



## **Secondary Program Review**

**To:** Committee of the Whole

**Date:** 12, June 2019

**Report No.:** 06-19-3688

### **Strategic Directions**

Transform Student Learning

Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the action plan for secondary school program as set out in this report be approved.

### **Context**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Trustees with an overview of secondary school programming within the Toronto District School Board, and specifically to explain how past practices and approaches to program delivery have led to the inequities that exist throughout the system today.

The existing structure of secondary schools across the TDSB is not in sync with the recent strategic and visionary documents approved by the Board of Trustees, and action is necessary to develop and implement a new vision for secondary school programming that:

- Aligns with the Board's commitment to Equity;
- Aligns with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, its goals and action plans;
- Aligns with the Guiding Principles of the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy; and,
- Responds to student voice.

All secondary school students across the TDSB deserve equitable access to stronger programs and richer pathways, as close to home as possible. The system will need to be re-envisioned and re-drawn to support this goal.

This report outlines a recommended plan of action that, if approved, will be initiated immediately.

### **Past Practice of Offering Choice**

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has a long history of offering program choice to students – especially at the secondary level. The system is served in large part by a series of composite neighbourhood secondary schools, which are obliged to accommodate students who reside within their respective attendance areas. These schools are intended to be destinations for secondary students that offer a range of program opportunities and pathways, supported by strong enrolments of 1,000 students or more.

Neighbourhood secondary schools only make up 61 of 112 total secondary schools across our system. The remainder are comprised of a variety of secondary school types, some that serve very specific purposes and others that do not.

### Specialized Programs

Within the network of neighbourhood secondary schools across the city there exists a layer of specialized programs. Many of the specialized schools and programs that exist today were established by the legacy school boards but since the creation of the TDSB, there has been an expansion of these programs.

Many neighbourhood secondary schools offer one or more of these specialized programs, which, per current practice, have the ability to accept students regardless of where they live. This is facilitated by the current Optional Attendance policy and procedure.

The general categories of specialized programs and schools at the secondary level are:

- Advanced Placement
- Africentric
- Arts
- Cyber Arts/Studies
- Elite Athletes/Arts
- Integrated Technology
- International Baccalaureate
- Leadership Pathway
- Math, Science and Technology
- Media Arts

### Alternative Secondary Schools

In addition, secondary students can also choose to attend one of 21 secondary Alternative schools across the city. Many were established by the legacy school boards, particularly the former Toronto Board of Education. Alternative schools were designed to be small and to offer a unique and different approach to learning. In the current school year, nearly 2,400 secondary students are enrolled in Alternative secondary schools. Many share buildings with neighbourhood elementary and secondary schools, very few are in standalone buildings.

### System Secondary Schools

Students, depending on where in the city they reside, may choose to enrol in legacy technical and commercial schools (e.g. Danforth Technical & Collegiate Institute, Central Technical School, and Central Toronto Academy). These schools also have attendance boundaries associated with their legacy programs but they no longer align with the nature of programming that exists at the schools. The existing boundaries existed prior to the creation of the TDSB and permit access for students residing within much larger geographies than the neighbourhood school boundaries. These schools have, for the most part, re-invented themselves as neighbourhood secondary schools and also offer specialized programs.

This category also includes schools in the TDSB that are challenging to define but may accept students who require additional support or a different learning environment to support their learning experience.

### French as a Second Language Programs

Secondary students may also continue with French Immersion and Extended French programs at the secondary level. As of October 2018, there were over 3,000 secondary students in French Immersion and approximately 1,800 in Extended French programs. French programming across the TDSB is also being reviewed to explore whether or not all students are being well served.

### Specialized Schools

Within the TDSB, there are three fully-specialized schools, where 100% of enrolment is subject to a stringent admissions process. This could be through an audition, portfolio submission or pre-requisite grades. These schools offer programs in the Arts as well as Science, Mathematics, Technology and Social Justice. There are no boundaries associated with these schools.

