

TAB 5

Program Priorities



Blank Page



The Context for TDSB

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

As a diverse system with approximately 233,000 students, it is essential that students see themselves reflected in their schools and their learning. Along with that, we need to create learning spaces that are effective, respectful, and celebrate and honour students as well as their families and their diverse communities.

Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Vision for Learning

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

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

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

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

Integrated Equity Framework

A key component of the Vision for Learning is the Integrated Equity Framework, a major directional framework that sets out a series of coordinated, strategic actions to focus and align every facet of the Board’s work including policies, practices, program, culture through an equity

The Context for TDSB

lens, and anchor all of it within a coherent, comprehensive framework of Equity. This equity action plan provides us focus and ensures that the work we are doing at the system level has a direct impact in classrooms. A large part of this work is having conversations and dialogue as well as understanding how bias and perspective can create or remove obstacles.

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

Program Priorities

Secondary Program

How do we Support Secondary Program?

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

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

2020-2021 Update

- In June 2020, the Secondary Program Review Interim Report was presented to the Board Trustees for information.
 - The interim report of the Secondary Program Review highlighted the issues, gaps, and needs facing our system that are impacting our ability to support this vision. Using the comprehensive and data-rich information, including enrolment and population projections, this report acknowledged where we have been, where we are and where we could go, all while respecting and protecting many of the successful schools and programs that exist right across our system.
 - The report supports the next step forward to re-imagine and re-draw our system in consultation and collaboration with our communities to enhance equity and support the achievement and well-being of each and every student in the TDSB, now and in the future.
- The final report of Secondary Program Review was presented to the Board of Trustees in November 2020.
- Due to COVID-19, the consultation process regarding the draft Specialized Schools and Programs policy was halted and will begin again in late fall 2021.
- As part of discussions about Specialized School and programs, schools have begun to challenge and dismantle inequitable practices in their admissions processes. Work is already underway developing more consistent and transparent practices in our numerous programs.

Program Priorities

- International Baccalaureate programs have developed a common application and standardized admissions criteria. Students no longer take an entrance exam as part of the application process. Eligible candidates are entered into a lottery for the spaces that are available each year, providing more students with an opportunity and a chance to participate in this unique Specialized Program.
- Administrators overseeing numerous Specialized Programs have already been collaborating to create more equitable application processes. Educators are critically assessing the historic barriers of access in schools and are leading essential changes in practice. Past practices that may have led to some communities remaining underrepresented in our programs are being re-evaluated and include:
 - The charging of application fees
 - Entrance exams based on enrichment and curriculum beyond middle school
 - The use of Learning Skills achievement from middle school report cards
 - Obstacles for students requiring IEP accommodations
 - Admissions criteria that are not open, clear and transparent
 - Admission of students not residing in the City of Toronto

Next Steps

- Alignment with the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS)
 - Staff will embed the Secondary Program vision into the LTPAS and include future studies in future iterations of the LTPAS.
- Review of Related Policies, Procedures and Practices
 - Staff will review related policies, procedures and practices that impact access, opportunity and outcomes. These include the Optional Attendance policy and procedure, Alternative Schools policy and procedure and the Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs procedure.
 - As an initial step, staff will conduct public consultations regarding the draft Specialized Schools and Programs policy.
 - Staff will undertake a board-wide study into the existing admissions practices in our schools this fall. Data will be used to better understand the nature of the impact of Optional Attendance in our schools and identify best practices that have been established by school administrators. The results will allow us to have a better understanding of the barriers that may remain in some schools and the systemic and institutional challenges that some of our communities continue to face.

Program Priorities

Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

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

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

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

How do we Support a Highly-Skilled Workforce?

- By expanding the Specialist High Skills Major Program
- By expanding Co-operative Education Programming
- By promoting skilled trades as a viable pathway to Grades 7 to 12 students
- By expanding participation in Skills Competitions

