



Toronto District School Board **Service Excellence**



Our Vision

All levels of government in Canada are shifting their emphasis to become more client-focused. As clients increasingly demand better quality services, the public sector needs to realign its work processes, delivery strategies and methods.

School boards are in the business of service delivery of the most vital kind. For the sake of our students, it is important that we continuously make improvements to all of our operations.

In the Toronto District School Board, we are dedicated to the achievement and well-being of each and every student. Every day, staff of our 584 schools across this city are privileged to serve students and families of communities as richly diverse and inspiring as any in the world. But when it comes to helping schools create the learning conditions—the equitable, inclusive cultures and welcoming environments—that are critical to the achievement and well-being of all students, the role played by the staff of our central service departments is critical.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is aiming to be at the forefront of this important movement for change in service delivery. We are embarking on a Service Excellence initiative that will improve everything we do.

This project will first focus on the following central business and operations areas that provide services to schools:

- Business Services
- Continuing Education
- Design, Construction & Maintenance
- Director's Office
- Employee Services
- Government, Public & Community Relations
- Governance & Board Services
- Health and Safety
- Human Rights Office
- Information Technology Services
- International Students & Admissions Office
- Legal Services
- Payroll and Benefits
- Plant Operations and Sustainability
- Professional Learning
- Research, Organizational Design & Information Services
- Strategy and Planning

The goal of these areas is to better serve schools.

Even though the initial focus of this project is on the central business and operations areas, the best practices of service excellence are applicable to all TDSB staff.

“We are committed to enhancing our responsiveness through service excellence to support our unwavering focus on student achievement and well-being for all.”

John Malloy
Director of Education



**SERVICE
EXCELLENCE**

What is service excellence?

Service excellence means top-quality client service. It also means treating others the way we would like to be treated. But in order to do that, a great deal of work must happen behind the scenes.

When central business and operations staff deliver excellent service to schools and to each other, school staff can focus on serving the TDSB's primary clients: our students and their parents.

Ultimately, how well the central business and operations staff deliver services will affect thousands of people, from the person on the other side of the office to the broader community.

The Service Excellence initiative will give staff the tools they need to take ownership of their work and be accountable for what they do. By improving communication and work processes, staff can resolve problems faster and more easily.



What is a service?

The work of all staff is to promote the TDSB's mission:

to enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and to get the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible members of a democratic society.

Everything we do at work, directly or indirectly, is intended to further that mission and is considered a service.

**SERVICE
EXCELLENCE**

What is our approach?

The Service Excellence initiative will be rolled out in stages and will involve collaboration and consultations with a broad range of stakeholders.

It is a long-term, but worthy goal. Think of it as being part of a commitment to continuously improve service. We imagine the approach as two-tiered, comprised of quick starts and deeper improvements.

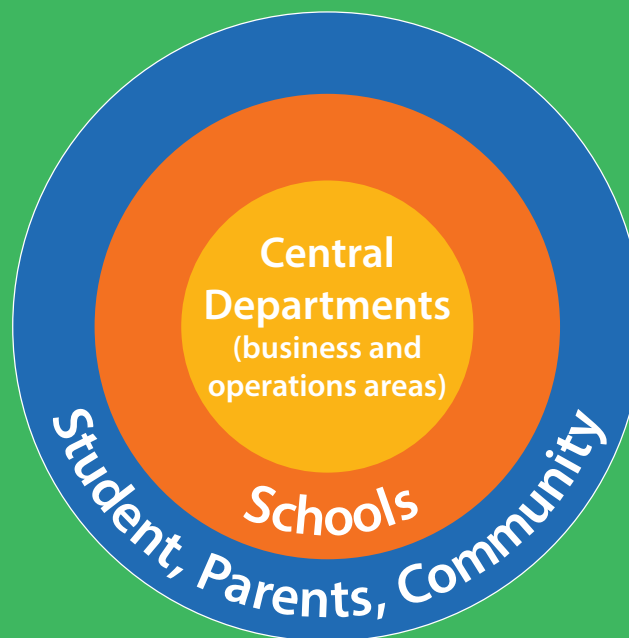
The quick starts address areas where changes can be implemented right away.