### Optional Attendance

Optional Attendance, a TDSB process detailed in a policy and procedure that facilitates choice by allowing students to apply to attend schools other than their designated school by home address, has been used by many students over the years. This process allows students to access secondary schools outside of their area, including those that offer specialized programs like those listed above.

It should be noted that Optional Attendance is possible only because there is excess capacity at some schools. Schools that are at or over capacity cannot accommodate students outside of their area.

It should also be noted that Optional Attendance has become much more pervasive across the system as a function of declining enrolment, i.e. schools competing for a shrinking secondary school-aged population but also due to the presence of specialized programs that draw students away from their neighbourhood school.

We have created an environment where schools are forced to market themselves and compete with each other to attract students in hopes of increasing their enrolment. This places undue stress on school Principals on a year to year basis that is unnecessary.

Today, the reality across the city is that past practices of choice combined with the harsh reality of declining enrolment have created inequities where students are fleeing certain schools and neighbourhoods in favour of others. It should be noted that the existing Optional Attendance policy and procedure are under review.

This report will provide further detail on many of the unintended consequences of Optional Attendance that, if not addressed, will only perpetuate further enrolment decline at particular schools.

### **Unintended Consequences of Choice**

While having program choice may be seen as a positive, there have been some unintended negative consequences, including inequity of access and in imbalance of enrolment among secondary schools across the system.

### Program Distribution and Admission Processes

Not all programs or specialized schools are accessible to students because of their location. There is not an equitable distribution of specialized schools and programs. There are limited numbers of specialized schools and programs and most are not easily accessible to students in the northwestern and northeastern areas of the city. Since bussing is not offered to secondary students under Optional Attendance, students must make their own way to a school outside of their area. Not all students have access to a

vehicle or have parents with vehicles who are able to drive them. Also, the cost of transit is a barrier for some students.

Expanding the number of all specialized programs and schools in their current form is not feasible given our financial constraints, and may also perpetuate the decline of enrolment in certain parts of the city. To support viable programs within secondary schools a critical mass of students is required.

The admission process and criteria for many specialized schools and programs can be a barrier to equity. Students from higher socioeconomic means are advantaged and once accepted into specialized schools and programs, they are represented in larger numbers. This is evidenced by the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) ranking of the TDSB's three specialized schools: Etobicoke School of the Arts (106), Ursula Franklin Academy (101) and Rosedale Heights School of the Arts (95).

Admission processes for specialized schools and programs appear to favour students who have had extra supports such as tutors or private lessons. These processes can also contribute to student stress. Students worry about getting into a program and their self-esteem may be diminished if they do not get admitted. This negatively impacts student well-being.

A 2010 TDSB research study titled "Programs of Choice, Characteristics of Students in French Immersion, Alternative Schools and Other Specialized Schools and Programs" about the characteristics of students in French and specialized programs showed that "School and program choices and school demographics are equally related. With few exceptions, social composition of the students who attend alternative schools and specialized schools and programs are more likely to come from families with higher SES, non-immigrant status, a two-parent family structure, and have parents with a high level of education. This is more evident in the French Immersion programs."

The Enhancing Equity Task Force report of December 2017 confirmed that change is necessary because some of our students are not achieving or do not seem to have access to the programs and learning environments they need. It identified "socioeconomic inequity between and among schools as a major barrier to equity, particularly in terms of the distribution of programs and resources."

### The Impact of Optional Attendance

As referenced above, students in the TDSB may choose to attend schools other than their local neighbourhood school for a variety of reasons such as access to specific programs. This current school year only 53% of TDSB's secondary school students were attending their designated neighbourhood secondary school.

This reflects the range and types of choices that students have available to them. In addition to the network of neighbourhood secondary schools, i.e. those that serve a

group of addresses, there are many other options that exist depending on where in the city a student resides.

There are wide variances depending on geography. Areas that have a significant amount of choice like the downtown core have much lower ratios of students choosing to attend their local secondary school. In areas of the city where these options exist, there are fewer students choosing to attend their local secondary school. This ratio is as low as 25% in some downtown areas.

