
- Processes are in place to help students transition between community care and PSS, as well as between grades and schools.

Challenges

- It is perceived that the lack of clarity in roles and scope of services causes confusion among parents and educators, which can impact access to the appropriate services.
- Despite PSS staff reports of working beyond standard office hours and prioritizing urgent cases, some educators and administrators perceive there is minimal flexibility with PSS professionals adjusting their capacity based on the collective needs of their assigned area.
- Established relationships between external service providers and PSS professionals allow for sharing of resources available in the community, however PSS staff are not aware of consistently up-to-date information.
- Although processes are in place to provide smooth transitions for children between key life stages, challenges still exist and stakeholders agree that these processes can be further improved.
- Collaboration among PSS staff, educators, and external agencies in accessing and appropriately using assistive devices for students is insufficient.
- While some areas adhere to established communication mechanisms to proactively transition students from community programs back to schools, a proportion of educators report variation in executing smooth transitions.

Quality: Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- PSS has a dedicated, diverse team of professionals who are knowledgeable in the delivery of services.
- A proportion of PSS staff, educators and parents report quality service delivery for students and their families.
- Formal and informal knowledge sharing and professional education exists within different professional support groups.
- Services are provided to students in a variety of formats and approaches, which is tailored to their respective needs and aligns with leading practices.
- PSS groups and educators develop innovative programs at the grassroots level based on evidence-based practices, which optimize staff's expertise as well as meets the needs of targeted issues emerging in the system.
- Participation in collaborative research initiatives with other leaders in the system provides another means to maintain quality and leading practices within PSS services.

Challenges

- Stakeholders report the professional development opportunities offered to advance staff learning are not sufficient. This makes it challenging to ensure all educators and PSS staff are equipped to understand the support needs of students and the appropriateness of accessing specialized services.
- Varying perspectives exist as to the right model required to effect a culture of inclusion in the classroom when supporting the learning needs of all students and families.
- Stakeholders perceive there is a lack of a dynamic feedback mechanism to provide input on services provided by both PSS staff and educators.
- A perceived lack of input by front-line PSS staff into the development and implementation of programs at the school and Board levels is reported to adversely impact the quality and success of new initiatives.

Quality: Challenges (continued)

- Variability exists in understanding the accountability lines in role expectations within the school.
- While educators and parents perceive PSS employ a variety of service delivery approaches to meet the needs of students and their families, a proportion of stakeholders feel that students require more targeted services.
- PSS staff raised concerns regarding inconsistencies among the abilities of interpreters and the impact these have on the quality services provided.
- Concerns were noted around the availability of appropriate space, tools and support to provide adequate services.

Recommendations

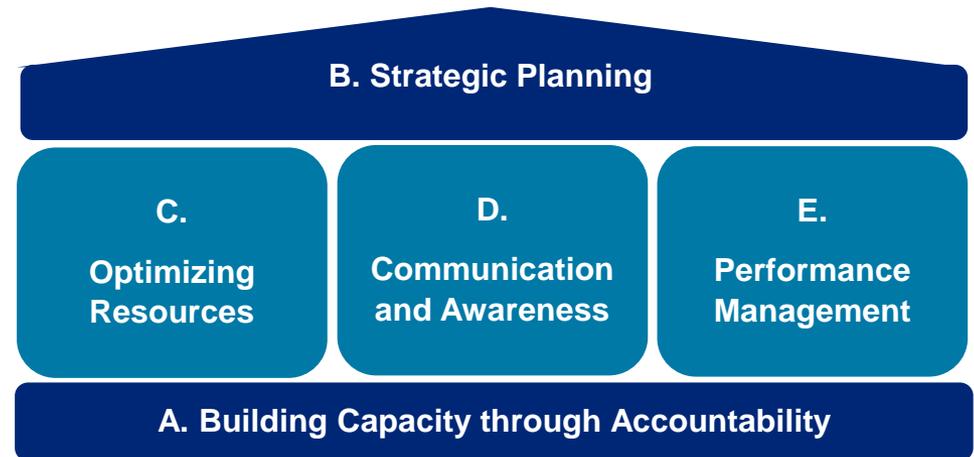
Recommendations related to Access and Equity, Coordination, and Quality fall into a number of key categories

- There are five themes that encompass the collective recommendations for consideration, which could be pursued by PSS or TDSB broadly to enhance service supports for students.
- Across these themes and recommendations, it is important to consider the broad set of stakeholders involved in meeting the needs of students to support their learning and educational achievements.

Key Stakeholders Around the Student



Five Recommendation Themes



Recommendations: Building Capacity through Accountability

A. Building Capacity through Accountability

1. Establish expectations, accountabilities, mechanisms, and communication protocols for PSS staff, administrators, and educators regarding PSS service delivery
 - a. Within PSS, provide clarification on optimizing PSS roles to meet the needs of students and families. Resources should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the five PSS services and provide an indication of the types of students who might be referred to each of the different services
2. Explore opportunities for systems, roles or processes to facilitate access to up-to-date information regarding community resources and expected roles, including:
 - a. Develop a shared inventory of services for access by TDSB staff and relevant community providers
 - b. Create intra-agency protocols to provide a streamlined and coordinated approach to meet the urgent needs of students, and improve communication for educators and PSS staff
 - c. Consider incorporating a case manager role or responsibility across SST stakeholders to liaise with community partners
3. Assume a leadership role within the province to enable knowledgeable educators to effectively manage the holistic needs of students in collaboration with PSS staff and parents. Examples of these mechanisms include:
 - a. Provide mentorship programs to recently graduated teachers working in the TDSB to better understand the approach to effectively addressing student's support needs
 - b. Collaborate with Ontario teacher colleges to potentially inform the curriculum to increase educator's special education capacity
 - c. Increase practical training opportunities for educators beyond information sessions, e.g., co-instruction, peer demonstration classes
 - d. Create forums or workshops for parents to enhance education on relevant developmental conditions or provide emotional support on managing their child's support needs

Recommendations: Strategic Planning

B. Strategic Planning

1. Use data to inform service planning and explore the strategic balance of both preventative and supportive programs
2. Explore initiatives or processes to improve consistency of service delivery at the Board level while allowing for flexibility across quadrants, areas, and families of schools (e.g., expectations regarding PSS and educator roles in working with students and families, approach to achieving TDSB-wide initiatives, professional development opportunities, knowledge exchange among PSS staff)
3. Enhance TDSB mechanisms for PSS input into relevant areas of broader TDSB policy, program and curriculum development
 - a. Enable educators and PSS staff to provide timely input on TDSB initiatives to inform the TDSB when prioritizing programming
 - b. Increase awareness around decision-making by providing information on programming decisions from a leadership level
4. Similar to the development of the new SST documents, incorporate literature and research review as new TDSB-wide policies and programming are developed (e.g., Preventative intervention strategies)

Recommendations: Communication and Awareness

C. Communication and Awareness

1. Enhance and develop accessible resources (e.g., reference guide, enhanced website) for parents, teachers, administration and PSS staff that delineate the roles and responsibilities for each of the PSS, outlines the full inventory of services provided, and identifies the types of students who might be referred to each service
 - a. Expand on and leverage existing print and online resources, and outreach approaches, that meet the needs of parents, educators, administrators and PSS staff about PSS services in a culturally sensitive manner to meet the TDSB's diverse populations
 - b. Enhance information regarding the full inventory of PSS services with parents, ensuring it is proactively offered when students start with the TDSB and that parents have ongoing and easy access
 - i. Continue to conduct outreach sessions in the community, including identification of and collaboration with parent champions to engage peers
2. Through existing mechanisms, engage parents during the school year to understand what they are interested in learning, which can inform local communication strategies and programming

Recommendations: Optimizing Resources

D. Optimizing Resources

1. Review the resource allocation formula and explore the feasibility of an alternate operational model to enable flexibility in staffing as needs arise (e.g., roaming roles, float pool)
 - a. Establish a TDSB resource model, including common definitions and expectations around resource allocation to support planning (e.g., define equity, role of educators and PSS staff in supporting students)
 - b. Further, leverage service utilization metrics to inform planning for the next school year
2. Increase transparency of methodology used to allocate PSS resources across the TDSB staff
3. Clarify the criteria for conducting formal Psychology assessments versus providing informal insights to support educators and other PSS staff in managing student needs at an early age
4. Clarify or develop TDSB's framework for School-based Mental Health services to better understand the structure and human resources required to meet the growing need for mental health services, which aligns with leading practices
 - a. E.g., the complementary roles of psychology and social work in meeting the needs of individuals with mental health and substance issues
5. Assess the current prioritization approach for completing psychology assessments for students with gifted support needs, to balance the competing priorities along the continuum of need
6. Evaluate student attendance management resourcing based on accurate data metrics to ensure capacity can effectively meet demands

Recommendations: Performance Management

E. Performance Management

1. Adopt valid, standardized and timely approaches to track data on services provided and wait lists in order to accurately inform resources required and plan for service utilization trends
2. Incorporate a standardized and timely approach and tools to capture the service volumes and other activities performed by each service to understand total workload, as opposed to only student caseload
 - a. Establish a workload measurement system to capture service utilization to inform resource planning
3. Develop a consistent model to enable evidence-informed practice, which considers information dissemination, peer support and mentoring, appropriate supervision models and resourcing
4. Explore the feasibility for a TDSB-wide mechanism to evaluate PSS staff and educators in meeting the needs of students, to understand where additional support is required
5. Implement a basic electronic feedback system for school board approved interpreters to inform staff about performance when choosing an interpreter to support service delivery (e.g., via online survey, or a shared electronic database)

Report Overview

Both qualitative and quantitative findings shaped the evaluation of PSS delivered in the TDSB

The following should be taken into consideration when reviewing the findings and opportunities of this report:

- Information was gathered based on the evaluation themes and their associated goals and objectives
- Findings are primarily based on qualitative comments collected from stakeholders involved in the interviews and focus groups, with comparison to known leading practices and data analysis insights
 - A compilation of literature and evidence-based practices on PSS services in the education environment was completed by TDSB to inform consultations, survey development, and recommendations
 - The document on leading practices is provided in a separate report.
- Data and documentation provided by the school board, as well as that collected through stakeholder surveys, were also analyzed to understand activity trends and broader opinions regarding PSS services
 - It is recognized through discussions with TDSB PSS and Research Department leadership that **data quality issues exist across the different sources of data**, which impacts the utility of available service data for this review

To provide context for the review, the following pages present a high-level summary of the following:

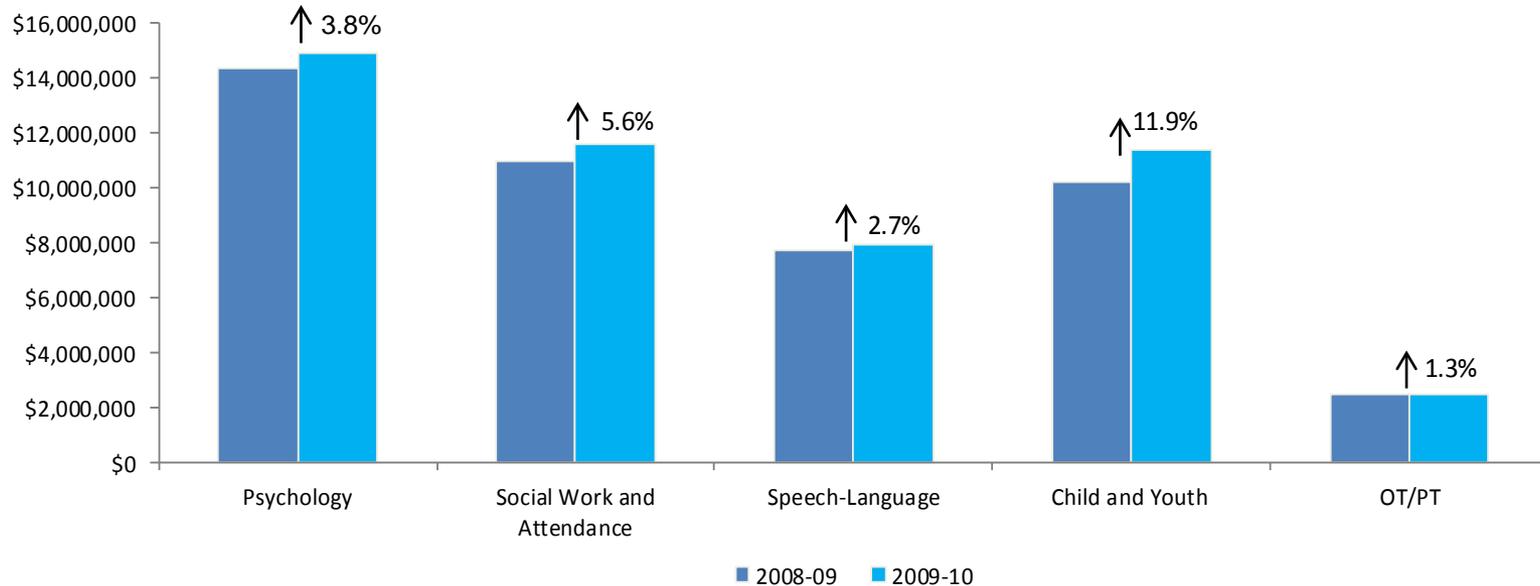
- Operating Cost Profile by Professional Support Service
- Volume of Professional Support Services Utilized by TDSB Students
- Stakeholder Engagement Profile and Survey Highlights for the Review

The report then presents findings and opportunities aligned to the evaluation framework for the review, organized in a structured reporting template.

