

# TAB 5

Program Priorities

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## 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. Choice, 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 more than 240,000 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 and respectful, and celebrate and honour students, 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 guides all that we do. The plan acts as a high-level statement of intent that sets direction and identifies system goals to support all of our students.



TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Vision for Learning are supported by four operational plans that have already been launched and continue to be implemented. They include: the Integrated Equity Framework, the Leadership Capacity Plan, the Learning Centre Strategy, and the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy.

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### 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 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, and 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.

### Secondary Program Review

As part of the Integrated Equity Framework, all students will be supported so they successfully graduate with a diploma or certificate of school completion and continue on their chosen post-secondary pathway. The Secondary Program Review will actively engage students in re-envisioning our secondary schools. It will examine access to secondary programs as well as the programs offered at the secondary panel. It will be completed over the next three years.

### Goals of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The goals of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan have major implications for the Program area:

1. Transform Student Learning
2. Create a Culture of Student and Staff Well-Being
3. Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
4. Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
5. Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

#### 1. Transform Student Learning

- We will provide all students with positive, supportive learning environments that have high expectations and enable them to reach their full potential as valuable and contributing members of society.
- We will work actively to ensure that communication, critical thinking & problem solving, collaboration & leadership, global citizenship & character, creativity, inquiry and

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entrepreneurship are embedded in all learning, beginning in the early years. On a foundation of literacy and math, students will deal with issues such as environmental sustainability, poverty and social justice in order for them to develop compassion, empathy and solutions to challenging problems.

- We will use technology thoughtfully to ensure that students develop both digital fluency and the ability to build healthy relationships with classmates and adults.

### **2. Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being**

- We will build positive school cultures that support the mental health and overall well-being (physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual) of all students.
- We will create the conditions for every student in every school to experience the support of a caring adult.
- We will equip educators with the tools necessary to teach, assess, support, and relate to students to ensure that student mental health and well-being is at the centre of teaching and learning.
- We will partner with staff to create workplaces that promote positive mental health and well-being and are free of bias and full of potential.
- We will provide all staff with professional learning opportunities that build healthy relationships and develop leadership capacity to effectively support students, schools and their communities.

### **3. Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students**

- We will effectively integrate the voices, choices, abilities and experiences of our students into our school programming. Students will be more successful when they are engaged in their learning in this manner. We will be more responsive to the strengths, interests, gifts, and lived realities of our students as we create and design our schools and classrooms.
- We will ensure that every school offers a wide range of programming and creates a welcoming, inclusive learning environment for all students.
- We will continually review and assess our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion and human rights practices.

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- We will review program, planning and accommodation needs to ensure equitable access, increased opportunities and enhanced learning outcomes for all students.

### **4. Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs**

- We will allocate human and financial resources to ensure that all schools and departments can support optimal student learning, based on the principles of equity and excellence.
- We will review budget allocations to address any barriers or system biases that could negatively affect student achievement and well-being.
- We will work to continuously renew facilities and improve services to meet the highest possible standards to accommodate the needs of students, staff and the community.

### **5. Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being**

- We will strengthen relationships among our students, staff, families and communities to create a culture that supports all students and leads to improved learning and well-being.
- We will involve parents/guardians in the school improvement process to ensure their voices and perspectives inform our work.
- We will continue to build both formal and informal community partnerships to support the needs of all students and families.
- We will continue to create an environment of shared leadership where everyone's expertise and experience is invited and every voice has influence.

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### Aboriginal Education

We recognize that the persistent achievement gap identified across Ontario for Aboriginal students compared to their non-Aboriginal peers is rooted in the destructive events and histories of colonization. In 2014, the Board passed a resolution to ensure that all students graduate with a significant knowledge of the effects of residential schools on Aboriginal communities.

#### How do we Support Aboriginal Education?

The goal of TDSB's Aboriginal Education Strategy is to “decolonize” our schools through actions aimed at enhancing overall achievement and social and emotional well-being of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students:

- By analyzing existing and emerging data through an Indigenous lens to identify trends, target research-based initiatives and inform effective program planning.
- By creating community partnerships to deliver culturally-relevant wrap-around supports and services directly to First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and their families.
- By creating culturally-relevant and responsive programming and learning environments that meet the unique needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and communities.
- Increasing knowledge and appreciation of Aboriginal experiences, values and cultures across the system, among all TDSB students and staff:
- By developing innovative program options and inclusive curriculum to infuse Aboriginal voices, perspectives and experiences across all areas of the curriculum, for all TDSB students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- By providing staff development to increase knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories and ways of knowing, and build system-wide capacity and cultural competence.

