

## Highlights from Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report

- The Toronto District School Board is the largest and most diverse public education system in Canada. Public education is for everyone and it is our goal and responsibility to ensure that each and every student has the tools, resources, supports and opportunities they need to thrive.
- When we remove the barriers, raise expectations and create access and opportunity for our students, we not only support those who have been underserved, but we raise the bar for everyone.
- While our communities may not agree on everything, there is a strong consensus that every student deserves a great education; that student well-being and learning should be at the centre of every decision we make; and that access to opportunities and experiences must be made available in an equitable and inclusive manner.
- This does not mean taking away the rich learning experiences from those who are thriving, but it means ensuring that these programs, opportunities and experiences are available and offered to everyone. We will:
  - Continue to offer choice through specialized schools and programs and will increase and improve access to them for all students;
  - Continue to support Special Education students, including Gifted, through parent choice of regular classroom, home school placement or congregated sites; and
  - Continue to study the impact of our programs, practices, and structures on the achievement and well-being of our students.
- Equity work is critical to ensure that the TDSB provides excellent education and pathways to high achievement and well-being for all our students. We must and we will make the TDSB work as well for historically marginalized students as for those who currently thrive. We will maintain standards of excellence in education for all our students as we undergo the necessary changes.

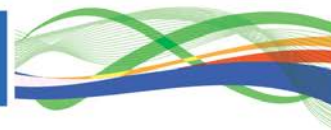
### Professional Learning for Staff

We are committed to providing all staff with professional learning in:

- Equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and human rights, alongside our federation and union partners;
- Indigenous education, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are committed to providing some staff with additional professional learning, as connected to their roles, in:

- Student improvement in literacy, numeracy, and global competencies;
- Supporting the needs of students with identified special learning needs;
- Intentionally supporting the mental health and well-being of students; and,
- Providing the leadership development necessary for current and aspiring leaders in formal leadership roles.



## **Challenging Streaming and Exclusion to Improve Achievement and Well-Being**

- We will confront and address patterns of academic streaming by examining the bias and barriers in particular areas with the aim of creating more equitable outcomes for all students.

### **The Early Years**

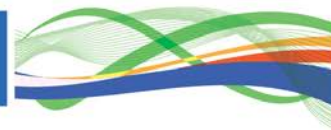
- Appropriate interventions will be put in place to support students who are struggling in reading and math in Kindergarten through Grade 2.
- Teachers in the Early Years must engage in learning that will:
  - Create learning environments that are engaging and reflective of students' experiences;
  - Support system-wide standards with regard to what interventions are possible and expected;
  - Assist in fulfilling the commitment that all students are reading by the end of Grade 1; and,
  - Ensure a seamless transition into school, supporting pre-kindergarten programs where appropriate and necessary.

### **Grades 9 and 10 Academic Programming**

- Based on a three-year phased schedule, we will begin to support the majority of our students in academic level programming for Grades 9 and 10. Detailed plans will be developed based on further consultation. This is one significant way of addressing the inequity in educational outcomes and the achievement, opportunity, and participation gaps that exist for certain groups of students in our system.
- Teaching all students at the academic level does not mean lowering standards. It requires effective transitions to high school, better teaching, more inclusive curriculum and higher expectations. Considerable support for staff and students will be provided.

### **Special Education**

- Continue to support Special Education students, including Gifted, through parent choice of home school placement or congregated sites.
- We do not recommend phasing out Gifted programs or congregated school sites.
- We will confront and challenge the deficit thinking that organizes students by perceived ability.
- We will review our Individual Education Plan and Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) processes to ensure greater clarity, transparency, and accountability so that parents, guardians, and students feel valued and included.
- Parents and guardians will feel that their voices have been heard and their preference of placement has been honoured. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs who desire a local neighbourhood school placement with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and/or alternative programming will receive this placement through the IPRC process.



- We will continue to provide special education programs and schools for students with special education needs as a necessary and differentiated approach to supporting all students.

### **Suspensions and Expulsions**

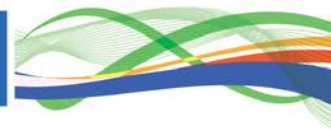
- We will review and revise our policies, procedures, practices, and structures to decrease suspensions and expulsions, as well as to address the disproportionate number given to racialized students, especially those who are Black and Indigenous.
- We will only suspend Kindergarten students as a last resort and only after all other possible actions have been exhausted.
- We will be more specific when imposing suspensions or expulsions in order to lend greater transparency and accountability to our processes.
- We know that to address issues like systemic racism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and issues of poverty, this work must begin with the learning that the adults in the system must do. It will require putting in place different processes to support change, such as creating a culture of restorative practices, with a focus on cooperative ways of resolving conflict.
- We will create a Student Concern Protocol to provide clarity on how student concerns are addressed within our system.

