

OPSBA Advocacy Day

Toronto District School Board

March 2021



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TDSB at a Glance

Students

- 173,000 elementary students
- 73,000 secondary students
- 2,200 international students
- 140,000 Continuing Education students
- 29,000 students are enrolled in Immersion and Extended French programs
- 23% were born outside of Canada
- There are over 120 languages spoken by TDSB students and their families

Student Racial Backgrounds

White (29%), South Asian (22%), East Asian (14%), Mixed (12%), Black (11%), Middle Eastern (6%), Southeast Asian (4%), Latin American (2%), Indigenous (0.3%)

Student Faith/Religion/Creed

Christianity (33%), no religion (29%), Islam (19%), Hinduism (8%), Buddhism (4%), other (4%), Judaism (2%)

Student Family Socioeconomic Status

41% of family incomes are less than \$50,000

Governance

22 Democratically Elected Trustees represent public school supporters in the City of Toronto



Staff

- 17,000 permanent teachers (11,820 Elementary; 5,180 Secondary)
- 5,800 occasional teachers (3,860 Elementary; 1,940 Secondary)
- 15,500 permanent support staff and 4,000 supply/casual employees (including Designated Early Childhood Educators, professional support workers, caretakers, maintenance staff, IT support, administrators, etc.)

Schools

- 471 Elementary schools (including 1 Elementary/Secondary First Nations School, 18 Elementary Alternative schools, 6 Special Education self-contained schools)
- 111 Secondary schools (including 1 Elementary/Secondary Alternative school, 20 Secondary Alternative schools, 4 Caring and Safe Schools Programs, 5 Adult/EdVance Programs, 2 Native Learning Centres, 6 Special Education self-contained schools)

Annual Operating Budget

- Approximately \$3.5 Billion



Education Development Charges

The Toronto District School Board is advocating for access to Education Development Charges (EDCs) as a source of revenue to sustain our ability to make adequate investments in our schools as development continues in the city.

Currently, the TDSB does not qualify for EDCs because it has excess capacity when assessed on a district-wide basis, regardless of significant pressures and challenges faced in many neighborhood schools. However, city intensification plans mean that many neighbourhoods are growing and putting additional pressure on schools in these areas that are already full.

EDCs are a critical funding tool that would help the TDSB meet growth-related infrastructure needs. While there are pockets of space within our system, many of our schools are over capacity because of significant residential intensification in certain areas. Lack of sufficient space in local schools in some areas of the City has forced the TDSB to adopt different accommodation strategies for managing enrollment growth including redirecting students from new residential developments to other TDSB schools located outside the area, using portables and changing program and school boundaries. In our view, the same way that developers pay for services such as roads, transit, water, sewer infrastructure and community centres, they should also contribute to education. TDSB continues to be at a disadvantage due to its inability to collect EDCs from developers, which could generate approximately \$500M in additional revenue for the Board over the next 15 years.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government to:

- Amend the Education Development Charges regulation (Ontario Reg. 20/98) under the *Education Act* to allow the TDSB to collect EDCs.

The EDC (Educational Development Charges) hearing is also now set to take place on March 25, 2021 at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice (Divisional Court), commencing at 10:00 am. In the hearing, TDSB seeks to have the court declare certain provisions of the *Education Act* regulations invalid and permit TDSB to charge Educational Development Charges.

For more information, please visit the TDSB webpage on [Education Development Charges](#).

Renewal Needs Backlog

Even with the additional renewal funds from provincial government over the last few years, the TDSB Renewal Needs Backlog (RNB) sits at approximately \$4.1 billion as of January 2021 and continues to rise.



Approximately 50% of our 583 schools are over 60 years old and building components continue to age requiring major repairs or replacement.

Without additional funding from government and/or a reduction, the backlog will grow approximately \$0.6 Billion per year:

- January 2022: \$4.4 Billion
- January 2023: \$4.7 Billion

It is crucial that the province commit to providing predictable and sustainable funding for school repairs so that the TDSB can continue implementing its long-term plan for renewal and lower its renewal needs backlog.