- Opportunities presented by theme have purposeful duplication, to demonstrate alignment to the evaluation framework
- In some instances, opportunities have become final recommendations; in some instances opportunities have been consolidated into the set of final recommendations presented in the Executive Summary

Operating Cost Profile by Professional Support Service

Professional Support Services Costs by Service Category
FY2008-09 – 2009-10



- PSS costs are comprised of categories such as, salaries and wages, benefits, supplies and services, textbooks and instructional supplies, and other costs.
- Total PSS operating costs have increased 7.1% between FY2008-09 to 2009-10.
- The financial analysis illustrates an increase in service delivery costs across all PSS services, with the greatest increase attributed to the Child and Youth service.
- Management reports there was no increase in staff allocation and a reduction in discretionary spending, suggesting that cost increases reflect the 3% negotiated salary increase and the purchase of some of these services by other departments (Special Education, Urban Priority High Schools, Caring and Safe Schools).

Breakdown of PSS Operating Costs by Quadrant

- While costs centres are separated by quadrant(s) for Psychology, Speech-Language, and Social Work and Attendance services, Child and Youth, and Occupational-Physical Therapy services are consolidated into one category.

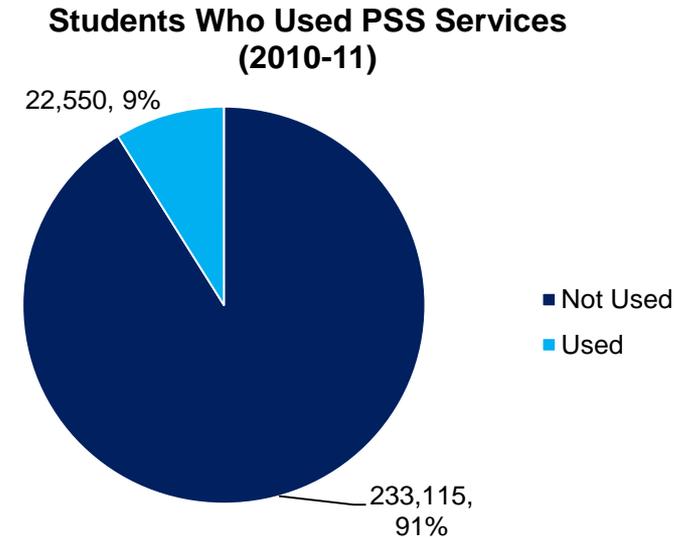
2009-10 School Year	Psychology	Social Work and Attendance
North East	\$4,030,317	\$3,001,777
North West	\$3,845,096	\$2,901,975
South East	\$3,438,211	\$2,662,656
South West	\$3,583,431	\$3,003,192

- Although operating costs vary across quadrants, they appear to align with the student population and volume of activity conducted in 2009-10.

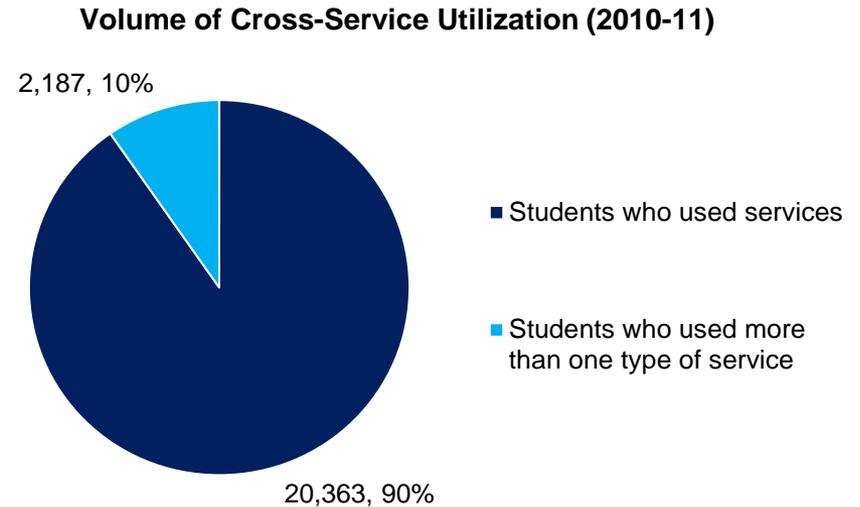
2009-10 School Year	Speech-Language
East	\$3,935,824
West	\$3,996,062

- Similarly to the other PSS services, costs to deliver speech and language support across the East and West were comparable in 2009-10.
- During that school year, the East completed 343 more cases than the West.
- Salaries and Supplies and Services expenses were higher in the West compared to the East.
- These differences may be accounted for by the types of services provided to students and the specialized programs that the SLPs may offer in each region.

Volume of Professional Support Service Utilized by TDSB Students



Source: TDSB SAP Database



Source: TDSB SAP Database

- The service utilization graphics reflect the use of PSS services across the TDSB.
- Based on the 2010-11 school year, it appears that just under 10% of students utilized services offered by the TDSB.
- It has been reported that a proportion of students have multiple support needs. In 2010-11, of the student population using PSS services, approximately 10% of this population accessed more than one PSS service.

Stakeholder Engagement Profile for the PSS Review

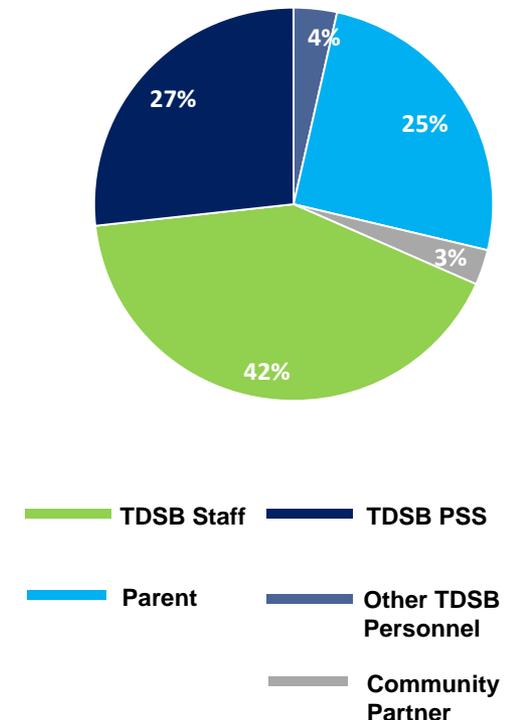
Stakeholder Engagement Highlights

- In addition to almost 1,000 survey participants, interviews / focus groups were conducted with representation from the following stakeholders:
 - School administrators
 - Educators
 - Psychology Staff
 - Social Workers and Attendance Counsellors
 - Speech Language Pathologists
 - Child Youth Counsellors/Workers
 - Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists
 - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) members
 - Trustees
 - Parents/Guardians
 - Community Agency Representatives:
 - Shoniker Clinic, Etobicoke Children’s Centre, Breaking the Cycle, Hinks Dellcrest, Central East Community Care Access Centre, Toronto Preschool Speech and Language Services, Surrey Place Centre, Microcomputer Science Centre Inc., Adventure Place, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and Toronto Children’s Aid Society

PSS Review Survey Respondent Breakdown

- Through an online survey, all PSS stakeholders were engaged to provide insight on the performance and opportunities to improve PSS access and equity, coordination and quality
- **A total of 998 stakeholders** responded to the survey, a breakdown of which is presented below:

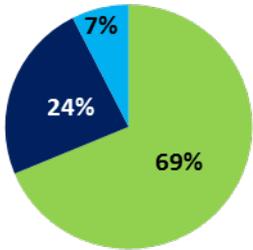
Respondent Groups	Respondent Type	Number of Respondents
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents and Guardians 	252
TDSB Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elementary School: Regular Classroom Teacher; School Special Education Teacher ▪ Secondary School: Regular Classroom Teacher; Special Education Teacher ▪ Principal ▪ Vice-Principal 	415
TDSB Professional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child and Youth Services ▪ Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services ▪ Psychological Services ▪ Social Work and Attendance ▪ Speech-Language Pathology ▪ PSS Chiefs 	267
Other TDSB Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TDSB Consultant/Coordinator ▪ Individual Support Assistant ▪ Office Administrator ▪ Secretary ▪ Elementary School Office Administrator ▪ TDSB Clerical 	35
Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social Services ▪ University placement service ▪ University of Faculty ▪ Director, Provincial Service Agency 	29



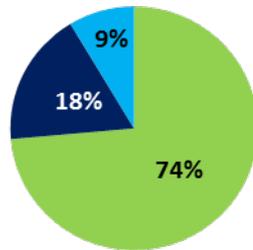
High-Level PSS Review Survey Results

Survey Findings – Overall Satisfaction with Targeted PSS Services

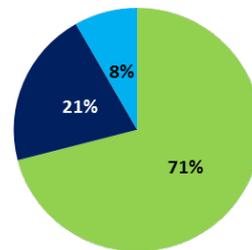
Psychology Services



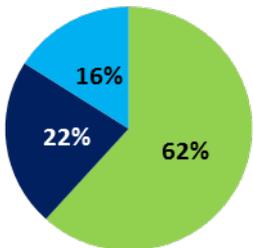
Speech and Language Services



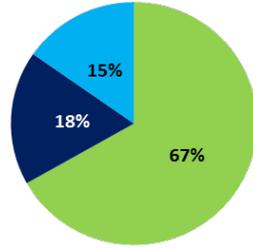
Social Work and Attendance Services



Occupational Therapy / Physiotherapy Services



Child and Youth Services

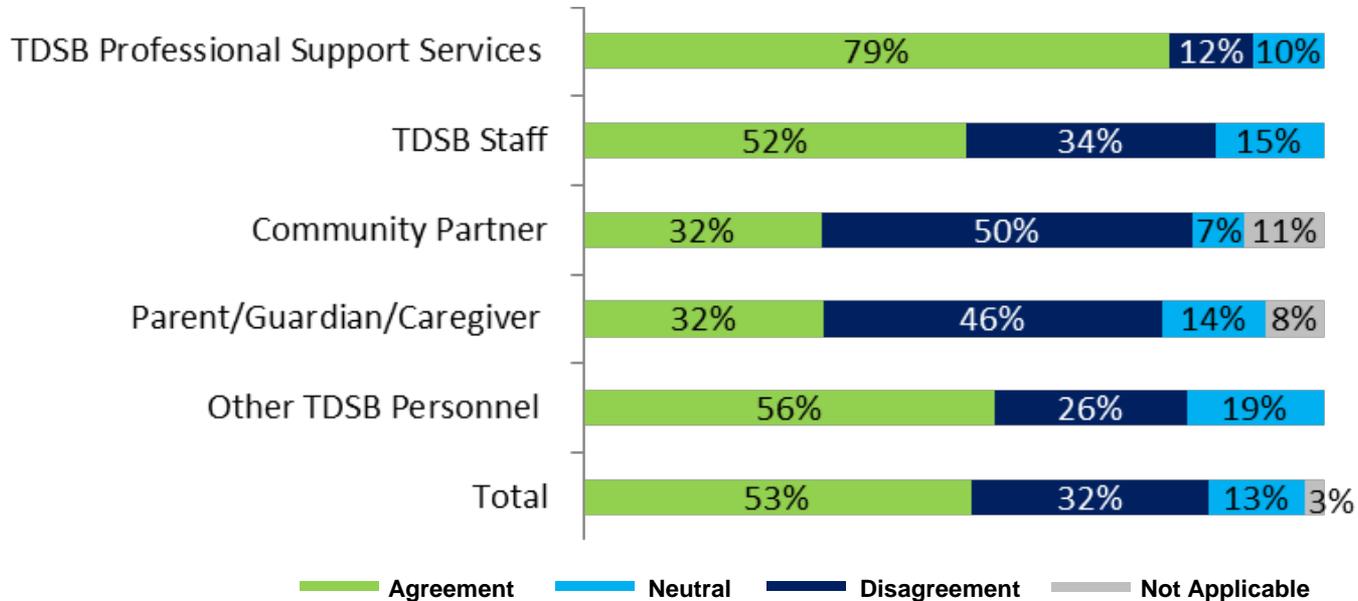


■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement

- Participants were asked to provide feedback to services with which they are familiar.
- The graphics to the left illustrate the participants' level of agreement with the following statement:
 - *“Overall, I am satisfied with Professional Support Services as they relate to...”*
- PSS staff, educators, and parents appear to be generally satisfied with the overall services provided across disciplines.
- Relative to other PSS, Speech and Language services resulted in the highest level of satisfaction.

High-Level PSS Review Survey Results (continued)

Survey Findings – Do PSS Services Meet Student Needs?



- The graphic above illustrates the participants' level of agreement with the following statement:
 - *“Professional Support Services are meeting the needs of students”*
- While PSS staff feel services currently delivered are appropriate to the breadth of needs across the TDSB, other stakeholders do not align with this perception.
- In particular, community partner organizations and parent/guardians report higher levels of disagreement, 50% and 46% of stakeholders respectively.

