Toronto District School Board

The Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 10 June, 2020

Report No.:   06-20-3899

Strategic Directions

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

Recommendation

It is recommended:

a) That the establishment of a centre for the success of Black students, as presented in the report, be approved;

b) That costs for implementing the initiative at Part (a) be incorporated in the 2020-2021 budget development process.

Context

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) serves more than 246,000 students, each of whom come to school with different lived experiences, histories, resources, capabilities and needs. This report proposes changes to Action Plans in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) focused specifically on the academic success and experiences of belonging of Black students to develop a new TDSB Centre of Excellence for Black[1] Student Achievement.

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[1] *For the purpose of this report: "Black" refers to individuals of African descent who may also self-identify as Black demographically. These individuals may include, but are not limited to, those of North American, African or Caribbean descent. Social categorizations such as race, class, sexuality, ability, and gender applied to a given individual or group create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage is described as an intersectionality. TDSB recognizes the intersectionalities of identities among individuals who self-identify as Black.*

<u>Background</u>

In December 2017, after one of the Board's largest consultations, the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) engaged in extensive discussions with community members, students, families, and staff to determine which equity strategies have worked and where challenges remain. From these consultations "Enhancing Equity Task Force" presented a report with specific recommendations for system change (Appendix A) including the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement within the TDSB.

The work of the EETF surfaced systemic barriers that many students are facing in the TDSB and identified the areas of focus including ongoing barriers faced in classrooms and schools by Black students. The Task Force heard specific issues related to anti-Black racism — both the stories and lived experiences of Black students and the data and research that support their individual stories, especially with regard to the relationship between race, achievement, and well-being (e.g., Queiser & De Araujo, 2017).

The Enhancing Equity Task Force Report cited: Black students in general are less satisfied with their overall school experiences, more likely to report being bullied physically, and have less positive relationships with adults and peers in school (Yau et al., 2015). School safety data show that they have higher suspension and expulsion rates than other students (Zheng, 2013, Zheng et al., 2020). By the time Black students finish high school, 42% have been suspended at least once, compared with 18% of other students (James and Turner, 2017). Of the 200 students who were expelled between 2011 and 2016, nearly half self-identified as Black. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2017 report, which supports that statistic, notes that "racialized students receive harsher treatment or punishment than their White peers for similar behaviour." EETR, p.4

The work of the EETF surfaced systemic barriers that many students are facing in the TDSB and identified the areas of focus including ongoing barriers faced in classrooms and schools by Black students. One of the recommendations was to establish a "Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement" within the TDSB, with a focus on generating solutions, based on evidence, and providing support for Black students and their families.

Some of the Task Force's recommendations were adopted in the Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report (Appendix B) and subsequently interpreted through the priorities in the MYSP - Action Plans.

Specifically, with the MYSP Action Plans, is the Development of a Strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence - in lieu of the creation of a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement. This focused strategy to support Black students is an

important and essential component of equity, anti-racism and transforming student learning and is necessary until we are able to make meaningful gains for Black students in the areas of early years, reading, graduation rates, suspensions and expulsions, access to academic programming, and changes to trends in Special Education and to family and community engagement. The Action Plans also committed to providing professional learning in addressing anti-Black racism to staff starting with principals/vice-principals which was directly connected to a recommendation from the EETF Report.

Those plans include: *Transforming Student Learning: Toward the Excellence in the Education of Black Students* in the MYSP outlined actions and commitment to address the following:

· & **[Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-being – Leadership Development](#)**

· & **[Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being – Pathways & Transitions](#)**

· & **[Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being – Special Education](#)**

· & **[Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-being-Suspensions and Expulsions](#)**

· & **[Transforming Learning, Achievement and Well-Being – Early Years](#)**

While specific gains in many areas have been demonstrated in TDSB's data (Appendix C) in a series of annual reports to the Board of Trustees, the current rate of improvement in closing the achievement gap and enhancing school climate is ultimately insufficient.

Prevalence of Anti-Black Racism

Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions and many attempts to address it have fallen short. There is daily coverage of the persistence of anti-Black racism despite decades of studies and strategies put in place to dismantle it. Anti-Black racism is seen as a root cause of the over-representation of children of Black-African descent in child welfare, higher mortality rates, educational attainment and underemployment as adults.

For Black families, present initiatives and newly developed policies and procedures need to promote faster positive change for the benefit of their children and all children to live in a more just world where everyone's human rights are respected. Families have a right to expect more from us as educators, allies and aspiring leaders at the forefront of human rights, equity, and anti-racism.

Systemic and individual acts of anti-Black racism have been normalized and are insidious therefore difficult to identify, address and prevent. The prevalence of anti-Black racism in schools has been tracked this year through requests for instructional coaching support from the four K-12 Equity Coaches. Those referrals highlighted that 50% of all requests were tied to anti-Black racism with 88% of these requests occurring within elementary classrooms and schools. In addition, Human Rights Procedure (PR 728) tracks all incidents and the upcoming Human Rights Report will show that anti-Black racism is among one of the most reported incidents in TDSB schools and departments.

While existing plans in the MYSP have been a positive first step in shifting toward anti-racist attitudes and pedagogies in specific schools, they are insufficient to uproot such a deeply entrenched form of oppression across the district. It is difficult to change not only the mindset of staff, parents and students and the systems that have been in place for decades that have not changed the educational structures and practices in ways that ensure that all TDSB employees are engaged in preventing, addressing and responding to anti-Black racism.

There is no path to racial equity that does not involve a direct confrontation with interpersonal, institutional and structural racism (Gorski, 2017).

A Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

It is vital for children and youth to be supported to see their own brilliance, celebrate their innovations and unique perspectives, value their distinct forms of expression and view themselves as essential contributors to a better Canada. A Centre for Excellence for Black Student Achievement aims to respond to this explicit need in an ongoing educational and community-informed approach to promoting the achievement and well-being of Black students.

A Centre for Excellence for Black Student Achievement offers a multi-pronged strategy for bringing about meaningful change and sustained change. It would provide a more direct, coordinated and well-resourced approach must be adopted to ensure that systemic transformation is achieved through greater support for impacted individuals, transparency and accountability.

This Centre would be among the first of its kind in Canada in public education within a Kindergarten to Grade 12 district school board - would be a gathering place for people with expertise to collaborate on innovative approaches to promoting Black student success in school. It would offer a forum for developing solutions that are authentic and relevant for Black students, families and staff as well as for staff of all identities. It has the potential for making significant contributions toward transforming professional

practice, educational programs, pedagogy and policies in educational institutions and Boards across the province.

A common misconception tied to centres that specifically focus on Black students and communities is that they foster separatism and self-segregation. It is important to recognize that communities of African-descent in Canada are not a monolithic identity of who identifies as Black and why they require a centralized space. In TDSB for example, while 77% of students who identify as Black are born in Canada the Black student population has diverse family/cultural backgrounds that span large regions of the *Caribbean*, *West Africa, East Africa, and Canada (TDSB, 2011*). With this in mind, Patton (2006) reminds us that Black students require a space in which to come together to address their common experiences of anti-Black racism.

It is also a misconception that those who hold the title "equity" are the experts and are primarily responsible for tackling system change. Further some may believe this work is most urgent in racialized communities. Nothing could be further from the truth. Tackling anti-Black racism, hate and oppression must be owned by everyone. This Centre holds the potential to be transformative but will not resolve all aspects of the discrimination faced by young people in education.

Mandate for the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement:

- Provide support to Black students in TDSB schools in combating racism, ' navigating complaint processes and identifying barriers to success and ' accessing appropriate resources (e.g., scholarships); '
- Use evidence to identify promising practices and engage in meaningful research on topics relevant to Black students that are then integrated across schools and at the system level (where needed) within the TDSB;
- Create professional learning in anti-Black racism and collaborate with other staff in facilitating learning in decolonization, Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression & human rights recognizing the similarities and intersections of various forms of oppression;
- Identify, develop and facilitate culturally responsive and relevant healing practices for groups of students;
- Inform changes to policies and procedures so that all students may benefit from the learning and innovative practices developed by the Centre;
- Establish effective mechanisms for monitoring improvement in the achievement of Black students;
- Provide annual reports and recommendations to the Board of Trustees and staff;
- Support meaningful engagement and advocacy of caregivers for their children in TDSB schools and programs and improve communication to them about Black student success, system navigation and complaint processes; and
- Engage in strategic community partnerships related to education within the annually identified approved budget for this purpose.

Current Resources to Support Indigenous Education & Equity, Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression & Human Rights

The focus on addressing all forms of discrimination and hate such as anti-oppression, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, and other forms of racism and discrimination against racialized groups, such as Sikhs, Roma, people from Latin America as well as homophobia, transphobia, the discrimination faced by those with physical and intellectual disabilities (MYSP, 2019) will continue in as described under Leadership for School Improvement as well as, the Equity Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Action Plans.

The Urban Indigenous Education Centre infuses Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum for all students as well as by providing direct wrap-around support to enhance the overall achievement of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students throughout the TDSB.

The current resources devoted to the implementation of the specific goals and actions in these plans will continue to be implemented by the staff currently assigned to the Human Rights Department, Equity Team of K-12 Coaches and other school-based, Learning Centre and central staff in Leadership for Learning and Equity, Well-Being and School Improvement.

Efforts to Respond to Systemic Discrimination Outside of the TDSB

Other levels of government have also sought to recognize the stigmatization of Black people and respond to systemic discrimination. Specifically, in 2017, The City of Toronto's City Council adopted the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism Report (Appendix D) which created an Anti-Black Racism Unit. The City of Toronto Anti-Black Racism Report provides an in-depth overview which can offer a roadmap for the proposed TDSB's Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement. Similarly, in 2017 the Provincial Government established an Anti-Racism Directorate and a corresponding strategy (Appendix E). The Federal Government has also instituted an Anti-Racism Secretariat and developed a financial plan to build capacity and support community initiatives. There are lessons to be learned from each of these approaches in the development of a Centre in TDSB.

Appendix F contains a brief literature review on organizations with a similar mandate. Research has shown that Black Cultural Centres provide numerous benefits for Black students who negotiate within predominately white institutions, where they experience regular acts of discrimination, feelings of isolation and overt racism (Patton, 2006, p.3). Toronto Public Health's 2013 study examining racialization and health inequities found that experiencing discrimination triggers harmful biological, psychological and

behavioural responses. These centres provide Black students with safe spaces to share and develop cultural knowledge; cultivate a sense of belonging; gain leadership experiences; access community resources and enhance their positive sense of racial identity.

Closing

It is recognized that this is a staff report. However, it is important to note that the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement was a recommendation that came from community members through the EETF over two years ago after a lengthy consultation. The idea is not new. It has been contemplated in Black community spaces for many years and at the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee. The TDSB had a Fran Endicott Centre which was a resource library and room for professional learning but was not consistently resourced nor modernized to reflect the changing system needs. The current realities of the historical impact of anti-Black racism on students, staff, families and communities propels us to act and be creative in our actions. We are compelled to act in new ways and be accountable to the requests from Black communities for change.

Action Plan and Associated Timelines

Critical Path	Responsibility	Timeline
Seek Budget Approval through Finance, Business and Enrolment Committee (FBEC)	Associate Director - Equity, Well-Being & School Improvement	June - August 2020
Staff Hiring & Training	Superintendent of Equity & Early Years	June - Fall 2020
Consultation with the Black Student Achievement Community Advisory Committee on Mandate	Associate Director - Equity, Well-Being & School Improvement	September 2020

Development of a Communication Plan	Associate Director - Equity, Well-Being & School Improvement & Communications Department	June 2020 - ongoing
Development of a Culturally Responsive Research Framework to Understand Impact	Black Student Success Initiative Research Team Superintendent of Equity & Early Years	Fall 2020
Development of a Year 1 Action Plan for the Centre & Revision of the MYSP Action Plans for Transforming Student Learning for Black Students	Associate Director - Equity, Well-Being & School Improvement Superintendent of Equity & Early Years	June 2020 - August 2020
Mid-Year Report to Committee of the Whole	Associate Director - Equity, Well-Being & School Improvement	February 2020 or March 2020
Central Accommodation Team (CAT)	Superintendent of Equity & Early Years	June 2020 - Fall 2020

Budget Implications

Proposed Organization of the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement

POSITION	NEW OR EXISTING	FUNDING SOURCE	FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME
Social Worker	New	Grants for Students' Needs (GSN)	1

Child & Youth Counsellor	New	GSN	1
Graduation Coach for Black Students	Existing	EPO (3) GSN (2)	5
Central Coordinating Principal	New	GSN	1.0
Communications Officer	New	GSN	0.25
Research Associate	New	GSN	0.25
Community Support Worker	Existing	GSN	2
Student Equity Program Advisors (SEPA)	Existing	GSN	2
K-12 Coaches	New	GSN	3
Office Administrator	New	GSN	1

Salary & Benefits (New Staffing Allocation) = $509,268

$175,000 Discretionary Funding

$10,000 Start Up Costs

$30,000 Strategic Community Partnerships focused on Well-Being & Achievement

The total new funding requested for this centre (staffing and discretionary budget) is $724,268.

Communications Considerations

A communication plan will be developed.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

Equity Policy

Human Rights Policy and Procedure

Appendices

- Appendix A: The Enhancing Equity Task Force Report (DEC 2017)
- Appendix B: The Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report
- Appendix C: Overview of System Data for Black Students
- Appendix D: The City of Toronto's City Council adopted the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism Report
- Appendix E: The Province of Ontario's Anti-Black Racism Directorate's Strategy
- Appendix F: Literature Review

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From

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Enhancing Equity Task Force

Report and Recommendations

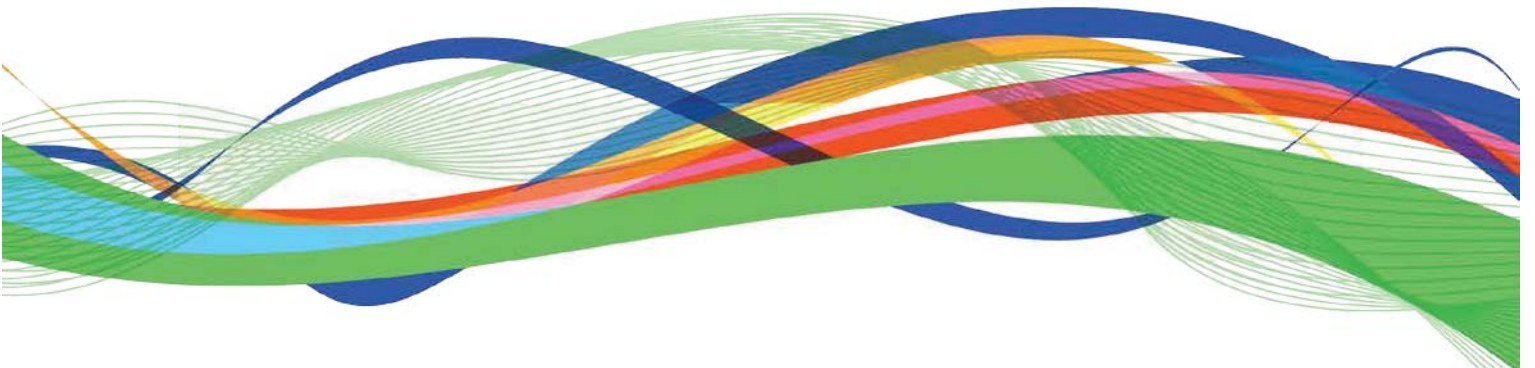### December 13, 2017

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report and the recommendations are a result of a tremendous amount of work and participation from people throughout the TDSB community. I would like to thank and acknowledge a great number of people whose skills, talents and voices fueled this process and moved it – and ultimately the system – forward.

I want to acknowledge:

❖ The many students who shared their stories and provided feedback on the draft report which brought the important issues to life and reminded everyone just how important this work is.
❖ The families who shared their experiences and passionately advocated for their children, making sure the system responds as it should for every student.
❖ The community members who attended the Ward Forums and the Student Summit for sharing your experiences and insights.
❖ Trustees who worked with the Task Force both as members of the Working Groups and the Planning Group as well as hosting the eight Ward Forums. Your leadership and commitment to the process was vital.
❖ The members of the Planning Group and four Working Groups for your participation over many months, your commitment to naming the issues and making things better and your courage to keep speaking up.
❖ The Leadership Team who supported the Task Force with your experience and knowledge of the system provided needed guidance and insight.
❖ The staff who work directly with students and families helping to organize opportunities to participate in the Task Force and provide their insights and experiences.
❖ The team of executive assistants and administrative liaisons who provided support in booking space, ordering food, arranging for audio/visual support and preparing materials so meetings could happen smoothly.
❖ The people who made the food and set up the rooms and provided the childcare and interpretation services so everyone could participate.
❖ The members of the public who took the time to read the report and provide detailed feedback to help us revise the recommendations.
❖ The staff who worked tirelessly on the final version of the report incorporating the many pieces of feedback.
❖ The research team who prepared the briefs and supported our work with evidence.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment and belief in our collective effort to make the school experience better for all students.

Yours Sincerely,

Liz Rykert, Task Force Facilitator

A full list of members of the Planning Group and the four Working Groups can be found in Appendix F.

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ENHANCING EQUITY TASK FORCE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada. It covers a vast geographic area with 583 schools and serves more than 246,000 students, each of whom come to school with varying experiences, histories, resources, capabilities and needs.

In support of students' diverse needs, the TDSB has demonstrated consistent leadership in supporting equity with innovative programs, inclusive curriculum and professional learning. But we still have a long way to go to make sure that education in Canada's largest school board works for all students.