In addition, we should consider other financing models to build new schools as well as investments in energy efficient school projects such as heating/ventilation, doors and windows.

The TDSB has encouraged the Ministry to:

- Establish a working group comprised of school board representatives, the ministries of Education, Finance and Ontario government agencies such as Infrastructure Ontario and include parent groups dedicated to improving schools, such as Fix Our Schools, to identify additional viable funding sources.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government to:

- Provide appropriate and sustainable funding to address the Facility Repair Backlog.

For more information please visit the TDSB webpage [Renewal Needs Backlog](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Accountability/Renewal-Needs-Backlog-and-Facility-Condition-Index)
<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Accountability/Renewal-Needs-Backlog-and-Facility-Condition-Index>

Capital Needs

The TDSB is the largest school board in the province with hundreds of aging building infrastructures, with an average age of 64 years. However, over the past two years, the province has only approved three TDSB Capital Priorities projects. Every board in the province, no matter the size, can only submit 10 projects. The TDSB has requested that the Ministry consider the size of the school board when determining the number of submissions to be considered.



The TDSB has also requested that the Ministry expedite the capital construction's Approval to Proceed (ATP) process. Faster timelines will avoid significant cost increases due to timing between submission and approval, and minimize accommodation pressures due to project delays.

The province has provided multiple years of additional School Condition Index (SCI) funding for school repairs which has allowed the TDSB to address the growing facilities renewal needs in our schools. The additional funding, however, has not been enough to decrease the significant \$3.5 billion backlog in TDSB's repairs. One solution that would assist the TDSB in managing the renewal backlog would be the elimination of the school closure moratorium, which would allow the TDSB to address over capacity and program issues, reduce renewal needs and lower operating costs. It is also imperative that the province commit to providing predictable and sustainable funding for school repairs to a level that will allow for the TDSB to continue to implement its long-term plan for renewal, reduce the repair backlog, and modernize our schools as 21st century learning environments.

As an urban board, the TDSB continues to face unique challenges relating to the capital program, including higher construction costs in Toronto compared to other rural school board jurisdictions. This is a result of constricted site access, building code requirements and price inflations in the high-density urban construction market. TDSB would ask that the Ministry update construction benchmarks to consider urban building costs.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government to:

- Consider the size of the school board when determining the number of submissions to be considered;
- Update the benchmarks to ensure capital projects are adequately funded; and
- Expedite the capital construction's Approval to Proceed (ATP) process.

For more information, please visit the TDSB webpage for [Capital Priorities](#).

Technology

In today's digital age, technology is actively used in classrooms to engage, enhance and support learning. From computers to mobile devices, tablets to interactive video games, the TDSB is working to engage students with technology.



The TDSB provides digital learning tools to students to support deep learning through technology. These tools include Academic Workspace, Desire to Learn, GSuite for Education and a Virtual Library, which help provide students with opportunities to communicate, collaborate, inquire, research and problem solve. Students and staff use these tools to facilitate the learning experience and other school related activities including submitting assignments and communicating with teachers and other students on school activities.

The continuation of funding for technology is vital to allow school boards to provide collaborative and communication platforms as well as digital devices, tools and resources for students and staff. Investments in hardware and services are also required to close the digital divide between students who have access to devices, internet connectivity, digital resources and tools and those who do not.

This need for technology -- hardware, software and digital resources -- within the TDSB has been accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government to provide additional investments to:

- Build collaborative and communication platforms;
- Provide digital devices, tools and supports for students and staff;
- Provide one device per student;
- Develop the library of digital content resources and program materials; and
- Build a sustainable and equitable virtual learning environment for students

Pandemic Impacts

The health and safety of staff and students has been a priority to the Toronto District School Board throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past 12 months, the TDSB provided students with regular and meaningful learning opportunities while maintaining a safe environment for our entire school community.

