



# Fact Sheet

## Academic Pathways

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### **Addressing Systemic Barriers to Student Achievement**

*For years, the Toronto District School Board has collected student data, which indicates high levels of achievement and engagement in many areas and for many students. However, this data also reveals persistent gaps in achievement and well-being for some students despite dedicated efforts to address them. These gaps are strongly connected to demographic factors such as family income, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, among others. We have also acknowledged that our bias has unintentionally created barriers for many of our most underserved students.*

*TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Pg. 1*

### **What is Academic Pathways?**

In 2018 the Toronto District School Board enacted the Grade 9 and 10 Academic Pathways Implementation Plan with the specific goal: “*To work over the course of three years to support the majority of our students to select academic courses for Grade 9 and Grade 10*”. The crucial matter of ensuring high expectations for all and of addressing systemic barriers to student achievement was the impetus for engaging in the transformation of not just Grade 9 and Grade 10 Academic Pathways, but in K-12 Academic Pathways. In 2020 the significance of bringing such systemic changes to fruition are arguably even more crucial with heightened societal awareness of systemic racism, oppression, conscious and unconscious bias within our communities and within our public education structure.

### **What will this mean for my child starting Grade 9 in September 2021?**

Effective September 2021 students entering Grade 9 will take academic level Geography, English, French, Mathematic and Science. Additionally, the Ministry of Education announced in July of 2020 that all Grade 9 math classes in the province will be de-streamed effective September 2021.

Elementary and secondary schools have been working to ensure:

- Grade 8 students are prepared leading up to the September 2021 transition to high school;
- Supports are in place for all students to achieve success in Grade 9.

### **Is this the first year for secondary schools to implement so-called “de-streamed” classes at the Grade 9 level?**

No. In fact, over the past 3 years secondary schools have phased in academic programming in some or all subjects. The system is on track for the September 2021 final stage of implementation for Grade 9.

### **What if my child learns best with hands-on, practical subjects?**

Academic Pathways supports all modes of learning. Students in Grade 9 and Grade 10 will continue to have the opportunity to choose options in the Arts, Business Studies, Computer Studies, Family Studies, Healthy Active Living and Technology.



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### **What if my child has had no formalized education in French?**

Students with less than 600 hours of French education will be permitted to take an Open Level beginners course in French.

### **What if my child plans to attend college or enrol in an apprenticeship program? Will Academic Pathways prepare him/her/them for these post-secondary destinations?**

Academic Pathways will ensure all students have the opportunity to pursue all post-secondary pathways including college, university, apprenticeships programs or the workplace.

### **What do I do if my child is struggling in Grade 9?**

Developing a relationship with your child's teacher(s) through early and ongoing communication is essential to ensure academic success. Parents/guardians/advocates are encouraged to communicate directly with the subject teacher. Your child's guidance counsellors can also be a source of support as can the vice principal and/or principal.

### **What happens if my child does not pass one or more courses in Grade 9?**

Every secondary school has a student success program to support students who are struggling academically. Available supports include: learning strategies; credit rescue; credit recovery; and remedial summer school. Some schools also offer summer school for incoming Grade 8s that focuses on numeracy or literacy fundamentals to help prepare students for high school and allow students to earn a credit before officially starting Grade 9.

### **Is Academic Pathways a part of Grade 10?**

Academic Pathways is a Kindergarten to Grade 12 initiative. The TDSB continues to improve instructional and classroom leadership and strategies from Kindergarten onwards to ensure all students meet success in school. We know from research that student opportunity for post-secondary options and success improves with academic course programming in Grades 9 and 10. Academic Pathways will be fully implemented in Grade 10 effective September 2022 with academic programming for History, English, French, Math and Science in place for all students.

### **Are all school boards participating in Academic Pathways?**

Most school boards in the province are moving in the same direction as the TDSB and with the recent Ministry of Education announcement the province will begin the de-streaming process beginning with Grade 9 Mathematics in September 2021 in all school boards. As the largest school board in the province many school boards ask to meet with our leaders to learn from us. Academic Pathways is no exception and we have already been sharing our successes with boards near and far.