We still see grave inequities in student achievement, well-being, engagement, experience, and treatment. Equity requires continuous commitment, in partnership with staff, students, families, and all of Toronto's communities. The TDSB's 2016 Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and new draft Equity Policy all testify to the Board's commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance, and inclusion for all.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force's mandate is to support the TDSB as it seeks to ensure that the framework of "equity for all" infuses every aspect of the Board's work, for students and staff alike. Equity is a question of fundamental human rights; it is also the foundation for excellence for all students, and for student achievement, well-being, and belonging.

Over the past year, the Task Force engaged in extensive consultations with community members, students, families, and staff to determine which equity strategies have worked and where challenges remain. It was an opportunity to take a deeper, collective look at what equity means, and to ask what specific actions need to be taken to enhance equity across the board.

The findings and recommendations enclosed in this report will continue to inform the work of the TDSB's staff and Board of Trustees as we make equity a reality for every student.

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Principles

The TDSB begins with the understanding that the purpose of working towards equity is to ensure that *all* students receive the right supports to help them reach their greatest potential. Currently, the system works well for some students and not others. When equity works, *all* students are supported to be their very best. Equity takes nothing away from the students who are already thriving in the education system; rather, it creates supports for those the system is currently failing.

An excellent public education system is one in which all children are supported and in which all children can thrive.

Equity is undergirded by the following principles:
- All students should be able to see themselves reflected in their learning, and their experiences in school should help them rise to their highest potential;
- All students should learn in safe and inclusive environments that promote their sense of identity and well-being;
- All students have the right to an education free of discrimination or limiting barriers;
- All students and families should be supported by schools that work in partnership with them to achieve the best results for them;
- Equity requires evidence-informed decision-making and better understanding of local communities;
- Equity requires accountability and transparency.

Recommendations

One clear vision emerged from the wealth of stories, insights, research, and consultations. Equity requires all TDSB schools to be strong neighbourhood schools that provide:
- Learning environments free of barriers so that *all* students can reach their full potential;
- Programming and staffing that is reflective, relevant, and responsive to the cultures, identities, and needs of the TDSB's diverse students, families, and communities;
- A school culture that is safe, welcoming, caring, and stands actively against discrimination, racism, and hate;
- Active engagement with families and communities as authentic partners.

In keeping with that vision, the Task Force has made recommendations in the following six areas, so as to:
1) Ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in all schools;
2) Make students whole: effectively addressing school incidents and complaints;
3) Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools;
4) Meaningfully engage students, families, and communities in building a culture of equity at school;
5) Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer, and promotion; and,
6) Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all.

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1) **Ensure Equitable Educational Access, Experiences, and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools**

- Remove systemic barriers *between* schools:
  o Examine practices that result in inequitable access to specialized programs;
  o Examine ways to improve access to resources and supports so that schools can offer a variety of specialized programs to all students;
  o Review the impact of the Optional Attendance policy in terms of barriers to accessibility of programs;
  o Ensure that the Optional Attendance policy maintains a fair and transparent process for applications and selection into available programs.

- Remove systemic barriers *within* schools (barriers that are created by the perceptions of educators, administrators, and/or professionals):
  o Phase in a program to allow a majority of Grade 9 and 10 students to work at an Academic level with necessary programming and teacher support. The phase-in should occur over a three-year period, closely monitor and report on student outcomes and achievement levels, and be responsive to parent concerns about curriculum standards and teacher expectations;
  o Review Special Education Learning programs with an emphasis on:
    ▪ Placement and inclusion of students with special education learning needs;
    ▪ Retaining congregated sites while exploring options to include Special Education at a home school;
    ▪ Professional development for staff;
    ▪ Providing a process and clear information for collaborative decision-making about student needs, as well as a process to appeal and revise decisions;
    ▪ Identifying physical and attitudinal barriers;
    ▪ Ensuring that all families, including those new to Canada and those whose first language is not English, can successfully navigate the Special Education system with confidence.

- Review curriculum based on an equity and anti-oppression framework. This means:
  o Incorporating equity and anti-oppression content into the curriculum, reflecting subject matter relevant to the various student demographics; and,
  o Incorporating content about Indigenous peoples and history, as well as being cognizant of Indigenous rights and land recognition.

- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement within the TDSB, with a focus on research and generating solutions and support within the TDSB for Black students and their families;

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- Under the leadership of TDSB's new Accessibility Coordinator and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, implement the TDSB's multi-year strategic plan to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, informational, and other barriers[1], and strive to remove physical barriers in existing buildings that prevent staff and students from full participation and high achievement in their respective working and learning environments.

2) Making Students Whole: Effectively Addressing School Incidents and Complaints

- Explore preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation approaches:

  o Review existing complaint protocols and ensure an effective process for complaints and resolution. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission argues, the goal of complaint resolution is to ensure that "the complainant is, to the extent possible, 'made whole,' and the effects of the discrimination remedied";
  o Explore staffing models that support preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation to better respond to school and student needs;
  o Respond to the overwhelming request to end the School Resource Officer program;
  o Review the handling and overseeing of student complaints and identify effective ways to support students when they are unable to resolve disputes at the school level;
  o Develop or acquire a system to gather and track reports of incidents and complaints related to exclusion, discrimination, racism, and hate.

- Review current suspension and expulsion practices, with an emphasis on:
  o Staff bias and the reasons for the over-representation of Black students and Indigenous students in Special Education learning programming;
  o The impact of suspension and expulsion on students and families.

3) Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources Among Schools

- Distribute funding and resources equitably among schools, recognizing that discrepancies among schools occurs in part because of disparities in school fundraising capacity, which leads to inequitable access to and quality of resources. In keeping with this goal, we recommend that:

  o The Board of Trustees confirm its commitment, as currently embodied in the Fundraising and Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) policies, that school resources be targeted equitably;

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[1] As cited in *What An Ontario Education Accessibility Standard Could Include.* www.aoda.ca/spread-the-word-about-the-aoda-alliances-new-discussion-paper-on-what-an-education-accessibility-standard-can-and-should-include

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- o The Board of Trustees consider requests, raised in Task Force consultations, that measures of inequality within schools (pockets of poverty and fundraising) be included in the calculation of the LOI;

- o The Learning Opportunities Grant and school-based/school council fundraising capacities be reviewed to ensure greater equity of resources among schools with different socioeconomic status;
- o The allocation of funding distributed for staff resources, classroom materials, and professional development and training also be reviewed.

4) **Meaningfully Engage Students, Families, and Communities in Building a Culture of Equity at School**

- In keeping with the need for strong neighbourhood schools where all students feel that they are cared for, that they belong, and that they are heard through the creation of a more inclusive and representative culture in schools[2], we recommend that the TDSB provide a school environment that:

  - o Ensures that students have dedicated, caring adults in school to mentor and advocate with and for them;
  - o Fosters student self-advocacy and empowerment, including student and peer leadership;
  - o Encourages students to have a voice in school practices and decision-making.

- Families, including those from historically marginalized and currently underserved communities, be fully engaged as authentic partners in the education of their children. To this end:
  - o Develop a set of Family Engagement Standards to ensure that all families feel welcomed, feel that they belong, and are encouraged to be contributors to the school community;
  - o Work to ensure that school councils are representative and reflective of the school community;
  - o Work to actively steward better and more meaningful communication and experiences between families and their schools;
  - o Strengthen the capacity of Community Support Workers to bolster families, schools, and community connectivity.

- Further community engagement, schools are to:
  - o Develop strategic community partnerships with social agencies, not-for-profit groups, and other levels of government to support the needs of students and families;
  - o Function as a resource and gathering space, especially for underserved communities (e.g., for social/emotional, medical- or employment-related purposes, recreation, childcare, adult education).

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[2] Fund LAEN (Latinx, Afro-Latin American, Aba Yala Education Network) programs. Follow through on the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services' Black Youth Action Plan.

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5) **Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer, and Promotion**

- Staffing models and delivery should reflect equity and the diversity of the communities served by the TDSB;

- Ensure the hiring of diverse staff with demonstrated equity and anti-oppression competency;

- Provide training for staff with hiring responsibilities on diverse hiring practices with an equity lens for all;

- Ensure more flexible staffing structures and processes by engaging local school staff to identify what they need to achieve greater equity;

- Review the hiring panel for school administrators to assess which stakeholder groups need to be included;

- Align transfer and surplus processes in partnership with unions.

6) **Provide Professional Learning on Equity and Anti-Oppression for ALL**

- Deliver systematic and comprehensive professional learning for *all* stakeholders to examine bias, as well as existing and changing laws, policies, practices, frameworks, strategies, and pedagogues that critically examine and address oppression, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, the challenges faced by students with physical and intellectual disabilities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of historical institutional discrimination;

- Apply an equity framework to all professional development learning activities;

- Deliver training by internal and/or external experts;

- Encourage ongoing professional learning and an environment of continuous learning and improvement;

- Ensure clear accountability for staff in School Improvement Plans and Performance Appraisals;

- Identify and provide systemic tools to support staff to control for bias in decision-making.

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Accountability

It is important that the TDSB establish clear accountability structures to ensure follow-through on approved Enhancing Equity Task Force recommendations, monitor their implementation, and report to the Board of Trustees annually on their progress. The work of enhancing equity will be an ongoing responsibility, and accountability mechanisms should reflect this requirement.

The Task Force recommends that the Board of Trustees:

- Develop a tracking and reporting framework to monitor progress on the recommendations;

- Develop a set of progress indicators;

- Use the existing committee structure to identify a lead committee of the Board of Trustees to track and monitor progress;
- Ensure that all advocacy and advisory committees have a role in tracking equity as it relates to their focus.

The Task Force recommends that the TDSB:

- Initiate an annual equity summit;
- Create four Learning Centre-based Enhancing Equity Committees.

The Task Force recommends that each school:

- Set goals and track progress on equity;
- Establish a focus on equity through existing School Improvement Planning processes;
- Provide information for families to deepen their understanding of existing accountability processes and how to advocate for their children.

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Introduction

- Scope and Definitions
- Structure and Process

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INTRODUCTION

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is acknowledged as a leader in advancing equity in education, but we still have a long way to go to make sure that education in Canada's largest school board works for all students.

We still see grave inequities in student achievement, well-being, engagement, experience, and treatment. Equity requires continuous commitment, in partnership with staff, students, families, and all of Toronto's communities. The TDSB's 2016 Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and draft Equity Policy all testify to the Board's commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance, and inclusion for all.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force has been mandated to support the TDSB as it seeks to ensure that the framework of "equity for all" infuses every aspect of the Board's work, for students and staff alike. Equity is a question of fundamental human rights; it is also the foundation for excellence for all students, and for student achievement, well-being, and belonging.

Over the past year, the Task Force engaged in consultations with community members, students, families, and staff to determine which equity strategies have worked and where challenges remain. It was an opportunity to take a deeper, collective look at what equity means, and to ask what specific actions need to be taken to enhance equity across the board.

The findings and recommendations enclosed in this report will continue to inform the work of the TDSB's staff and Board of Trustees as we make equity a reality for every student.[3]

SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

The TDSB recognizes that the demographics of the communities it serves have changed and that it has significant work to do to ensure that all its students are assured of equitable access to excellent public education.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force believes that the TDSB is firmly committed to addressing systemic and structural discrimination[4] and to making the real change that students, educators, administrators, support staff, families, and community partners urgently need.

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[3] It should, however, be noted It was not within the scope of the Enhancing Equity Task Force to provide direction on how to operationalize specific recommendations or to analyze financial implications of the recommendations.

[4] Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan 2017 defines systemic barriers as being caused by embedded biases in policies, practices and processes, and may result in differential treatment. Barriers can be unintentional – for example, learning materials that do not take into account the diversity of our communities – often these are the result of doing things the way they have always been done. Regardless of the reason for them, their impact can be detrimental to many. It is also important for us to recognize and address the additional barriers and unique experiences of discrimination that can

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The Enhancing Equity Task Force has focused on the effects of inequity and oppression that students continue to experience in TDSB schools. These include racism, xenophobia,[5] homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of hate and discrimination. Students experience racism and oppression in different ways depending on their multiple identities (or intersections)[6]. The Task Force acknowledges the disproportionate way that these issues affect Black students and staff, as well as the depth of the impact upon First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and staff.

The TDSB begins with the understanding that the purpose of working towards equity is to ensure that *all* students receive the right supports to help them reach their greatest potential. Currently, the system works well for some students and not others. When equity works, *all* students are supported to be their very best. Equity takes nothing away from the students who are already thriving in the education system; rather, it creates supports for those the system is currently failing.

An excellent public education system is one in which all children are supported and in which all children can thrive.

The Task Force adopted the definition of equity as it is outlined in the TDSB's draft Equity Policy:
> The TDSB believes that equity of opportunity, and equity of access to our programs, services, and resources, are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for our students, employees, and parent and community partners.
>
> The TDSB recognizes that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status. Similar biases have also impacted First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations. (TDSB, Draft Equity Policy, p. 2)
>
> The provision of opportunities for equality for all by responding to the needs of individuals. Equity of treatment is not the same as equal treatment because it includes acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination. (TDSB, Draft Equity Policy, p. 16)

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arise for some students when factors such as race, class, gender identity, religion and physical or intellectual ability intersect.
Cite: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/education_equity_plan_en.pdf

[5] Xenophobia refers to fear or hatred of foreigners or people from other countries.
[6] Intersectionality refers to the overlap of different social identities, such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and so forth, which means that different individuals may experience multiple forms of discrimination or racism.

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The Ministry of Education in Ontario defines equity as the foundation of excellence that meets individual needs. The Ministry's Equity Secretariat's Action Plan holds up the equity goal of building "learning environments in Ontario schools that inspire every child and student to reach their full potential and become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens." Some students have been consistently denied these outcomes for reasons that have nothing to do with their inherent abilities.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS OF THE ENHANCING EQUITY TASK FORCE

In June 2016 the Board of Trustees passed a motion to reconstitute the Model Schools Inner-Cities Task Force. A consulting firm, Meta Strategies, was commissioned to work with a TDSB planning group to develop an approach to the work. It became clear that the nature of the work went further than that addressed by the Inner Cities Task Force. The term "inner cities" has come to mean a way of primarily addressing the economic issues of families and students living with poverty. The mandate of the new Task Force was broadened to encompass social issues, including race and other aspects of identity, in addition to class and socioeconomic status. Its name was changed to the "Enhancing Equity Task Force" to reflect its expanded mandate.

The Task Force chose a structure that would support the direct involvement of a wide variety of stakeholder groups and members. It adopted a ""Big Tent Approach"[7] to create an open and inclusive process and to accommodate the growing number of people who had expressed an interest in its work.

It included the following components:

The Enhancing Equity Task Force Planning Group: The planning group was composed of TDSB staff, families and caregivers, Trustees, community organizations and representatives, union representatives, and academics. It met monthly to guide and support the Task Force process;

Four Learning Centre Working Groups: Based on the TDSB's four geographic Learning Centres[8], four independent Learning Centre Working Groups were created. Each was a multidisciplinary group of Board staff, Trustees, community advisory committee members, labour representatives, families, community partners, and academics, ranging in size from 18 to 35 members.[9]

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[7] *Discuss. Decide. Do The Value of Engagement as a decision support tool*, Nicole Swerhun and Vanessa Avruskin, 2012 p. 13.

[8] Learning Centres are a new organizational structure adopted by the TDSB in 2016 to group schools and staff in a certain geographic way (see Figure 1). Each Learning Centre is led by an Executive Superintendent and includes seven Superintendents of Education with responsibility for schools within its boundaries.

[9] Members for the Working Groups, as well as the Planning Group, were identified through TDSB Advisory Committees; Superintendents were asked to refer people in the community and from schools; the Federations were requested to submit names; the Toronto School Administrators Association provided names; academics were identified who were working on issues related to Equity; and community organizations were asked to join based on their expertise and

Figure 1: Boundaries of TDSB's Four Learning Centres
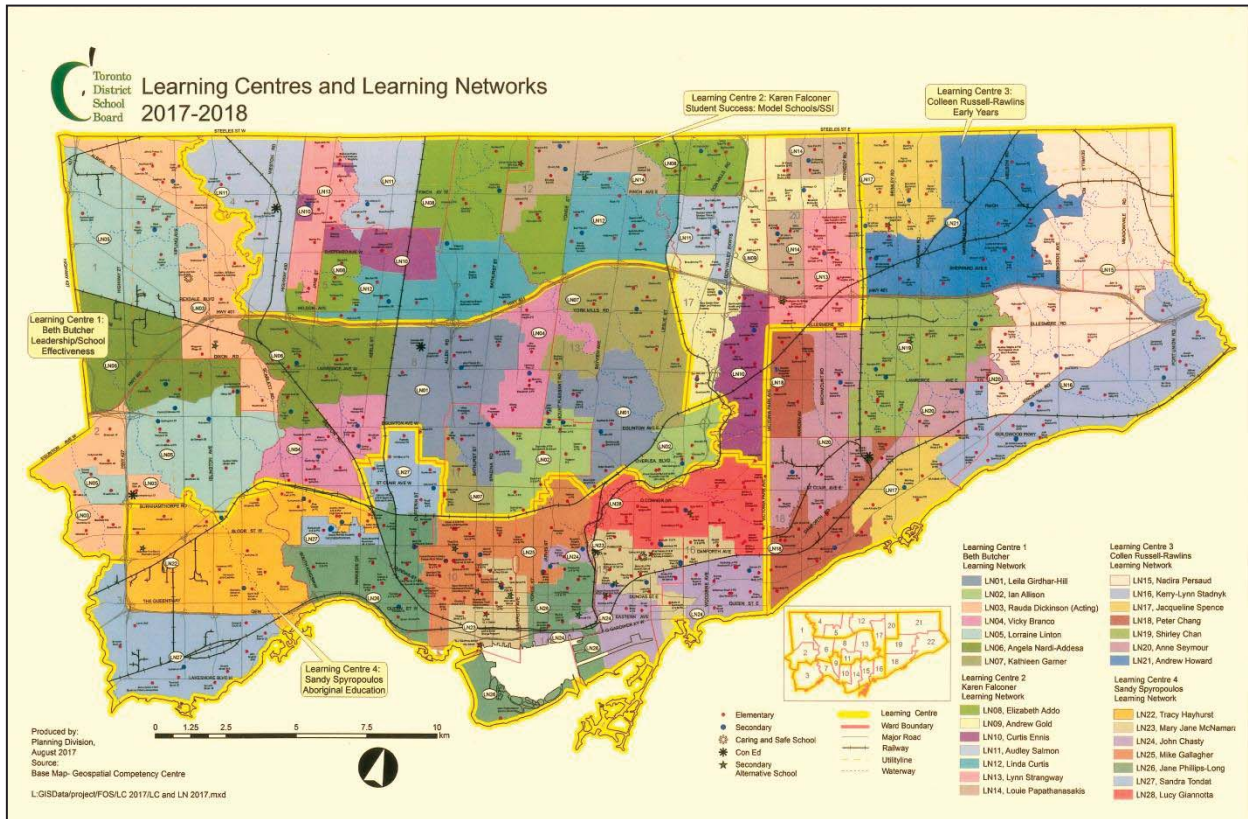
Each group met four times in 2017. First, they considered existing challenges and the conditions that successful equity would require. Second, they reviewed research and data prepared by the TDSB's Research and Information Services, and identified the barriers that may be preventing progress on equity. Third, they drafted recommendations, which were summarized and presented to the Task Force in June 2017. Finally, they reviewed the Task Force's draft report and provided recommendations to it.