Responding to the pandemic included a significant and urgent shift to remote learning in the spring, including ensuring access to technology for approximately 245,000 learners as well as opening two Virtual Schools for nearly 80,000 of these learners in September 2020. In the TDSB, there is a disproportionate number of students of families with lower socio-economic status enrolled in the Virtual Schools and many families do not have adequate financial means to provide technology devices



or broadband internet access to support their children’s participation in remote learning. The TDSB has already supported students with more than 70,000 devices and helped families with internet connectivity and purchasing digital resources to accommodate these growing demands.

In addition, the TDSB recognizes the tremendous emotional, social and physical strains of the pandemic on students and must continue to provide additional resources and supports to help students during this time. The Board is also concerned about the learning gaps created by the pandemic on students. To minimize this impact, additional resources will be needed, including additional teachers, professional support services and professional development.

At this point, it is unclear what impact the pandemic will continue to have; however, we can anticipate some needs.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government for funding to:

- To fully fund all additional COVID-related resources that may be necessary to support student learning, well-being and mental health during the 2021-22 school year;
- To reimburse reserve funds and other pandemic-related costs from the 2020-21 school year, so that school boards can maintain their reserves and recover from budget pressures related to unfunded pandemic costs;
- Hire additional teachers, education workers and professional support services;
- Support IT infrastructure;
- Acquire virtual curriculum and materials for in-person and virtual learning; and
- Further identify gaps through research and develop action plans to support students.

Mental Health and Well-Being

We know when students feel valued, heard and included it strengthens their resilience and increases overall positive mood, mental and physical health. Therefore, students with positive mental health strategies are more engaged and better able to learn. That is why the TDSB is focused on continually improving and supporting the mental health and well-being of all students.

We also recognize the tremendous emotional, social and physical strain the pandemic has had on students’ well-being and we continue to provide additional resources and supports to help during this time. Addressing low mood, depression, stress and anxiety by strengthening coping and resilience skills



have been critical this year and into the following school year. Additionally, social inequities, such as racism, discrimination, hate and biases have been exacerbated by the pandemic and further impact student mental health and wellness.

Our focus in 2020 was to build mental health literacy for staff, students and families and to support positive mental health strategies and increase their overall well-being. Our approaches to mental health support continue to evolve to meet students' diverse needs by incorporating their lived experiences, voices, identities and special educational needs to support inclusion, belonging and engagement in learning.

Some highlights this year, included:

- Producing, enhancing and providing mental health and well-being strategies to support inclusion of students with special educational needs, Indigenous students and Black students through individual counseling to strengthen resilience, coping and stress management skills.
- Organizing and facilitating student virtual group meetings that support peer socialization, self esteem, positive and healthy relationships and emotion management because of the pandemic and school closures.
- Providing counseling support/consultations to caregivers and staff during pandemic associated school transitions by providing individual and group training on coping, stress management and resilience building.
- Building anti-oppressive and culturally responsive and relevant mental health and well-being resources in resources libraries available for staff/parents/students.
- Participating, facilitating and organizing monthly parent and student mental health and well-being groups allowing for their voices, thoughts and ideas to help direct our mental health and well-being goals.
- Providing resource support by working collaboratively with community partners to assist families with food security, housing, advocacy, crisis management and socio-emotional support especially during the pandemic.

The TDSB has asked the Ontario Government for additional resources to:

- Support additional staff for boards to ensure students' mental health and well-being, and help students cope with issues such as stress, anxiety and depression; and
- Support all students as they cope with the unprecedented physical, social and emotional impact of the pandemic, transitions and return to the post-pandemic school environment.



Equity Work within the Toronto District School Board

Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression, specifically, the dismantling of Anti-Black Racism are core priorities in the TDSB. These priorities, coupled with the creation of the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement, serve as an example of the Board's commitment to address anti-Black racism and equity system-wide and are outlined in the TDSB's Vision for Learning and the Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

An example of this work is in the vast array of professional learning within the organization to change mindset and to develop the capacity of staff to notice, name and address issues of discrimination as they occur.