Research has shown that Optional Attendance is not the answer for all. According to the findings of the Enhancing Equity Task Force, “Even where students from low-income neighbourhoods are enrolled through Optional Attendance in schools in high-income areas, they don’t always find themselves fitting in socially. The way they are perceived and/or treated can negatively affect their well-being and sense of belonging or engagement in school.” This situation is clearly not acceptable. The TDSB is committed to ensuring that students have a sense of belonging and well-being. There has been growing evidence over a number of years of the interrelation between well-being and achievement and that together they are long-term predictors of student success.

As mentioned, Optional Attendance has enabled the flight of students from schools perceived to be in undesirable areas to schools in areas perceived to be more desirable. The result is under-enrolled and under-utilized schools in some areas of the city that cannot offer viable programs and opportunities for students. When this enrolment declines and course options begin to diminish, students may not have access to what they want to pursue, meaning they are more likely to seek out other schools or programs. This, in effect, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy where enrolment at the school continues to decline, making the situation worse each subsequent year.

Many of the secondary schools that have been closed in recent years have experienced the same trend where enrolment declines, whether due to demographic factors or Optional Attendance, causing courses/opportunities at the school to be reduced, meaning students do not have access to what they want or need, those students then choose to enrol in other schools through optional attendance, and finally the school becomes non-viable over time.

The impact of Optional Attendance is being felt overwhelmingly at schools in underserved areas that rank higher on the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) (i.e. those with greater need). For example, in 2018-2019, secondary schools that were 50% utilized or less had an average LOI of 27 (less advantaged) while those that were operating at 90% or more had an average LOI of 73 (more advantaged).

Further, the five highest ranking schools on the LOI list had an average utilization rate of 48% and an average enrolment of 411 students. Conversely, the five lowest ranking

schools had an average utilization rate of 111% and an average enrolment of 1,244 students.

In addition to having higher LOI's, schools that are under-utilized also tend to have much smaller student populations. In 2018-2019, schools that were 50% utilized or less had an average enrolment of 517 students. Comparatively, schools that were 90% utilized or more had an average enrolment of 1,077 students, more than double.

Having a lower enrolment leads to diminished course options for students, fewer opportunities for extra-curricular and a weaker secondary school experience overall. On the other hand, well-utilized schools tend to have larger enrolments and rank much lower on the LOI scale. This is fairly consistent across the TDSB.

## **New Realities**

In addition to the unintended consequences of past practice, there are many realities that must be acknowledged and brought to the forefront.

The context in which we operate is determined by many external factors, many of which are out of our control. The system is impacted by provincial policy and funding decisions, demographic and socio-economic factors, as well as facility challenges. These factors have all contributed to the state of our secondary system as it exists today. Although out of our control, the system must adjust to adapt to the conditions that currently exist.

## Demographic Changes and the Impact on Enrolment

The secondary panel at the TDSB has declined from a high of 140,433 students in 1976 to the approximately 73,000 students we have in the system today. This reflects the larger demographic shift experienced over the past few decades, otherwise known as the 'boom, bust and echo'. There have also been external factors that have contributed to enrolment decline such as the extension of funding to Catholic secondary schools in the 1980's, the removal of adult learners from the funding envelope in the 1990's, and the elimination of Grade 13 in the early 2000's.

This decline of almost 50% has left many of our school buildings under-utilized. Our system was built to accommodate the peak enrolment of the baby boom generation, and has only been reduced through moderate school closures over the past number of years.

In a more recent context, secondary school enrolment has declined by over 13,000 students over the 10-year period between 2008 and 2018. Recent enrolment projections for the secondary panel suggest that enrolment will begin to increase slightly and then stabilize over the next ten years at approximately 77,000 students. This number includes students residing in Toronto but also students who reside outside of the city and International students.

The decline is not just attributed to the number of students enrolled within TDSB schools but to a broader decline in the number of secondary school-aged students residing the city. Since 2008, the secondary school-aged population has declined by nearly 15,000, from nearly 114,000 to 98,000 today. This means not only are TDSB schools competing with each other to gain a larger portion of a declining population but are also competing with the other educational options in Toronto such as other publically-funded school boards and the private school system.