Eight Joint-Ward Forums: These were public meetings hosted by two or more Trustees to engage school teams and the broader public. School teams included some combination of a principal, teachers, support staff, students, and families. Each forum drew between 150 and 200 participants, for a total of over 1300 people.

The forums created an opportunity for people to share their views of the challenges, barriers, and biases affecting student well-being and achievement at their school. After they learned how the TDSB operationalizes equity, teams were asked to generate a list of ideas — either current activities or ideas they were considering — to improve student outcomes.

experience or previous involvement in the Inner City Task Force. A list of participants can be found in the Acknowledgements Section.

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The teams were also introduced to a 20-item survey to capture baseline data on the culture of equity at their school. This survey — the Enhancing Equity School-based Feedback Form — was then completed by each school-based stakeholder group (students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators) through group members' discussion of each of the 20 items. Schools were invited to determine the best way to make this happen in each location. The data were collected in the summer and fall of 2017. Once the results are available in 2018, the schools will be able to use them to support their individual plans to improve the school culture of equity and to track its progress.[10]

All the ideas generated at the Ward Forums were analyzed and a summary of the themes was compiled and shared with the four working groups. Detailed notes from the forums were emailed to participants and posted on the TDSB website.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force Summit: The summit provided an opportunity for the four working groups to share their draft recommendations and for the 150 summit participants to discuss, refine, and build on those ideas. Participants included planning group members, the four working groups, the TDSB's senior leadership team, Trustees, labour representatives, community advisory committees, and principals with identified experience in removing barriers to equity. In the spirit of a big-tent approach, others who expressed an interested were included.

The summit opened with a short video of student stories prepared by Student Equity Program Advisors. The students shared their lived experiences with an understanding of the context in which their stories would be used and that their sharing would be part of a larger TDSB process to engage with students as knowledge keepers to enact change.

Specific Populations: Specific groups within the Board were identified as key to forward momentum, including families from the Model Schools' Parent Academies and the Aboriginal Education Centre. Various community advisory committees — the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee, the Inner City Advisory Committee, the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee, and the Special Education Advisory Committee — submitted specific recommendations to the Task Force, as did students identified through the Student Equity Program Advisors.

Various methods to enhance participation were employed at all public consultations to ensure that all the voices in the room could be heard. This is important because using these methods redistributes power and builds ownership across stakeholder groups for emerging insights, ideas, and recommendations.

Inviting Feedback on the Draft Report and Recommendations: The Enhancing Equity Task Force shared the report in draft form as widely as possible so as to invite feedback and ensure that its recommendations would reflect all the communities served by the TDSB. This is the first time a draft of a report of this nature has been made publicly available.

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[10] The timing of the Enhancing Equity Task Force did not allow for the baseline data to inform this Report.

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Feedback was gathered at a student summit and by committees that requested an opportunity to speak or whose feedback was sought by the Task Force. Public feedback was collected online.

- o **Public Feedback:** The draft report was made available October 6, 2017 online for feedback from the general public. School administrators and school council chairs were invited by email to share the opportunity for feedback with their school communities. All Task Force members were sent the link, as were all Forum participants who had provided an email address.

   The date to provide feedback was extended to November 20, 2017. The Task Force received nearly 5,000 comments.

   Individual submissions were also received by email and in person. The public feedback has informed the revised recommendations in this report.

- o **Student Feedback:** Over 100 secondary students from 21 schools participated in a student summit on November 2, 2017 to discuss the draft recommendations. The mix of schools provided representation from a range of socioeconomic communities, as well as students from different specialized programs and experiences. Students were invited to share their thoughts, input, and experiences to ensure that a strong student lens was included in the Task Force's work.

- o **Additional Feedback:** The Task Force also met with the Equity Policy Advisory Committee and the Student Super Council to gather feedback from their members on the draft.

Research Support: The Task Force's work was supplemented by the TDSB's Research and Information Services Team, which prepared the following research:

- o Four research briefs provided consultation participants with key context. These include:
  - A scan of the varying social and economic conditions in the City of Toronto;
  - A bird's-eye view of the multilevel needs of TDSB's diverse student population;
  - A summary of a number of Board-initiated, equity-related programs evaluated by the Research team; and,
  - A research highlight on the 10-year progress of the Model Schools for Inner Cities program.

- o Existing data on TDSB students were compiled for each Learning Centre working group. These data included demographics, school community characteristics, achievement, the Safe Schools program, in-school and out-of-school experiences, and well-being.

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o   The Enhancing Equity Task Force feedback forms were based on the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education's *Equity Continuum: Action for Critical Transformation in Schools and Classrooms* (2011). The forms were completed by school administrators, teachers, school support staff, students, and families with the goal of gauging where each of the schools stand in creating equitable experiences and outcomes for their students.

o   An inventory of TDSB's equity-related efforts since its 1998 amalgamation was compiled.

o   An extensive literature review identified exemplary equity-related practices in other sectors and jurisdictions. It included de-tracking, special education learning, school choice, employment equity, and parent and community engagement.

o   Finally, the research team worked closely with Meta Strategies to synthesize and categorize all the consultation notes and recommendations that went into the writing and recommendations in this Task Force report.

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Findings

- TDSB Strengths and Challenges
- What We Learned
- Observations and Insights from What We Learned

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FINDINGS

TDSB STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

The TDSB has made ongoing, dedicated efforts to address equity since its 1998 amalgamation.

In its first year, the Board established the Community Equity Reference Group (now known as the Equity Policy Advisory Committee) to develop a comprehensive Equity in Foundation Statement and commitments to Equity Policy implementation: anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity; anti-sexism and gender equity; anti-homophobia, sexual orientation, and equity; anti-classism and socioeconomic equity; and equity for persons with disabilities.

At the same time, a newly formed Equity Department was tasked to develop and implement programs, policies, and procedures on equity education and an inclusive curriculum; to address human rights discrimination and harassment; and to monitor all equity policies. Special task groups were assembled to review practices related to access to programs and optional attendance; anti-racist education; ethno-cultural equity; community use of schools; human rights, discrimination and harassment; and student, family, and community involvement.

In keeping with the Education Act, the Board of Trustees formed its Special Education Advisory Committee, which released a Special Education Plan that acknowledged that "inclusion in the home school is the first option for all students." Aligned with these efforts were the formation of the Parent and Community Network (later called the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee) and Community Liaison Groups, as well as the creation of two student trustee positions as the voice of students across the system.

Over the years, other advisory committees were struck, including, for example, Early Years, French as a Second Language, the Inner City, and most recently Black Student Achievement.

The Board has been holding discussions about school-based fundraising policies since its early years, as well as the importance of having equity drive the budget process with regard to programs and services, as opposed to the opposite.

Once established, the TDSB moved to expand some of the exemplary practices and programs of its legacy boards across the bigger district. These included the Learning Opportunities Index for resource allocation; the expansion of Parenting and Family Literacy Centres to high-needs communities to foster young children's school readiness and parent engagement; the formation of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success as an independent charitable organization to extend student nutrition programs to more inner-city neighbourhoods; the Aboriginal Education Centre; and Pathways to Success for at-risk students.

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In 2004, the TDSB explored and adopted more of the groundbreaking work of the former boards. For example, learning from the Every Student Survey of the former Toronto Board of Education, the TDSB mandated the collection of identity-based and experiential data through the Student and Parent Census. This had the goal of helping the system understand the demographic makeup of its diverse student population and identify the issues and gaps experienced by students from different backgrounds, all so as to inform decisions and track progress.

Specific responses were developed to address inequities, many of which have proven to be successful. For example, the Inner City Task Force was formed in 2004 on the strength of the earlier Inner City Project School initiative. As a result of its recommendations, the Model Schools for the Inner Cities initiative was launched as a systemic effort to improve student outcomes in low-socioeconomic communities. The initiative grew from three schools in 2006-07 to 150 schools by 2012-13. Annual evaluations and 10-year research have demonstrated its effectiveness in narrowing achievement and opportunity gaps for students in these schools (see Research Brief 4, Appendix D).

In addition, throughout its nearly 20 years of history, the TDSB has designated 12 heritage months to acknowledge the representation of students from different ethno-cultural groups. The Board has formed at least 10 equity-focused task forces to address various issues related to inner-city students, immigrant and refugee students, Portuguese-speaking students, and students of Somali descent, in addition to student nutrition, safe and compassionate schools, community use of schools, employment equity, and the current Enhancing Equity Task Force. The Board has had in place religious accommodation guidelines since 2001 and accommodations for transgender and gender non-conforming staff and students since 2011.

Other innovative initiatives launched by the Board include the Africentric School, in-school health clinics, and the recent pilot program efforts to encourage students to take academic-level courses in Grades 9 and 10. In addition, the Beyond 3:30 after-school program (see Research Brief 3, Appendix C), funded, programmed, and staffed by the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, was offered in collaboration with the Board to middle/senior schools in high-needs neighbourhoods across the city.

In 2008, the TDSB was awarded the world-renowned Carl Bertelsmann Prize for "its exemplary work in promoting social integration and improving equal learning opportunities at its schools," as well as "its success at integrating children and young people of migrant origin and ensuring that disadvantaged students and schools in high-need areas receive additional support" (TDSB Bulletin, September 2008).

As the largest school system in Canada, with 246,000 students, nearly 600 schools, and 37,000 employees, the TDSB has faced challenges in scaling successful programs. Transferring promising practices has not always been easy. The benefits of a large city with great diversity are enormous: they come alongside the challenges of fluctuating communities and social and financial realities. These external factors (see Research Brief 1, Appendix A), as well as declining overall enrollment, are ongoing challenges that the Board has to manage with its finite resources. Although achievement and opportunity gaps among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds

have narrowed over time due to its Model Schools for Inner Cities program and other equity efforts, disparities continue to exist, especially among historically marginalized populations (see Research Brief 2, Appendix B).

There remains much work to be done. To address these systemic issues, in 2017, the TDSB developed the Integrated Equity Framework; added the position of Superintendent of Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression; and developed the Leadership Capacity Plan with a focus on equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression learning for all staff.

WHAT WE LEARNED

As much as the TDSB is a recognized leader in advancing equity in education, more needs to be examined and done on an ongoing basis. In fact, the question of what must be done *differently* and *systemically* has become a central theme of the Enhancing Equity Task Force's work.

Throughout its consultations with stakeholders, the Task Force was asked for clarity about what the TDSB means by "equity."

Equity is undergirded by the following principles:

- *All* students should be able to see themselves reflected in their learning, and their experiences in school should help them rise to their highest potential;
- *All* students should learn in safe and inclusive environments that promote their sense of identity and well-being;
- *All* students have the right to an education free of discrimination or limiting barriers;
- *All* students and families should be supported by schools that work in partnership with them to achieve the best results for them;
- Equity requires evidence-informed decision-making and better understanding of local communities;
- Equity requires accountability and transparency.

Stakeholder consultations revealed key concerns, challenges, and needs to include the following:

- Discrimination and human rights concerns;
- Systemic discrimination;
- Students with special education learning needs and other disabilities;
- More student voice;
- More authentic family and community relations;
- More professional learning; and,
- Accountability and transparency.

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Discrimination and Human Rights Concerns

Racism

The 2011-12 Student and Parent Census shows that the TDSB student population is composed of very diverse, racialized groups (see Figure 2). Although students who self-identify as White are the largest group, they make up less than a third (29%) of the population. The majority (71%) of the TDSB's students come from different racialized backgrounds.

Figure 2: TDSB Students – Racialized Groups
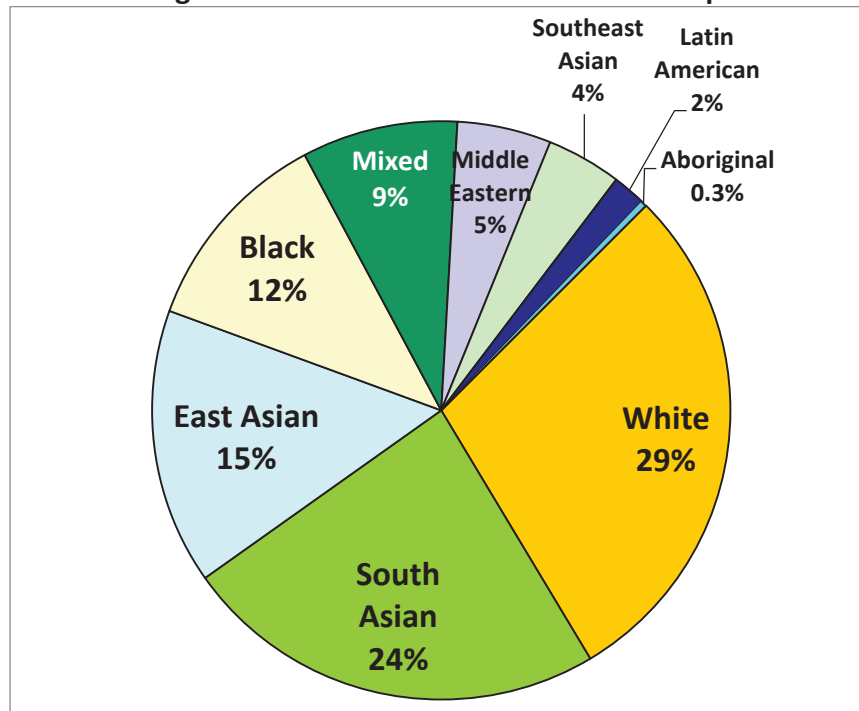
Source: 2011-12 Student & Parent Census

While this great racial diversity is a valuable asset for the school system, discrimination and human rights concerns based on race are an enormous concern. Racism was frequently raised as a concern by a wide array of stakeholders, and most notably by affected families and students. Explicit and implicit forms of racism were reported in both subtle and strong ways. We heard stories that ranged from a teacher making a casual joke about lynching, to a teacher allowing racist comments to be expressed in the classroom and telling the class that everyone is entitled to their opinions, to blatant racist bullying taking place unchecked in classrooms and schools.

When educators do not address unacceptable occurrences in their classrooms appropriately, harmful perspectives and behaviours are legitimized and perpetuated at the expense of racialized students, especially in terms of well-being.

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The Task Force's participants spoke further about the way that discrimination affects staff decision-making with regard to students. Rather than believing that all students can succeed, and helping them to do so, some staff harbour presumptions about the capability and potential of students from racialized and historically marginalized communities. "Streaming"[11] was frequently raised as an example of this pattern of discrimination, as harmful assumptions are made about students of certain races and backgrounds. Student participants shared frequently about the ways in which this discrimination negatively affected their morale and chances of future success.

During the whole year of consultation, concerns about the specific types of racism experienced by different racialized groups were raised, including anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-East Asian racism, and the lived experiences of newcomer students and families. It should be noted that these examples are used in this report as they were explicitly named during the consultations, but that they are by no means exhaustive, and that other racialized groups, such as Latinx, South Asians, and Southeast Asians have also experienced various forms of discrimination.

Anti-Black Racism

Our consultations drew specific attention to anti-Black racism — both the stories and lived experiences of Black students and the data and research that support their individual stories, especially with regard to the relationship between race, achievement, and well-being (e.g., Queiser & De Araujo, 2017).

Black students in general are less satisfied with their overall school experiences, more likely to report being bullied physically, and have less positive relationships with adults and peers in school (Yau et al., 2015). School safety data show that they have higher suspension and expulsion rates than other students (Zheng, 2013, Zheng et al., 2017). By the time Black students finish high school, 42% have been suspended at least once, compared with 18% of other students (James and Turner, 2017). Of the 200 students who were expelled between 2011 and 2016, nearly half self-identified as Black. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2017 report, which supports that statistic, notes that "racialized students receive harsher treatment or punishment than their White peers for similar behaviour."