Professional Learning and Capacity Building includes:

- Launching *TDSB Human Library: Conversations Around Equitable, Anti-Racist, and Anti-Oppressive Practice*, a podcast series comprising a collection of audio episodes on topics related to Equity, Anti-Racism, and Anti-Oppression in education. Episodes are open to the public and push educators to critically reflect on their pedagogy, as well as reimagine meaningful ways to deepen student engagement and community partnerships.
- Using *TDSB Equity Toolkits*, a criteria checklist that supports the development and selection of learning, instructional and well-being resources from an Equity and Culturally Relevant and Responsive stance.
- Developing *TDSB Vignettes - Equity in Remote Learning Environments* to examine strategies to ensure every student has equitable access to learning experiences that are responsive to the current remote learning conditions and reflective of their identities and lived experiences.
- Offering system-wide training for school leaders with external partners:
 - *Leading Change for Equity: Anti-Black Racism Training for Leaders in Education*, a 4-week virtual training professional learning facilitated by Kike Ojo-Thompson. This comprehensive learning opportunity supports educators in deepening their anti-racist and inclusive leadership practice.
 - *Stronger than Hate*, a learning experience that centred the stories of the first all African-American Tank Battalion in World War II (761st Tank Battalion) their role in liberating several concentration camps. Students, staff, and community partners are provided opportunities to learn about themselves and others, and how they can affect positive change. This experience was in partnership between the TDSB's African Heritage



Committee, Jewish Heritage Committee, Liberation75, USC Shoah Foundation, and Peel District School Board.

- *Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educators*, a resource developed in collaboration with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) to empower educators to act against anti-Asian racism.

Other work includes efforts to enhance student voice and engaging parents/caregivers and community through:

- Launching *Black Student Success and Excellence Initiative*, a collaborative 21-school initiative with the Anti-Racism Directorate and the TDSB Research Department. This initiative engages secondary schools and their elementary feeder schools serving high populations of Black students. With support from community partnerships and central staff members connected to the identified schools, educators engaged in strategies to establish the necessary conditions to build agency and leadership within students, along with exploring opportunities to leverage community and caregiver relationships to promote the success and excellence of Black students.
- Hiring Graduation Coaches for Black Students, a pilot initiative with five Coaches supporting the leadership and pathways of Black students within diverse secondary schools across the TDSB.
- Hosting *Black Community Organization Partnerships*, a two-session event geared towards leveraging the strengths of Black community organizations that offer educational programming to ensure students can see themselves reflected within the curriculum.
- Hosting *Parent Engagement Sessions - "How to Navigate the School System for Black Student Success, K-12,"* cross-system community learning opportunities with Dr. Carl James. These sessions served to further engage families, community and educators in discussions on improving the experiences and opportunities of Black students.

Recommendations for support:

- Continuation of the Graduation Coaches for Black Students Initiative;
- Embed within the curriculum language that intentionally addresses the teaching, learning and understanding of race, racism, colonization and the contribution of Indigenous and Black communities within the province and the nation;
- Additional financial support to enhance school-based programs tied to Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression. This includes increased community involvement and community-based partnerships



- Enhance supports for health and well-being for historically marginalized and racialized students
- Credit the locally developed course, Genocide: Historical and Contemporary Implications (Grade 11), as a university or mixed course;
- Ensure that Canada’s role in genocide examples are a comprehensive study as part of the mandatory course, Canadian History since World War I (Grade 10 Academic and Applied);
- Convene a working group of experts to look critically at the Ontario curriculum to develop a policy framework which will enable students to graduate with a better understanding of human rights, peace, war, critical thinking, historical thinking, racism, etc; and to ensure students know their human rights and responsibilities, how to protect those rights, the consequences of indifference and how to take effective action when they or other members of the community experience, hate, racism, and other forms of discrimination and violence, now and in the future; and
- Include Genocide education as mandatory curriculum.

Academic Pathways: Challenging Streaming K-12 in the Toronto District School Board

As outlined in the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#), the TDSB is committed to equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression by challenging academic streaming beginning in the early years and continuing into secondary school. Our goal is to have almost all students successfully study at the Academic or De-streamed level in all compulsory Grade 9 courses by September 2021 and Grade 10 courses by September 2022.