The following template illustrates the reporting format applied throughout the presentation of findings and opportunities

Survey Findings

- Key data from the survey to inform findings
- Qualitative comments from survey respondents



Strengths

- Positive findings that align with the evaluation theme

Challenges

- Perceived challenges associated with evaluation theme
- Areas where PSS does not fully meet goals or intent



Opportunities

- Potential opportunities identified that could be pursued by PSS or TDSB broadly

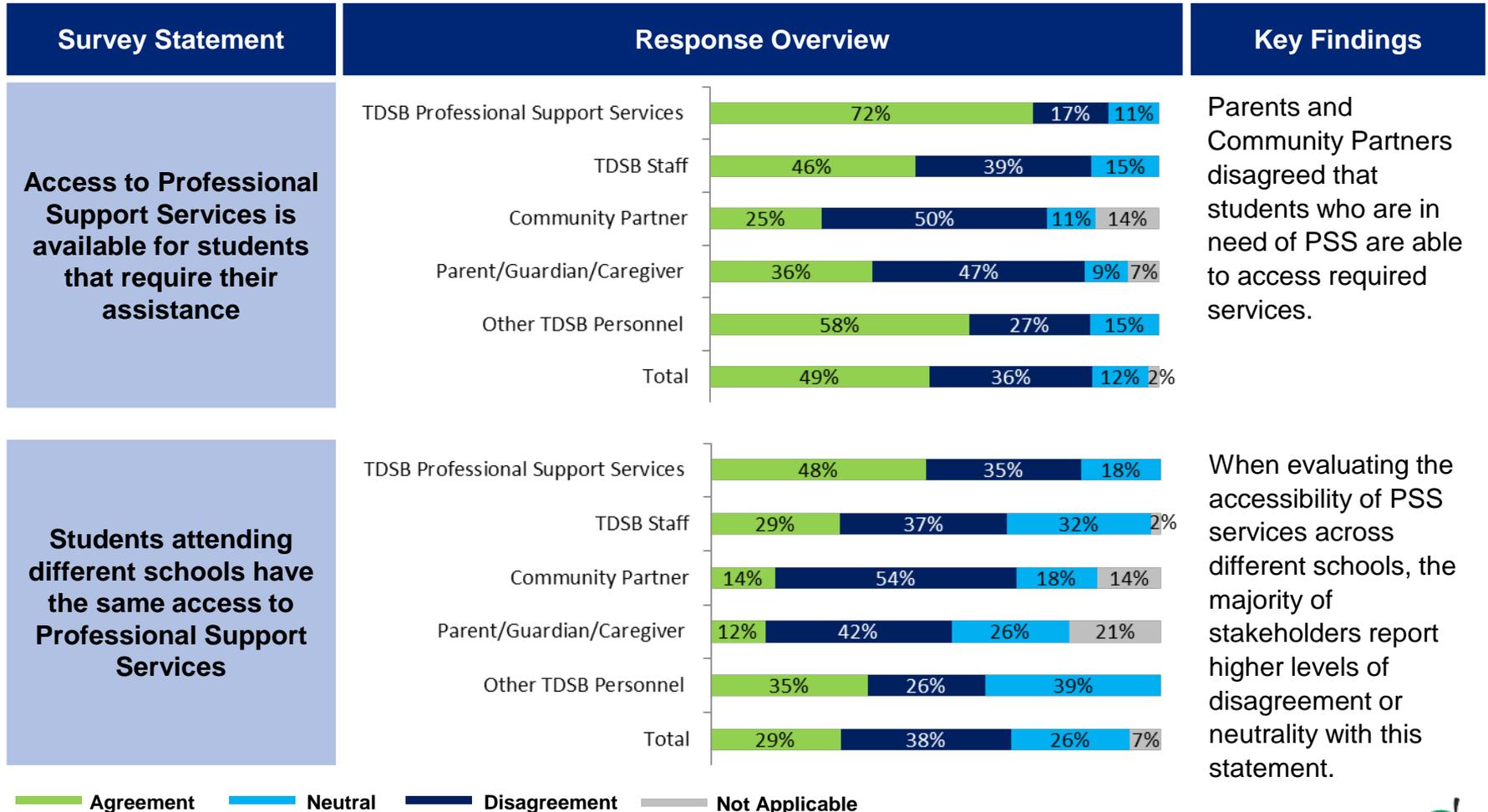
Professional Support Services Review Findings and Opportunities

Access and Equity

High-level Survey Results: Access and Equity

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on access to, and equity of, Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.

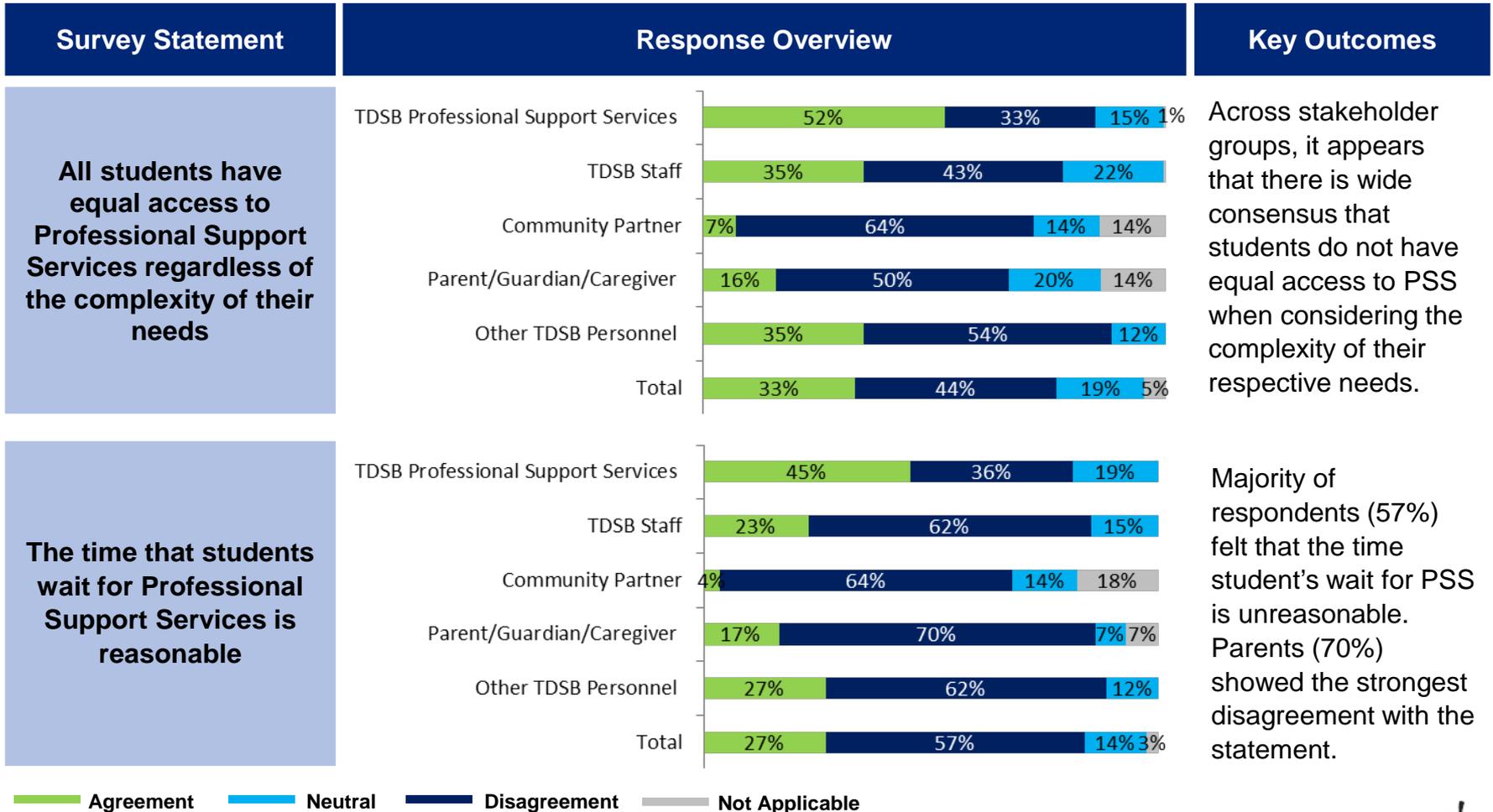


■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement
 ■ Not Applicable

High-level Survey Results: Access and Equity (continued)

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on access to, and equity of, Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.



■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement
 ■ Not Applicable

Access & Equity: Qualitative Comments from Survey Participants

- “It takes a long time for a referral- often up to a year depending on what is needed”... . – *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “Wait times are inappropriate... inequity to access services. Between school services not always offered in a timely fashion...”– *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “Not accessible enough. As children grow and change they may start to struggle and the teachers are not identifying that and putting them forward as needing help (At least in my daughters school) I hear about it being very accessible in other schools. It appears we (Parents in my daughters school) are solely responsible for helping them adjust or they get left behind.” - *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “My son has not got the services he wants and he has been suspended on numerous occasions for his disability. He has received a refusal to admit notice and this is all because the service providers are not adequate.” - *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “Wait time for assessment is ridiculous. We will lose our kids by the time they are seen, and then have to support them for a greater amount of time as a result. We need more help to get them assessed in a timely manner.” – *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “We consistently wait 2 years for student testing in response to psych referrals. I have found that student needs are considered last behind bureaucratic parameters.” - *TDSB Educator*
- “PSS are free, easy to access for families and school personal. We have access to school records to meet the needs of the students socially, emotionally, physically and academically. We do not have waitlists. Social Workers are available to assist in crisis situations, we can be available within minutes of a crisis occurring. In addition, many of us are available to parents, students and school personnel after hours. We are also available for crisis situations over the summer holidays.” - *TDSB Professional Services*

Access and Equity: Strengths

Strengths

- **The delivery of PSS offers the opportunity for students to access services to which they may not have been exposed in the community.**
 - It is reported that students and families do not encounter the wait times for certain services through PSS relative to community providers.
 - As services are delivered in the school setting, PSS staff are able to conduct comprehensive assessments in a typical education environment, which increases the ability to provide effective supports and aligns with leading practices of Full Service Schools.
- **Onsite PSS staff develop long-term working and peer relationships with students, staff and parents which enables them to have a richer view of the children's needs.**
 - Students are able to consistently access the same PSS and, in a proportion of areas, the same PSS staff for a number of years while in school.
 - Where PSS staff have worked in the same schools for a number of years, they have developed trust and a positive relationship with students, families, and educators, which is reported to be beneficial in supporting students through their development and key life stages.
- **A proportion of PSS groups have developed effective, standardized communication materials and processes to inform educators, administrators, and parents of the services offered in the school environment, and promote appropriate access to the PSS resources.**
 - A dedicated committee within the Speech and Language department develops standard communication material, which are distributed to school administrators and educators across all quadrants.
 - Other groups work to provide an overview of services, communicate their roles, and discuss expectations through in-person meetings or Professional Development presentations to administration and staff. In some schools, PSS representatives from each of the disciplines conduct collaborative information sharing sessions for educators to demonstrate the breadth and depth of services available.
 - Some PSS staff conduct outreach sessions with community groups, such as community-driven peer support groups, to increase awareness of PSS, which is reported to be effective in disseminating information.

Access and Equity: Strengths (continued)

Strengths

- **The provision of PSS enables the TDSB to support their underserved populations and position students for success in academic achievement.**
 - PSS staff offers relevant and accessible services to their diverse student population, despite potential cultural or language barriers.
 - Staff access external translation services to facilitate constructive dialogue among family and students, including participation in meetings between PSS staff and parents.
- **PSS provide an established emergency crisis management suite of services and a well practiced process to support students in urgent need.**
 - Response to crisis events are prioritized over other needs, regardless of workload, and professionals work to adapt schedules when crisis responses required. Social Work and Psychology staff are called upon to provide these emergency services.
- **Effective mechanisms are in place to review students requiring PSS and to prioritize the collective needs within the schools.**
 - School Support Teams (SST) provide an opportunity for collaboration between administration, PSS staff, parents and teachers.
 - The majority of schools ensure this enables staff to collaborate and discuss individual cases, as well as the overall waitlist. These meetings promote peer-to-peer learning among staff and provide a complete perspective on the supports students require.
 - SSTs provide access to parents to interact directly with all support services accessed by their children
- **While there is high demand for PSS, professional staff offer mitigating strategies to educators and parents to support students' needs while waiting for formal support services, where appropriate.**
 - Through information sharing forums, such as SSTs and informal discussions with educators, providers will suggest intermediary tools or strategies that could be employed to assist students in addressing their learning needs.

Access and Equity: Challenges

- **Despite outreach efforts of staff to families and the broader community, a proportion of parents, educators, and administrators indicate that do not fully understand the breadth and depth of services offered through PSS.**
 - Variation exists with respect to where families typically receive information and it is reported that the PSS website, while improved recently, is challenging for educators to navigate. In particular, parents accessing services for the first time or who speak English as a second language are challenged to navigate the system effectively.
 - While educators attend Professional Development sessions to increase awareness of PSS services, it is reported that a proportion of information is digested, yet the service becomes more relevant if the need arises with a particular student.
 - Further, some parents are not fully receptive to services, as they may lack a complete understanding of a particular service and perceive a stigma is associated with PSS services offered.
- **Most stakeholders agree that early identification of issues students face is key to effectively supporting their needs, however, there are variable perspectives with regards to how this should be executed.**
 - While there are targeted prevention programs delivered in schools, a proportion of PSS staff and educators perceive these are limited and there is an imbalance between preventative/proactive services and reactive services.
- **While a standardized formula that encompasses a number of relevant variables is employed each year to determine appropriate PSS resource allocation, most stakeholders are unaware of the inputs considered and perceive there is inequity among schools.**
 - It appears that the process used to allocate staff to schools not been fully communicated within the TDSB.
 - In some areas where resourcing is relatively high, it is reported that there are times when PSS staff are not optimized fully and there is capacity to do additional work. Educators and some PSS staff report this is particularly evident in Model Schools or Urban Priority High Schools.