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[11] "Streaming" is the language that participants used to refer to program pathways offered to students entering high school. These pathways include: Academic, Applied, Locally Developed, Apprenticeship and Work. Many marginalized (including but not limited to students coming from low socio-economic situations, students with identified learning needs, and racialized students) populations speak about the ways in which teachers hold lower expectations held for them and "stream" them into an Applied pathway when they are capable of Academic with the right support and would prefer it.

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The School Resource Officer (SRO) program was also raised as an example of the perceived criminalization of racialized youth, due to the over-representation of SROs in schools with higher populations of racialized students[12]. Many of these concerns were reflected in the recommendations made to the Task Force by the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee. In response to these concerns and recommendations, the TDSB Board of Trustees voted in November 2017 to eliminate the SRO program.

Moreover, a greater proportion of Black students are streamed to the "lowest academic level classes," specifically, Applied or Essential programs in secondary school: 48%, versus 19% of White students or 21% of others. A greater percentage of Black students are identified as having non-gifted exceptionalities, unidentified special needs, and/or in need of an Individual Education Plan requiring special education support: 26%, as opposed to 16% of White students or 9% of others. As James and Turner state, "behind [these] numbers are families who have dreams for their children, and Black children who are ambitious, excited about learning, and deserve the education offered to other children…" (2017, p.37).

Some Black students told the Task Force:

"I am asked to sit in front because I am not trusted to sit behind."

"If I am not doing well that is what they expect."

"My teacher refused to help me and he won't tell me why."

One Black male student described how he and two others were the only Black students in the class and for two years the teacher could not get their names straight.

Another student related the following: "I've been wanting to go to university forever. I started planning my post-secondary from Grade 9. I used to go to Guidance a lot; I would ask, 'can you email this university…?' She deliberately did not email [me the information]. Other kids were getting emails and info. When I asked her she said, 'I just don't think you can do it… I don't think you can get to the Grade point average. She's telling me, why don't you go to college?"

The Task Force heard a great many similar statements and stories directly from adults and students alike.

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[12] On November 22nd, 2017 the Board of Trustees voted to eliminate the SRO program based on recommendations from staff and community.

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Anti-Indigenous Racism

In keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls for Action, and to support Indigenous governance and self-determination, issues with regard to Indigenous students do not fall under the purview of equity. Rather, the TDSB's Aboriginal Education Centre will address these more explicitly.

That said, the lived experiences of Indigenous students are often described as being hidden in plain view. The data show that they are more likely to be identified as having special education learning needs, to be streamed to non-academic programs of study in high school, and to be over-represented among expelled students. The OHRC 2017 report also highlights that Indigenous students are often assumed to be the perpetrators of conflict with other students and are disproportionately disciplined.

The TDSB's 2011 Census data further indicate that Indigenous students feel less comfortable than other racialized groups participating in class; are more likely to report experiencing incidents of theft, physical bullying, or threats in school; are less likely to have an adult at school to whom they feel comfortable turning for help, advice, or support; have less positive relationships with peers; and have lower emotional well-being and self-perception.

Many participants cited the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students. They see land and treaty recognitions as positive steps, but much more is needed. They are adamant that the TDSB has an urgent responsibility to recognize and uphold those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Actions that are relevant to education. A TRC Task Force for Indigenous Education was proposed as a way of examining what the TRC's Actions mean for the TDSB and Indigenous education and how to implement the relevant Actions.

This is particularly important given that many Indigenous students and families feel that they are "hidden in plain view" and are fearful about self-identifying as Indigenous.

Given Canada's history of Residential Schools, it is especially important to honour and discuss the significance of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and to accelerate efforts that are already underway to decolonize education. Participants impressed upon the Task Force that the learning events and resources developed by the Aboriginal Education Centre provide valuable and important resources for students and educators. Indigenous peoples see education as a critical piece of Reconciliation.

Islamophobia

Participants were adamant that the TDSB is not doing enough to address the problem of rising Islamophobia and the negative effects it has on Muslim students. Students, families, and staff spoke

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of troubling experiences that range from school events being planned without taking into account religious holidays that affect Muslim students; having to explain or advocate for their need for

religious accommodation — even though the Board has been clear that that is their right; and feeling threatened by adults who belittle them for wearing a "veil" or by other students who refer to them as "terrorists." These instances of discrimination underline the need for intentional recommendations that take such injustices into account. Previous TDSB Census data collections did not take religion into account, but as of 2017, the Student Census does.

Among the stories, we heard the following:

A Muslim student who wears a veil described how she was asked to read out loud in class. When she struggled, the teacher said, "It might be easier if you take that shit off your face." The student said that she did not know what to do afterwards because she was shy.

Another Muslim student was forced to show a calendar to her teacher to prove when Eid is.

Anti-Semitism

Like other domains, during the consultations and working group meetings, Anti-Semitism was not raised frequently as an issue but this does not mean it is not present. Anti-Semitism is defined as "the latent or overt hostility or hatred directed towards, or discrimination against individual Jewish people or the Jewish people for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity, and their cultural, historical, intellectual and religious heritage".[13] Follow-up conversations revealed multiple students and staff from different schools told stories of seeing anti-Semitic symbols such as swastikas engraved on desks or written on textbooks or public bathrooms.

Anti-East Asian Racism

Very few East Asian participants shared concerns during the public consultation process, but follow-up interviews with students, staff, and families indicate that many East Asian students suffer quietly from more hidden racism. They endured subtle and/or blatant discrimination. Within the current curriculum and what they describe as the "mainstream" culture of power, privilege, or popularity, these students seldom see role models to whom they can relate. Many describe feeling alienated, dismissed, mocked by racial slurs, or excluded. Indeed, the Board's 2011 Student Census data indicate that East Asian students as a group experience the largest proportion of low emotional well-being, especially in terms of self-esteem, self-image, and confidence.

For instance, a student shared that a teacher made fun of her Chinese students by saying "Ching chang chong" regularly in class.

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[13] A Better Way Forward – Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan www.Ontario.ca/antiracism.

Another East Asian student told us that "Racism against students of Chinese descent is really normal and always happens in school…. [Many] have already accepted it as a norm or a reality that they couldn't change."

Newcomer Students and Families

Participants also raised concerns about the well-being of newcomers, including immigrant, refugee, and international students, many of whom experience culture shock and language barriers. For instance, without in-class language support, many newcomer or ESL (English as a Second Language) students felt lost, neglected, or incapable in school despite significant academic abilities. Furthermore, not only did these students feel looked down or frowned upon when they spoke their own language or when they could not express themselves well in English, but they felt helpless or unsafe defending or advocating for themselves or their children when faced with bullying, disputes, or problems.

Many newcomer students and families were appreciative of the ESL teachers or bilingual staff to whom they had access, but both the Student Census and anecdotal data clearly indicate that more comprehensive ESL supports, along with more professional learning for staff in general, are needed to make these students and their families feel welcome and cared for with empathy and cultural understanding.

Classism

Socioeconomic status also contributes to inequities in accessing enriched learning opportunities. There has been a growing body of research on poverty and economic and social inequality in the GTA, and the TDSB's own Student and Parent Census (2011-12) demonstrates that nearly half the population served by the Board falls in the two lowest income bracket groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: TDSB Students' Family Income Distribution (2012 Parent Census, JK-Grade 6)
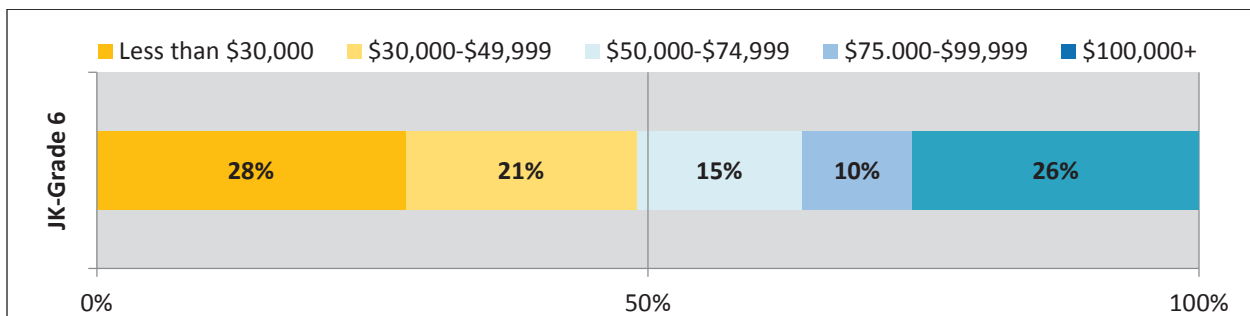
Growing inequality at the neighbourhood level can often mean that children in different schools experience very different learning environments, something that is exacerbated by such issues as relatively lower fundraising capacities or gentrification.

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Teachers, students, and families pointed to socioeconomic inequality between and among schools as a major barrier to equity, particularly in terms of the distribution of programs and resources. 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.

Classism also plays out in the differing capacity of schools to fundraise. Stakeholder groups identified disparities in fundraising capacity between schools in affluent and low-income areas that lead to inequitable access to technology or excursions. As one parent noted, "It can mean the difference between having scientists come in and give a series of talks to inspire students in the school, or not." Participants suggested devising strategies to encourage parity in the fundraising capacity of schools across the Board. Others recommended that efforts should be taken to ensure that financial difficulties do not prevent any students from accessing enriched or extracurricular activities.

The Task Force also heard concerns about how the TDSB has used its evidence-based measurement tool, the Learning Opportunity Index (LOI), to administer the Model Schools for Inner Cities program. The program ensures that the 150 lowest-income schools receive additional resources. Participants were concerned that 1) the hard cut-off of 150 schools may be failing other needy schools and students; and 2) middle-income schools that include low-income students have seen their resources and programs cut, to the detriment of the low-income students.

The Ministry of Education has provided resources to school boards to address socioeconomic inequities through its Learning Opportunity Grant [14] and has announced its intention to develop criteria to assess the grant's impact. These assessments may well complement the Board's own LOI and provide opportunities for greater socioeconomic equity.

Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation

Inequity based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation was not raised as frequently as some other issues during the consultation process. This may suggest students' discomfort or fear of coming to consultations or community meetings or not feeling safe in those spaces. The Board's 2011 Student Census reveals that LGBTQ students feel less satisfied than the general student population with their overall school experience; feel less safe in school; are more likely to be bullied socially and physically; have poorer relationships with school adults and peers; and experience other emotional challenges.

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[14] In the winter of 2017 Social Planning Toronto released a report analyzing the Learning Opportunity Grant (LOG) received by the TDSB from the Ministry of Education. While originally intended to be used to address issues of inequity LOG funds can now be used for a range of purposes. People for Education detailed these changes in their annual report of 2017.

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Participants noted that action to address inequity on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation has been undertaken and/or considered in their schools. Action has included resource hubs/notice boards, gender-neutral washrooms, student-led gender equality conferences, gender-sexuality alliance clubs, and gender-based violence prevention work.

Nonetheless, in light of students' ongoing negative experiences and fear, more intentional work is needed to address the discrimination they face.

As an example, one transgender student described how a teacher who was taking attendance on a field trip said, "We have the boys and the girls and 'student's name'." The student said that "this sparked homophobia and discrimination" as another student shouted out "tranny" in response. "It was a negative experience to have such an important role model put you on the spot like that," the student said.

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Systemic Discrimination

The Need for Equitable and Inclusive Practices

The current education system was built to serve a less diverse demographic and has had difficulty shifting to reflect the needs of the diverse communities it now serves. Equity demands that students see themselves reflected in, and well served by, the education system. Participants in consultations were adamant in raising the urgent need for more equitable and inclusive practices. The issues they raised include conscious or unconscious bias in teachers and staff, school curriculum and materials, cultural representation and appreciation, and different learning styles.

○ *Conscious or Unconscious Bias in Teachers and Staff*

A significant number of students and families spoke out about experiencing racism or prejudice from school staff, particularly on the basis of their socioeconomic or racial background. They stressed that it is the duty of the TDSB to ensure that staff do not perpetuate such prejudices or racism.

It is obvious that students should never experience racism or prejudice from their teachers or school staff. Racism and/or oppressive behaviour on the part of teachers or staff is inexcusable and, for the safety and well-being of students, must be eliminated from all TDSB schools.

Participants were clear that challenging conversations about racism, oppression, classism, and other barriers to equity are critical. They also felt that partnering with faculties of education and unions to ensure teacher training is reflective of diversity would help eliminate many conscious or unconscious biases held by educators and other school or central staff. The TDSB has already begun the process of delivering anti-racism and anti-oppression professional learning to their senior leadership. This professional learning has begun for all principals, vice-principals, centrally assigned principals, and coaches in the system. The learning explicitly introduces equity as a leadership competency and stresses that a deep understanding of equity is necessary for all staff so as to support student achievement and well-being.

○ *School Curriculum and Materials*

Participants noted that students often struggle to see themselves represented in their schoolwork. Participants recommended more training for teachers in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, as well as the inclusion of global and Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. As a way of addressing these issues, all principals, vice principals, and coaches have been engaged in learning on Inclusive Design.

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o *Cultural Representation and Appreciation*

In addition to representative textbooks and the curriculum, students expressed the need to see themselves reflected in their schools. They asked for more positive representation of historically marginalized groups in the curriculum and in the school itself. Participants asked that schools make the effort to honour and celebrate culture and languages; be mindful of prominent holidays; and honour the home languages of students and families. They noted that while some schools do touch on the more significant holidays, they provide few other ways to immerse students in diverse cultural identities, which affects how included and reflected they feel in their learning environments. Participants were clear that racialized students need diverse staff members to relate to culturally and as role models.

A consistent theme was the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students, support beyond the necessary land and treaty recognitions. Participants see as critical that the knowledge gap on Indigenous peoples in Canada be filled. They also want acknowledgement plaques of treaties and territories, the inclusion of Indigenous music and art into daily activities, and partnering with First Nations schools. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the wake of the TRC includes acknowledging that we are all treaty people. Teachers should be familiar with the TRC's 94 recommendations.

o *Embracing Different Learning Styles and Needs*

Many cited a need for educational strategies that will work for students with different learning styles. These might include more inquiry-based learning in the curriculum; alternative ways of evaluating students; strength-based pedagogical approaches; and more online/hybrid resources for students. Online feedback indicated that all families want the best learning environment for their children and that an embrace of different learning styles is the most effective way to achieve it. Specialized programs and Optional Attendance help to achieve that goal.

Optional Attendance

Participants noted that schools with specialized programs[15] are not equitably distributed or accessible throughout the city. This has a negative impact on specific neighbourhoods and on students who do not live within the catchment areas of those schools. The dynamics of the Optional Attendance application process (used to apply for a specialized program or to attend a school outside the student's catchment or home school area) create a number of problems that then have caused deepening divisions within and between schools competing for student enrolment.

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[15] At the TDSB, specialized programs include Advanced Placement, Africentric Programs, Arts Programs, Cisco/Nortel Systems, Cyber Arts, Elite Athletes/Arts, Integrated Technology, International Baccalaureate, Leadership Pathway, Math, Science and Technology, Pre-Advanced Placement

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Students with Special Education Learning Needs and Other Disabilities

Participants voiced concerns that the existing Special Education Learning programming and delivery can be divisive and exclusionary, especially to students' families — a challenge across the education and not only within the TDSB. Families expressed frustration at being shut out of decisions made on behalf of their children. They want to be more involved in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other choices that affect their children. They also want a clear understanding of how to appeal decisions about IEPs.

The data are clear that Black students are over-represented in Special Education Learning programs while White students are over-represented in Gifted programs (Brown & Parekh, 2010; Parekh 2013a, Parekh 2013b).

Some families, concerned that congregated[16] Gifted programs might be phased out as a result of the Enhancing Equity Task Force's work, expressed online how important these classrooms have proven for their children, who had previously experienced social isolation and low mental health, and their fears of what might happen if these supports were removed. Online feedback noted that some students in Gifted programming have dual diagnoses and benefit enormously from classrooms tailored to their needs.

This report does not recommend phasing out or closing congregated Special Education sites or Special Education programs, which includes Gifted. It is, however, important to review Special Education to assess the impact of these supports on students' achievement and well-being.

Many other students require more system support to benefit fully from education, including students identified with multiple exceptionalities such as autism, and students with complex medical care needs, intellectual and physical disabilities, or hearing or vision impairment that affects their ability to learn. The TDSB needs to recognize, understand, and support differences according to the needs of all these individual students.

The Task Force heard significant debate around specific issues such as inclusive classrooms and the Home School Program. Some participants asked for the end of the program, arguing that the TDSB's goal should be to include students in its classrooms rather than segregate them, and that more resources, staff, and professional learning are required for the Board to adequately meet the need of these vulnerable students. Many participants did not think that the current model provides sufficient supports for students with special education needs and other disabilities in blended classrooms. Other families, however, noted online that they fear that inclusive classrooms

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[16] Congregated schools are schools that only have special education class to support some students in placements that are special education class full time. These programs support communities of learners whose complex educational needs require alternative curriculum and specialized services, facilities and resources. The goal is to maximize student independence.

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may not meet the needs of their children or provide the best learning environment for them, especially if they have dual or multiple diagnoses.

Participants were clear that existing services do not adequately meet the need of students. They asked specifically for professional learning for staff and more support staff with the knowledge and skills to work with students.

One teacher is reported to have said of a student, "Kids with ADHD don't need medication; they just need more love from their parents."