Enrolment projections at the secondary panel suggest that we have reached the end of the steep decline that began in the late 1990's as the echo generation graduated out of the system. Moving forward, enrolment is projected to remain stable at the secondary panel.

The TDSB's enrolment declines have had significant implications on the number of small and under-utilized secondary schools across the system. Small and under-utilized schools struggle to operate within Ministry of Education's funding benchmarks and also have difficulty offering the high-quality programs and services that students and parents expect.

Excluding Alternative and congregated Special Education schools, which are small by design, there are 17 secondary schools that presently have an enrolment less than 700 students. This falls far below the critical mass of 1,000 to 1,200 students that is necessary to deliver the breadth of programming that students require.

### School Utilization

As of October 31, 2018, the average utilization rate across all 112 schools in the secondary panel was 78%, leaving over 20,000 surplus pupil places across the system.

The capacity of our secondary schools has been reduced over the past few years through the removal of pupil places that are used for other purposes such as Adult ESL/Continuing Education, Caring and Safe Schools and Section 23 programs. These groups occupy over 5,000 pupil places within secondary schools across the system.

There is a significant amount of variance in the utilization rate among secondary schools. There are currently 25 of 112 secondary schools that are operating below 50% utilization. The recently-approved guiding principles of the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy set out a target utilization rate of 90%, which represents an optimal and efficient school organization. At present, there are only 18 secondary schools that are operating between 90% and 110% utilization.



Change to Secondary Average Class Size

The Ministry of Education controls school board funding and any imposed changes directly affect our operation including the programs and supports we offer to students.

The recent changes to secondary school class size significantly impact staffing and program offerings. Staff has estimated that the increase in average class size to 28 would result in the loss of about 800 teaching positions for the TDSB. Furthermore, the number and breadth of courses offered at all secondary schools, not just those that are small or under-utilized, will be reduced and in some cases, students will not have access to courses they require for post-secondary education.

More than 300 compulsory and elective course sections will be cancelled in the next school year as a result of the first phase of provincial changes to secondary class size. This reflects an increase in average class size of 1.9 in the first year of the four-year implementation process. While all compulsory courses will be offered at schools, they will be available at fewer times and the class sizes will be larger.

Implementing the average class size changes at small schools will be especially challenging and will greatly limit the selection of courses that can be offered. Continuing to operate many schools that cannot longer offer what students need is not feasible nor is it acceptable and a review of schools is necessary.

In staff's view, the Ministry of Education's secondary school teacher reduction plan is, at this point, an emerging factor to be taken into consideration in our secondary program review. Staff are of the view that well before the Ministry's secondary school teacher reduction plan was conceived, there were many compelling factors as outlined in this report that lead staff to believe that secondary school consolidation is needed and will create a very positive educational experience for students through greater and more equitable access to secondary programs. While the secondary school teacher reduction plan, when partially or fully implemented, will have a varying impact on secondary schools across Ontario, it is not onto itself, the reason staff are proposing secondary school consolidation.

Aging Buildings

The majority of TDSB's secondary school buildings were constructed before the 1970's and their average age is 64 years old. The most pressing financial issue facing the TDSB is the funding required to maintain our existing buildings in a state of good repair.

Since 2014-2015, the Ministry of Education has provided multiple years of significant funding for school repairs. This has allowed the TDSB to move beyond just fixing high and urgent renewal issues in our schools and begin to address the large repair backlog.

Without predictable and sustainable funding for repairs, the TDSB cannot continue implementing our long-term plan for renewal or lower our current \$3.5 billion repair backlog, a result of years of inadequate funding.

However, continuing to operate too many buildings will mean that limited renewal dollars will be stretched too thin to properly address the growing renewal backlog. By continuing this approach, our renewal needs will only continue to grow on an annual basis. Without addressing the surplus capacity we have within our system, the TDSB's school repairs backlog could grow to an estimated \$5.0 billion by 2022. Modernizing our schools to deliver 21<sup>st</sup> century learning requires additional funding to implement. If we continue to struggle to address basic state of good repair, then the important work of modernizing our system cannot be fulfilled.