Access and Equity: Challenges (continued)

- **It is reported that the multidisciplinary team within a school prioritizes students waiting for services, however waitlist management of the collective needs across the Board appears limited.**
 - While there is natural variation among student need and resourcing across the Board (e.g., socio-demographic factors, Learning Opportunity Index scores, and designated model schools), stakeholder interviews reveal that some schools have limited wait times, while other schools experience longer wait times for students requiring the same supports.
 - A proportion of parents, educators, and PSS staff perceive this variability results in students receiving timely access to services in one school, while a similar student population at another school would not be prioritized for service.
- **A proportion of PSS staff and educators perceive the approach to conducting targeted psychology assessments for students with gifted support needs during dedicated timeframes results in inequity of service delivery.**
 - The priority focus on one category of student support needs has resulted in sensitivity among some stakeholders, as the “blitz” approach conducted over two weeks impacts the other student populations, though they may also have priority needs.
 - Further, the assessments for gifted students are still conducted throughout the school year, which compounds the perception of inequitable service provision.
 - Some stakeholders feel that, if the TDSB endorses this approach to meet the specific needs of a given population, the approach should be replicated across all discrete populations to remain equitable.
 - Leadership notes this model of gifted assessments are required to support the Special Education department to determine appropriate resourcing required for the gifted education programs.
 - In addition, variability exists among educators in appropriately referring students who qualify for gifted assessments, which impacts the ability for Psychology staff to meet the total demand.

Access and Equity: Challenges (continued)

- **It is reported that the reductions in the number of Attendance Counsellors result in managing an increased case load, which proves challenging to addressing attendance issues effectively.**
 - The legislated change requiring Attendance Counsellors to monitor students up to the age of 18 was not accompanied with any increase in staff capacity.
 - While Attendance Counsellors are dedicated at the secondary schools, educators and PSS staff report attendance management is important at the elementary level as well, as early intervention could potentially reduce absentee issues in later years.
 - In elementary schools, Social Workers assume attendance responsibilities, which impacts the overall workload and prioritization expectations.
 - Further, stakeholders report significant time and effort in completing required paperwork to monitor and act upon addressing students with attendance issues, which impacts their time in direct services for students. In addition, while there is a formal committee reviewing current processes, it is challenging for Attendance Counsellors to access the right level of information in the Student Information System and Trillium databases.
 - In some cases, external agencies (e.g., CAS) will get involved with students with attendance issues to better understand root issues. However, Attendance Counsellors are challenged to provide appropriate supports, as they may not be involved due to privacy and confidentiality issues.

Access and Equity: Challenges (continued)

- **PSS groups employ several tools to monitor service utilization, however, stakeholders report challenges in capturing metrics that are reflective of their work.**
 - Current mechanisms for reporting (e.g., SAP database, Monthly statistics reported by PSS staff) do not appear to align with regards to indicators or outcome metrics, thus it is challenging to understand a 'single source of truth'
 - Further, stakeholders report that the SAP database includes incomplete charts (e.g. empty data fields), and delays in inputting data, which makes the database unable to provide comprehensive real-time data
 - In addition, PSS staff develop and facilitate group, school, and classroom programming, which are not captured through these reporting mechanisms.
 - It has been reported that some referrals are relatively simple and straight-forward, thus formal referrals are not completed, which impacts PSS service utilization measurement.
 - Further, it is challenging to document the type and complexity of cases PSS staff oversee, as well as the intensity of services required to address students' support needs.
 - These challenges make it difficult to project service demand and capacity across the TDSB, for future resource planning.

Access and Equity: Opportunities

	Opportunities
<p>Awareness and Eligibility</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop accessible resources (e.g., reference guide, enhanced website) for parents, teachers, administration and PSS staff that delineate the roles and responsibilities for each of the PSS and provides an indication of the types of students who might be referred to each one 2. Enhance information regarding PSS services with parents, ensuring it is proactively offered when students start with the TDSB and that parents have ongoing and easy access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to conduct outreach sessions in the community, including identification of and collaboration with parent champions to engage peers 3. Clarify the criteria for conducting formal Psychology assessments versus providing informal insights to support educators and other PSS staff in managing student needs at an early age
<p>Resource Management</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Review the resource allocation formula and explore the feasibility of an alternate operational model to enable flexibility in staffing as needs arise (e.g., roaming roles, float pool) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a TDSB resource model, including common definitions and expectations around resource allocation to support planning (e.g., define equity, role of educators and PSS staff in supporting students) • Further, leverage service utilization metrics to inform planning for the next school year 5. Increase transparency of methodology used to allocate PSS resources across the TDSB staff 6. Assess the current prioritization approach for completing psychology assessments for students with gifted support needs, to balance the competing priorities along the continuum of need 7. Evaluate student attendance management resourcing based on accurate data metrics to ensure capacity can effectively meet demands

Access and Equity: Opportunities

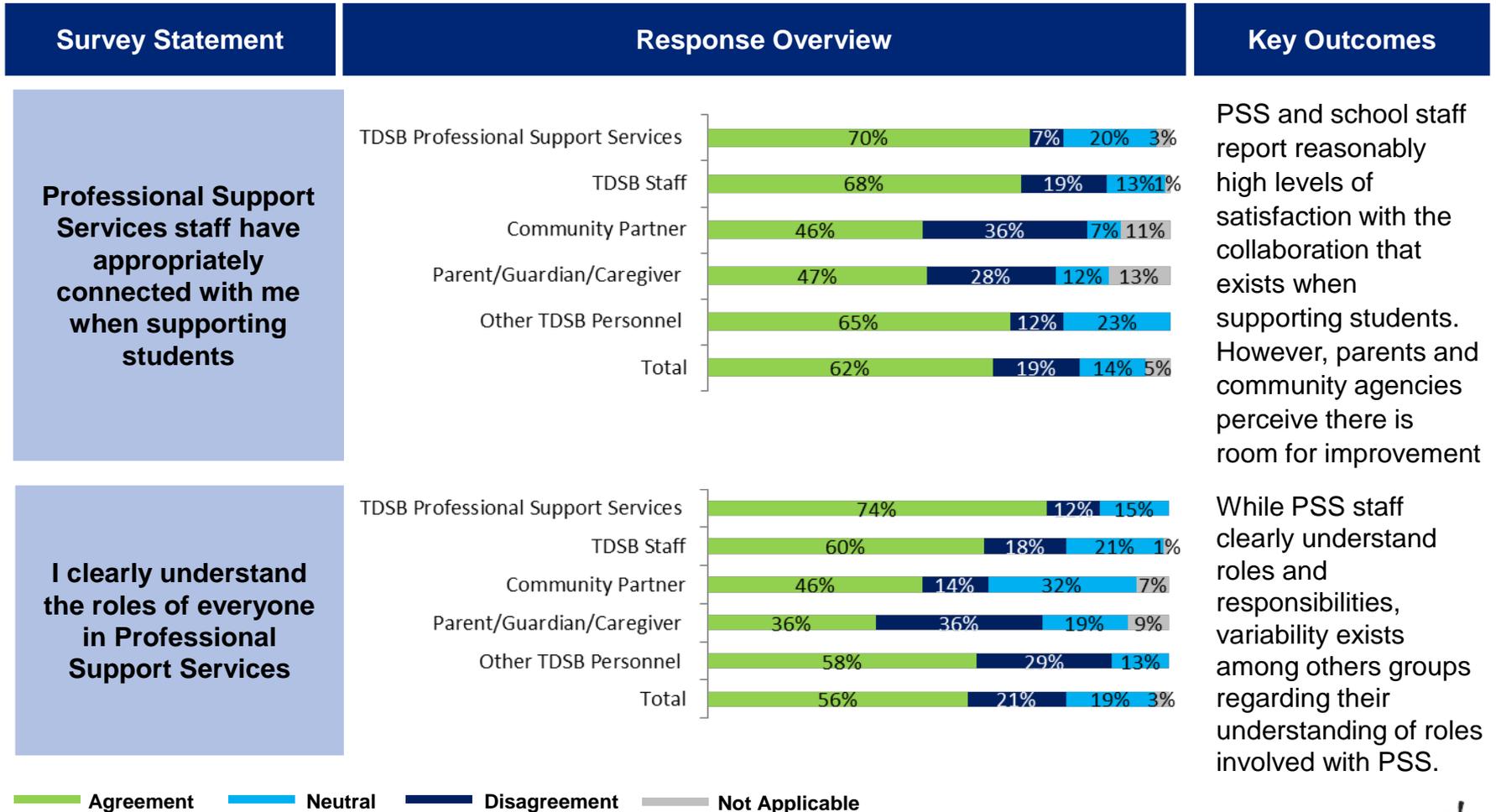
	Opportunities
Performance Metrics and Service Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Adopt valid, standardized and timely approaches to track data on services provided and wait lists in order to accurately inform resources required and plan for service utilization trends9. Incorporate a standardized and timely approach and tools to capture the service volumes and other activities performed by each service to understand total workload, as opposed to only student caseload9. Use data to inform service planning and explore the strategic balance of both preventative and supportive programs10. Establish a workload measurement system to capture service utilization to inform resource planning

Coordination

High-level Survey Results: Coordination

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on coordination of Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.



PSS and school staff report reasonably high levels of satisfaction with the collaboration that exists when supporting students. However, parents and community agencies perceive there is room for improvement

While PSS staff clearly understand roles and responsibilities, variability exists among others groups regarding their understanding of roles involved with PSS.

■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement
 ■ Not Applicable

High-level Survey Results: Coordination (continued)

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on coordination of Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.

Survey Statement	Response Overview	Key Outcomes																																			
<p>Sufficient discussion occurs among Professional Support Services staff, students/families, school staff to meet student needs</p>	<table border="1"> <caption>Response Overview for Statement 1</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Agreement</th> <th>Disagreement</th> <th>Neutral</th> <th>Not Applicable</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>TDSB Professional Support Services</td> <td>70%</td> <td>13%</td> <td>17%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TDSB Staff</td> <td>55%</td> <td>23%</td> <td>21%</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community Partner</td> <td>18%</td> <td>43%</td> <td>21%</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent/Guardian/Caregiver</td> <td>26%</td> <td>45%</td> <td>18%</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other TDSB Personnel</td> <td>56%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>50%</td> <td>27%</td> <td>19%</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Agreement	Disagreement	Neutral	Not Applicable	TDSB Professional Support Services	70%	13%	17%	0%	TDSB Staff	55%	23%	21%	1%	Community Partner	18%	43%	21%	18%	Parent/Guardian/Caregiver	26%	45%	18%	10%	Other TDSB Personnel	56%	24%	20%	0%	Total	50%	27%	19%	3%	<p>The majority of TDSB respondents agreed that sufficient discussion occurs among PSS staff and stakeholders, however Parents and Community Partners identify that challenges exist.</p>
Group	Agreement	Disagreement	Neutral	Not Applicable																																	
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<p>Professional Support Services are well coordinated with other services in the community</p>	<table border="1"> <caption>Response Overview for Statement 2</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Agreement</th> <th>Disagreement</th> <th>Neutral</th> <th>Not Applicable</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>TDSB Professional Support Services</td> <td>55%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TDSB Staff</td> <td>43%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>31%</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community Partner</td> <td>30%</td> <td>48%</td> <td>11%</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent/Guardian/Caregiver</td> <td>21%</td> <td>36%</td> <td>24%</td> <td>19%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other TDSB Personnel</td> <td>65%</td> <td>12%</td> <td>23%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>41%</td> <td>27%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Agreement	Disagreement	Neutral	Not Applicable	TDSB Professional Support Services	55%	20%	24%	1%	TDSB Staff	43%	24%	31%	1%	Community Partner	30%	48%	11%	11%	Parent/Guardian/Caregiver	21%	36%	24%	19%	Other TDSB Personnel	65%	12%	23%	0%	Total	41%	27%	26%	6%	<p>Overall, it appears that all respondents reported that PSS services are not well-coordinated with external community agency services.</p>
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■ Agreement
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 ■ Not Applicable

Coordination: Qualitative Comments from Survey Participants

- “Professional Support Services can be very confusing. Our Principals do not seem to know much. One Principal would not refer our child when she needed services. Children even have to wait too long for services...” – *Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- “I have routinely seen parental and administrative pressures affecting the testing of students in TDSB psychological services, especially in the testing of "giftedness" exceptionality. Due to these pressures, other students' testing needs are pushed back ...”– *TDSB Educator*
- “They are barely able to meet the needs of students. All they do is assess and report. The reason is they are assigned too many schools. Some areas are very needy with many complex needs among students. Teachers are not trained to follow through on their recommendations...” – *TDSB Educator*
- “There is little to no consistent, coordinated communication between, for example, a homeroom teacher of a student in need and social workers, administrators, educational psychologists, guidance counselors and families. The communication opportunities must be more transparent, and the homeroom teacher, especially, must be kept up-to-date about recent occurrences...” – *TDSB Educator*
- “This survey drew to my attention the need for a more formalized process to a)track students who are receiving PSS, b)ensure communication amongst the professionals involved takes place and c)when a student moves schools (during the school year or in a new school year) to ensure more formalized contact is recorded between the service providers...”- *TDSB Professional Services*
- “As a parent of a student with autism, I am extremely grateful to the professional support services who enable him to achieve to his highest potential. As a professional, I am committed to being a part of a team who can work alongside educators to promote attendance, positive school adjustment and attendance. It is a privilege to do this work.” – *TDSB Professional Services*
- “The major barrier to effective PSS service delivery is administrative resistance. This has been more specifically observed around student transfers, wherein requested transition planning is routinely ignored...”– *TDSB Professional Services*

Coordination: Strengths

Strengths

- **PSS staff implement the philosophy of a multidisciplinary approach to address a student's needs holistically.**
 - PSS staff are considered part of the overall school team, which better promotes collaboration among disciplines.
 - Regular collaboration through SSTs provide the opportunity for interaction between PSS staff and educators to encourage effective coordination and provision of services.
 - In addition to reviewing individual cases, SST meetings permit ongoing dialogue at a macro level regarding PSS issues happening at the school or school board level.
 - PSS staff, educators and administration provide a cross-section of perspectives upon which to draw. The professional perspectives at the table permit a full picture of the students and their needs.
 - Collectively, all staff can learn from one another and better understand how goals can translate into the classroom curriculum.
- **Both formal and informal communication mechanisms promote timely and effective coordination between staff.**
 - Informal networks exist between staff and within different groups. Examples include the committee structure in place within the Speech Language team.
 - Ongoing and open communication between support services staff and school administration help share information. Some PSS staff report making efforts to visit the school office to regularly update school administration on relevant students and proposed plans when they visit the schools.

