The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) places the highest priority on the literacy development of students at all grade levels, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. A comprehensive literacy program framed within daily literacy blocks allows our elementary students to develop and master thinking, reading, writing, speaking, and media literacy skills. As students progress through the middle and secondary school grades, the literacy demands of all subject areas become increasingly complex. All students entering work, college, apprenticeship, and university destinations need critical-thinking and effective reading, writing, media literacy, and oral language skills to achieve success in life. The TDSB has undertaken the following initiatives to promote the literacy development of all students.

ASSESSING STUDENTS’ LITERACY: AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is an assessment tool that is used across the TDSB with students from Senior Kindergarten to Grade 3. It provides diagnostic information on reading comprehension, fluency, accuracy, phrasing, and expression. The information collected during the assessment, in particular the miscue analysis, is essential, as it allows the teacher to identify what the student needs to learn next, and the specific skills that will be the focus of instruction. The DRA is primarily a resource that is intended to support classroom instruction. Professional learning opportunities are conducted by teacher-leaders in each Family of Schools.

Alpha Jeunes is the assessment tool that is used across the TDSB with students in grades 1-3 in the Early French Immersion program. The Alpha Jeunes diagnostic provides French Immersion teachers with a similar assessment to that of the DRA in English classes. It is also used to collect system-wide data regarding the development of reading skills of students in French and provides teachers with the opportunity to create class profiles and customize reading programs for students in a second language classroom.

Two additional literacy assessment tools are used in the primary grades. The Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement™ for Kindergarten and Grade 1 is used to develop a rich profile of young readers and is intended to be used in its entirety. Senior Kindergarten and grade 1 teachers in French Immersion classrooms use a selection of the tools from Le Sondage d’Observation that would be appropriate for students developing language and literacy skills in French. The LAMP (Literacy Assessment Manual 2003–Primary) for Kindergarten to Grade 3 is a compendium of rich classroom-based resources containing assessment tools that teachers can use to assess students’ development and achievement in various aspects of literacy.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a community-based measure, used by Kindergarten teachers to assess children’s readiness to learn at school in five general domains, including language, general knowledge, and cognitive skills. Research generated by the TDSB, along with external research, reveals that the EDI yields reliable data for early intervention. Teachers review this early-intervention data to provide differentiated programming to meet the needs of our early learners.
**FACTS**

**CASI (Comprehension Attitude Strategies Interests) Reading Assessment** (revised 2006) for Grades 4–8 has been distributed to all TDSB schools. These grade-specific assessment packages include reading passages and other components such as oral retelling, reading conference, miscue analysis, oral and written comprehension questions—assessments that provide important information that enables teachers to improve the reading skills and strategies of all learners. Training of teachers new to CASI is conducted by English/Literacy Instructional Leaders who also provide system-wide support to help teachers plan next steps for instruction.

**La Trousse d’Évaluation Diagnostique de la Lecture en Immersion française** is the reading assessment written specifically for French Immersion students in grades 4–8 in the TDSB. It is a package designed to include the same components of the CASI including the student conference and the reading inventory in French. This information will assist French Immersion teachers in program planning. Board-wide training is conducted throughout the school year by the Instructional Leaders in the French As a Second Language department.

**TDSB Student Success Kit for Literacy, Grades 7 and 8**
This customized TDSB literacy diagnostic tool is both a reading and writing assessment, and is designed to complement the use of CASI with Grades 7 and 8 students. The TDSB Student Success Kit contains a wide range of cross-curricular reading passages with associated reading and writing tasks. It enables all teachers to match every Grade 7 and Grade 8 student with a text he or she can read and write about in order to demonstrate the literacy skills he or she already possesses. This information will help teachers provide explicit instruction in reading and writing to help Grades 7 and 8 students set literacy goals and move to the next level of literacy success in their school subjects, enabling them to make a successful transition to secondary school. It is a companion to the TDSB Literacy Success Diagnostic Kit (Secondary).