Another student described how a teacher "told a kid she didn't have depression; she just needed to take a nap."

Senior staff at the TDSB recognize that some students require the support of special education classrooms and congregated schools. Effective September 2016, the TDSB introduced a universal screening process for all Grade 3 students across the Board. The purpose of this universal screening test is to:

- Provide information to classroom teachers about the strengths and learning needs of each student in order to better support teachers in programming for students
- Help teachers to know when to bring a student forward to In-School Team (IST) or School Support Team (SST) for programming suggestions
- Improve equity of access for all students to differentiated programming including the potential identification of students with a gifted exceptionality

The low percentage of schools that are physically accessible is also a major barrier for students with physical accessibility needs.

More Student Voice

Many participants cited a lack of opportunity for students to speak and be heard. Students stressed their desire to participate in conversations on issues of equity. At some schools, students are taking a leadership role in equity initiatives, through student-led equity councils, student equity clubs and forums, and pushing for student representation on school committees.

Participants also see it as essential for staff to support and advocate for students in opening up opportunities for their participation and leadership. Participants also asked for data such as surveys and interviews to better understand students' experiences and needs with regard to equity, and to hear their opinions and solutions.

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More Authentic Parent and Community Relationships[17]

Building better relationships between school staff and families is essential for success in equity. Many educators, community partners, and others suggested that many families feel disenfranchised in various ways. Families from a variety of areas described feeling isolated, wanting better or more meaningful communication, experiencing frustration with the system, and/or feeling unwelcome in their child's school.

Some families were concerned that their voices were minimized in larger community gatherings or in the presence of "expert" voices from community agencies. School councils can become hierarchies that put families with the time, resources, and ability to engage regularly with the school at the top and those without social, cultural, or linguistic capital at the bottom. Those at the top often have higher socioeconomic status and English fluency. These power dynamics need to be addressed by school leaders who must ensure that those who are habitually silenced or excluded are included and listened to.

Community members noted that it can be challenging to establish partnerships with the TDSB. Exploring new partnerships with community organizations and strengthening the capacity of Community Support Workers could bolster schools' connectivity with their neighbourhoods.

Participants discussed the value of schools as strong community hubs that encourage student and family voice in school and community initiatives, as well as provide spaces and resources for people to collaboratively support and learn from each other. Schools can be strong neighbourhood resources in partnership with other levels of government and local community organizations that can provide connections and resources with regard to language, settlement, health, and mental health and well-being. Participants believe that school buildings can become a welcome and critical resource that contribute to local community development.

More Professional Learning

Participants were adamant that there be robust opportunities for ongoing, intersectional, professional learning and development for TDSB leadership, administrators, educators, support staff, families, and students, particularly with regard to the difficult and uncomfortable work of equity. This professional learning is led by individuals who have demonstrated expertise in equity and anti-oppression.

The importance of this theme was reinforced throughout the consultations.

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[17] Part of the Enhancing Equity Task Force work was started on the creation of a set of Standards for Family Engagement. Timing did not allow this work to be completed within the scope of the Enhancing Equity Task Force but it will continue within the Board.

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Accountability and Transparency

Participants suggested that families and community members must keep the TDSB accountable for advancing equity for those who have experienced discrimination and racism, and especially for those who have historically and systemically been marginalized.

The system itself needs the tools, policies, and procedures to make the necessary changes, as well as to track and report on its success through ongoing data collection. Participants also recognized that all stakeholders must be involved in necessary, difficult conversations about ongoing barriers to equity.

Data needs to be collected for accountability purposes. School-level equity assessments that detail the strengths and challenges within each school should be undertaken on a periodic basis so that actions can be planned and progress measured. Participants noted that the current Parent Concern Protocol process can vary greatly between schools, depending on the individuals involved. The existing process should be reviewed and expanded to all stakeholders, including students and staff, and it should be strengthened. More work is required to develop a better understanding of the process and to ensure that anyone who wants to use the protocol knows what to expect and what to do next if their efforts at addressing issues remain unresolved.

Participants also raised concerns over what may happen to equity work if there are changes to leadership within the TDSB. The TDSB must secure strong accountability measures for the work that emerges from the Task Force so as to ensure that the TDSB and the Board of Trustees move beyond discussion to sustainable actions.

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OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT WE LEARNED

Four themes emerged from our work:

- The problems of social and economic inequity are greater than the TDSB;
- Divisions between and within schools;
- Developing a mindset of true partnership and mutual respect with students, families, caregivers, and community; and,
- The need for tracking and reporting.

The Problems of Social and Economic Inequity are Greater than the TDSB:

The school system exists within a broader societal context of racism, oppression, and socioeconomic disparities. Toronto is the child poverty capital of Canada and more than a quarter of GTA children live in poverty. These children and their families face enormous disadvantages with regard to employment, income, housing, health care, child care, accessibility, and transportation (see Research Brief 1, Appendix A). These disparities have consequences for education that the education system cannot solve on its own.

The TDSB cannot resolve larger issues of income disparity but it can play a strong role in addressing disparity within its systems. The Enhancing Equity Task Force's recommendations aim to advance the TDSB's equity work.

Divisions Between and Within Schools

Participants focused on the structure and delivery of education as they noted how practices like Optional Attendance (the ability to attend a school other than your local school) and specialized programs in schools (such as Arts or International Baccalaureate programs) resulted in divisions between schools. These programs have opened pathways to post-secondary opportunities for some students but not for others. At the same time, some families noted in online feedback that the selection processes and subsequent competition that arises to gain entry into such programs is worthwhile and relevant learning to prepare for life after school.

Equity means building learning environments that inspire *all* children to meet their full potential. Wherever there are divisions between schools, traditionally marginalized students end up under-represented in these specialized programs and without equitable, merit-based access to them. According to an international study by Doug Willms (2006), "When students are segregated into different kinds of programmes as they progress through school, the gap tends to increase and overall levels of performance [of the schooling systems] become worse (Willms, 2006, p.50)."

Our consultations emphasized the overwhelming value of specialized programs and schools and the need to build on and expand access to these types of programs for all students. The recommendations therefore, focus on how to improve access to these specialized programs and to support all schools to be great schools.

Consultation participants voiced concerns about the structural elements within schools that divide students — including programs such as transitional pathways that move Grade 9 students into different programs of study and streams (Academic, Applied, Apprenticeship, Locally Developed, and Work). Research has indeed demonstrated consistently that racialized students are under-represented in Academic streams and that students with identified learning needs do better when they are fully integrated into the classroom with as-needed supports. Participants were concerned that streaming at the start of Grade 9 and at age 13 limits post-secondary choices far too early; some suggested that students would be better equipped to make decisions at the end of Grade 10.

Other parents were concerned that destreaming could "water down" the curriculum if all students were to begin high school in the academic stream and that stronger students would not have access to adequate teacher time.

It is important to note that successful pilot programs within the TDSB have shown that, given the opportunity and the right supports, all students can succeed in the Academic stream. The Peel District School Board has announced that it will soon begin similar destreaming pilot programs. And this fall, Queen's Park has pledged to look at destreaming Grade 9 across Ontario after its own data found that 38% of Ontario's lowest income students study at the Applied level, compared with 26% of students from high income groups.

A recent York University study using TDSB data found that only 53% of Black TDSB students were enrolled in an Academic program, compared with 80% of students of other backgrounds.

These data are compelling and the solution may very well lie in rethinking streaming. While recommendations are provided with regard to Grade 9 and Grade 10 curriculum, concerns of parents on both sides of the issue need to be addressed. The right level of supports for students and teachers must go hand in hand with any changes to ensure that all students in the academic program have access to teachers with high expectations and experience high academic achievement and success so that no student is adversely affected. In fact, Doug Willms (2006) in his international study further points out that "countries that have the highest levels of performance tend to be those that are successful in not only raising the learning bar, but also levelling it. These findings provide strong evidence that strong school performance and equity can go hand in hand (Willms, 2006, p.67)."

Parents also voiced different opinions as to whether structural barriers exist with regard to the delivery of effective Special Education programs and services. Some parents are concerned that students are detrimentally segregated in their home schools based on learning needs and abilities. Others felt that this segregation allowed for a more focused approach to teaching and learning.

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Some parents preferred that their children have greater opportunities to receive Special Education at their home schools rather than be sent to a congregated site, while yet others expressed high levels of satisfaction with their children's experiences at congregated sites. In particular, parents of Gifted children felt very strongly that the congregated site model continue.

Developing a Mindset of True Partnership and Mutual Respect with Students, Families, Caregivers, and Community

Relationships matter. Student and family experiences with the TDSB are based on the relationships they develop with the teachers, administrators, and other staff within the school. It is through these interactions that they experience support, encouragement, and the opportunities they seek for learning and advancement. It is often through these relationships that students achieve success. As one of the planning group members said, "for many, education is the path to hope and a better future." However, as noted by many participants, many students do not experience these positive relationships.

The Task Force heard from participants about inequities based on inconsistent practices and expectations, as well as harmful biases. Racist or oppressive assumptions and biases have no place in education and must be eliminated so that all children can feel that they belong in school and can achieve their potential.

Students need to know that educators will neither make nor tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Asian or any other oppressive language or comments, from other students, staff, teachers, or administrators.

Finally, it is important that schools work more productively with parents and caregivers. True partnership requires that teachers, other staff, students, and parents/caregivers work together to determine what is best for each child in a given situation. This is particularly important for students who receive Special Education Learning supports and who often feel excluded from the assessment process.

The Need for Tracking and Reporting

There is currently no central system to document or track incidents based in discrimination, racism, or hate. When such incidents do occur, they are dealt with in a wide variety of ways. In one school, for instance, swastikas were carved into the wooden stage at the gym. The school immediately reported the incident; closed the gym until the swastikas were removed; alerted all staff and students to what had happened; and put out a clear statement condemning the actions and indicating that those responsible would be held accountable. In another school, a teacher discovered a bathroom with hateful racial slurs on almost every surface from walls to toilets to towel dispensers. The bathroom was quietly repainted but no discussion took place between the administrator and the teacher who reported the incident and no alert or statement was made. In

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the first instance, the school signaled a clear expectation that this type of behaviour was not going to be tolerated and that immediate action would be taken. In the second instance, there was no clear signal that the school would not tolerate hate or what steps would be taken to re-establish a safe and caring environment.

Every school needs to be free from discrimination, racism, and hate. There need to be clear expectations that these behaviours will not be tolerated. Should an incident occur, it needs to be recorded and a response needs to be generated that addresses the concern and seeks to protect the students who have been targeted.

Summary:

Equity is about responding to the needs of *all* students so as to ensure they reach their full potential and that they thrive in the education system from the day they enter it in pre-kindergarten until the day they graduate from secondary school.

The recommendations that follow seek to ensure that the TDSB creates an equitable environment for all its students, one that fosters excellence, clear accountability, authentic engagement, and trusting relationships within the context of an anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogy and framework.

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Recommendations

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RECOMMENDATIONS

One clear vision emerged from the wealth of stories, insights, research, and consultations. Equity requires all TDSB schools to be strong neighbourhood schools that provide:

- Learning environments free of barriers so that *all* students can reach their full potential;
- Programming and staffing that is reflective, relevant, and responsive to the cultures, identities, and needs of the TDSB's diverse students, families, and communities;
- A school culture that is safe, welcoming, caring, and stands actively against discrimination, racism, and hate;
- Active engagement with families and communities as authentic partners.

In keeping with that vision, the Task Force has made recommendations in the following six areas, so as to:

1) **Ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in all schools;**
2) **Make students whole: effectively addressing school incidents and complaints;**
3) **Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools;**
4) **Meaningfully engage students, families, and communities in building a culture of equity at school;**
5) **Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer, and promotion; and,**
6) **Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all.**

1) **Ensure Equitable Educational Access, Experiences, and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools**

- Remove systemic barriers *between* schools:

    o Examine practices that result in inequitable access to specialized programs;

    o Examine ways to improve access to resources and supports so that schools can offer a variety of specialized programs to all students;

    o Review the impact of the Optional Attendance policy in terms of barriers to accessibility of programs;

    o Ensure that the Optional Attendance policy maintains a fair and transparent process for applications and selection into available programs.

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- Remove systemic barriers *within* schools (barriers that are created by the perceptions of educators, administrators, and/or professionals):

  o Phase in a program to allow a majority of Grade 9 and 10 students to work at an Academic level with necessary programming and teacher support.[18] The phase-in should occur over a three-year period, closely monitor and report on student outcomes and achievement levels, and be responsive to parent concerns about curriculum standards and teacher expectations;

  o Review Special Education Learning programs with an emphasis on:
    - Placement and inclusion of students with special education learning needs;
    - Retaining congregated sites while exploring options to include Special Education at a home school;
    - Professional development for staff;
    - Providing a process and clear information for collaborative decision-making about student needs, as well as a process to appeal and revise decisions;
    - Identifying physical and attitudinal barriers;
    - Ensuring that all families, including those new to Canada and those whose first language is not English, can successfully navigate the Special Education system with confidence.

- Review curriculum based on an equity and anti-oppression framework. This means:

  o Incorporating equity and anti-oppression content into the curriculum, reflecting subject matter relevant to the various student demographics; and,

  o Incorporating content about Indigenous peoples and history, as well as being cognizant of Indigenous rights and land recognition.

- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement within the TDSB, with a focus on research and generating solutions and support within the TDSB for Black students and their families;

- Under the leadership of TDSB's new Accessibility Coordinator and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, implement the TDSB's multi-year strategic plan to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, informational, and other barriers[19], and strive to remove physical barriers in existing buildings that prevent staff and students from full participation and high achievement in their respective working and learning environments.

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[18] San Vicente, R., Sultana, F., & Seck, N. (2015). Sifting, sorting & selecting: A collaborative inquiry on alternatives to streaming in the TDSB. Final Report. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

[19] as cited in *What An Ontario Education Accessibility Standard Could Include.* http://www.aoda.ca/spread-the-word-about-the-aoda-alliances-new-discussion-paper-on-what-an-education-accessibility-standard-can-and-should-include

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2) **Making Students Whole: Effectively Addressing School Incidents and Complaints**

- Explore preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation approaches:

  o Review existing complaint protocols and ensure an effective process for complaints and resolution. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission argues, the goal of complaint resolution is to ensure that "the complainant is, to the extent possible, 'made whole,' and the effects of the discrimination remedied";

  o Explore staffing models that support preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation to better respond to school and student needs;

  o Respond to the overwhelming request to end the School Resource Officer program;

  o Review the handling and overseeing of student complaints and identify effective ways to support students when they are unable to resolve disputes at the school level;

  o Develop or acquire a system to gather and track reports of incidents and complaints related to exclusion, discrimination, racism, and hate.

- Review current suspension and expulsion practices, with an emphasis on:

  o Staff bias and the reasons for the over-representation of Black and Indigenous students in Special Education Learning programming;

  o The impact of suspension and expulsion on students and families.

3) **Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources Among Schools**

- Distribute funding and resources equitably among schools, recognizing that discrepancies among schools occurs in part because of disparities in school fundraising capacity, which leads to inequitable access to and quality of resources. In keeping with this goal, we recommend that:

  o The Board of Trustees confirm its commitment, as currently embodied in the Fundraising and Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) policies, that school resources be targeted equitably;

- o The Board of Trustees consider requests, raised in Task Force consultations, that measures of inequality within schools (pockets of poverty and fundraising) be included in the calculation of the LOI;

- o The Learning Opportunities Grant and school-based/school council fundraising capacities be reviewed to ensure greater equity of resources among schools with different socioeconomic status;

- o The allocation of funding distributed for staff resources, classroom materials, and professional development and training also be reviewed.

4) Meaningfully Engage Students, Families, and Communities in Building a Culture of Equity at School

- In keeping with the need for strong neighbourhood schools where all students feel that they are cared for, that they belong, and that they are heard through the creation of a more inclusive and representative culture in schools[20], we recommend that the TDSB provide a school environment that:

  - o Ensures that students have dedicated, caring adults in school to mentor and advocate with and for them;

  - o Fosters student self-advocacy and empowerment, including student and peer leadership;

  - o Encourages students to have a voice in school practices and decision-making.

- Families, including those from historically marginalized and currently underserved communities, be fully engaged as authentic partners in the education of their children. To this end:

  - o Develop a set of Family Engagement Standards to ensure that all families feel welcomed, feel that they belong, and are encouraged to be contributors to the school community;

  - o Work to ensure that school councils are representative and reflective of the school community;

  - o Work to actively steward better and more meaningful communication and experiences between families and their schools;

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[20] Fund LAEN (Latinx, Afro-Latin American, Aba Yala Education Network) programs. Follow through on the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services' Black Youth Action Plan.

- o Strengthen the capacity of Community Support Workers to bolster families, schools, and community connectivity.

- Further community engagement, schools are to:

  - o Develop strategic community partnerships with social agencies, not-for-profit groups, and other levels of government to support the needs of students and families;

  - o Function as a resource and gathering space, especially for underserved communities (e.g., for social/emotional, medical- or employment-related purposes, recreation, childcare, adult education).[21]

5) **Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer, and Promotion**

- Staffing models and delivery should reflect equity and the diversity of the communities served by the TDSB;

- Ensure the hiring of diverse staff with demonstrated equity and anti-oppression competency;

- Provide training for staff with hiring responsibilities on diverse hiring practices with an equity lens for all;

- Ensure more flexible staffing structures and processes by engaging local school staff to identify what they need to achieve greater equity;

- Review the hiring panel for school administrators to assess which stakeholder groups need to be included;

- Align transfer and surplus processes in partnership with unions.