#### 2017-2018 Update

- A comprehensive plan has been developed to implement the Board's resolution of December 2014 and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action #62 and #63, focusing

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on treaties and residential school impact. Components of this plan include the Board Action Plan on First Nations, Metis and Inuit Education that guides and supports staff professional learning across the district; community learning opportunities and community events; a well-maintained roster of diverse Aboriginal artists, speakers, knowledge and wisdom keepers and Elders to support all work connected to Aboriginal Education and a well-attended, broadly represented Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee.

- The two Native Learning Centres (one downtown that works in partnership with Jarvis CI located adjacent to Church St PS and the other at Sir Wilfred Laurier CI) provide educational programs to Indigenous youth working toward high school graduation. The NLC program model provides students with an opportunity to work at their own pace, with highly individualized instruction in a non-competitive environment. The programs' foundation and success are based on combining traditional practices with "wrap around, holistic" services to meet the needs of students, fostering positive Indigenous identities, achievement and well-being.
- For students studying Native Language, a secondary school pathway is in place at five TDSB secondary schools. The five schools are Riverdale C.I., First Nations School of Toronto, Sir Wilfrid Laurier C.I., Native Learning Centre Downtown and Native Learning Centre East.
- First introduced in 2013 at 18 secondary schools as a Grade 9 Visual Arts pilot program, NAC10: Expressions of First Nations, Métis, Inuit Cultures has now grown to 64 secondary schools. Response from both students and staff has been extremely positive, and the incremental revenue generated for the Board by the course is used to fund NAC10 teacher professional learning, classroom resources and experiential partnerships.

### Next Steps

- Design and construction of the First Nations School of Toronto will move forward now that funding has been secured by the Ministry of Education.
- Visioning and research for the reopening of the Boyne as an Indigenous Focused Outdoor Education Centre will include programming possibilities such as Indigenous land-based education: sports (e.g., snowshoeing, lacrosse, archery, hiking), using the kitchen (growing and preparing Indigenous Foods, Indigenous culinary program),



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medicine walks (plant walks), ceremonies (e.g. solstice/equinox gathering, fasting), conferences and feasts, ceremonial spaces (e.g. healing lodge), maple syrup, canoe building, tool making, traditional games, cultural teachings, professional learning, team building activities, wellness activities, workshops and/or classes on the land, community engagement, and partnership engagement.

## Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

The Premier's "Highly Skilled Workforce Report" 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 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?

1. By expanding Specialist High Skills Major Program
2. By expanding Co-operative Education Programming
3. By implementing Community Connected Experiential Learning (K-Adult)
4. By expanding participation in Skills Competitions

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### 2017-2018 Update

- Expansion of Specialist High Skills Major Program
  - 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. In 2017-2018, the TDSB offered 87 SHSM programs in 46 of its secondary schools. This is an increase of seven programs over the previous year.
  - A dedicated staff person was hired in 2018 to support the expansion of the SHSM program.
- Expansion of Co-operative Education Programming
  - The Toronto District School Board offers students opportunities to participate in a variety of cooperative education placements. These opportunities give students valuable work experience. In May, 2018, xoTO/TDSB was officially launched. This unique pilot partnership between the TDSB and the City of Toronto's unions and guilds will allow TDSB students to gain exposure, experience and skills through a variety of learning and work opportunities in the film, television, digital and new media industries. To date, eight students have completed Co-operative Education placements in these fields. One student has been accepted into the Toronto Film School and another is currently doing an apprenticeship in the industry.
- Implementation of Community Connected Experiential Learning (K-Adult)
  - Community-connected experiential learning (CCEL) is a new approach to student learning that provides students with opportunities to participate actively in experiences connected to a community outside of school (local, national, or global); reflect on those experiences to derive meaning from them; and apply their learning to their decisions and actions in various aspects of their lives.
  - Community-connected experiential learning builds on research that indicates that students are more engaged, more motivated to learn, and more successful when they can connect what they are learning to situations they care about in their community and in the world. Research has also found that experiential learning that