**TDSB Literacy Success Diagnostic Kit (Secondary)**
The TDSB Literacy Success Diagnostic Kit is now available for all secondary schools to use. This cross-curricular diagnostic assessment is appropriate for use with Grades 9 and 10 students. It contains a wide range of reading selections and writing tasks that will enable teachers to identify all their students’ literacy strengths and challenges so they may provide the differentiated and precise literacy instruction their students need to be successful in all subject areas, as well as on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. It is a companion to the new TDSB Success Kit for Literacy, Grades 7 and 8.

**Grades 9 and 10 English Literacy Diagnostic Assessments**
English teachers use TDSB-developed English diagnostic assessments with their students in Grades 9 and 10 English that are specific to the literacy requirements of the Grades 9 and 10 English curriculum, with clear links to reading and writing skills students are expected to demonstrate on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Samples of TDSB students’ work provided with the assessments enable teachers to evaluate their students’ responses according to the OSSLT and provincial standards. Teachers use the assessment results to provide explicit, differentiated, and intentional instruction in the literacy skills students need to be successful.
LITERACY PROJECTS, STRATEGIES, AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Early Years: Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
The TDSB’s Parenting and Family Literacy Centres work together with Child Care and Kindergarten teachers to support early literacy for children. These are school-based programs in which parents/guardians and their children (birth to age six) participate together in a range of play-based learning activities. These activities focus on the optimal development of the child and the early acquisition of literacy, numeracy, and social skills. The programs promote children’s early learning through play and inquiry, and lay the foundations for a successful transition to school. Parents and guardians are introduced to the school system in positive ways, and are supported in the critical role they play in their child’s acquisition of early literacy skills.

Kindergarten Networks
Kindergarten networks have been established in many areas of the TDSB for both the regular and the Senior Kindergarten French Immersion programs. An important emphasis of Kindergarten teachers’ professional learning is a focus on early literacy, particularly research-based practices that have a positive impact on children’s learning. In addition, these networks allow Kindergarten teachers to share best practice and establish consistency in practice and communication about developmentally appropriate early learning.

Kindergarten Learning Strategy
The Kindergarten Learning Strategy (KLS) is an electronic resource for Kindergarten teachers and Early Childhood Educators. Six key components are featured:

- Culture of High Expectations
- Comprehensive Literacy and Numeracy
- Learning Environment
- Assessment as, for, and of Learning
- Play-Based Programming
- Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

Each component outlines what the expectation of practice is, what it looks like in the classroom, and practices to rethink or replace. Included in the KLS are photographs from classrooms, video clips of instructional approaches, Ministry of Education video clips, articles, resource lists, and PowerPoint presentations that have been shared in professional learning sessions led by the Early Years Department. A new feature to the KLS is the addition of photographs and clips from French Immersion classes that support the same instructional strategies and practices in Senior Kindergarten French classes.
Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP)
This partnership between The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (LNS) and the TDSB is intended to support schools in sharpening the instructional focus on strategies that will raise student achievement. Staff continue to implement the Teaching/Learning Critical Pathway, a collaborative professional teaching and learning model, where teachers work in teams to improve their students’ reading, writing, and higher-order thinking skills. TLCP’s are conducted in both single-track and dual-track French Immersion schools as part of teacher collaboration. The pathway is built on the principles of precision, personalization, and professional learning, and allows teachers to focus on using assessment data along with evidence-based instructional strategies to help students to improve their academic performance. The professional learning that is part of every pathway involves teachers in exploring the research that supports the instructional focus on which each pathway is based. The professional learning teams in which teachers work to build and implement these pathways are facilitated by administrators, teacher leaders in schools, Teaching & Learning Instructional Leaders, and/or Student Achievement Officers from the LNS.

System Implementation Monitoring (SIM) and Student Work Study (SWS)
In addition to OFIP, the TDSB partners with the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat on the System Implementation Monitoring initiative. The extensive design and development work is led by a System Improvement Team, Quad Improvement Teams, and School Improvement Teams. This tri-level strategy involves superintendents, principals, vice-principals, and teachers working together in identifying and spreading excellent teaching practices that result in moving students working at Level 1 or 2 to Levels 3 and 4.

The focus on making exemplary practice an expectation and not an exception is achieved through the networks of professional learning. These networks consist of principals, vice-principals, and teachers, facilitated and coached by superintendents, key literacy and mathematics teachers, as well as LNS student achievement officers and Instructional Leaders from English/Literacy. The professional learning model is based on collaborative focused inquiry, where staff examine the instructional core, develop theories of action to guide their work, and use student work as a key source of information about effective teaching and learning practices. Critical thinking, critical stance, and assessment for and as learning are the focus of professional learning.