6) **Provide Professional Learning on Equity and Anti-Oppression for ALL**

- Deliver systematic and comprehensive professional learning for *all* stakeholders to examine bias, as well as existing and changing laws, policies, practices, frameworks, strategies, and pedagogues that critically examine and address oppression, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, the challenges faced by students with physical and intellectual disabilities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of historical institutional discrimination;

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[21] Existing examples to model on include Northview Hub and Nelson Mandela Park Public School's Open School Project.

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- Apply an equity framework to all professional development learning activities;

- Deliver training by internal and/or external experts;

- Encourage ongoing professional learning and an environment of continuous learning and improvement;

- Ensure clear accountability for staff in School Improvement Plans and Performance Appraisals;

- Identify and provide systemic tools to support staff to control for bias in decision-making.

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Accountability

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ACCOUNTABILITY

It is important that the TDSB establish clear accountability structures to ensure follow-through on approved Enhancing Equity Task Force recommendations, monitor their implementation, and report to the Board of Trustees annually on their progress. The work of enhancing equity will be an ongoing responsibility, and accountability mechanisms should reflect this requirement.

The Task Force recommends that the Board of Trustees:

- Develop a tracking and reporting framework to monitor progress on the recommendations;

- Develop a set of progress indicators;

- Use the existing committee structure to identify a lead committee of the Board of Trustees to track and monitor progress;

- Ensure that all advocacy and advisory committees have a role in tracking equity as it relates to their focus.

The Task Force recommends that the TDSB:

- Initiate an annual equity summit;

- Create four Learning Centre-based Enhancing Equity Committees.

The Task Force recommends that each school:

- Set goals and track progress on equity;

- Establish a focus on equity through existing School Improvement Planning processes;

- Provide information for families to deepen their understanding of existing accountability processes and how to advocate for their children.

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Appendices

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APPENDIX A: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 1
A Scan of Current Conditions in Toronto Impacting Equity
Prepared by Stefanie De Jesus & Maria Yau
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(February 2017)

While Toronto is home to some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the country, recent statistics reveal that this metropolis is at the same time the child poverty capital of Canada (Polanyi et al., 2016). Overall, 27% of children live in poverty, with this figure reaching over 40% in some of Toronto's inner city or most diverse neighbourhoods (Polanyi et al., 2016). Considering that individuals under 18 years of age are the most likely age group to live in poverty in Toronto, it is imperative to examine factors that sustain this inequity, which often places children on a disadvantageous trajectory. These factors include:

- Employment and income
- Food security
- Housing
- Transportation
- Access to health care
- Childcare
- Accessibility

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Recent generations have observed a marked change in the workforce landscape. Between 1984 and 2014, the proportion of part-time jobs in Toronto has more than doubled, from 11% to 23% (City of Toronto, 2014). Qualifying for Employment Insurance and Ontario Works is increasingly difficult as stricter restrictions were enforced (Granofsy et al., 2015). To further aggravate this social crisis, precarious employment (i.e., jobs lacking security or benefits) has become ubiquitous; precarity has increased by approximately 50% in the last 20 years, with at least 20% of the workforce currently holding such forms of employment (PEPSO, 2013).

These trends disproportionately affect youth, racialized individuals, recent immigrants, and Indigenous families, who already face barriers to employment, such as limited Canadian experience or credentials, language difficulties, few networking opportunities, and ineligibility for particular employment services or income supports (City of Toronto, 2013). According to The Scorecard on Prosperity 2013, over 55% of newcomers have a university degree, yet most are underemployed with jobs which offer low pay and fewer opportunities to advance (Toronto Region Board of Trade, 2013). This inability to capitalize on newcomers' abilities is estimated to cost the Toronto economy between $1.5 billion to $2.25 billion annually (Toronto Region Board of Trade, 2010).

Poverty intensification can also be attributed to inequities in income. Not surprisingly, when compared to other cities across the country, Toronto has experienced the highest level of income inequality (United Way, 2015). Between 1980 and 2005, income inequity among Torontonians rose by 23%, in contrast to the national rate of 6% (United Way, 2015). Income inequity is further exacerbated by race, gender, newcomer, and Indigenous status, among other factors. For example, racialized individuals endure reduced earnings (i.e., 81.4 cents to a dollar) compared to non-racialized workers (Block & Galabuzi, 2011), women face a 31.5% gender pay gap (Cornish, 2014), and newcomers earn 48.5% of the incomes of non-immigrants in Toronto (Walks, 2013). This disparity in income is also manifested geographically; "high-income neighbourhoods have become more affluent, and low-income neighbourhoods have become poorer, in relative terms" (United Way, 2015). To be specific, between 1970 and 2005, the number of low-income

neighbourhoods rose from 19% to 53%, middle income neighbourhoods dwindled from 66% to 29%, and high income neighbourhoods rose from 15% to 19% (Hulchanski, 2010).

FOOD SECURITY

Inequities in employment and income propel inequities in food security. Owing to financial circumstances, 13% of families in Toronto experienced food insecurity in 2013-14 (Tarasuk et al., 2016). By the same token, there has been a 13% rise in the overall usage of food banks across Toronto, with a 48% rise in ethno-racial diverse areas (e.g., Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough; Daily Bread Food Bank, 2016). Even so, racialized, low-income communities are less likely to have a food bank in their neighbourhood compared to non-racialized, low-income communities (Tehara, 2010).

Although children constitute one fifth of the total population of Toronto, they are an overrepresented fragment of food bank users at 29% (Tarasuk et al., 2016). Reports have also revealed an increase in the proportion of children in households using food banks who had not eaten for a whole day in the past two years due to finances (from 28% in 2014 to 37% in 2016; Toronto Child and Family Network). Moreover, 17% of Torontonian children who used food banks recounted going hungry at least once per week (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2016).

To exacerbate income inequities in Toronto, many individuals face financial and geographic barriers to regularly accessing healthy and culturally appropriate foods (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2012). Namely, quality and lower-priced food retail outlets are rarely within walking distance or easily accessible by public transit in low-income neighbourhoods (Toronto Public Health, 2013).

HOUSING

Currently, an unprecedented housing crisis exists in Toronto and the surrounding region, where rental and ownership prices are among the highest in Canada and have increased well above the rate of inflation. The rapid rise in housing costs is aggravating existing inequities. To illustrate, 34% of families with children aged 17 and under are forfeiting over 30% of their income on rent (the cutpoint of "affordability"; Polanyi et al., 2016) and half of all families in low-income neighbourhoods are living in housing that is either overcrowded, unaffordable, or in deficient condition (e.g., pests, poor repair, broken door locks, etc.; Paradis et al., 2014). As such, lower-income families are driven to wait lists for subsidized housing or into unsafe housing situations as they are without options (Polanyi et al., 2016).

Moreover, particular groups face a disparate challenge in accessing adequate housing. Studies have found that newcomers, women escaping violence, single parent households, individuals with mental illness, as well as racialized, Indigenous and LGBTQ people experience discrimination and barriers to renting (Campaign 2000, 2015; CERA, 2009). Consequently, thousands of Toronto families have experienced homelessness and turned to shelters, thereby affecting the health and well-being of their children (Shapcott, 2014).

TRANSPORTATION

Though Toronto has one of the least affordable public transit passes among Canadian cities (Toronto Public Health, 2013), efforts have been made to improve affordability for youth by making transit free for children aged 12 and under. This policy not only benefits approximately 90,000 children from low-income families in order to partake in educational, health and recreational opportunities but also daycares, schools, and community groups who provide services (e.g., field trips) to children (Polanyi et al., 2016).

Despite these positive gains, inequities exist in transportation. The cost of fares has been acknowledged as a barrier to public transit use for Torontonians living on a low income (Shapiro, 2012; Toronto Public Health,

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2011; Wilson et al., 2011). Again, consider low-income families, who are more likely to live in the inner suburbs, which are more affordable yet designed for cars, as opposed to the downtown core. Transit in downtown Toronto is reported to be three times better than in the inner suburbs (e.g., higher frequency of nearby subway, bus and streetcar services), areas where individuals are most likely to depend on transit but experience a substantial service gap (Toronto Prosperity, 2015). As a result, low-income earners are required to spend a notable portion of their wages on public transit, which is often unreliable or infrequent in their communities or inaccessible due to irregular work schedules. This forces individuals to spend additional time commuting and triage necessary errands, such as picking up a child from daycare, doctor's appointments, and grocery shopping, if they cannot afford public transit.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
While there is publicly funded and universal health care coverage in the province of Ontario, inequities and accessibility barriers related to health care exist, particularly among many newcomer and disadvantaged families. These barriers can be tangible (e.g., financial, geographical, and uninsured or unattached health care provision) and intangible (e.g., language, cultural, familiarity, etc.) in nature.

Research (Yau & De Jesus, 2014; Yau et al., 2015) has found that financial inflexibility often prevents families in high priority neighbourhoods from seeking medical attention due to associated costs, such as transportation to reach health care professionals farther away, out-of-pocket medical services, prescriptions, and specialized assessments. Another leading obstacle to health care access for children of newcomer families is the ineligibility for provincial health care coverage - Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). In some cases, families on a refugee claim admit to not seeking health care services for the sole reason of not wanting to cause trouble or jeopardize their refugee claim. Even for students who do have OHIP coverage, some may be unattached. In other words, they do not have family doctors, and hence consistent primary health care for them is uncommon. These barriers significantly decrease families' accessibility to health care.
Sources of intangible barriers that Toronto children and their families face to accessing health care include language and cultural differences (e.g., trust in "Western" medicine, dismissal of taboo health concerns such as mental and sexual health). Many immigrant or low-income families feel intimidated by and fearful of visiting hospitals, specialists, or walk-in clinics due to their limited familiarity and understanding of the Ontario health care system and how to navigate through it (Yau & De Jesus, 2014; Yau et al., 2015). Their unfamiliarity leads to the fear of using and accessing the health care system.

These findings are corroborated by literature which demonstrates that racialized communities are non-existent when it comes to health promotion campaigns, encounter differential treatment when receiving health care, and are deprived access to culturally appropriate health promotion information (Patychuk, 2011). In addition, refugee claimants, migrant workers, and non-status/undocumented individuals encounter further obstacles and threats to health. These patterns have also been observed for Indigenous people living in Toronto (McCaskill et al., 2011; NCCAB, 2013; Olding et al., 2014).

CHILDCARE
Recently, the affordability of childcare in Toronto has received a lot of exposure as the cost of childcare has soared by 30% from 2009 to 2015 (Toronto Prosperity, 2015). The City of Toronto has reported that 75% of families would have to pay over 10% of their household income (after tax and benefits) to access licensed child care (Cleveland et al., 2016). Although 10% is an affordability threshold commonly used in other jurisdictions, it represents a significant financial strain for lower-income families in Toronto, thereby further exacerbating inequities. For this reason, parents/caregivers are forced to decide between unregulated childcare arrangements (which may be less reliable, lower quality, and lack public oversight), incurring

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greater financial strain and possible debt to afford licensed childcare, or not work full-time or at all (Polanyi et al., 2016).

ACCESSIBILITY

One in seven Canadians has a disability (Statistics Canada, 2006). Research has found that individuals living with disabilities are more likely to face poverty, un- or under-employment, poor health and exclusion from their communities (OHRC, 2012; Wellesley Institute, 2016). Recent legislation has sought to change this. According to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), accessibility refers to "measures, policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises or such other things [i.e., information and communication] as may be prescribed, and for the prevention of the erection of such barriers." According to this provincial act, the public sector, non-profits and private sector organizations in Ontario that employ one or more individuals will be required to meet the accessibility standards by January 1, 2025. While there is a commitment to improve the accessibility of Ontario, this has not yet equated to compliance. For instance, the Toronto Transit Commission has equipped all buses with low-floors and ramps, but not all bus stops are fully accessible (Wellesley Institute, 2016). Furthermore, low-income individuals with accessibility needs often face inequitable access to transit services (Wellesley Institute, 2016).

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APPENDIX B: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 2
Evidence of Need Among TDSB's Diverse Student Population
Prepared by Maria Yau & Ryan Romard
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(February 2017)

In 1999, the newly amalgamated Toronto District School Board (TDSB) released its *Equity Foundation Statement* to ensure "fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of [the] school system, and are integrated into all [its] policies, programs, operations, and practices." In accordance with this equity mandate, the TDSB passed in 2004 a motion:

> That staff in consultation with the OHRC and educational experts develop research proposals that identify the factors within the school system which may inhibit student achievement. Such factors should include, but not be limited to, differences in gender, race, ethnicity, mother tongue, income and place of residence.

This motion resulted in the creation of TDSB's *Student and Parent Census* in 2006, which has since then been implemented approximately every five years. The intent is to help the school system and local schools understand their students' demographic makeup as well as to identify the multiple factors (including conditions, experiences, needs and gaps) that affect both the educational and well-being outcomes of their diverse student population.

Based on the latest (2011-12) *Student and Parent Census* findings, this Research Brief offers an overview of potential areas of inequity among five different self-identified groupings including socio-economic status (SES), racialized background, special education needs (SEN), gender, and sexual orientation. To illustrate the intersections of students' needs, a matrix (pp. 2-4) is used to highlight their experiences in five main areas - life in school, life outside of school, well-being, self-perceived abilities, and achievement – cross-sectioned by the five self-identified groupings. Within each of the five areas of need, several themes are highlighted in the first column of the matrix. Under each theme, a number of items are listed along with the percentage of TDSB's Grade 7-12 students who responded favourably to each of the stated items. The five columns to the right represent the reported findings for each of the five self-identified groupings, respectively. A filled cell for each intersection in the matrix indicates a significant gap[22] experienced by a specific self-identified group(s) (column) for a particular theme (row). For example, under the theme of 'overall school experience' (which includes items such as school enjoyment, and feelings of belonging in school), the matrix shows evidence of need for students in four of the groupings – students from lower socio-economic status background, those who identified themselves as Black or Latin American, students with special education needs, and LGBTQ students. Further, by examining a specific self-identified grouping (column), such as gender, one can also determine if gender gaps exist in certain areas at a glance.

For more detailed findings, refer to the *2011-12 Student and Parent Census:* Fact Sheets and Census Portraits at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research/Research/Publications.aspx.

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[22] A significant gap is based on a difference of more than 5 percentage points lower than that of the general population.

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Life in School					
Evidence of need	**Group with Higher Needs**				
	Socio economic status (SES)	**Racialized groups**	Special education needs (SEN)	**Gender**	**LGBTQ**
Overall school experience (all the time/often) • Enjoyment of school (64%) • Feelings of belonging in school (69%) • Seeing school as a friendly place (71%)	• Lowest SES	• Black • Latin American	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Class participation (all the time/often) • Participating in class discussions (62%) • Answering questions in class (60%) • Speaking up in class (52%)	• Lowest SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian • Aboriginal	• SEN	• Female	
School extracurricular activities (weekly/monthly) • Sports (42%) • Music (31%) • Arts (31%)	• Lower SES				
Sense of safety at school (all the time/often) • In school building (82%) • Outside on school grounds (75%)	• Lower SES	• Southeast Asian	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Relationships with school adults (all the time/often) • School staff respecting my background (92%) • Feeling accepted by school adults (79%)		• Black • Latin American			• LGBTQ
Perceptions of teachers (all or most teachers) • Feeling supported by teachers (74%) • Feeling satisfied with the ways teachers teach (70%)					• LGBTQ
Support from school adults • Having one or more school adults to turn to for personal support, advice or help (54% Gr. 9-12)		• East Asian • Aboriginal			
Relationships with peers (all the time/often) • Getting along well with other students (84%) • Feeling accepted by other students (79%) • Feeling comfortable discussing problems with friends (70%)		• Aboriginal • Black • Latin American	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Number of close friends at school • Three or more close friends (77% Gr. 9-12)		• Aboriginal • Latin American			• LGBTQ

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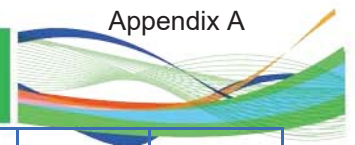
Student suspension rates (2011-12)[23] • Suspension rates for Grades 7-8: 3.3% • Suspension rates for Grades 9-12: 3.8%	• Lower SES	• Black • Mixed • Latin American • Middle Eastern	• SEN	• Male	• LGBTQ

Life Outside of School

Evidence of need	Group with Higher Needs				
	Socio economic status (SES)	Racialized groups	Special education needs (SEN)	Gender	LGBTQ
Relationships with parents (all the time/often) • Parents giving praise (71%) • Parents showing interest in what their child has to say (63%) • Parents helping set goals/make plans (68%) • Talking to parents about school work (54%)	• Lower SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian			• LGBTQ
Parent involvement in school (all the time/often) • Communicating with teachers (24%) • Attending parent-teacher interviews (53%) • Attending meetings and school events (24%)	• Lower SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian			
Parent post-secondary expectations • To attend university (71%) • To attend college (12%)	• Lower SES	• Black • Latin American • Aboriginal	• SEN	• Male	• LGBTQ
Extracurricular activities outside of school • Arts (weekly/monthly) (28%) • Music (weekly/monthly) (31%) • Sports/recreation (weekly/monthly) (40%)	• Lower SES	• Aboriginal			
Screen activities (less than 2 hours/day) • TV or videos (70%) • Computer or video games (76%)	• Lower SES	• Aboriginal • Black • Southeast Asian	• SEN	• Male	• LGBTQ
Homework habits • No help with homework (28% Gr. 9-12) • Difficulty of homework barrier to completion (23% Gr. 9-12) • Frequent distractions at home barrier to completion (23% Gr. 9-12)	• Lower SES	• Aboriginal • Black • Latin American • Southeast Asian			• LGBTQ

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[23] Source: *TDSB Facts: Caring and Safe Schools*. Issue 3, June 2013

Appendix A

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Well-being					
Evidence of need	**Group with Higher Needs**				
	Socio economic status (SES)	**Racialized groups**	**Special education needs (SEN)**	**Gender**	**LGBTQ**
Physical health and activity • Overall physical health (good/excellent) (60%) • Physical activity 5+ days/week (47%)	• Lower SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian		• Female	• LGBTQ
Eating habits • Having breakfast daily (55%) • Having lunch daily (73%)	• Lower SES	• Black • Aboriginal • Southeast Asian		• Female	• LGBTQ
Emotional well-being • Feeling good about oneself (often) (73%) • Liking one's look (often) (61%) • Being hopeful about future (often) (65%) • Nervousness or anxiety (rarely/never) (31%) • Loneliness (rarely/never) (61%) • Feeling down (rarely/never) **(57%)**		• East Asian • Aboriginal • Southeast Asian	• Gifted	• Female	• LGBTQ
Self-perceived Abilities					
Self-rated academic skills (excellent/good) • Reading(70%)/Writing (60%) • Mathematics (53%) • Creativity (73%)	• Lower SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian • Aboriginal	• SEN	• Male	
Self-rated social skills (excellent/good) • Oral communication (65%) • Leadership (61%) • Conflict mediation (63%)	• Lower SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian • Aboriginal	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Self-rated life skills (excellent/good) • Hands-on skills (67%) • Money management (58%) • Time management (44%)		• East Asian • Southeast Asian • Aboriginal			• LGBTQ
Academic Achievement					
Grade 6 EQAO (Level 3 / 4) • Reading • Writing • Mathematics	• Lower SES	• Aboriginal • Black • Latin American	• SEN	• Male	(N/A)
Grade 10 • OSSLT • Grade 10 credit accumulation	• Lower SES	• Aboriginal • Black • Latin American	• SEN	• Male	• LGBTQ

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APPENDIX C: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 3
Evaluation of TDSB's School-Based Equity Programs
Prepared by Maria Yau & Vanessa Bonsu
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(April 2017)

One of the main functions of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Research Department is to conduct evaluations of programs and initiatives offered by the TDSB. For the last 10 years or so, the department has been commissioned to study a number of school-based equity programs. The objectives of these evaluations are to: 1) monitor the progress of each program in order to provide formative data to improve the program; and 2) assess the program's effectiveness and impacts over time. Most of these research evaluations involved the use of multiple measures, and covered multiple outcome areas over multiple years.