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- takes place in the community contributes to the development of 21st century competencies by “giving opportunities for authentic learning, engaging students actively, fostering cooperation and collaboration, meeting individual interests, empowering learners and extending horizons beyond comfort zones” (Furco, 2010, p.227)
- Last year, the Ministry of Education approved five CCEL projects. This year, the TDSB provided professional learning to Elementary teachers to learn about CCEL, and help them to write and submit CCEL proposals to the Ministry. Nine projects, (5 in Elementary, 1 in Secondary and 3 in congregated sites) were approved by the Ministry and TDSB funded 14 more projects (8 in Elementary, 5 in Secondary and 1 in a congregated site). An additional four projects from schools working with the Aboriginal Education Centre were approved.
  - All of these projects provide students with opportunities to engage with local, national or Global community partners as students go through the Experiential Learning Cycle and are provided with opportunities to develop and consider their education and career/life planning competencies.
  - A professional learning session took place in May 2018 where 30 teachers learned more about implementation of CCEL projects.
  - Expansion of Participation in Skills Competitions
    - This year, the TDSB hosted 41 competitions for students to compete in a variety of competitions. In the secondary panel, 241 students from 45 schools competed. 127 students are advancing to the provincial skills competition which is an increase from 91 students last year.
    - The skills competitions provide SHSM students with the opportunity to receive a certification as well as a 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.

### Next Steps

- Expansion of Specialist High Skills Major Program

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- The Ministry has approved an additional 14 programs for 2018-2019, bringing our total to 101 programs in 50 schools.
- Expansion of Co-operative Education Programming
  - For 2018-2019, Co-op opportunities will be expanded with our Specialized Trades Exploration Program (STEP). In STEP, students earn four Co-op credits as well as a Dual Credit (total of 5 high school credits and one college-level credit). The STEP to Construction program (formerly CTEP) is expanding to two sections, or 88 students over the year. Students are given hands-on opportunities to discover the wide range of careers available in construction and they gain valuable industry experience.
  - New for 2018-2019 is our STEP to Transportation program where students will explore the Motive Power sector at the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), including Truck and Coach Technician, Auto Body Collision Repair, Electronics, Carpentry, Millwright, Metal Fabricator, Welder and more. This program will accept 44 students next year.
  - xoTO/TDSB will be expanded to increase student Co-op placements in the film, television, digital and new media industries from eight students to a minimum of 24 students. TDSB will work closely with the Ontario Media Development Corporation, as well as guilds and unions, to ensure that students have diverse and rich experiential opportunities to explore these fascinating and potentially lucrative careers -- careers for which the students of Toronto are particularly well poised to access due to the location of the Board and this innovative partnership with the city.
- Implementation of Community Connected Experiential Learning (K-Adult)
  - TDSB's Media department is capturing some of these projects to help promote CCEL learning to schools for next year so the program continues to expand.
  - Professional learning sessions will continue to be offered to teachers to expand teacher capacity to develop new partnerships.
- Expansion of Participation in Skills Competitions
  - Staff will capitalize on the momentum in the area and continue to increase participation in skills competitions.

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### French Immersion and Extended French

#### Why 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.

With over 90,000 students in Core French and another 28,000 students in French Immersion/Extended French programs, comes 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.

#### 2017-2018 Update

As part of the Director's Response to the Enhanced Equity Task Force Report, a review of all French Programs took place in spring 2018. In collaboration with the TDSB's Research department, this review focused on the current status of all French Programs, including the structure, content of the teaching and learning, and policies and procedures related to French. The feedback was received about the successes and challenges of the various French Programs through face-to-face consultation with parents/guardians, Trustees, staff, students and community members and online surveys.

#### Next Steps

The findings of the review will be included in a staff report to be presented to board committee in the fall 2018. Implementation of the Board's decisions related to the review will constitute next steps.

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### Special Education and Inclusion

#### Why Special Education Inclusion?

Students with special education needs should participate and be included in all school activities. They need to be valued as individuals for their unique contributions to school life so that they will enjoy a sense of belonging to a school community that accepts ownership and responsibility for their learning. They need to be unencumbered by stereotypical, outdated perspectives about abilities and disabilities.

#### 2017-2018 Update

The Integrated Equity Framework for Inclusion and Special Education 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)
- Deficit thinking is rejected and students are not organized within and outside the classroom by perceived ability (Parekh & Underwood, 2016)

#### Next Steps

- Continue to remodel the Home School Program. Ensure that resources are available to meet the needs of primary students who will be served in the regular class in their local school
- Continue to move towards greater inclusion by:

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- Ensuring that all students with exceptionalities are reviewed through the IPRC process at least every other school year.
- Continuing to use a variety of communication strategies in order to provide parents/students with information about services and programs offered by Special Education and Section 23 Programs.
- Continuing to provide professional learning opportunities for all staff.

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