Coordination: Strengths (continued)

Strengths

- **In some cases, providers optimize their efforts as well as the student's experience in collaborating on assessments and treatment plans.**
 - Psychology and Speech-Language professionals conduct assessments on a given student, where appropriate. Further, both parties collaborate to produce one joint report to guide educators and parents in supporting student needs.
- **Across all quadrants, it was reported by PSS staff across several disciplines that close relationships are cultivated between PSS staff and external service providers. Support service staff maintain an awareness of changes in external service providers to best leverage community resources for students.**
 - Social workers and other PSS staff report often directing students and families to the appropriate community resources to support their needs beyond the school environment.
- **Processes are in place to help students transition between community care and PSS, as well as between grades and schools.**
 - In some areas, standard processes are followed to facilitate student's transition from external care, such as via Reintegration Meetings to collaborate on students returning to the classroom from community day programs. These processes facilitate communication and sharing of information between external and internal professionals.
 - Similarly, processes exist to help transition students between elementary, middle and secondary schools. Procedures are in place to facilitate information sharing between professionals and teachers at different schools, these procedures also include parents.

Coordination: Challenges

- **It is perceived that the lack of clarity in roles and scope of services causes confusion among parents and educators, which can impact access to the appropriate services.**
 - It was reported that Speech-Language providers use standardized communication at the beginning of the school year, however, confusion exists regarding the breadth and depth of services provided.
 - Some parents report that they must take the lead in engaging PSS and school staff to understand the goals, strategies, progress their children make, as it is perceived that these functions will not occur seamlessly or in a timely manner without their advocacy.
 - A proportion of educators and parents perceive there is some confusion regarding the role distinction between Social Workers and Child Youth Workers (CYWs) (e.g., long-term vs. short-term counseling support).
 - Aside from formal assessments, a proportion of educators and parents do not fully understand the other services that can be provided by psychology staff. Further, due to the waitlists for formal assessments that exist in some areas, there are variable perceptions as to the role psychology staff should be playing in supporting student needs.
 - The prevalence of mental health needs among students has risen over the years, however, a lack of clarity exists with regards to the role psychology and social work play in serving student mental health needs in the TDSB.
 - While PSS professionals agree that early identification is key to effectively supporting students with their respective needs, and clear guidelines exist with regards to the appropriate use of formal psychological testing in defined age groups, focus group sessions revealed that these guidelines are not widely known among parents, educators and other PSS staff.
- **Despite PSS staff reports of working beyond standard office hours and prioritizing urgent cases, some educators and administrators perceive there is minimal flexibility with PSS professionals adjusting their capacity based on the collective needs of their assigned area.**

Coordination: Challenges (continued)

- **Established relationships between external service providers and PSS professionals allow for sharing of resources available in the community, however, PSS staff are not aware of consistently up-to-date information, particularly for Social Workers.**
 - Evolving community programs and changing eligibility criteria cause staff to spend efforts in navigating the system and looking for information to find the best fit for the needs of the student.
 - Further, a proportion of parents echo similar struggles accessing and navigating services inside and outside the school board.
 - Consultations with community providers reveal that they are challenged to providing this type of information through effective mechanisms.
- **Although processes are in place to provide smooth transitions for children between key life stages, challenges still exist and stakeholders agree that these processes can be further improved.**
 - Variability exists regarding PSS resource allocations to support feeder schools effectively, which impacts the quality of seamless transitions. It is reported by a proportion of educators that it is challenging to ensure effective communication takes place when students transition between schools, when PSS staff are not allocated to the same feeder schools.
- **Collaboration among PSS staff, educators, and external agencies in accessing and appropriately using assistive devices for students is insufficient.**
 - In some areas, Speech-Language and OT/PT staff report insufficient collaboration exists in completing SEA claims, which results in a device that may not best serve the student's needs, as the assessment is based on a snapshot of the child's needs.
 - While educators may receive information on the effective use of an assistive device to support a student's learning, there are limited follow-up or evaluation activities to ensure that the learning strategy is employed effectively.

Coordination: Challenges (continued)

- **While some areas adhere to established communication mechanisms to proactively transition students from community programs back to schools, a proportion of educators report variation in executing smooth transitions.**
 - At times, educators report students unexpectedly transition back to the classroom, without notification or information regarding a student's status and follow-up plan. In some cases, parents or students choose to discontinue programs, yet communication from external providers is limited.
 - Depending on a student's case, various roles take the lead on bringing relevant individuals together to develop an appropriate plan (e.g., Social Worker, Principal, educator, or community provider). However, the variability can potentially lead to lack of effective and proactive case management.
 - Privacy legislation can cause challenges as to the degree of information sharing that is relevant between external agencies and PSS.
 - Educators suggest that, in some cases, parents of students or students themselves choose to discontinue programs with no information given to PSS or educators. If students return to school without following the procedures that facilitate appropriate preparations or changes to PSS supports, this can cause a great deal of confusion in the system.
- Coordination and accountability with external partnerships – perceived lack of transparency regarding decisions to bring in community agencies.
 - A proportion of PSS staff and educators report that there is limited communication regarding the external partner's scope of practice in working with students and the impact to the PSS role.

Coordination: Opportunities

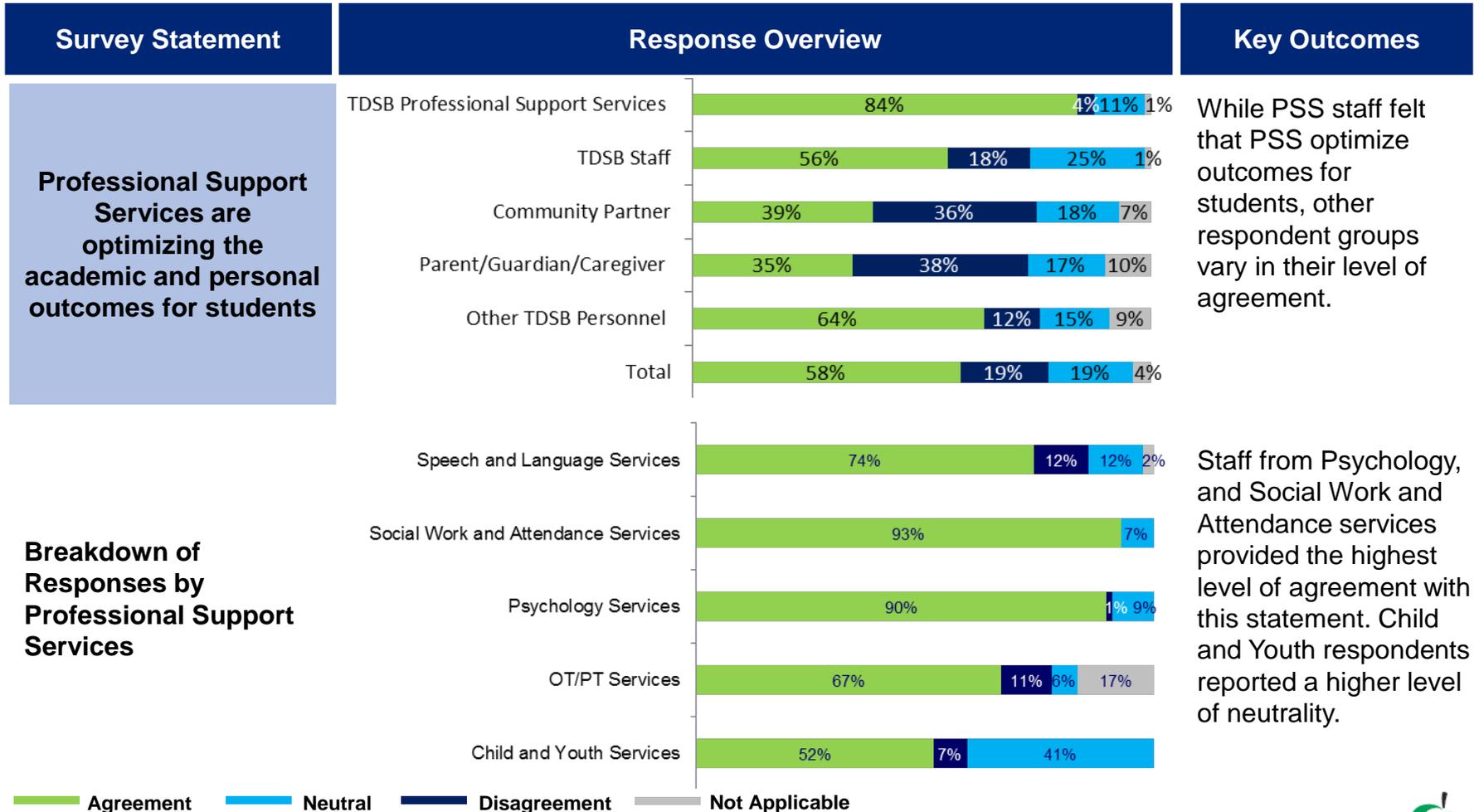
	Opportunities
<p>Roles, Responsibilities and Communication</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish expectations, accountabilities, mechanisms, and communication protocols for PSS staff, administrators, and educators regarding PSS service delivery 2. Within PSS, provide clarification on optimizing PSS roles to meet the needs of students and families 3. Clarify or develop TDSB’s framework for School-based Mental Health services to better understand the structure and human resources required to meet the growing need for mental health services, which aligns with leading practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g., the complementary roles of psychology and social work in meeting the needs of individuals with mental health and substance issues 4. Expand on and leverage existing print and online resources, and outreach approaches, that meet the needs of parents, educators, administrators and PSS staff about PSS services in a culturally sensitive manner to meet the TDSB’s diverse population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources should delineate the roles and responsibilities of the five PSS services and provide an indication of the types of students who might be referred to each of the different services 5. Through existing mechanisms, engage parents during the school year to understand what they are interested in learning, which can inform local communication strategies and programming
<p>Facilitating Collaborations and Transitions Internally and Externally</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Explore opportunities for systems, roles or processes to facilitate access to up-to-date information regarding community resources and expected roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g., Develop a shared inventory of services for access by TDSB staff and relevant community providers • E.g., Create intra-agency protocols to provide a streamlined and coordinated approach to meet the urgent needs of students, and improve communication for educators and PSS staff • E.g., Consider incorporating a case manager role or responsibility across SST stakeholders to liaise with community partners

Quality

High-level Survey Results: Quality

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on the quality of Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.

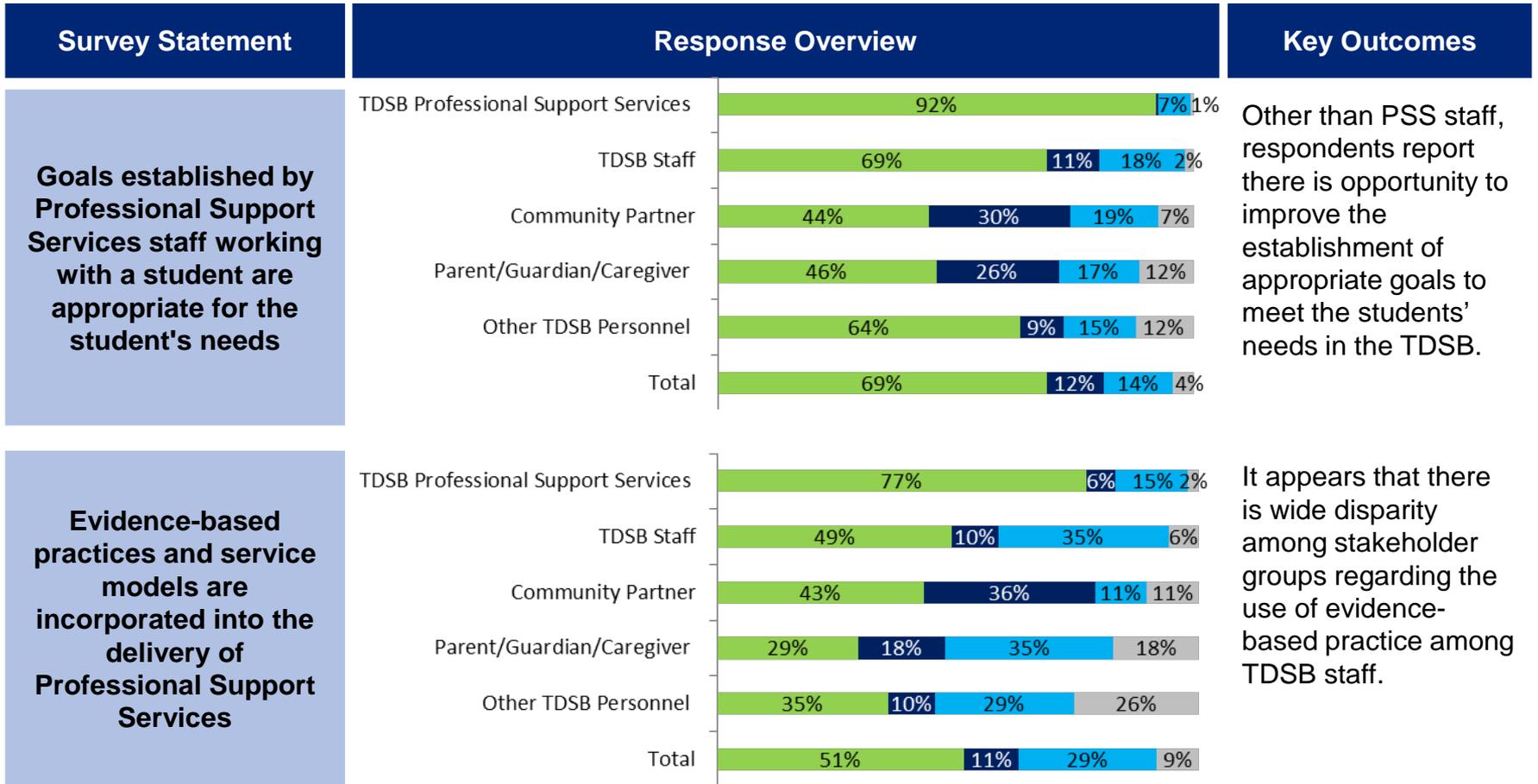


■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement
 ■ Not Applicable

High-level Survey Results: Quality

Respondents were asked:

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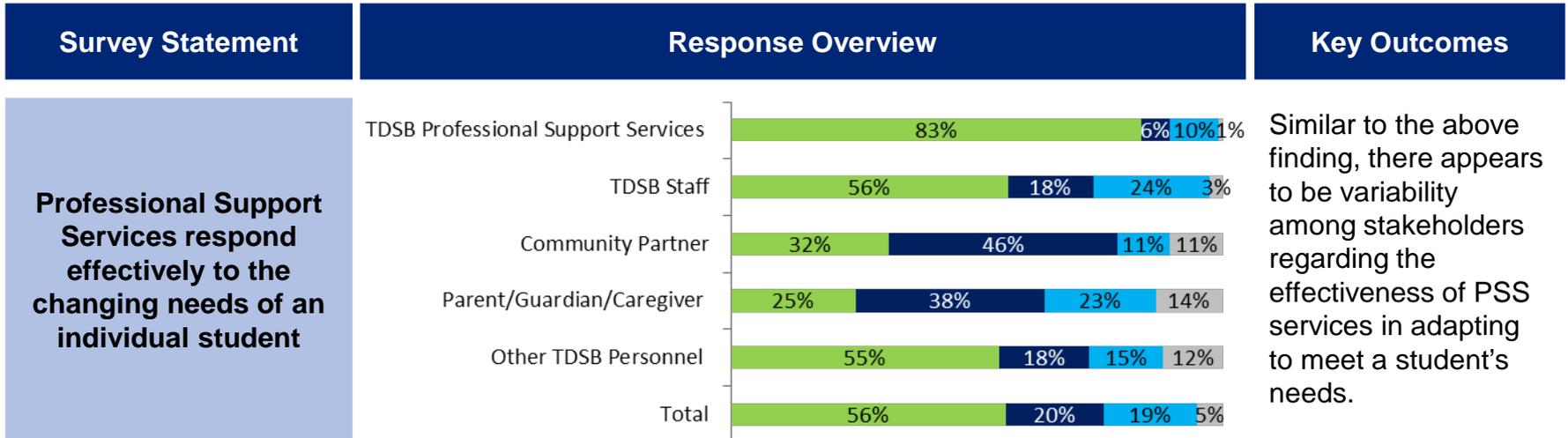


Agreement Neutral Disagreement Not Applicable

High-level Survey Results: Quality (continued)

Respondents were asked:

We are interested in learning your perspectives on the quality of Professional Support Services. To provide insights, please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Professional Support Services.



■ Agreement
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagreement
 ■ Not Applicable

Quality: Qualitative Comments from Survey Participants

- *“The work ethic, knowledge and skills of the people I work with are of the highest order. The problem is insufficient staff. We need MUCH MUCH more social worker support in our secondary school.” – TDSB Staff*
- *“Psychologist has been outstanding! Speech and Language Pathologist very thorough. Waiting list for psychological assessment is frustrating for parents.” – TDSB Staff*
- *“Most people in PSS are excellent but the system is stretched beyond its limit...” – Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- *“We used counseling services. The lack of availability and time spent with my children was abysmal. There was no scheduling or follow up. They would just show up and my children maybe had 10-15 minutes of time. More qualified professionals are needed.” - Parent/Guardian/Caregiver*
- *“I work daily with a CYW & a CYC. The support that they give our students in our Alternative Attendance Program is amazing & invaluable. The availability, quality, knowledge, & interest of the worker varies greatly. Having access to our own Social Worker that knows the particular needs of our students would help a lot...” – TDSB Educator*
- *“Quality and wait time for services differs greatly from school to school...” – TDSB Educator*
- *“There appears to be variability in the quality and timeliness of service across the quadrants and FOS. My personal experience with professionals on the School Support Team has been very positive...” – TDSB Professional Services*
- *“The Professional Services need to hire more appropriate language workers to serve the increasing diverse language needs of the student population and their families...” – TDSB Professional Services*
- *We need to have our role defined in terms of quality rather than quantity. When we are dealing with complex issues, we may spend a day or two dealing with a situation, and the student may be under our radar for years, if they are seriously disturbed, autistic, etc. Alternatively, we may have a brief intervention where only that intervention is required. Our statistics need to reflect other things we do -social skills programs, crisis work, etc. - TDSB Professional Services*

Quality: Strengths

Strengths

- **PSS has a dedicated, diverse team of professionals who are knowledgeable in the delivery of services.**
 - PSS staff come from a variety of backgrounds and use a diverse set of experiences to best serve the complex needs of students.
 - PSS groups provide significant expertise in their fields and support one another's skills as a broader PSS team. Further, a subset of individuals within each PSS possess subspecialty expertise, which, at times, is leveraged across the quadrants.
 - The development of specialized teams, such as the ASD Team, assists to further specialize PSS for targeted student populations. These programs expand the overall quality of service provided to students.
- **A proportion of PSS staff, educators and parents report quality service delivery for students and their families.**
 - Some stakeholders report that PSS staff go above and beyond to meet the needs of families (e.g., conducting assessments in summer, supporting families through significant transitions during summer months).
 - Overall, survey results reveal relatively high satisfaction levels with the delivery of PSS services
- **Formal and informal knowledge sharing and professional education exists within different professional support groups.**
 - PSS staff recognize the importance of ongoing professional development, not only to meet their professional college requirements, but also to ensure practitioners are kept up-to-date on current best practices in their field.
 - Beyond requisite professional development, information and best practices research is shared informally among providers. Examples include sharing of literature reviews among the Psychology group, and the Speech Language Professional Development Committee that develops and delivers advanced education specifically targeted towards SLPs.
 - A proportion of PSS staff supervise university students in their field practicums, which enables dynamic learning and exposure to other leading practices in the academic field.

Quality: Strengths

Strengths

- **Services are provided to students in a variety of formats and approaches, which is tailored to their respective needs and aligns with leading practices.**
 - PSS professionals tailor therapy or interventions based on student or population need, including one-to-one therapy, group interventions, consultative services, school-wide programming.
- **PSS groups and educators develop innovative programs at the grassroots level based on evidence-based practices, which optimize staff's expertise as well as meets the needs of targeted issues emerging in the system.**
 - Staff collaborate to trial pilot programs that benefit a large group of students who are experiencing common challenges
 - With refinement and evaluation of these pilots, staff develop effective programs that are often shared across quadrants, which builds capacity in the system.
- **Participation in collaborative research initiatives with other leaders in the system provides another means to maintain quality and leading practices within PSS services.**
 - Some groups partner with universities, hospitals, and other organizations on projects aimed at improving the delivery of children's services through alternate models.

Quality: Challenges

- **Stakeholders report the professional development opportunities offered to advance staff learning are not sufficient. This makes it challenging to ensure all educators and PSS staff are equipped to understand the support needs of students and the appropriateness of accessing specialized services.**
 - PSS staff report that educators who have recently entered the teaching profession may not necessarily be armed with the right knowledge and tools to effectively manage students with specialized needs.
 - While the Speech-Language professionals share leading practices and initiatives across all four quadrants consistently, it is reported that other PSS groups do not adopt similar practices, which is perceived to be due to the barriers of working in a large school Board.
 - PSS professionals collaborate and share information within their service organization structures (e.g. by defined quadrant) more consistently, instead of having more comprehensive knowledge exchange across the Board.
 - For some PSS groups, the nature of their independent work and their operational model can result in feelings of isolation and disconnect from the broader group.
- **Varying perspectives exist as to the right model required to effect a culture of inclusion in the classroom when supporting the learning needs of all students and families.**
 - In a proportion of areas, PSS staff feel educators need to shift their philosophy and practice to fully accept students with special education needs in the classroom, and their responsibility in learning how to address their needs.
 - In some areas, administrators and educators report that their respective priorities are to focus on delivering a quality education curriculum and PSS professionals are more appropriate individuals who can support students' emotional, social, and psychological needs.

Quality: Challenges (continued)

- **Stakeholders perceive there is a lack of a dynamic feedback mechanism to provide input on services provided by both PSS staff and educators.**
 - Some educators and parents reported variations in levels of service provided across PSS professionals; alternatively, PSS staff and parents perceive this challenge exists among educators as well.
 - While stakeholders recognize the challenges in delivering the same service levels across unique professionals, in some cases there are marked differences in service delivery and expectations among providers and educators.
 - Although formal mechanisms exist, stakeholders perceive there are limited opportunities to provide input to leadership to address performance issues for either educators or PSS staff, which is further complicated by the perceived barriers resulting from existing collective agreements.
 - Parents expressed a desire to provide feedback on the quality of service provided to their schools.
- **A perceived lack of input by front-line PSS staff into the development and implementation of programs at the school and Board levels is reported to adversely impact the quality and success of new initiatives.**
 - Some PSS staff feel the lack of input and clarity regarding reasoning for programming decisions impacts their ability to prioritize initiatives and provide quality programs.
 - E.g., the DIBELS program was considered a successful and positive program for students to support their literacy by SLPs and Psychology staff. It is perceived by staff that the TDSB did not incorporate or attain the feedback from front-line staff to inform internal or external funding decisions about the program's continuation.
 - As a result, a mistrust of TDSB initiatives exists in some areas due to the lack of fulsome explanations offered when staff make efforts to incorporate programs, yet programs are not sustained.
- **Variability exists in understanding the accountability lines in role expectations within the school.**
 - In some regions, administrators are well-informed of the daily activities to be achieved by a PSS staff, however, this is not consistently practiced in all quadrants.
 - Administrators are challenged to keep abreast of student progress and plans overall.

Quality: Challenges (continued)

- **While educators and parents perceive PSS employ a variety of service delivery approaches to meet the needs of students and their families, a proportion of stakeholders feel that students require more targeted services.**
 - While PSS offer a breadth of services, other stakeholders may not be aware of the full spectrum of support provided.
 - Regardless, despite the fact that effective programming and individual plans are developed to best meet a student's needs, there is inconsistency among educators and parents to implement these plans.
 - There is a recognition by most stakeholders that direct interventions are not reasonable expectations for all students, however, it is reported that students would benefit from increased follow-ups and evaluations post therapy to assess a student's progress.
- **PSS staff raised concerns regarding inconsistencies among the abilities of interpreters and the impact these have on the quality services provided.**
 - The inability of PSS staff to provide feedback on translation services increases the risk to access translators who may not offer appropriate services, which impacts the ability to conduct comprehensive assessments of therapies.
- **Concerns were noted around the availability of appropriate space, tools and support to provide adequate services.**
 - In some areas, PSS staff report they are expected to work with children and deliver therapy in school hallways, closets, storage rooms or in other public areas that are not conducive to the provision of appropriate services.
 - Further, it was noted that these spaces might not be equipped with essential office supports (e.g. phone, internet connectivity, ability to print or photocopy, etc.), which impacts the ability to optimize their time at a given school.
 - PSS staff report spending significant time on administrative activities, which impacts availability to focus on direct student/family-related activity.