To achieve this goal, we have made significant progress in providing opportunities to more students each year to study courses at the Academic level, especially those who have been disproportionately underserved in the education system. We know that students enrolled in Academic courses, compared to those enrolled in Applied and Locally Developed courses, experience higher achievement in courses beyond Grade 10; have access to increased post-secondary destinations (college, university, apprenticeship and workplace); and achieve greater success in post-secondary programs. We also know that Black and Indigenous students, students from low-income families and students with special education designations are underrepresented in Academic courses. As a system, we are committed to



setting high expectations, creating inclusive classrooms, challenging educator biases, and increasing access to high-quality programming for all students.

Challenging streaming must also begin in the early years and include changes to special education. We have developed a new K-Grade 1 IEP strategy to address the overrepresentation of Black students in special education programs. We are also completing the phasing out student placements in the Home School Program and promoting an inclusionary model of resource support for students in Grades 1-8. Identifying and addressing academic streaming from K-12 is a substantive action to combat racism and oppression in education. The TDSB is proud to be at the forefront of this movement in Ontario.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Education:

- Ensure that, as a result of destreaming and altering class sizes, staffing levels are not decreased;
- Dedicate teacher-release funding for K-12 educators to continue to collaborate on developing inclusive programming, creating inclusive classrooms, and participating in ongoing professional learning to support student success in destreamed classrooms;
- Dedicate funding for foundational learning in elementary literacy and numeracy to build skills for success and for interventionists to support adolescent literacy to ensure underserved students have the literacy skills necessary to be successful in secondary school; and
- Ensure funding to allow for the recruitment and placement of mathematics specialists in elementary schools and for access to technology for all students.

Community Use of Schools

The TDSB has a long history of developing strong and positive relationships with many community-based agencies and is a proven leader in operating community hubs in many of our schools. Facility partnerships are considered in schools where they are compatible and may support ongoing school operations. Our long history of community-based partnerships has benefited the students and citizens of Toronto for many years. Historically, these partnerships flourished under a funding structure that enabled school boards and municipalities to address community benefits directly from a common tax base.

The TDSB fully supports the province's commitment to community hubs to create vibrant centres of community life, strengthen our public school system, and reduce the massive community



infrastructure burden already shouldered by school boards. However, clarification is needed in terms of the funding sources required to make this community hubs vision a reality and to help school boards make these services more accessible for all.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Education:

- Restore the Priority Schools Initiative and the Community Use of Schools funding, to support free permits and position of the Community Use of Schools Coordinator.

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Our Mission

To enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and well-being and to acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible, contributing members of a democratic and sustainable society.

We Value

- Each and every student's interests, strengths, passions, identities and needs
- A strong public education system
- A partnership of students, staff, family and community
- Shared leadership that builds trust, supports effective practices and enhances high expectations
- The diversity of our students, staff and our community
- The commitment and skills of our staff
- Equity, innovation, accountability and accessibility
- Learning and working spaces that are inclusive, caring, safe, respectful and environmentally sustainable

Our Goals

Transform Student Learning

We will have high expectations for all students and provide positive, supportive learning environments. On a foundation of literacy and math, students will deal with issues such as environmental sustainability, poverty and social justice to develop compassion, empathy and problem solving skills. Students will develop an understanding of technology and the ability to build healthy relationships.

Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being

We will build positive school cultures and workplaces where mental health and well-being is a priority for all staff and students. Teachers will be provided with professional learning opportunities and the tools necessary to effectively support students, schools and communities.

Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

We will ensure that all schools offer a wide range of programming that reflects the voices, choices, abilities, identities and experiences of students. We will continually review policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion and human rights practices and enhance learning opportunities for all students.

Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

We will allocate resources, renew schools, improve services and remove barriers and biases to support student achievement and accommodate the different needs of students, staff and the community.

Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

We will strengthen relationships and continue to build partnerships among students, staff, families and communities that support student needs and improve learning and well-being. We will continue to create an environment where every voice is welcomed and has influence.

To read the full Multi-Year Strategic Plan, visit www.tdsb.on.ca/mysp

