

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting

September 18, 2023

Leadership Report

Learning Innovation and Equitable Outcomes

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Projected Enrolment Data for 2023-2024 (Attachment)

Projected enrollment data for the 2023-2024 school year for Elementary and Secondary has been included in the attachments to this report.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability (AODA) Update

This report highlights the key activities of the Accessibility Office at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) in their pursuit of compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) from 2005 to September 2023.

Accessibility Policies and Plans:

- TDSB's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is undergoing updates that are in line with AODA requirements and which coincide with the 2023 Accessibility Compliance Report due by December 31, 2023.
- The Accessibility Policy: P069 was updated to include provisions for training and emergency response for people with disabilities.
- An internal administrative review is in progress for various procedures related to public use of service animals, support persons, and assistive devices.
- A monthly awareness campaign focusing on accessibility in physical, digital, social, and emotional aspects has been initiated on our internal website.
- AODA compliance training sessions are mandatory for TDSB staff, with upcoming topics including "Defining Disability" and "Defining Accessibility".
- Digital Document Accessibility Training is being provided to staff.
- One-on-one interviews with Advisory Board members highlighted financial limitations and diverse accessibility needs. The need for significant funding for accessibility improvements was emphasized.

Information and Communications

Our unit regularly conducts accessibility audits of content on the TDSB website. Where content is not accessible, we contact, invite, train, and provide direction in making public facing communications accessible.

Employment Standards

The collection of samples related to employment procedures for employees with disabilities is ongoing for the December 31, 2023 submission deadline.

Staff census data will be released in a report entitled “Count Yourself In Every Voice Matters - TDSB Staff Census Final Report in Fall 2023”. The report identified 2019 respondents who identified as a person with a disability, which accounts for 6.4% of 31, 532 TDSB staff.

Built Environment

The excerpt below is taken from the report [Making TDSB School Buildings and Sites More Accessible](#)

“While all new TDSB schools are designed to meet or exceed current accessibility standards, most of our older schools were not built with accessibility in mind. These sites include significant barriers to students, educators, parents, and visitors with disabilities, including those who use mobility assistance devices and who have low vision or hearing.”

The physical barriers present at 5050 Yonge hinder people with disabilities from accessing TDSB services. These barriers encompass a range of challenges, from inadequate parking, signage, lack of ramps and elevators, to narrow doorways and inaccessible washrooms.

There is an urgent need for TDSB to prioritize full physical accessibility. Such limitations not only exclude individuals with disabilities, but also send a discouraging message that their needs are not valued. Ensuring full accessibility at 5050 is not just a matter of convenience; it is a fundamental human right. It promotes inclusivity, fosters diversity, and allows all members of our community to participate fully in the educational opportunities and services offered by the TDSB. It is the goal that by January 1, 2025, the TDSB will become fully accessible to all people.

Conclusion

TDSB remains committed to AODA compliance, focusing on policies, training, and accessibility improvements. The goal is to better serve all members of the TDSB community and ensure inclusion, diversity, and equal access to educational opportunities. Collaborations with other departments and organizations continue towards sharing best practices and strategies for AODA compliance.



Special Education Fall and Winter Professional Activity (PA) Day Sessions

Building on the success of the June 2023 PA Day, professional learning sessions for support staff will be offered by Special Education and Inclusion staff from the Assistive Technology, Autism Services, and Behaviour, Prevention and Intervention (BPI) teams during PA Days throughout the fall and winter. They will present a variety of interactive professional learning sessions for support staff on a number of topics such as *ABCs of ABA: Using Basic ABA Strategies in the Classroom; Positive Reinforcement; Structuring Unstructured Time; Behaviour Prevention and Supporting De-Escalation; and Effective Strategies to Support Students Who Have an Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Device.*

These hands-on learning sessions will provide an opportunity for support staff to learn, develop skills and explore effective inclusionary practices to implement accommodations in classrooms that incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI). Participants will deepen their understanding of the intersection of anti-ableism, anti-oppression and anti-racism and discuss ways in which students can effectively be integrated and supported in school.

PowerSchool Special Education Application

In March 2024, the TDSB will move all Special Education and Inclusion applications to the PowerSchool Special Education Program. The existing processes and forms are similar, and the new platform will be integrated with PowerSchool SIS and provide the user with more modernized functionality and design.