2020-2021 Update

- Expansion of Specialist High Skills Major Program

Program Priorities

- The Ministry's Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program provides secondary students an opportunity to focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests. It also helps with their career development by exposing them to opportunities in the workforce. SHSM programs are offered in 17 sectors including ICT, Arts & Culture, Transportation, Sports, Construction, Health & Wellness, and Environment.
- Expansion of Experiential Learning Opportunities
 - The Expansion of Experiential Learning Grant is designed to increase the amount of experiential learning opportunities that students and teachers can engage with, by providing funding to enable student-based experiential learning projects and learning opportunities. Recent TDSB examples include the creation of outdoor learning spaces that incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing, pollinator gardens, and revitalization of existing/creation of new learning spaces that incorporates skilled trades and technology career exploration for students.
- Expansion of Co-operative Education Programming
 - The SPEEL (Special Education Experiential Learning) program and Project SEARCH provide cooperative education opportunities for students with low-incidence exceptionalities to support increased access to employment upon graduation. The Experiential Learning Department continues to work with community partners to enhance Cooperative Education Programming and provide meaningful experiences for all students.
- Be Our Guest: STEP to Hospitality Program – The TDSB is working with the hotel industry to launch the Specialized Trades Exploration Program for the Hospitality sector. We currently have STEP to Construction and STEP to Transportation. We are working with Toronto hotels such as the Hazelton, the Royal York, the InterContinental and the Four Seasons as well as George Brown College and Accor (the largest hotel group in the world outside of the United States).
- Expansion of Participation in Skills Competitions
 - The skills competitions provide SHSM students with the opportunity to receive a certification and reach ahead for the SHSM components. Students in technological education courses are provided with authentic learning opportunities where they apply their learning from the classroom. The skills competitions help prepare students for future career opportunities.
 - Staff will capitalize on the momentum in the area and continue to increase participation in skills competitions (secondary) and challenges (elementary).

Program Priorities

Next Steps

- In an effort to increase city-wide access to technical programming, consultation will begin with secondary principals about a proposed program entitled “Facilitating Access to Skilled Trades”, or FAST.
- Continued expansion of:
 - Specialist High Skills Major Program
 - Community Connected Experiential Learning Grant
 - Co-operative Education Programming
 - Participation in Skills Competitions

French Immersion and Extended French

How do we Support French Immersion and Extended French?

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

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

2020-2021 Update

- In June 2020, the French Review Interim Report was presented to the Board Trustees for information.
 - The interim report continues to guide how the TDSB could possibly achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Board’s key strategic documents.

Program Priorities

- The report indicated that the TDSB will phase in changes and enhancements to FSL programs, which are all aimed at improving equity of access for students. The establishment of a single program model with two entry points – Junior Kindergarten French Immersion (beginning 2022) and Grade 4 MFI (beginning 2021) will increase access to intensive FSL programs in the board. It will permit the focus of resources, both human and material, and strengthen the Core French programming Grades 4-9 (and beyond) for those who do not choose intensive FSL programs. As part of planned program changes, the Grade 4 Junior Extended French (JEF) Program is currently phasing out as the Grade 4 MFI Program begins in September 2021, and the following entry points will phase out entirely: the one (1) Grade 6 Intensive Extended French Program and the fourteen (14) Grade 7 Entry Extended French programs. At the foundation of this decision was a commitment to ensuring that access to intensive FSL programs was more fair and equitable across the TDSB. The streamlining of programs will increase access to an intensive FSL program for students in the board.
- Opened 4 new Early French Immersion programs for implementation in September 2022 to improve equity of access in underserved areas of TDSB
- Operational procedure, PR597, French Immersion/Extended French was revised in January 2021.
- As per the Core French Action Plan, targeted Professional Learning to support educators was delivered.

Next Steps

- Development of a plan for French Immersion programs to improve equity of access in underserved areas.

Program Priorities

Indigenous Education

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

How do we Support Indigenous Education?

The TDSB's Indigenous Education Strategy is focused on enhancing the achievement and social and emotional well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students. Taking action to decolonize our school will be done by:

- Building the leadership capacity of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous leaders to centre Indigenous knowledges and challenge anti-Indigenous discrimination in schools and throughout the Board.
- Increasing the representation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in positions of formal leadership.
- Improving access to enhanced academic pathways in secondary schools and multiple post-secondary options for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Providing culturally-safe, trauma informed learning environments that effectively support Indigenous students' physical, emotional, spiritual and mental well-being within their school community.
- Reducing the over-representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in Special Education programs.
- Reducing the over-representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students among students being suspended and expelled across the system.
- Ensuring that Indigenous students have access to Indigenous cultures, languages and community upon entering Full Day Kindergarten (FDK).