Since the TDSB has many school buildings without the adequate capital, a review of the number of sites may be necessary to determine which ones could be consolidated. Given the current Ministry of Education moratorium on school closures, the TDSB will have to develop a plan that could be implemented should the moratorium be lifted or potentially changed to apply, for example to, isolated or remote school boards and/or single school towns and villages.

Staff recognizes that in some communities, the government's moratorium makes sense. However, as time goes on, it may be that a differentiated approach to school closure is more desirable. Such an approach would recognize that in Ontario's larger urban centres where secondary schools are in close proximity and supported by road and rail transit systems, closure can reduce duplication, strengthen and expand secondary school program offerings, achieve efficiencies and savings and/or create capital for reinvestment.

#### Polarization of City of Toronto by Income

The TDSB's Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) is measure of external challenges affecting student success, including income. The LOI is a resource that can be used to determine where barriers exist, and where additional funding and/or resources are required to support student success.

The LOI is calculated from the characteristics of the students attending a school, and not from the characteristics of the area around the school. The polarization maps developed by University of Toronto Social Work Professor David Hulchanski provide an additional perspective on the inequities that exist across the City of Toronto from a geographic perspective, i.e. neighbourhood-based rather than school-based.

Professor Hulchanski's research about income disparities in Toronto is well-documented in "The Three Cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's Neighbourhoods, 1970-2005". His work has shown average incomes rising dramatically in the city core and north up the centre on either side of the Yonge subway line while the average incomes are plunging in the inner suburbs.

Professor Hulchanski's work is significant and relevant to the TDSB as it clearly shows "have" and "have not" areas that mirror the current perceptions about schools in these areas. Secondary students are choosing programs and schools in higher income areas and fleeing from those in lower income areas.

### **Present Context**

The Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) approved by the Board in October 2018 sets direction and identifies system goals to support all students. Its focus is to ensure that every student receives a great education by having equitable access to programs and resources and increased opportunities to lead to success.

The MYSP and its associated action plans lay the ground work for how we will transform student learning, create a culture of well-being, provide access to learning opportunities, and allocate resources strategically and build strong partnerships.

Equitable access underpins the strategy. This is not aligned with past practice given that not all students have been able to access and benefit from the choices available.

### **Student Voice**

#### Access and Secondary Program Review

In 2016-2017, a number of consultation opportunities were offered for students to share their thoughts about secondary school programs and opportunities, the knowledge/skills and supports students need for the future, the design of school spaces, and the organization of the school schedule. These included some group consultation meetings as well as an online survey that was more broadly disseminated and facilitated by Guidance staff in selected grades (Grades 8, 10 and 12).

Students identified providing student support as the primary role of schools, teachers, parents and the community to ensure access to exemplary programs. Some specific comments in this category included supporting and helping students, giving them guidance and direction, encouraging and motivating them, and understanding their needs. Younger students in particular also felt that parent involvement (e.g. being informed, involved, encouraging) was quite important.

Other common themes included the role of teachers or teaching (e.g. the quality of teaching, instructional practices, student-teacher relationships); program choice (e.g. having information about the availability and choice of a variety of programs, guidance about options and pathways that suit students' needs); and access to opportunity (e.g. ensuring access to quality programs and opportunities for all students in all schools).

The consideration of a late start to the school day was by far the most common single suggestion by students.

Other general scheduling modifications were also suggested and included several variations of modifying class time, the school day or the school calendar, like building in homework periods or shortening the summer break. Many students were also in favour of building in more mid-day breaks or recesses.

### 2017 Student Census

The TDSB conducts a system-wide Student and Parent Census every four years to understand a number of areas including students' demographic makeup; experience both inside and outside of school; relationships with peers and adults at school; and physical health and emotional well-being. The student census was conducted in 2017 and the results were released in late 2018.

It is interesting to note that the gap between students from families of higher and lower socioeconomic status continues to widen. Compared to 2011-2012, more students were from the highest income group (over \$100,000 average household income) yet about 45% of the students were from lower income bracket groups (lower than \$50,000 average household income).