The deeper improvements will take longer and will focus on revitalizing our service delivery model so that it is more client-focused, responsive and efficient.

Who are our clients?

A client is anyone who receives a service.

At the TDSB, our clients are everywhere, both inside and outside the organization, and we are all interdependent:



The central business and operations areas serve a vital client: schools. But they are also clients of one another. How they serve schools is a reflection of how they support each other.

Quick starts: what we can do now

The TDSB's Service Excellence initiative is in the early stages of development. However, many staff members are already working in ways that demonstrate the excellence we hope to achieve throughout the organization.

We have incorporated some of these in the Guiding Principles for Service Excellence and Best Practices for Business Communications set out below.

As part of this project, the central business and operations departments will adopt these principles and best practices.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The Guiding Principles for Service Excellence present a common vision of service for all of us to follow and support equitable and inclusive working environments that encourage employee excellence.

They are to be used as a primary factor in how we conduct our business and make decisions.

Our vision is to be client-focused, responsive and efficient.

CLIENT-FOCUSED

We will:

- embrace our role as providers of excellent customer service.
- serve each client in a fair, consistent, courteous and respectful manner while aiming to provide accurate and timely information.
- ensure our services are equitable, easy to access and meet the needs of all clients.

RESPONSIVE

We will:

- approach each client and situation with an open mind, taking ownership of the outcome.
- listen to our clients and coworkers, and strive to improve by refining our processes.
- continuously evaluate and measure our performance to build on our success.

EFFICIENT

We will:

- collaborate and work in partnership across departments to develop innovative, client-focused solutions.
- review and manage our resources to limit waste.
- continuously invest in technology and training so we have the tools, skills and confidence to provide excellent customer service.

Quick starts: what we can do now

BEST PRACTICES FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

Adopting a common language for business communications will help improve our level of service. By committing to follow these practices to the best of our ability, we hold one another accountable to high professional standards for communication.

Under normal circumstances, we should all be able to follow these practices most of the time. If you find yourself consistently unable to do so, please take the time to discuss your particular situation with your supervisor.

The practices outlined below are meant to be general “common sense” standards that can be adopted by all of us, alongside any service level objectives or specific standards particular to your job.

The central business and operations departments have committed to adopt these best practices, effective immediately.

General guidelines

1. Excellent client communication is timely, courteous, accurate, fair and solution-oriented. These qualities will guide all our business communications, whether by telephone, in writing, or in person.
2. Respect the confidentiality of the person you are serving.
3. Be honest. Don't make promises you cannot deliver. Demonstrate empathy for the client even if you cannot fully resolve their issue.
4. Be sure to stay positive and focused on finding a solution, even when dealing with a difficult situation.

Quick starts: what we can do now

Telephone

- Answer the telephone when it rings rather than allowing it to go to voicemail, if possible.
- In a clear voice, identify yourself by department and name.
- Ask how you can help the caller (e.g., How may I help you?).
- Allow the caller to identify and explain the reason for the call.
- Listen attentively and respectfully. Don't interrupt.
- Do your best to serve the caller by providing clear, accurate information.
- Speak slowly, especially if the information you are providing needs to be written down.
- If you are not able to assist the caller yourself, provide him or her with the name, department and phone number/email address of the appropriate person. If possible, offer to take the caller's name and contact information and pass it on to the appropriate person yourself.
- If you are not able to provide an answer at the time of the call, or you don't know to whom you should redirect the caller, offer to call back with an answer and provide the caller with a time frame.
- Follow up the phone call with an email to confirm action items that were agreed to during the conversation.

Voicemail

- Check your voicemail messages frequently, at least twice a day.
- Delete old messages on a regular basis to ensure your mailbox does not become full.
- Answer calls promptly, within one business day. If you are not able to provide a full response, let the caller know when a full response will be delivered.
- Record an outgoing voicemail message that identifies you by name and department. Example:
 - o Thank you for calling. You have reached Susan from Business Services. I am currently unavailable to take your call, so please leave me a detailed message along with your name and contact information and I will return your call as soon as possible.
- Set up an out-of-office notification if you are going to be away from your phone for more than one a day. Include the current date, the date or time of your return and an alternate contact in case of emergency. Example:
 - o Thank you for calling. You have reached Susan from Business Services. I am away from the office, returning (insert time/date). Please leave me a message or contact (insert alternative contact name and number) for immediate assistance.