Quality: Opportunities

	Opportunities
<p>Professional Development</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assume a leadership role within the province to enable knowledgeable educators to effectively manage the holistic needs of students in collaboration with PSS staff and parents. Examples of these mechanisms include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide mentorship programs to recently graduated teachers working in the TDSB to better understand the approach to effectively addressing student's support needs • Collaborate with Ontario teacher colleges to potentially inform the curriculum to increase educator's special education capacity • Increase practical training opportunities for educators beyond information sessions, e.g., co-instruction, peer demonstration classes • Create forums or workshops for parents to enhance education on relevant developmental conditions or provide emotional support on managing their child's support needs
<p>Feedback Mechanisms</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Enable educators and PSS staff to provide timely input on TDSB initiatives to inform the TDSB when prioritizing programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness around decision-making by providing information on programming decisions from a leadership level 3. Explore the feasibility for a TDSB-wide mechanism to evaluate PSS staff and educators in meeting the needs of students, to understand where additional support is required 4. Implement a basic electronic feedback system for school board approved interpreters to inform staff about performance when choosing an interpreter to support service delivery (e.g., via online survey, or a shared electronic database)

Quality: Opportunities

	Opportunities
Evidence-based Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Similar to the development of the new SST documents, review literature and research to develop TDSB-wide policies and programming (e.g., Preventative intervention strategies)6. Enhance TDSB mechanisms for PSS input into relevant areas of broader TDSB policy, program and curriculum development7. Explore initiatives or processes to improve consistency of service delivery at the Board level while allowing for flexibility across quadrants, areas, and families of schools (e.g., expectations regarding PSS and educator roles in working with students and families, approach to achieving TDSB-wide initiatives, professional development opportunities, knowledge exchange among PSS staff)8. Develop a consistent model to enable evidence-informed practice, which considers information dissemination, peer support and mentoring, appropriate supervision models and resourcing

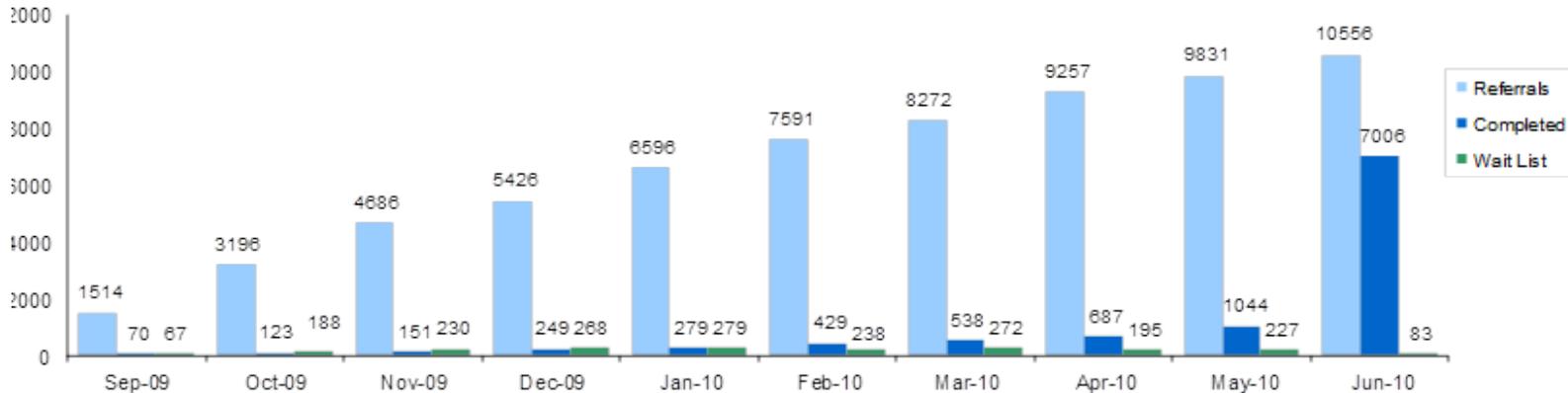
**Appendix:
Summary Findings by Professional Support
Services**

Social Work and Attendance Services

Social Work and Attendance Service Utilization

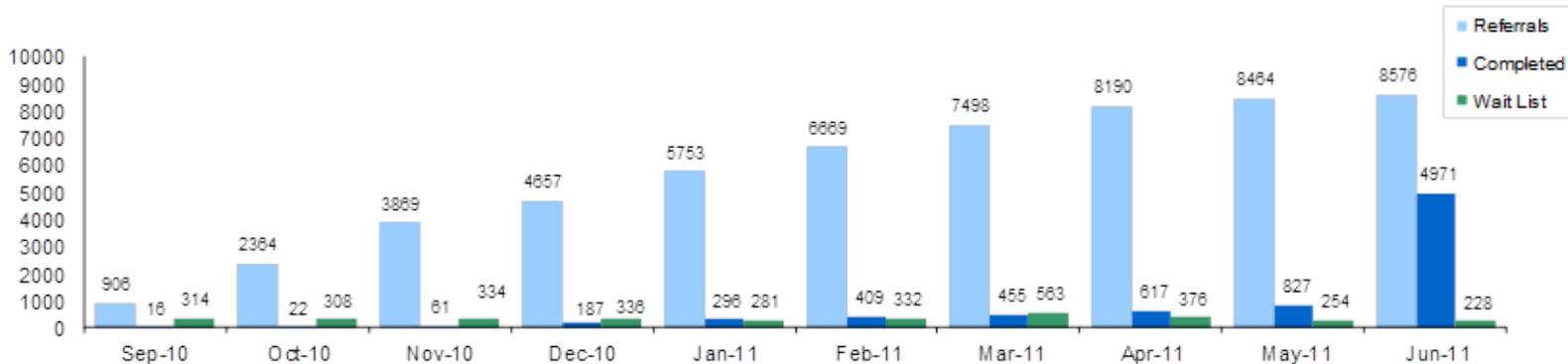
- Between 2009-10 and 2010-11, there was a decrease in the number of referrals and completed cases, 23% and 40% respectively. The number of cases waiting more than doubled in the same timeframe.
- Management reports active cases equal the difference between referrals, and completed and wait list cases
 - E.g., June 2011 active cases = 3,377 cases

Social Work and Attendance



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2009-10)

Social Work and Attendance



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2010-11)

Discipline-Specific Findings: Social Work and Attendance

Strengths:

- School staff and parents report social workers “go above and beyond” in providing services to students and their families (e.g., organize clothes drives for families in need, meet with families in home or work sites after hours, support families over summer or Christmas break, if necessary)
- Provide support to school staff as well: due to stigma that can be associated with accessing social supports, SWs are perceived to be more approachable than other disciplines for assistance
- Deliver formal training to educators and administrators on relevant topics, e.g., TDSB Child Abuse policy, sexual abuse, suicide
- Have a strong link with community agencies – some staff conduct joint presentations with community organizations for families to increase awareness of social work services
- Evidence of leading practices and innovation across all quadrants, for example:
 - SW - recently implemented dedicated role to collate research and evidence-based practice, and goal is to roll out info to rest of quadrant
 - SE – developed booklet for parents regarding who to call and how to access social work services
 - NW – developed quick reference sheet, will spend half-day sessions with principals to educate
 - NE – Evidence Based Practice Group and Narrative Therapy Group – peer specialized PD and inventory of peer research
- Develop interdisciplinary plan for appropriate cases - efforts to connect with colleagues (guidance counsellors, CYWs) over the phone if at another site – still maintain accountability of being involved with case vs. just handing it off

Challenges:

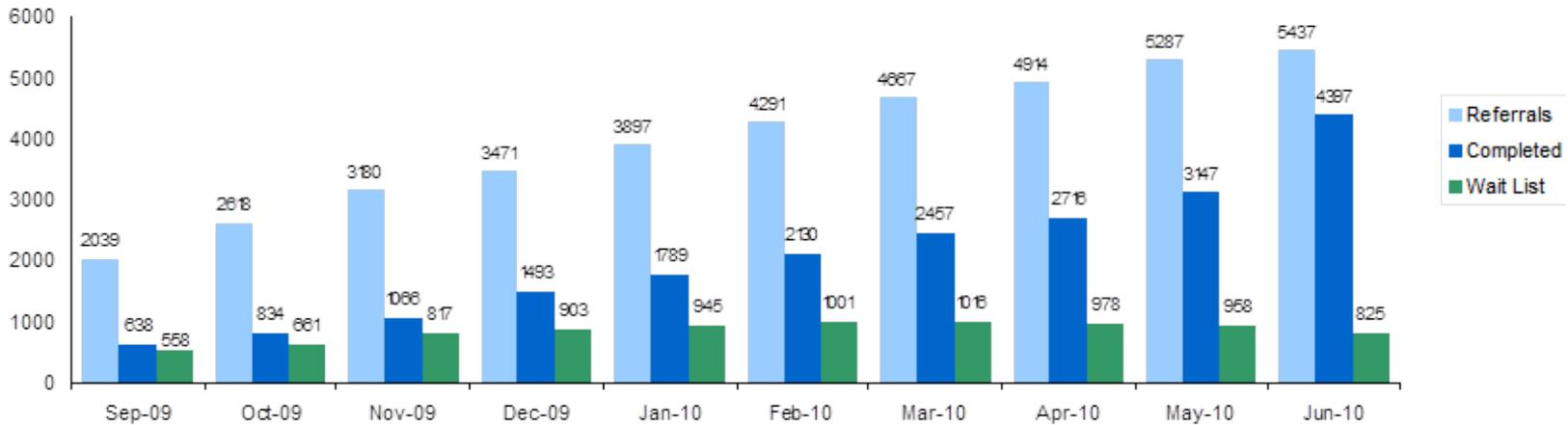
- A natural imbalance to the nature of work required, where crisis response takes precedent and more time than on-going support
- All stakeholders report that SWs appear to be stretched across their caseloads to meet demands, however as there are limited opportunities to formally evaluate services, it is challenging to understand if resource workloads are appropriate.
- Variability exists among Administrators regarding the role and scope of social work responsibility in some schools

Speech and Language Services

Speech and Language Service Utilization

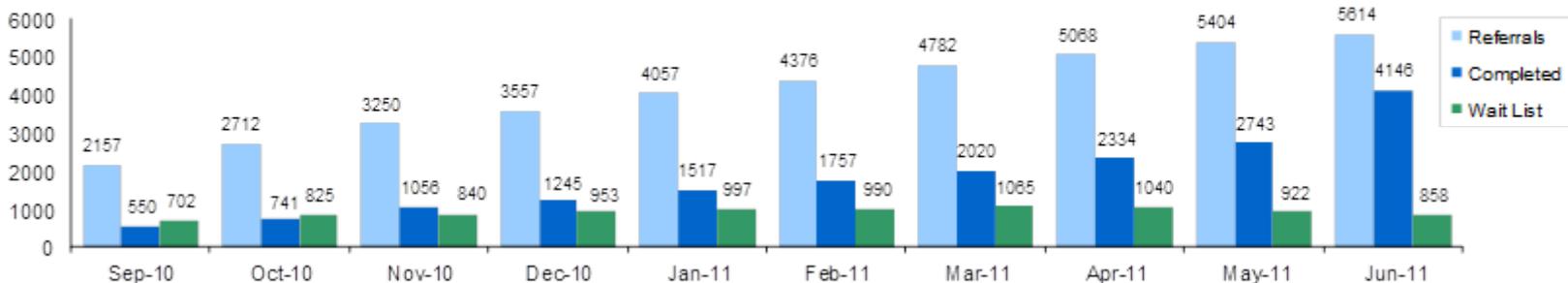
- Between 2009-10 and 2010-11, while there was a 3% increase in the number of referrals, there was a 6% decrease in the number of cases completed. The number of waitlisted cases remained consistent in both years.
- Management reports active cases equal the difference between referrals, and completed and wait list cases
 - E.g., June 2011 active cases = 610 cases

Speech/Language



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2009-10)

2010-11 Monthly Statistics - Speech and Language Services



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2010-11)

Discipline-Specific Findings: Speech and Language Services

Strengths:

- Through programs, such as the KELI program, there is strong collaboration between educators and Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) staff to deliver targeted programs
 - A proportion of educators did not realize the link between Speech-Language and literacy prior to working so closely with SLP staff.
- Innovative practices are seen across the TDSB, e.g., in one area, when visits completed are completed, staff bring in student volunteers to practice with a TDSB student, which provides another mechanism for students to optimize their learning needs.
- The commitment to professional development among staff is evident, as there are dedicated committees involved across the East and West to promote evidence-based practices, including committees for Professional Development, Professional Practice, and Public Relations.
- Actively participate in partnerships with community to support innovative communication for children with speech or language needs (e.g., partnership with Infinity Communication Access Lab with Holland Bloorview to provide communication technology support to children with complex needs)

Challenges:

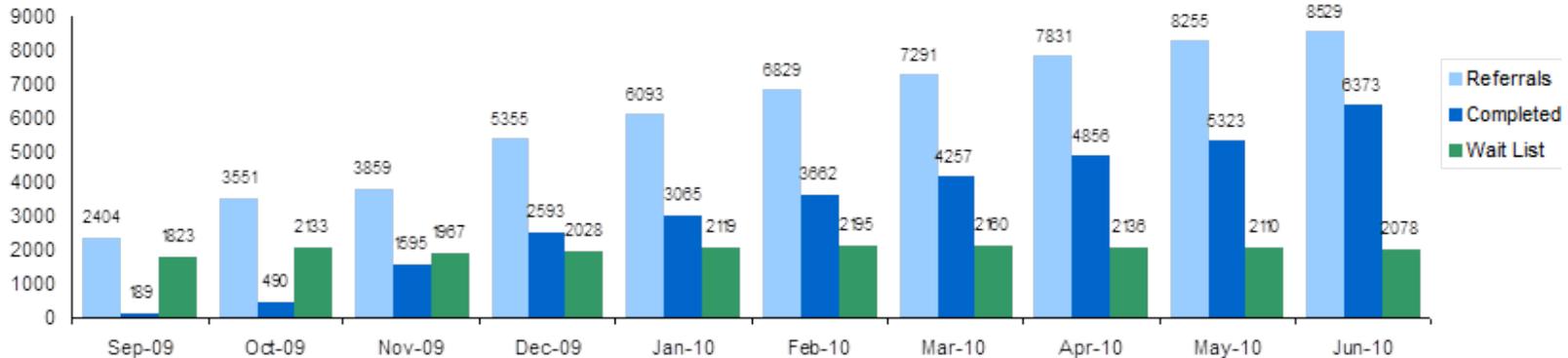
- It is difficult to access high quality interpreters for students and families where English is not their first language, which is particularly critical for SLP service.
- In Developmental Disability (DD) classes, the waitlist is kept low, and educators are required to identify students representative of the class to provide programming, which may impact DD class students with unique support needs.
- Stakeholders report different practices with regards to the referral process for Speech-Language services, which requires further exploration to understand how policies are implemented by area and family of schools.
 - A proportion of SLP staff reported referrals are cut off at the end of March and students must be re-referred to the service. Because the students transition to a new class in the new year, there is an increased risk of students falling through the cracks, if the student, family, educators and administrators are not appropriately communicated to the next year.
 - A proportion SLP staff reported that, if students are on the waitlist longer than one year, they must be re-referred to the service again.