Data that was collected related to students' school experiences and relationships with adults at school shows that secondary students generally felt positive about their school, enjoyed school and had a sense of belonging. The majority of students had positive perceptions of their teachers but fewer students than in the past felt connected to or supported and encouraged by their teachers. Compared to 2011-2012, Grade 7-12 students were less physically active or physically healthy.

### **Progress Thus Far**

The purpose of working towards equity is to ensure that all students receive the supports they need to help them reach their greatest potential. Currently the system works well for some but not others.

Since 2016, the Board of Trustees has approved many transformational strategic documents that have set the stage for enhanced equity and opportunity for all students.

### Vision for Learning

TDSB is committed to creating an equitable school system where the achievement and well-being of every student is fostered through rich, culturally authentic learning experiences in diverse, accepting environments where all are included, every voice is heard, and every experience is honoured.

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Each school will determine a learning focus in three areas: equity, well-being and achievement. In addition to identifying the three focus areas, this process will include engaging in the learning to support student improvement in these areas, determining the evidence and data to be collected and monitoring progress.

### Integrated Equity Framework Action Plan -- 2016-2019

The Integrated Equity Framework (IEF) Action Plan 2016-2019 aims to improve achievement and well-being for each and every student, while closing persistent achievement, opportunity and participation gaps for all.

### Report of Enhancing Equity Task Force -- December 2017

The Enhancing Equity Task Force made recommendations to support the TDSB as it strives to ensure that the framework of “equity for all” infuses every aspect of the Board’s work including students and staff. Its approach to community engagement showed the importance of reaching out directly to marginalized communities and inviting those voices that we do not typically hear from and honouring their experiences, concerns, challenges, realities and goals.

### Multi-Year Strategic Plan -- October 2018

The Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and work of the Enhancing Equity Taskforce lay the foundation for the The Multi-Year Strategic Plan which sets direction and identifies system goals to support all students. Its focus is to ensure that every student receives a great education by having equitable access to programs and resources and increased opportunities to lead to success.

### Review of Policies

Work has been done to review policies that promote equity and inclusion. Thus far, the following has been accomplished:

- Completed a review of the Equity Policy (P037)
- Developed an Equity Assessment Tool to use in the formal policy review process
- Approved the work plan for the review of the Alternative Schools Policy (P062)
- Approved the work plan for the review of the Optional Attendance Policy (P013)

### New Guiding Principles for Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS)

The following guiding principles were approved by the Board of Trustees:

#### Equity of Access

1. Neighbourhood schools that meet the needs of all students – Focus on building strong neighbourhood schools that offer a wide range of programs including

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specialty programs that meet the needs and interests of all students and support all post-secondary destinations.

2. Optimal elementary school size of at least two classes per grade – Aim for enrolments of no less than two classes per grade in elementary schools where possible to ensure that schools have a sufficient number of teaching staff to offer a range of educational opportunities.
3. Optimal secondary school size of at least 1,000 students – Aim for enrolments of no less than 1,000 students in secondary schools where possible to ensure that a variety of pathways, opportunities and programs can be offered to all students – review secondary schools with enrolments of less than 700 students to address diminishing opportunities to offer viable programs that meet the needs of all students.
4. Consistent attendance boundaries – Establish consistent attendance boundaries across the TDSB – review instances of shared attendance boundaries where multiple schools are offered based on home address and split attendance boundaries where graduating cohorts are divided among two or more schools.
5. School locations that support active transportation – Locate schools and plan attendance boundaries to support active, safe and sustainable transportation to and from school with consideration to the distances specified in the Transportation of Students Policy P020 – locate elementary schools within walking distance and secondary schools in close proximity to public transit.
6. Minimal transitions – Minimize school transitions for students as they move through their elementary and secondary school pathways.
7. Balanced enrolment across tracks – Aim for a balanced representation of students across programs in schools where French programs are offered.