### **Mental Health and Well-Being**

- The well-being of students must be taken into account in all aspects of our work, including how we teach, assess, support, and relate to students.
- Student mental-health and well-being will be the responsibility of everyone. In decreasing stigma and increasing understanding and awareness of mental health, we are confident that students, families, and TDSB staff will be better able to identify concerns and know what to do when they, or someone they know, needs help.
- Privilege, power, biases, racism, discrimination, and other barriers all affect the mental-health and well-being of students: solutions must take these into consideration.

### **Examination of our Policies, Procedures, and Practices that Affect Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes**

- We do not recommend phasing out optional attendance, specialty schools/programs, gifted programs or congregated school sites. However, we will examine our policies, procedures, and practices to determine whether they are creating and/or exacerbating inequity and we will work to increase access and opportunity so that those programs are more reflective of the TDSB student population.
- We will review policies and procedures with an anti-oppressive approach to understand how our policies may be inadvertently creating barriers and perpetuating the outcomes we are



dedicated to challenging and changing. We will engage our community as a part of the process of changing policies, including those related to:

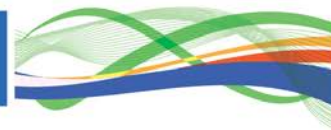
- Admissions to specialty schools and programs and optional attendance; and
- French programming.

### **Enhancing Engagement and Voice Towards System Change**

- All of our work must centre on the needs of students, which includes effectively capturing and integrating student voice and input. Our students will be actively involved in their own learning and in the decisions made about their learning.
- We will improve our communication about the Parent Concern Protocol and support staff to resolve conflicts in creative ways by using mediation and restorative practice strategies as required.
- The Board will also introduce a position with a mediation/restorative practice focus to more effectively support staff in responding to and resolving conflicts. Principals and superintendents will have greater knowledge of how to resolve human rights issues through conflict resolution strategies and will be able to access other resources to help them resolve conflict situations.
- We will develop Community and Family Engagement Standards that will strengthen the relationship among the school, the family, and the community. These standards will include how we partner with community agencies and other community groups to serve our students and their families.

### **Equitable Resource Allocation Review**

- Staff will review existing data to determine the validity of the perception that schools in disadvantaged areas are not supported to the same extent as those in affluent neighbourhoods.
- Staff are not currently recommending changes to specific resource allocations, but rather are proposing that we look at our current resource allocation methods and processes to ensure that more equitable opportunities and outcomes for students are achieved.
- We will address inequities connected to school fundraising.
- We will review sources of information and data beyond the Learning Opportunity Index, such as student achievement results, to help allocate staffing resources.
- In an effort to ensure that resources are closer to schools, and where flexibility exists, we will make staffing allocation decisions locally as opposed to on a system-wide basis.
- We will conduct a thorough examination of historical/legacy resource allocation practices using an equity-focused approach so as to determine their suitability to meet current student needs.



## **Development of a Strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence**

- A strategy to support Black students will operate within the context of our equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression work until we are able to make meaningful gains for Black Students in the areas of Early Years reading, graduation rates, suspensions and expulsions, access to academic programming, and changes to trends in Special Education and to family and community engagement.
- In classrooms and schools it will require a targeted look at the learning necessary to support Black Student Excellence and the transformation of classroom practices, curriculum materials, and school environments so that Black students can thrive and reach their highest potential. This learning will be embedded explicitly in our system-wide professional learning.

## **Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Placement Processes as Aligned with Principles of Human Rights**

- We will measure how effective our employment practices are at supporting equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, placement, and succession planning.
- We will ensure that all our employees have equitable opportunities for advancement, that their skills and knowledge are valued and used appropriately and that they have equitable access to available support for their professional development needs.
- To consider how the means by which we welcome and assist new staff in understanding their work within the TDSB relates to the significant work we are doing with respect to equity.
- To build on positive relationships and include the voices of our various leadership, union, network, and association partners by effectively collaborating on our work in equity and anti-oppression.
- We will review the results of our most recent staff census together with our union partners to identify gaps and areas of need and to create learning opportunities to address these.