This Research Brief highlights eight system-initiated or supported school-based programs that were specifically designed to address the issue of equity among students mainly from historically marginalized communities. The eight programs or initiatives that have been evaluated by the TDSB's Research Department include (alphabetically):

- Africentric Alternative School
- Beyond 3:30 – An extended after-school program
- Feeding our Future – Nutrition program
- Licensed to Learn – Peer tutoring program
- Model Schools for Inner Cities
- Model Schools Paediatrics Health Initiative
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Pre-kindergarten Summer Learning Program - Inspire to Excel

Each of these programs/initiatives is presented in a matrix (see following page) including a brief description according to the key areas of focus, objectives, target groups, history and scope of the program years of evaluation, as well as highlighted findings relating to program impacts and effectiveness.

It should be noted that the eight programs/initiatives included in this Brief do not represent all the equity-based programs implemented at the school board. Rather, they are the equity-specific programs that have been studied by the Board's Research Department in the last ten years, and are also the ones that were locally developed (by or with the school board) and, thus, required formative data to help inform program refinement, enhancement, continuation or, if warranted, discontinuation. The Board's Research Department also undertakes evaluations of curriculum-based programs – such as Entrepreneurship Education; Innovative Intelligence (I2Q); Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI); Reading Recovery; and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education - some of which have been applied or piloted in inner-city schools.[24]

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[24] For more details, see TDSB's Research publications
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research/Research/Publications.aspx

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PROGRAM	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM
Africentric Alternative School (Aas) Research Project **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2011-14	**Nature of the Program** Curriculum strategy under TDSB's alternative school model centered on an Africentric education **Target Group(s)** Black elementary school students **Objective(s)** Support the schooling and achievement of Black students **History** Established in 2009 **Total Students Served** As of September 2012, 208 students were enrolled at the AAS.	**Impact on Students** • When compared to TDSB and Ontario EQAO achievement results, AAS students were reported to have an overall higher rate of improvement • AAS students performed at higher levels compared to schools with similar demographic backgrounds • Students reported they experienced a more positive school climate and a sense of community compared to their former public schools. • Positive impacts on students' sense of identity, confidence, social development, awareness of African culture and critical thinking skills were also found **Other Benefits** Higher levels of parent and community engagement
Beyond 3:30 **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2012-15	**Nature of the Program** Comprehensive in-school after-school program with four key components: Homework Club, Junior Chef's Club, Sports and Recreation, and Specialty Programs (for creative expression and life development) **Target Group(s)** Inner-city middle school students (Grades 6-8) **Objective(s)** Close opportunity gaps to foster equity, well-being and achievement for inner-city middle school students **History** Piloted in 2009-10 with seven middle schools **Total Students Served** By 2013-14, over 400 middle-school students from 18 inner-city schools were served each year.	**Impact on Students** • Enhanced homework habits, improved academic performance, and increased school engagement • Improved physical health – nutrition, healthy eating and food preparation skills, physical fitness and activity • Development and improvement in life skills, social and emotional well-being • Long-term impacts in terms of preparedness for high school transition, school performance and engagement in high school, and post-secondary aspirations **Other Benefits** • Multiple positive ripple effects on family dynamics, school environment, as well as local community
Feeding Our Future **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2009-10	**Nature of the Program** Student nutrition program that offers a healthy morning meal to all students in participating schools, regardless of their ability to pay. **Target Group(s)** Inner-city middle and secondary school students (Grades 6-12) **Objective(s)** • Improve health, student behaviour, attention in school, attendance and students' academic achievement and graduation rates • Encourage positive nutrition habits for entire families and reduce violence in the school community **History** Initiated in 2008 as a two year pilot program that has continued beyond the planned years **Total Students Served** Approximately 6,000 students in four middle schools (Grades 6-8) and three secondary schools as of 2009	**Impact on Students** • Higher academic achievement in reading and science for middle school students • Higher levels of academic achievement in Grade 9 EQAO Math and Grade 10 OSSLT success for secondary school students • Higher proportion of students on track for graduation by accumulating sufficient credits • Improved student behaviour and attitude • Reduced tardiness • Lower suspension rates • Improved sense of well-being and better health

Appendix A

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PROGRAM	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM
Licensed to Learn (L2l) **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2012 and ongoing**	**Nature of the Program** After-school dual peer tutoring program which trains older and higher achieving students to become certified tutors, and in the training process they offer after-school tutoring support to younger and more at-risk students. **Target Group(s)** • Higher achieving junior to secondary students (Grades 4-12) • At-risk students (Grades 1-12) **Objective(s)** • Help foster peer helping skills and a caring character in the older, more successful students • Raise the success level of the younger, more at-risk students **History** Offered since 2002 **Students Served** • First piloted in two schools and now offered in over 40 TDSB elementary and secondary schools • 262 L2L tutors and 404 peers as of 2009-10	*Impact on Students* *Tutors* Gained skills and characteristics geared towards supporting, guiding/instructing others such as: • Communicating and engaging with young peers • Fostering an empathetic understanding of the different learning styles and emotional needs of their peers *Peers* • Grades improved significantly with a majority of the peers moving up one Grade level. • Increased confidence • More positive learning attitudes • Increased sense of responsibility for their education and future
Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2006 – ongoing**	**Nature of the Program** A board-wide initiative that addresses the impacts of poverty on students' achievement and well-being. The MSIC has 5 essential components: 1. Innovative teaching and learning practices 2. Support services to meet the social, emotional and physical well-being of students 3. School as the heart of the community 4. Research, review and evaluation 5. Commitment to share successful practices **Target Group(s)** Inner-city students in the TDSB (JK-Grade 8) **Objective(s)** • Increase access and opportunities for inner-city students in order to level their playing field • Improve student achievement, well-being and engagement **History** Piloted at 3 inner-city schools in 2006, and 4 schools in 2007 **Total Students Served** By 2013-14, the number of MSIC schools expanded to 150, serving over 56,000 inner-city students.	*Impact on Students* • Opportunity gaps for inner-city students have been reduced over time • Achievement gaps have been narrowed as measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI), CAT4 (a Canadian standardized test), EQAO outcomes, and Grade 10 credit accumulation* *See more details in *Enhancing Equity Task Force Research Brief 4.*
Model Schools: Paediatric Health Initiative (MSPHI) **Year(s) of Evaluation:**	**Nature of the Program** An innovative, integrated, education-health partnership between the MSIC and local health agencies. **Target Group(s)** Inner-city students (JK-Grade 12)	*Impact on Students* Positive impacts in terms of: • Physical health • Mental health and well-being related to developmental, behavioural, and psychological health • Reduced absenteeism • Greater attentiveness to learning • Overall improvement in academic performance

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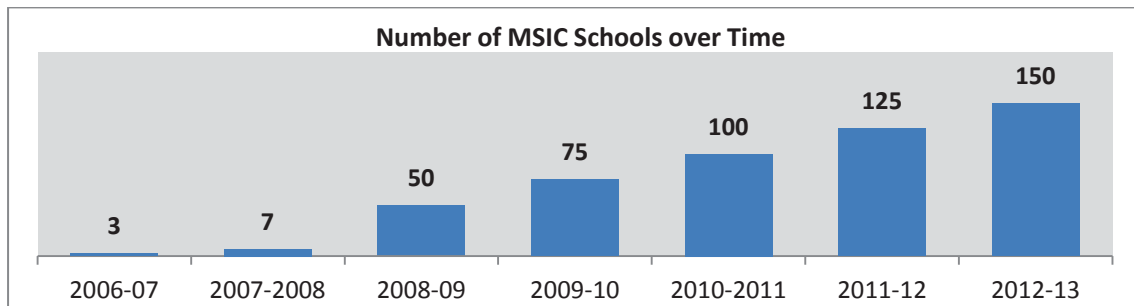| 2012-15		
PROGRAM	**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**	**IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM**
Model Schools: Pediatric Health Initiative (MSPHI) *(Cont.)*	-	• Foster improved family dynamics/relationships
Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLC) **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2005, 2009, 2012, 2017**	<u>Nature of the Program</u> An in-school pre-school and parent engagement program <u>Target Group(s)</u> Pre-school children and their parents/caregivers from high-needs neighbourhoods <u>Objective(s)</u> Lay the foundation for young children, especially those from high needs neighbourhoods, for formal schooling and future success <u>History</u> First created and implemented in the former Toronto Board of Education at 5 school sites in 1981 <u>Students Served</u> A total of 78 PFLC sites across the TDSB	***Impact on Students*** PFLC children scored higher in all 5 EDI domains (physical health/well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge) compared to their peers in their schools (mostly located in underserved schools) as well as the overall SK population ***Other Benefits*** • Parents –*m*ore effective parenting, improved well-being, and increased parent engagement in their child's education and school • PFLC host schools – easing kindergarten transition for JK teachers/students in host schools, supporting special education needs identification and early intervention, offering expertise and knowledge base to enhance the schools' Early Years and Primary Division
Pre-Kindergarten Summer Learning Program - Inspire to Excel **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2014-16**	<u>Nature of the Program</u> Pre-kindergarten summer learning program (half days for four weeks) to support young children's transition into Kindergarten that builds learning skills (problem solving, communication and self-regulation) and develop students' proficiency in literacy, numeracy, science, and tech by infusing Africentric perspective. <u>Target Group(s)</u> Inner-city pre-school and JK children <u>Objective(s)</u> • Investigate the short and long term impacts of early interventions on pre-kindergarten children, especially those from lower socio-economic background and/or African descent in big urban cities such as Toronto Provide children and their parents/caregivers with an inclusive, supportive and safe learning space <u>History</u> Started in July 2014 at four sites with 81 children. <u>Total Students Served</u> 131 children participated in the program at six sites during the summer of 2016.	***Impact on Students*** • Children were more prepared for the start of school in September • Children gained numeracy and literacy skills, and language acquisition • Children benefited in terms of personal well-being, sense of belonging, engagement in play and inquiry experiences, and expression and communication • Children became more self-regulated (e.g., following rules and routines) as well as more independent, confident and assertive ***Other Benefits*** • Parents - developed a sense of belonging in the school setting with educators and other parents/caregivers • Educators - positively impacted by the program as it challenged educators' teaching philosophy, perceptions and assumptions

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APPENDIX D: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 4
An Overview of TDSB's Model Schools for Inner Cities Program, 2006-2016
Prepared by Maria Yau, Bryce Archer & Ryan Romard
(March 2017)

History and Background

In 2006, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) launched the Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) program, in response to the release of the TDSB Inner City Task Force Report in 2005. The Task Force called for a systemic approach to address the impact of poverty on student outcomes and the issue of achievement gaps experienced by historically marginalized groups. According to its recommendations, extra funding based on the Ministry's Learning Opportunity Grant (LOG) would be allocated to schools in high priority neighbourhoods. The intent was to provide these schools with additional resources and intentional supports in order to "level the playing field for all students regardless of their socio-economic circumstance or cultural background", to enable "students to achieve academically, socially and emotionally to their highest potential", and to allow students to "leave school with the skills and confidence that position them to compete equally in the broader world" (2005 TDSB Task Force Report, pp.4-5).

In 2006, under a rigorous review and selection process, three inner-city schools in different high needs communities were identified as the first MSIC pilot sites. In the second year, another four inner-city schools were added. The third year (2008-09) witnessed sharing of MSIC resources and funds initially granted to the seven MSIC schools with their neighbouring schools, resulting in the formation of seven clusters of 50 MSIC schools. Since then, each subsequent school year, until 2012-13, saw an addition of 25 more MSIC schools based on the Board's Learning Opportunity Index (LOI). By 2012-13, the number of MSIC schools reached 150, serving over 56,000 students from the 150 lowest LOI elementary schools (see chart below).

Number of MSIC Schools over Time

2006-07	2007-2008	2008-09	2009-10	2010-2011	2011-12	2012-13
3	7	50	75	100	125	150

Structure and Governance

A central MSIC Office, headed by a superintendent of education with a central co-ordinating principal and a support team, was created to manage, lead and co-ordinate resource allocations, programming, community liaisons and accountability for the 150 MSIC schools in the seven clusters. Each cluster also formed a committee with members comprised of school superintendents and principals, along with one lead teacher, two MSIC teaching and learning coaches and three community support workers, who offered direct support to their respective MSIC schools and school communities.

In addition, an Inner City Advisory Committee (ICAC) was established as an overseeing body with representatives from different stakeholder groups - including trustees, school superintendents, principals, unions, parents, faculties of education, as well as community and government agencies. The ICAC also monitored the progress of the MSIC program, dealt with ongoing inner-city issues such as LOG and LOI

funding, and liaised with other levels of government to address related social policy and broader funding issues.