An added aspect to the SIM strategy is the Student Work Study (SWS) teachers. Through LNS funding, SWS teachers are assigned to clusters of five to seven SIM schools. The SWS teachers and classroom teachers use student work and close observations of how students learn to uncover, articulate, develop, and share current best thinking on how to support students working at Level 2 to the next level of performance in literacy and mathematics. This sharing of practice between partner teachers results in deeper, more thoughtful implementation of effective teaching which is responsive to students’ needs and strengths. The effectiveness of the SWS strategy is documented through a reflective journal kept by teachers and shared between teachers. These two strategies will continue next year, as the initial research of implementation effectiveness indicates tremendous gains in teachers’ knowledge construction and understanding of students’ literacy and mathematics development, which in turn contributes to positive effects on students’ thinking, learning, and success.
PROGRAMS FOR LITERACY IMPROVEMENT

Reading Recovery®
Reading Recovery® is a one-to-one early reading and writing intervention program for selected students in Grade 1. Teachers participate in intensive training in their first year of teaching Reading Recovery, and are continuously trained throughout the time they are teaching Reading Recovery. Teachers work one-on-one with students in 30-minute daily lessons for a maximum of 20 weeks. Students who demonstrate literacy skills that are below the expected levels on formal assessments conducted by their classroom teachers may be selected for this intervention. The program shows a high success rate in helping students to achieve grade-level performance upon completion of the 20 weeks or less of direct and precise instruction in Reading Recovery. The effectiveness of this program is well documented internationally, and is celebrated by staff, parents/guardians, and students.

Literacy Enrichment Academic Program (LEAP)
LEAP is an intensive upgrading program for students who have recently arrived in Ontario schools with limited prior schooling. Some have not had the opportunity to attend school at all before arriving in Canada. As a result, these students are significantly behind their peers in literacy and numeracy, and would not achieve Level 1 if assessed according to grade-level expectations. LEAP helps students to make significant gains (equivalent to at least two grade levels in one academic year) in second-language development, literacy and numeracy skills, and academic skills and knowledge, so that they can eventually be successfully integrated into the regular program. LEAP is provided for newcomers beginning in Grade 4.

First Steps™
First Steps™ is a literacy framework that helps teachers to deliver effective, comprehensive programs in reading, writing, and oral communication. Intensive staff development ensures that teachers link assessment with instruction, and provides a rich repertoire of strategies to build the literacy skills of all students, including French Immersion students, English Language Learners, and students with special needs. The focus has been First Steps™ Writing in both the English and French Immersion programs. First Steps is supported at the FOS level where teacher leaders facilitate the training and support for First Steps in Families of Schools who have adopted this program as part of their literacy focus.

Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI)
Early intervention is critical to the success of students who are experiencing difficulty in reading. The goal of the LLI, is to close the achievement gap between those students exiting kindergarten and entering grade one. As part of the Early Years Strategy, LLI was piloted in 37 schools, helping teachers to use initial and ongoing assessments to personalize instruction, monitor progress and make instructional decisions based on observation to improve student achievement. Teachers received intensive professional learning opportunities in addition to Early Years, English/Literacy and English as a Second Language Instructional Leader support directly in their classrooms to facilitate the implementation of this intervention. Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders have played a key role in the ongoing professional learning for the LLI teachers.
Throughout the school year, the English/Literacy, the French As a Second Language, Classical and International Languages and the English as a Second Language departments support the professional learning of teachers of primary and junior students in a wide variety of ways, including literacy support in FOS networks and hubs. In addition, they provide subject-specific expertise and leadership to literacy steering committees. Instructional Leaders use current research combined with relevant data to identify the literacy topics, strategies, and resources that will be most effective in supporting and celebrating students’ literacy development in the primary and junior grades. Some of these include assisting teachers and administrators in:

- effectively using the literacy block of time within the school day to achieve a comprehensive literacy program
- enabling students to become critical thinkers, readers, and writers (critical literacy)
- encouraging students to critically examine and expertly use twenty-first-century forms of literacy and become confidently “media literate”
- integrating literacy across the subjects to improve students’ thinking, reasoning, and communication skills
- teaching students a wide variety of non-fiction forms of writing so that they may find and express their own voices
- using effective and differentiated assessment practices to help all their students achieve success
- using the results of EQAO assessments as a teaching tool to improve their teaching and students’ learning
- engaging in professional learning and dialogue through exploration classrooms for the primary and junior grades
- ensuring that current Ministry of Education resource documents are available and being used effectively and thoughtfully

**Full Day Kindergarten (FDK)**
This capacity building series was designed to support each implementation phase of the Ministry’s FDK program through a differentiated approach. The TDSB Early Years Strategy framework (2012) served as a foundation. Under the leadership of the Early Years Instructional Leaders, over 400 teachers, Early Childhood Educators and administrators participated in 8 half-day sessions. Sessions focused on:

- oral language development
- early reading and writing acquisition
- inquiry based learning
- the role of observation and documentation to scaffold young children’s learning
- strategic small group instruction
FACTS

Comprehensive Literacy in the Primary Grades
In 2012-2013, an interdisciplinary team comprised of Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders, Early Years Instructional Leaders, and English/Literacy Instructional Leaders developed a powerful, job-embedded learning series. The goals of this series were to ensure consistent implementation of developmentally appropriate practice, connect assessment for and as learning to instruction, and to close the achievement gap between kindergarten and grade one students within the framework of the comprehensive literacy block.

Using EQAO Data! A Professional Learning Series Designed to Use EQAO to Improve Achievement in the Junior Grades
Over 85 teachers from across the system including those from OFIP and SIM schools were provided with a variety of opportunities to examine and expand evidence-based strategies for increasing student achievement. Also involved in these learning opportunities were Special Education and ESL itinerant teachers. These professionals worked under the leadership of English/Literacy Instructional Leaders to understand the provincial assessment in more detail, try out new ideas and reflect on the impact of these ideas by examining samples of student work. Our collective work has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of OFIP schools in TDSB.

Guided Reading: Making the Most of Twelve Minutes
Over 320 primary, junior and intermediate teachers participated in this focused and intentional exploration of guided reading. Participants were provided with opportunities to explore current research and examine effective and intentional teaching strategies. Challenges were addressed with opportunities to explore strategies for keeping the rest of the class engaged and on task during independent reading.

SUPPORTING STUDENT LITERACY SUCCESS: GRADES 7 TO 12

Continuing Support for Student and School Success: The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test
The English/Literacy Department makes available a variety of professional learning opportunities to support teachers of all subjects in Grades 7 to 12, whole school staffs, and administrators, as they prepare their students for success on the OSSLT. These opportunities include: support for professional learning communities devoted to literacy; school literacy committees; fostering a culture of literacy in schools; information sessions on the OSSLT; support for after-school literacy programs for students of Grades 7 and 8 and Grades 9 and 10; professional learning sessions that focus on specific reading and writing strategies; and sessions focusing on improving the literacy skills of specific groups of students (e.g., Applied, Locally Developed Compulsory Credit [LDCC]).
FACTS

Literacy Professional Learning Communities that Work
This year saw the continuation of a series of capacity building professional learning series specifically intended to develop and refine the literacy plans for secondary schools to improve student achievement. Over four sessions, 200 teacher-leaders and administrators participated in an in-depth examination of the OSSLT and the scoring protocol. These schools used a standardized method of data interpretation and, as school teams, developed a comprehensive school profile which reflected opportunity gaps and identified explicit steps to address these gaps. Secondary school teams also had opportunities to see exemplary Literacy Committees in action and participate in moderation activities designed to ensure consistency across school districts.

Exploration English/Literacy Classrooms
In 2012-2013, the English/Literacy Department, the French As a Second Language, Classical and International Languages and the English as a Second Language departments continued the powerful small-group professional learning model of the demonstration classroom, providing opportunities for English teachers to observe exemplary teachers of Grade 9 and 10 academic courses, and Grade 11 college destination courses in their work with students. Many teachers report that the demonstration classroom experience is a highlight of their professional learning and growth and have attributed the ongoing professional learning as essential to improve student outcomes.

