

Three-year results for Model Schools for Inner Cities

Background of the program

- Model Schools for Inner Cities was launched in 2005 to provide inner city students with the same choices as all children in Toronto
- The Board has invested \$25 million in the Model Schools for Inner Cities program, which identified seven Model Schools to act as the engines for change. These schools provide leadership and best practices to cluster schools in their area
- The program is based on five Essential Components for change, which are implemented in the Model Schools and the cluster schools. They are:
 - Innovative teaching and learning practices
 - Support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students
 - School as the heart of the community
 - Research, review and evaluation of students and programs
 - Commitment to share successful practice

Three-year results

- It is the mandate of the project to report on the results of the Model Schools for Inner Cities program after three years
- This research will demonstrate how the five Essential Components have been used to reach the goal of the Model Schools for Inner Cities program

Highlights of results

- Both quantitative and qualitative data collected over the last three years clearly indicate that all seven Model Schools have:
 - ✓ narrowed the opportunity gap (levelled the playing field) – by meeting students’ basic needs, engaging parents, and partnering with the community
 - closed the achievement gap – from below standard in reading, writing and math basic skills to at or above expected level – building important foundations for continuous learning
 - ✓ increased attendance and reduced lateness in some schools
 - ✓ increased students’ progress over time
 - ✓ strengthened the physical, social and emotional well-being of their students
 - ✓ increased young students’ readiness for schooling in their early years
 - ✓ improved school atmosphere for learning
 - ✓ enhanced opportunities for staff development and involvement in multiple areas.

Programs that led to these results

Hearing and Visioning screening – Students tested to determine if there were hearing or vision problems hinder their ability to learn

Parent engagement – Schools developed parent workshops, a yearly parent conference and after school programs and training to help parents understand the education system and engage more in their children’s education

Community partnerships – Partnerships are developed with community agencies to ensure students and their families have access to community events and resources

Nutrition and dining programs to meet students’ basic needs

Concentrated curriculum with a social justice lens

After school programs such as Beyond 3:30 that provide a safe place for students to learn and play

Specialized staff assigned to schools i.e. Teaching/Learning Coaches, Community Support Workers, Lead Teachers

What we’ve learned

- After three years of research on the seven Model Schools, we have learned that all high needs schools - no matter how challenging – can bring about change, and can close the opportunity gap *as long as* the school has (or is given):
 - ✓ Solid support and resources to level the playing field (to fill the opportunity gaps)
 - ✓ Extra efforts to make up the initial achievement gaps
 - ✓ Opportunities to research and review information to help monitor progress so adjustments can be made to the programs and curriculum where necessary
 - ✓ Sufficient time to demonstrate growth – the more challenging the school the longer the time is needed.
 - ✓ Sustained leadership which is fair, open, collaborative, forward thinking and visionary
 - ✓ Staff support and engagement
 - ✓ Continuous resources and efforts to cope with, changing external and internal challenges.

Moving Forward

- The program has managed to change the way inner city education is delivered and has narrowed the opportunity gap and the achievement gap
- Model Schools for Inner Cities will continue to focus efforts and resources on these five essential components to finally close these gaps and to ensure they do not widen again
- The Model Schools for Inner Cities program focus should continue for at least three more years to determine the program has managed to meet the needs of the whole inner city child, ensuring they have same opportunities as all other children in the Toronto District School Board