To support teachers and schools in shifting over to this new platform, staff will receive 30 minutes of asynchronous professional learning on the October 6 PA Day to review the technical instructional videos that have been developed to support in navigating and utilizing the new platform.

Five schools are piloting the new program beginning this September to support a smooth transition in March 2024. Currently teachers and special education staff are learning the new platform and providing valuable feedback to the developers.

Summer Transition for Students with High Special Education Needs

Students with high special education needs have a range of physical, emotional, social, health, safety, and academic needs that should be considered as they transition back to school. For these students, structure and routine are often critical components to learning. Through ministry funding, over 83 elementary and secondary schools offered a transition program for students with high special education needs to facilitate a smooth transition back to school. Programs included building relationships, establishing familiarity with schools and reviewing/practicing routines.



Special Education and Inclusion Summer School Program

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) once again offered a variety of summer programs for students with special education needs. Programs to meet the various needs of students who receive support for their physical disabilities, developmental disabilities from Kindergarten to age 21, and for those with deaf and hard of hearing needs were held at eleven school sites across the TDSB. Of the various sites, six were specialized congregated schools, and five were schools running additional programs providing a wonderful integrated learning experience. Students were supported in developing their independence through programming in the areas of functional literacy and numeracy skills, activities of daily living, communication and social skills through a creative curriculum which included technology, physical fitness, art, music and drama.

Education Community Partnership Program (ECP) Summer Program

In partnership with Sick Kids Hospital, Humber River Hospital, Youthdale, Turning Point, Fernie, Springboard and Lumenus Community Services, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) was able to offer Secondary Credit Summer School Courses in Math, English, Geography, Food and Nutrition and Physical Education and Health to students from Grades 9-12. Across the 13 programs, students earned credits while receiving care and treatment for addictions and/or eating disorders and or mental health needs. These partnership classrooms also supported the continuation of education for students who are in the youth justice system.

Summer Skills Development Leisure Program for Students with ASD

The Summer Skills Development Leisure program for students with autism was held at 13 locations across the TDSB with at least 3 sites in each Learning Centre with 197 participants in Grades 4-10. Over the past 6 years, the program has experienced remarkable growth and success by fostering an environment based on intentional instruction/activities, a growth mindset, and a place for students to simply have fun as they build on their social and self regulation skills. The main goal of the Summer Leisure program was to provide an opportunity for students to enhance their social, self-regulation skills and to prepare for transitioning back to school in September.

116 TDSB schools sent students to the program. The program was held daily from July 4 to July 19, and was staffed by 28 teachers with Special Education qualifications (with knowledge of ABA strategies and an understanding of Zones of Regulation), 12 CYWs, 18 SNAs, and 7 Child Care Attendants.



Students participated in a variety of arts and crafts activities with high engagement, such as sensory bottles, pop art doughnuts, bracelets/beading, rock art, and cooking. Students also focused on transition (e.g., to a new school, new grade, etc.) through scenarios, role play and social stories. Students learned about strategies of how to initiate conversations and how to react when someone does not agree with them or want to play with them. Students enjoyed the social interactions and developed social skills that will help as they transition back to school in September. Families were very appreciative of the opportunity and shared that they hope that program will continue next year.

International FASD Awareness Day – September 9, 2023

September is FASD Awareness Month. First celebrated in 1999, FASD day is devoted to raising awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) to improve prevention of FASD and diagnosis and support for individuals with FASD. The Government of Canada officially recognized September as FASD Awareness Month in 2020.

The theme for this year's FASD awareness month is *Building Strengths and Abilities*. Historically, much of the research and discussion about FASD has focused on challenges. While this discussion is necessary, it is also important to recognize people's unique talents, abilities and interests. When we don't explore the success of people with FASD and celebrate their contributions, we fail to recognize their immense potential.

For more information, please visit [FASD Awareness Month Website](#). We invite you to celebrate your abilities and strengths this FASD Month using the hashtag #FASDMonth2023!

September 23 is International Day of Sign Languages

International Day of Sign Languages is celebrated annually across the world on September 23rd. The Day is a unique opportunity to support Deaf individuals and other sign language users. For more information: [International Day of Sign Languages](#).



IPRC Data - June 2023

June IPRCs	
Learning Centre 1	88
Learning Centre 2	77
Learning Centre 3	149
Learning Centre 4	106
IPRCs Completed	420
IPRC Cumulative since August 2022	
IPRC Cumulative since August 2022	4,376