Grade 10 OSSLT Preparation Course
Schools offer this 10-hour test-preparation mini-course (non-credit) after school in January/February to prepare students for success on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. Using the Support Document for OSSLT Test-Taking Skills: Non-Credit Program (Grade 10), teachers teach students important test-taking skills (e.g., answering different kinds of questions) and other literacy skills that are key for success on the test. This document is distributed to schools through the Continuing Education Department. This resource is available for purchase from Curriculum Resources at the Tippett Centre (tel: 416-397-2595; fax: 416-395-8357).

Grades 9 and 10 Remedial Literacy Materials
Schools continue to use the Support Document for Grades 9 and 10 Remedial Literacy: Non-Credit Programs in their after-school remedial literacy programs. The TDSB is deeply committed to improving the literacy achievement of all students. Rich and targeted instructional focus provided in these courses is intended to enrich the learning experiences of students who face social and academic challenges. These resources include lessons to help students develop the key reading and writing skills that students must demonstrate on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. This document is distributed to schools through the Continuing Education Department.
FACTS

SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Revised Language Curriculum, Grades 1 to 8 and Revised English Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12
The English/Literacy Department continues to support implementation of the revised curriculum in Grades 1 to 12, and to highlight the many ways the curriculum can help teachers enhance and enrich students’ reading, writing, oral communication, and media literacy skills for success.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC)
The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course is available to students in Grades 11 or 12 who have been unsuccessful on the OSSLT, as an alternate way for them to acquire their literacy graduation requirement. Schools are strongly encouraged to offer the course to students who have been unsuccessful on the OSSLT, since the literacy skills it teaches are essential for student success in all subjects. The English/Literacy Department continues to provide professional learning to teachers of the OSSLC to ensure that they have the strategies and resources they need to help all students receive their graduation literacy requirement. Support includes reading and writing exemplars (samples of student work at various levels of achievement) to help teachers identify and apply a fair and consistent pass/fail standard for this course.

Grades 9 and 10 Locally Developed Compulsory Credit Courses (ENG1L and ENG2L) and ELS
The TDSB is deeply committed to improving the literacy achievement of all students. Rich and targeted instructional focus provided in these courses is intended to enrich the learning experiences of students who face social and academic challenges. The English/Literacy Department provides ongoing professional development opportunities to teachers of the Locally Developed English and English Literacy Skills courses, along with support for the appropriate teaching resources and strategies that will engage these learners in higher-order thinking and critical literacy skills important to their school and future success.

Celebrating Student Literacy
Urban Voices/L’écho de la ville Anthology of Student Poetry
The TDSB is committed to providing opportunities for students to demonstrate success and achievement in literacy at the highest levels. Urban Voices/L’écho de la ville is an annual publication (Volume 1 was published in the year 2000) of exemplary poetry and illustrations, in English and in French, by elementary students from across the TDSB. More than 1000 poems are submitted annually by students in TDSB schools. Following judging at the school, quadrant, and Board levels in February, poems are selected for publication. A gala celebration and launch is held in June each year.
SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS

The TDSB provides extensive support to teachers in their first and second years of teaching in all schools and Families of Schools. An important aspect of the Beginning Teachers initiative is the pairing of new teachers with experienced teachers who have effective interpersonal and teaching skills, who act as mentors for beginning teachers.

English/Literacy, the French As a Second Language, Classical and International Languages and the English as a Second Language Instructional Leaders provide direct support for the professional learning of beginning teachers in the following settings:

- one-to-one support in their classrooms
- job-embedded learning in demonstration classroom settings
- grade teams or department professional learning
- learning modules
- FOS learning sessions

All professional learning for beginning teachers focuses on the development of strong, well-planned English and literacy programs, with attention to implementation of the revised curriculum for Language, Grades 1 to 8 and English, Grades 9 to 12, classroom organization and management, and issues related to assessment and evaluation.

For more information contact:

Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Central Coordinating Principal, 416-396-2174 or sheryl.robinsonpetrazzini@tdsb.on.ca

Alix Harte, Program Coordinator, English/Literacy, 416-578-0502 or alix.harte@tdsb.on.ca