### Efficient and Flexible Learning Space

8. Optimal utilization rate of 90% – Ensure that school buildings are used efficiently by targeting utilization rates of 90% while recognizing the importance of child care – address issues of underutilization (schools operating at 65% utilization or less) and overutilization (schools operating at 110% utilization or greater) – use existing space in schools efficiently to balance enrolments.
9. Minimal use of portables – Use portables when the enrolment of a school exceeds the capacity of the building – review the use of portables on a site when the number of portables approaches the maximum number that can be accommodated on the site.
10. Flexible buildings and sites – Plan school sites, school buildings, and additions to be flexible and adaptive to a dynamic and changing city – design sites that can accommodate portables and future expansion as well as school spaces that are multi-functional.
11. Different models of school organization – Explore different models of school organization such as JK to Grade 12, Grade 7 to 12, specialty programs, campus models, multiple schools co-existing within the same building, full-year schools, and schools in mixed-use developments.

**Conclusion: Bold and Exciting Vision for the Future**

Enhanced equity and opportunity are the fundamental components of the general vision for the future. When equity works, all students are supported to be their best. Equity takes nothing away from the students who are already thriving and it ensures the right supports are in place for those students that the system is under serving.

Equity requires that all schools:

- Are strong neighbourhood schools of a sufficient size to offer viable programs
- Have a large number of students to provide a good variety of viable program choice in all pathways to address student needs, interest and achievement. As per the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS) guiding principles, secondary schools should have enrolments of at least 1,000 to ensure that a variety of pathways, opportunities and programs can be offered to all students.
- Provide program choice driven by student needs and interests
- Are situated in locations that support active transportation such as walking and are close to public transit
- Provide the types of supports that students want such as caring adults, flexible learning environments, and general scheduling modifications -- supports that students have told us they want

The vision for secondary program recommended by staff includes fewer but stronger schools that provide greater access, better options, and rich pathways as close to home as possible. The focus will be on neighbourhood schools that offer a breadth of program while still ensuring for some specialized programs, Alternative schools, and congregated Special Education schools. Achieving this vision requires the support of the Board of Trustees. That support will set in motion the following next steps:

- Development of Vision to look at secondary program and accessibility differently Staff will continue to work strategically to further develop a vision of secondary program that will benefit all students. Staff will work at a system level to examine the distribution and viability of secondary programs and schools to determine how best to meet the needs and interests of students and move the system towards much needed focus.
- Alignment with the Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy (LTPAS) Staff will align the LTPAS with the secondary program vision and present a report to the Board with the updated LTPAS.
- Review of Related Policies, Procedures and Practices Staff will review related policies, procedures and practices that impact access, opportunity and outcomes. These include the Optional Attendance Policy and Procedure, Alternative Schools and Procedure and the Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs Procedure.

The vision for TDSB secondary schools recommended by staff is bold and exciting. Our aim is to offer all our high school students access to challenging, high quality courses and programs.

## **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

Pending Board approval of this report, staff will begin working on the following

### Summer 2019:

- Refine vision for secondary program and access
- Analyze current secondary programs and schools more closely to determine how they fit into the vision
- Examine related policies and procedures to determine which will require review

### Fall 2019:

- Present a staff report to the Committee of the Whole and Board with the vision for secondary program and access including a detailed action plan and critical path
- Present a staff report to the Committee of the Whole and Board with the updated LTPAS which will include studies to review secondary schools for potential closure

The vision is the result of more than two years of study supported by special attention to demographic and enrolment trends. The vision is based on historical and realistic future assessments of high school utilization patterns. Finally the vision is grounded in our most fundamental values relating to equity of educational opportunity as outlined in the Board's multiyear strategic plan.

## **Resource Implications**

No resources will be required to implement the recommendation in this report.

## **Communications Considerations**

Staff will work with the Government, Public and Community Relations Department to determine communication needs and support required. A Communications plan will be drafted in consultation with Communications Officer, if required.

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**



Policy P013 - Optional Attendance Procedure

Policy P062 - Alternative Schools

Procedure PR545 - Optional Attendance

Procedure PR584 - Alternative Schools

Procedure PR612 - Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs

## **Appendices**

Not applicable

## **From**

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