Quick starts: what we can do now

Written correspondence

Exercise care with all written correspondence. Aim to be clear, complete and professional. Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Email

- When composing an email, use the “to” field for the names of those you require a response from; reserve the “cc” field for those you do not require a response from.
- Check your email messages at least twice a day.
- Respond to non-urgent emails within one business day. If you are not able to provide a full response, let the person know when a full response will be delivered.
- Follow the TDSB’s email signature template to ensure your full name, title, department and phone number are included at the end your emails.
- Activate your out-of-office notification if you are away for more than one day. Include an alternate contact name and number. Examples:
 - o Thank you for your email. I’m out of the office and will be back on (insert date). If you need immediate assistance during my absence, please contact (insert name) at (insert email address). Otherwise, I will respond to your email as soon as possible when I return.
 - o Include details on your availability, if any, by phone or email during your absence, e.g., Thank you for your email. I’m out of the office and will be back on (insert date). During this period, I will have limited access to my email. For immediate assistance, please contact me on my cell phone at (insert number).

Mail or fax

- Respond to written correspondence by mail or fax within two business days.
- Unless a written response is required, respond by telephone or email (within two business days).
- If a written response is required, use proper business letter format on TDSB letterhead. Include your full name, title, department and phone number in your signature.
- If you are not able to provide a full response, acknowledge the letter within two business days and include the date when the client can expect a full response.
- Written correspondence that needs to be answered by another department will be redirected within two business days.
- If you are away from the office for more than two days, assign someone to manage your written correspondence.

Quick starts: what we can do now

In person

Acknowledge and greet people when they enter your workspace.

When visiting a school or site

- Prearrange your visit, if possible. If you will be conducting work in someone else's workspace (e.g., maintenance or repairs), please provide as much advance notice as possible.
- Wear your identification badge.
- Sign in at the office.
- Clearly state the purpose of your visit.
- Be courteous.
- Answer questions and provide accurate information.
- Follow up, if required.

When interacting with members of the public

Some central business and operations departments deal directly with the public. All interactions with the public must be professional:

- Display your department's hours of operation.
- Ensure the area is clean, tidy and safe.
- Wear your identification badge.
- When a client comes to the counter, acknowledge him or her immediately. Clients at the counter take priority over phone calls.
- Be courteous.
- Listen to requests, ask questions if needed and provide accurate information.
- Follow up as needed.

In meetings

- Be on time.
- Be prepared.
- Introduce yourself.
- Listen and participate.
- Do not interrupt.
- Stay focused on the agenda.
- Avoid side conversations.
- Set your phone to silent. Do not respond to non-urgent messages during the meeting.
- Follow through on action items.

In addition to these quick starts—the Guiding Principles for Service Excellence and the Best Practices for Business Communications—the Board is committed to deeper improvements.

Deeper Improvements

CHANGING HOW WE SERVE SCHOOLS AND ONE ANOTHER

The Guiding Principles for Service Excellence and the Best Practices for Business Communications are just the start.

Shifting how an organization operates is deeply complex and takes time. All staff, starting at the highest level, will be called to reflect upon how they think and behave at work. The TDSB is committed to building leadership and a service excellence team to lead the change.

We need deeper improvements to enhance how services are delivered to schools. Service delivery that is client-focused, responsive and efficient supports school staff members who are striving to make a difference in students' lives.

We envision deeper improvements to include the following components:

1. Developing meaningful and measurable service standards specific to each service being offered, thus bringing consistency and reliability to the delivery of all services offered by the central business and operations departments;
2. Documenting and streamlining business processes to create better quality services with clients in mind;
3. Tracking performance and reporting on results across the full range of services offered by the central departments;
4. Increasing the focus on communication with clients in general and improving the use of the intranet in particular as part of an overall client service strategy.

The Service Excellence initiative offers a new path for the TDSB and an opportunity to become a leader in client service in public education.