2020-2021 Update

[Indigenous Education 2020 Annual Report](#)

[Indigenous Education 2019 Annual Report](#)

[Indigenous Education 2018 Annual Report](#)

Program Priorities

Next Steps

- Continue moving forward with the design and construction of the Wandering Spirit School (Kapapamahchkwew).
- Continue moving forward with the Boyne as a site of Indigenous Land -Based Pedagogy led by the Urban Indigenous Education Centre and guided by the Elders Council.
- Continue to engage community through the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee.
- Provide mandatory training to all formal leaders on The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Integrate professional learning about anti-Indigenous racism, trauma informed approaches and cultural safety into all leadership development opportunities.
- Initiate and lead Indigenous Education Administrator Collaborative Inquiry in order to support the enhancement of Indigenous Education in schools, as well as support to inform School Improvement Plans.
- Support school leaders with the creation of Indigenous Education foci in School Improvement Planning.
- Continue to build upon the Indigenous Aspiring Leadership Network for First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff.
- Develop and implement focused professional learning inquiries for Principals, Vice Principals and teachers on creating conditions for enhancing Indigenous student well-being and achievement within Grade 7-10 classrooms.
- Create and provide ongoing access for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students to Indigenous Student Leadership Groups.
- Develop structures, in collaboration with the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee and the Council of Elders, for peer and community mentorship programs.
- Continue and enhance system-wide referral process through the Urban Indigenous Education Centre.

Program Priorities

- Establish communication processes to ensure the presence of an Indigenous advocate (e.g., UIEC Student Success Team member) at all IPRC meetings that involve First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and families.
- Create supports for non-Indigenous Special Education staff to work with Indigenous wholistic approaches.
- Continue to build and enhance professional learning for all staff in trauma informed practices and cultural safety from Indigenous perspectives.
- Provide professional learning for all central Special Education staff on anti-Indigenous racism.
- Work with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre and the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee to identify barriers and develop strategies for removing systemic processes that impede First Nations, Métis and Inuit well-being and learning.
- Provide professional learning for Caring and Safe Schools Centrally Assigned Principals and Advisors on Indigenous Education contexts, anti-Indigenous racism, and Indigenous approaches to restorative practices and student engagement.
- Provide professional learning for school leaders on Indigenous Education contexts, anti-Indigenous racism, and Indigenous approaches to restorative practices and student engagement with a focus on ethical decision making.
- With the support of families and community partners, support Principals and Vice Principals in developing whole-school Indigenous approaches to restorative practices.
- Work with community partners to create an Indigenous focused pre-Kindergarten program for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and families.
- Support the mobilization of Indigenous community members and Indigenous Early Years educators with expertise in Indigenous approaches to Early Years education in order to create and implement professional learning for all early years educators.
- Work with the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee to develop and share strategies to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit families with formal school-entry processes.
- Provide culturally-relevant resources and access to the Council of Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous language speakers.

Program Priorities

- Create Early Years curriculum writing opportunities that centre Indigenous perspectives.
- Provide all Early Years practitioners (school-based teams – Designated Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten teachers, administrators) with professional learning on how to engage with and support Indigenous students and their families/caregivers with reference to an anti-Indigenous racism framework.

Special Education and Inclusion

How do we Support Special Education and Inclusion?

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

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

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

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

Students are successfully included, supported, and empowered when:

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

Program Priorities

- Deficit thinking is rejected and students are not organized within and outside the classroom by perceived ability (Parekh & Underwood, 2016)

Next Steps

- Continue our commitment to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students, especially students with special education needs. This includes our ongoing commitment to human rights, equity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and our commitment to combating anti-Indigeneity and anti-Black racism. This commitment is the foundation of the TDSB Equity Policy. It is the basis of everything we do and underpins all programming across all grade levels.
- Continue to implement Inclusion practices:
 - We will work to optimize professional learning that promotes inclusive models of education and that deepens awareness of anti-Black racism, critical disabilities and culturally relevant teaching practices.
 - We will work to confront and challenge unconscious bias within our schools, and work closely with principals and superintendents to interrupt, interrogate and strategize to ensure that Black students are treated equitably.
 - This strategy will be closely informed by data, and shaped in close collaboration with all stakeholders.
 - Implementing a variety of communication strategies in order to provide parents/students and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) with information about services and programs offered by Special Education and Inclusion and the Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECP).
- Increase employment opportunities and outcomes for all students with Low Incidence Exceptionalities (Intellectual Disabilities, Physical Disability, Low Vision, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Health/Medical) by:
 - Reviewing data to better understand the post-secondary pathways of students with special education needs;
 - Supporting school leaders and liaise with community partners to explore creative ways of increasing the number of students served through the Special Education Experiential Learning Program and continue to seek out opportunities for additional partnerships with business and various levels of government;
 - Continuing to provide staffing and collaborate with partners in Project SEARCH to support our school to work transition initiative;

Program Priorities

- Working with support staff to better support students with Developmental Disabilities in experiential learning settings; and
- Leveraging the Continuous Intake Co-op (CIC) Program and investigating additional co-op opportunities for students with Intellectual Disabilities.