Psychology Services

Psychology Service Utilization

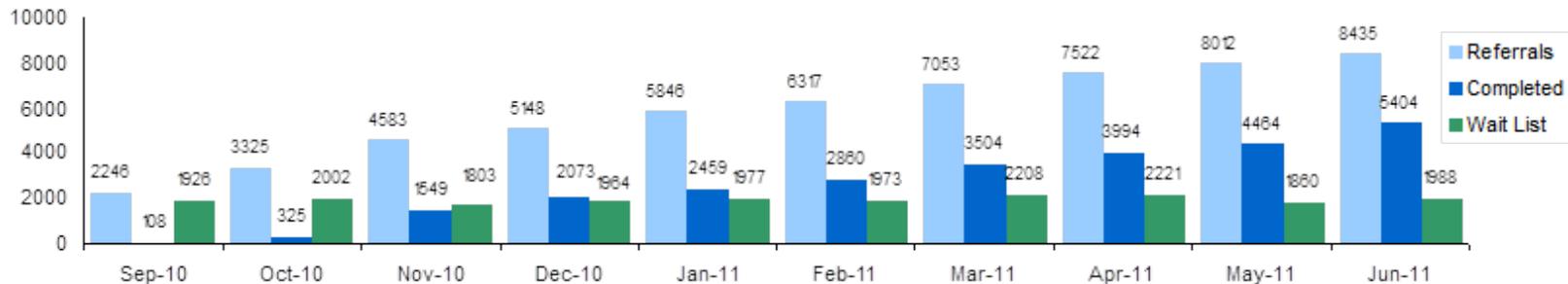
- While the total number of referrals were similar each year, the number of completed cases decreased by 18% between 2009-10 and 2010-11. However, the number of cases waiting for psychology service were reduced by 4%.
- Management reports active cases equal the difference between referrals, and completed and wait list cases
 - E.g., June 2011 active cases = 1,043 cases

Psychology



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2009-10)

Psychology



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2010-11)

Discipline-Specific Findings: Psychology Services

Strengths:

- Psychology staff offer broader, holistic clinical services beyond conducting formal assessments, which leverages staff expertise
- Programming aligns with leading practices and evidence-based research
 - E.g., Resilience Program – joint venture with University of Toronto
 - E.g., DIEBLS program focused on literacy and started in the SW quadrant, then spread to other quadrants
- Regular participation in innovative pilots or initiatives to advance practice and services to students
 - E.g., Tele-psychiatry pilot through Hospital for Sick Kids to connect students with specialized services
 - E.g., Intervention pilots focused on targeted student populations – Cogmed and Fast Forward pilots
- Chiefs disseminate survey to staff at year-end to understand experiences and ask for feedback to better understand how to improve services

Challenges:

- Variability regarding priority of assessments vs. other services (e.g., need assessments to inform student placements, funding, etc.), which is reported to be driven by Administrators and SSTs regarding prioritization of population needs.
- Lack of awareness regarding applicability of standardized tests to conduct formal assessments vs. preliminary perspectives
- Lack of understanding of unique roles between psychology and social work with students requiring mental health supports

Child and Youth Services

Child and Youth Service Statistics

Data Analysis

- Please note, current or historical service activity data was not available for Child and Youth Services

The Chief of Child and Youth Services has provided the following statistics below:

- 300 Child and Youth Workers (CYWs) in the system, and they are assigned to different roles/functions, such as:
 - Special Incidence Portion (SIP)
 - Intensive Support Programs (e.g., Behaviour, Autism classes)
 - Regular Programs
 - Itinerant (e.g., Caring and Safe Schools, Special Education)
- In some cases (SIP), CYW's would be providing intensive support to 1 student, while in other settings (regular schools), they may be working with up to 20 students. In Intensive Support Programs, CYW's could be working with up to 8 students.
- 40 Child and Youth Counsellors (CYCs), and they are also assigned to different roles/functions, including:
 - Itinerant (e.g., Caring and Safe Schools, Special Education)
 - Schools (e.g., Urban Priority High Schools, Alternative Schools, Regular Schools)
 - Programs (e.g., Caring and Safe Schools, Aboriginal Education)
- Over the course of a school year, the average CYC could be managing between 50-60 referrals
- Overall, the estimated direct contact for Child and Youth Services would be:
 - Child and Youth Workers – 3,044
 - Child and Youth Counsellors – 2,200

Discipline-Specific Findings: Child and Youth Services

Strengths:

- Child and Youth Services leverages research and system trends to develop group programming valued by students, with a focus on a student's strengths to develop an effective plan
- Proportion of educators report strong collaboration among educators, social workers, Guidance Counsellors and CYWs in providing counselling support and identifying trends to develop appropriate prevention programs (e.g., Attendance)
- CYC-led Leadership Groups build capacity in students to become mentors to peers and demonstrate positive impacts to prevalent issues, such as bullying or substance abuse
- Strong links are reported with resources external to the school environment
 - Community providers report CYWs and CYCs are trusted roles among youths and identify appropriate students who would benefit from community programs
 - E.g., South East multi-system therapy approach – work with families and community agencies to provide support over the summer months
- Recent hire of Chief for Child Youth services has legitimized profession and enabled staff to provide full services to meet the holistic needs of students

Challenges:

- As one Chief oversees a large number of CYCs and CYWs, it is challenging to gain sufficient supervision to support the personal needs of each provider.
- While CYCs meet once a month for support, the same opportunity is not afforded to the larger CYW group, which impacts their ability to learn from one another.
- Variability exists among administrators regarding the accountability of overseeing the Success Program; in particular, stakeholder report limited clarity on the role of CYWs versus Special Education.

Discipline-Specific Findings: Child and Youth Services (continued)

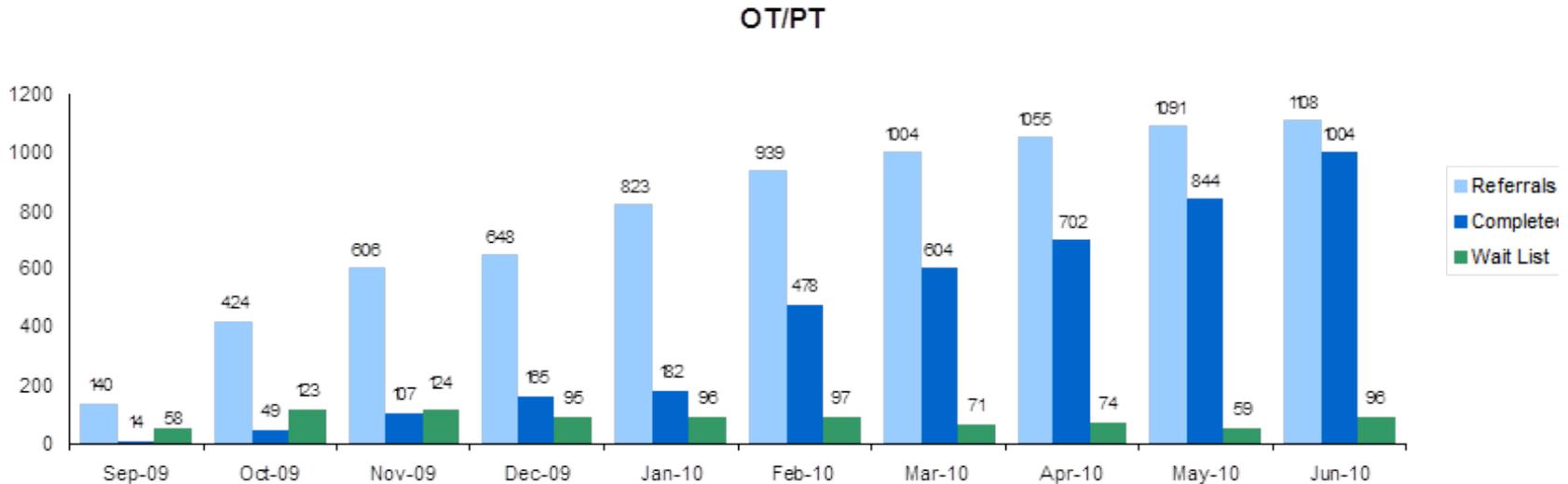
Challenges (continued):

- As the CYW role and function is influenced by school Administrators, wide variability exists regarding the CYW's scope of practice across the Board.
- It is reported, while CYWs each have diverse backgrounds to serve the support needs of students, on-going education is required to ensure a standardized foundation can be sustained across individuals (e.g., training in Special Education and program development).
- The CYC group makes efforts to increase awareness among PSS and school staff about services (e.g., present at staff meetings, leverage resource website, conduct in-services, connect with students in-person, etc.); however, some educators and Social Workers report a lack of role clarity and scope of responsibility for CYCs and CYWs, which impacts the ability to optimize resources appropriately.
 - E.g., Educators and administrators report that they do not always understand the CYC goals for taking students on CYC-focused field trips
- Although staff align programming with their respective School Improvement Plan goals, it is reported that limited communication on Board initiatives is provided to the CYC group, which impacts the ability to be involved in system planning effectively.

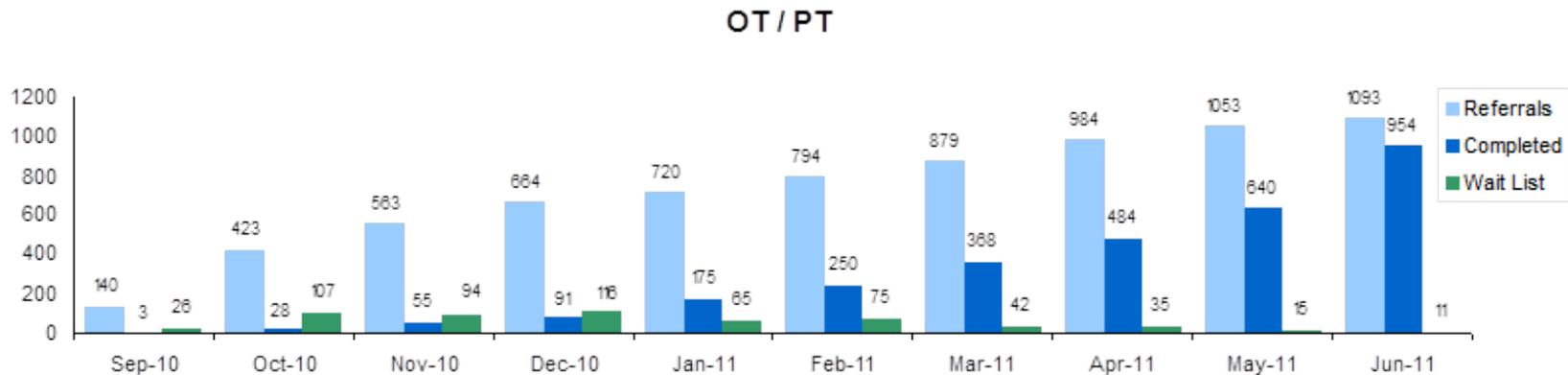
Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Services

Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy Service Utilization

- While the total number of referrals were similar each year, the number of completed cases decreased by 5% between 2009-10 and 2010-11. However, the number of cases waiting for OT/PT service reduced significantly during the same timeframe.
- Management reports active cases equal the difference between referrals, and completed and wait list cases
 - E.g., June 2011 active cases = 128 cases



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2009-10)



Source: Monthly Reported PSS Statistics (2010-11)

Discipline-Specific Findings: Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy

Strengths:

- The Chief for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy (OT/PT) plays a key role in increasing awareness of services across the Board
- Stakeholders report that valuable and timely services are provided in DD classes, including the demonstration of model behaviours for educators to support their students safely and effectively
- OT/PT staff act as the bridge between health and education, particularly for the medically fragile population
- In a proportion of regions, OT/PT staff support both students with fine motor needs and also with other issues
- Staff will accept group referrals, which enables them to optimize their services and provide classroom assessments
- In some areas, the OT/PT group provides a survey to educators to gain their perspectives of services and opportunities for improvement
- The OT/PT service is involved in the Barrier-Free Program and provide input on renovation decisions
- As part of their role, OT/PT completes SEA claims and have dedicated resource to support PSS and educators to inform claims policies
- Stakeholders also report strong OT/PT partnerships are established with community agencies, e.g., Infinity Communication Access Lab at Bloorview

Challenges:

- While OT/PTs provide information and resources to TDSB staff via a shared drive, the department requires more technical support to enhance access.
- Due to the increasing complexities of students in schools today, it is reported to be challenging to advocate for students, as Administrators may not understand the capabilities of a given student.
- Beyond the low-incidence program, OT/PT provides largely consultative services. Staff report the need to understand the appropriate the scope of service delivery in schools in light of overall system capacity constraints.

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