Essential Components and Philosophy

Based on the Task Force recommendations, all MSIC schools were guided by five essential components:

1. *Innovation in teaching and learning practice and school structure* – to support improved academic performance through enriched experiential learning opportunities, creativity and critical thinking emphasis, social justice curriculum, and culturally responsive pedagogies
2. *Support services to meet students' physical, social and emotional needs* – with the use of multidisciplinary approaches such as nutrition programs, hearing and vision assessment, in-school health clinics, and extended after-school programs
3. *School as the heart of the community* – through establishing active partnerships with parents, community members, and community organizations
4. *Research, review and evaluation of students and programs* – through annual data collections and reporting to drive continuous school improvement, and summative evaluation to ensure accountability
5. *Commitment to share successful practices* – including innovative strategies, initiatives, and structures with other schools and outside of the board

These essential components embodied the MSIC philosophy of applying an integrated approach through the lens of equity with an emphasis on:

- Adopting a strength-based approach to teaching and learning
- Fostering student well-being including relationship building
- Creating opportunities for student, parent and community engagement

Under these premises and required components, along with the provision of additional resources and direct support from MSIC central staff, MSIC schools offered a variety of innovative and equity-based programs and services to meet the specific needs of their students and local communities. While individual schools had their unique school programming plans, all MSIC schools had undergone a common annual research and review process, which helped inform them of their ongoing needs and progress, and reinforce their MSIC commitment and accountability.
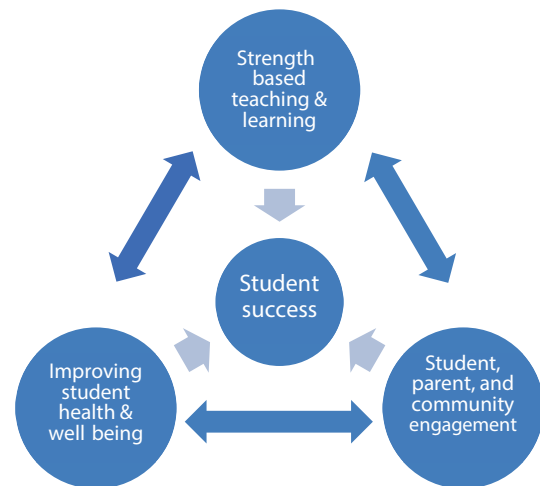
Performance Outcomes

Using multiple outcome indicators, measures and data sources, as well as multi-year longitudinal tracking, TDSB's research has demonstrated a narrowing of achievement gaps among MSIC students over time. For instance:
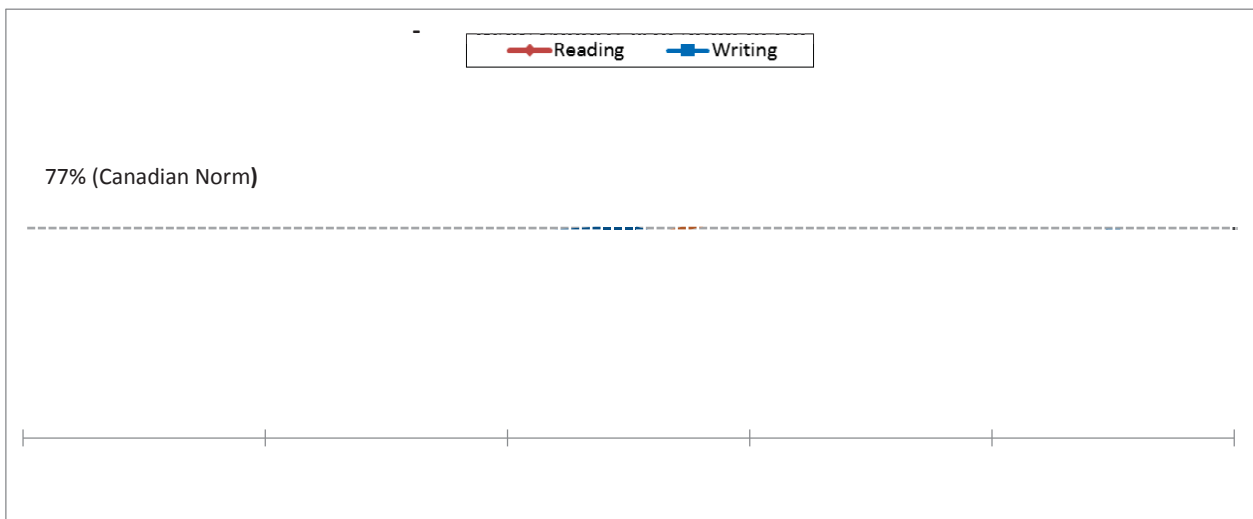
- Early Development Instrument (EDI)

  A comparison of the 2008 system-wide EDI assessment results to those of 2011 shows a notable reduction in the school readiness gap between MSIC Senior Kindergarten (SK) children and their non-MSIC counterparts over time. A more recent (2015) EDI assessment further indicates significant improvements among MSIC children in terms of Language and Cognitive Development (see chart at right.)
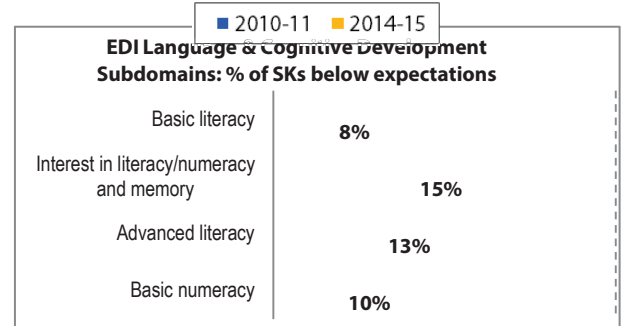
- EQAO Grade 3 and Grade 6 Reading

  While there was a large gap between MSIC students and the overall population in achieving the provincial standard (Level 3/4) in Grade 3 EQAO reading test (54% versus 65% in 2011), the discrepancy had reduced when these students reached Grade 6 (78% versus 71%). (See chart at right.) A cohort tracking analysis further reveals that whereas 18% of the TDSB population rose from below standard in Grade 3 EQAO to Level 3/4 in Grade 6, the corresponding percentage for MSIC students was 21%.
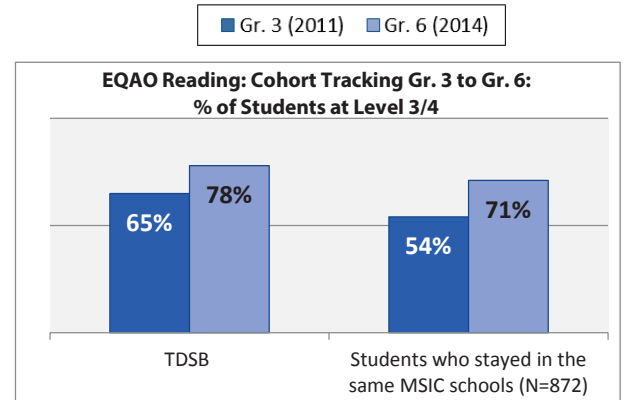
- Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT4)

  Every fall, all MSIC schools administered CAT4, which measures the foundational skills of Grade 2-8 students. Tracking these students' CAT4 results between 2010 and 2014 shows their yearly progress from well below the Canadian norm in Grade 4 to reaching or surpassing the norm by Grade 8 before transitioning to secondary school.

EDI Language & Cognitive Development Subdomains: % of SKs below expectations

■ 2010-11 ■ 2014-15

- Basic literacy 8%
- Interest in literacy/numeracy and memory 15%
- Advanced literacy 13%
- Basic numeracy 10%

EQAO Reading: Cohort Tracking Gr. 3 to Gr. 6: % of Students at Level 3/4

■ Gr. 3 (2011) ■ Gr. 6 (2014)

- TDSB: 65%, 78%
- Students who stayed in the same MSIC schools (N=872): 54%, 71%

77% (Canadian Norm)

— Reading — Writing

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- Grade 10 Credit Accumulation

Although MSIC was not offered in the secondary school panel (except for a few years), tracking MSIC students beyond their elementary years sheds light on the long-term impacts of the program. As illustrated in the chart below, students from lower LOI schools were much *less* likely to have accumulated 16 credits by Grade 10 (an indicator of students being on track to graduate from secondary school) than their counterparts from higher LOI schools. This was especially the case for inner-city students *prior to* the existence of the MSIC program. For instance, only 50% of these (pre-MSIC) students from the lowest 50 LOI schools, compared to 74% of those from the higher (151 or above) LOI schools, were on track. However, among the MSIC students (the first MSIC cohort), the proportion on track rose to about two-thirds (64%) compared to 50% among their predecessors. In fact, as shown in the graph, the percentage point increase made by the MSIC students was noticeably greater than that of the higher LOI schools. In other words, the gap had narrowed.

% of Grade 10s Expected to Graduate from Secondary School by

2003-04 Gr.5 Cohort (N=4,600)...   2008-09 Gr.5 Cohort with 2-3 MSIC years (N=4,200)...

% with 16 credits by Grade 10

	LOI 1-50	LOI 51-100	LOI 101-150	LOI 151+
Blue	50%	57%	62%	74%
Orange	64%	68%	75%	81%
Change	+15%	+12%	+12%	+8%
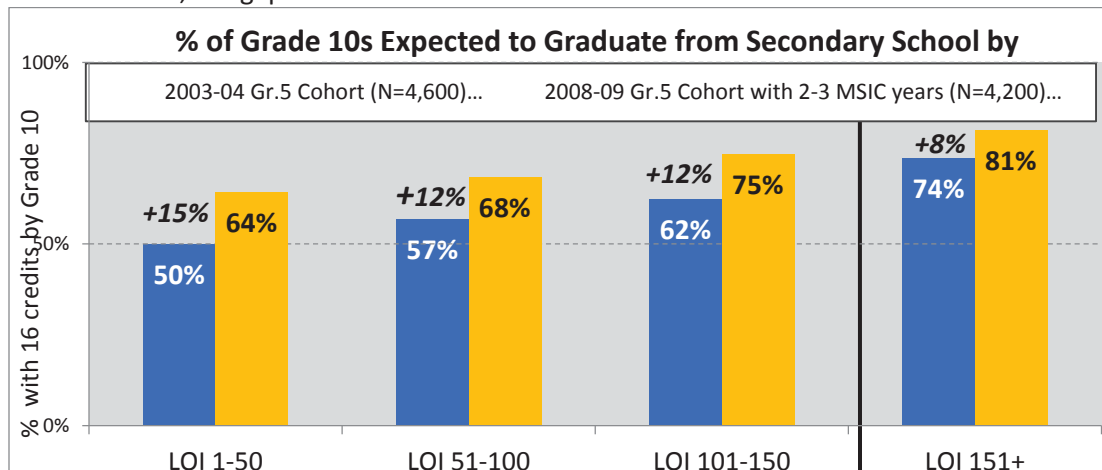
Conditions for Success

While longitudinal tracking shows overall improvement among MSIC students over time, it should be noted that the degree of progress made by individual MSIC schools varied according to the level of and the unique set of external challenges (e.g., socioeconomic circumstances) faced by each school community, the initial academic standing (baseline) of the students in different schools, and the school's internal organizational structure (e.g., leadership and staff turnover). Nonetheless, the multi-year research on MSIC has clearly proven that high needs schools - no matter how challenging – can help bring about positive change for students, and can narrow, if not completely close, the opportunity and subsequently the achievement gaps *so long as* the school has, or is provided with, the following six conditions:

✓ Sustainable additional supports and resources to close opportunity gaps and level the playing field
✓ Extra efforts and innovative pedagogies to narrow wide achievement gaps
✓ Ongoing research and review to help schools monitor ongoing needs and progress, and adjust planning and practices
✓ Sufficient time for schools and students to demonstrate growth – the higher the level of challenge, the more time is needed
✓ Visionary leadership and committed staff at both the school and system levels
✓ Continuous efforts and resources to address recurring or changing external challenges

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APPENDIX E: Equity Policy (DRAFT) Definitions Glossary

This glossary is provided to assist in understanding various terms used in this document, as well as terms they may encounter in the context of discussions of equity and inclusive education. Terminology in the area of equity and inclusive education is constantly evolving. The Board recognizes that terms and usages favoured by various groups and individuals, in various contexts, and at different points in time may differ and that this glossary is not meant to be a comprehensive, nor definitive list.

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: "In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada". These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their Indigenous ancestry.

Acceptance: An affirmation and recognition of people whose race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, abilities, or other, similar characteristics or attributes are different from one's own. Acceptance goes beyond tolerance, in that it implies a positive and welcoming attitude.

Accommodation: An adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code or other factors. (Refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Guidelines on Accessible Education* and *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate*, at **www.ohrc.on.ca**.)

Age: How old a person is. Age discrimination involves treating persons in an unequal fashion due to age in a way that is contrary to human rights law.

Ancestry: Lineage, or whom you are descended from and how you trace family and heritage.

Barrier: An obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to and individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

Bias: An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.

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Creed (Religion) : Creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. A creed is sincerely, freely and deeply held; is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfillment; is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices; addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence; and has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief.

Culture: Broadly described, culture can include economic systems, political ideologies and processes, ways of life and social mores, educational institutions, social programs, the environment, technological systems, recreational practices, customs and traditions, artistic and heritage activities, transportation and communication industries, and religious and spiritual activities.

Cyber-bullying: Under the Education Act (s.1.0.0.2), bullying by electronic means, including by "(a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals." Cyber-bullying can involve the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and/or social media sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships. It may include put-downs or insults and can also involve spreading rumours; sharing private information, photos, or videos; or threatening to harm someone. Cyber-bullying is always aggressive and hurtful. (Refer to *Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students,* at **www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ multi/english/BullyingEN.pdf**.)

Disability: A term that covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others not (e.g., physical, mental, and learning disabilities, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, environmental sensitivities). A disability may be present from birth, may be caused by an accident, or may develop over time.

Discrimination: Any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which has a negative effect on an individual or group because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability or socio-economic status. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

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Diversity: The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Duty to accommodate: The legal obligation that school boards, employers, unions, and service providers have under the Ontario Human Rights Code to take measures that enable people to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. (Refer to **www.ohrc.on.ca**.)

Employment equity: A program designated to remove systemic barriers to equality of out-comes in all aspects of employment and which leads to equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of employment.

Equality : The achievement of equal status in society in terms of access to opportunities, support, rewards and economic and social power for all without regard to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Equity: The provision of opportunities for equality for all by responding to the needs of individuals. Equity of treatment is not the same as equal treatment because it includes acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination.

Equity Seeking Groups and other Historically Disadvantaged Communities:
Persons and communities who have experienced, and or, are more likely to experience, and or, are experiencing bias, oppression, disadvantage or discrimination based on one or more of these factors: colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Ethnicity: Refers to a group of people having a heritage and a common ancestry or shared historical past, as well as identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

Family Status: The status of being in a parent/caregiver/guardian and child relationship.

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First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word Indian, which many found offensive. The term *First Nation* has been adopted to replace the word "band" in the names of communities.

Gender Identity: How a person identifies themselves based on an individual's intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their biological sex.

Gender Expression: Refers to the way an individual expresses their gender identity (e.g. in the way they dress, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the volume of their voice, and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up) Understandings of gender expression are culturally specific and will change over time.

Harassment: A form of discrimination that is often but not always, persistent, ongoing conduct or communication, in any form, of attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group which are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, inappropriate, intimidating or offensive. A single act or expression can constitute harassment, for example, if it is a serious violation or it is from a person in authority. Harassment may be either subtle or blunt.

Hate: expressions of bias, prejudice and bigotry that are carried out by individuals, groups, organizations and states, directed against stigmatized and marginalized persons and groups in communities, and intended to affirm and secure existing structures of domination and subordination. Hate activities and incidents represent some of the most destructive forms of human rights-based discrimination by promoting hatred against identifiable groups of people. Some hate incidents are also considered criminal offences committed against a person or property and motivated, in whole or in part, by bias or prejudice based on real or perceived race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability or any other similar factor.

Human Rights: Rights that recognize the dignity and worth of every person, and provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or other similar factors.

Inclusive Education: Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, school staff teams, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

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Intersectionality: The condition in which a person simultaneously belongs to two or more social identities and the unique consequences that result from that combination.

Inuit: Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act.

Language: The first language we learn or the language spoken by our parents/caregivers/guardians and others who take care of us as children. This may also include dialects. There is almost inevitably a link between the language we speak or the accent with which we speak a particular language on the one hand, and our ancestry, ethnic origin or place of origin on the other. A person's accent is also often associated with her or his "mother tongue" or place of origin.

Marital Status: The status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes the status of living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage, including both same-sex and opposite sex relationships.
Métis: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe, and Cree.

Nationality: The status of belonging to a particular nation.

Place of Origin: Where one is originally from, generally meaning country of birth, or if born in Canada it could include an area, province or region of the country, (ie Quebec, Newfoundland, The West Coast, Toronto, etc.)

Positive School Climate: The school climate may be defined as the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

Power dynamics: The process by which one group defines and subordinates other groups and subjects them to differential and unequal treatment.

Power imbalance: A situation in which an individual or group is able to influence others and impose its beliefs, subjecting other individuals and/or groups to differential and unequal treatment.

Prejudice: The pre-judgement (usually negative) of groups or individuals, or preconceived notions about them, based on misinformation, bias, or stereotypes.

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Privilege: The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities on the basis of group membership or social context, which is denied or not extended to members of all groups.

Race (Colour): Race is a socially constructed way of judging, categorizing and creating difference among people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye, lips and nose shape, hair texture and body shape. The process of social construction of race is termed "racialization." This is the "process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life. Despite the fact that there are no biological "races", the social construction of race is a powerful force with real consequences for individuals. Someone's "race" can also extend to specific traits which are deemed to be "abnormal" and of less worth. Individuals may have prejudices related to various racialized characteristics. In addition to physical features, these characteristics could include accent, dialect or manner of speech, name, clothing and grooming, diet, beliefs and practices, leisure preferences, and places of origin.

Sex/ Biological Sex: Generally refers to the sex assigned at birth based on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution.

Sexual orientation: A term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction, desire or affection for another person. Examples include asexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality. Sexual orientation is much more accurately viewed as an attraction continuum that includes a range of gender identities, expressions and biological sexes.

Socio-Economic Status: The economic, social and political relationships in which people operate in a given social order. These relationships reflect the areas of income level, education, access to goods and services, type of occupation, sense of ownership or entitlement and other indicators of social rank or class.

Social Identity: Those aspects of a person that are defined in terms their group membership, or their perceived group membership in broad social categories (i.e. race, disability, gender identity, etc.) Social identities are most accurate when individuals self-identify or chose of how they want to be identified, as opposed to being labelled by society or others.

Stereotype: A false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other factors.

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Systemic discrimination: A pattern of discrimination that arises out of apparently neutral institutional policies or practices, that is reinforced by institutional structures and power dynamics, and that results in the differential and unequal treatment of members of certain groups.

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APPENDIX F: Enhancing Equity Task Force Membership 2017

Learning Centre 1 Working Group

Vicky Branco, Superintendent of Education (SOE)
Laura Lloyd, Executive Assistant to SOE
Trustee Jennifer Arp
Trustee Gerri Gershon
Faz Khan, Principal, North Albion CI
Karen Murray, Vice-Principal, Amesbury MS
John Duwyn, Central Coordinating Principal
Chelsea Takalo, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Amita Handa, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Ian MacPherson, Community Support Worker (CSW)

Prafulla Prabhu, ASAC
Dennis Keshinro, CUSAC
Silvia Argentina Arauz, EPAC
Ingrid Palmer, ICAC
Chris Trussel, SNAC
Yolanda McClean, Equity Vice-President, CUPE 4400
Vidya Shah, York University
Ibrahim Murkeshi
Mario del Castillo, Student
Helen Elliot, North Toronto CI, OSSTF
Sinead Whelehan, Northern SS, OSSTF
Roxanne Chee, OSSTF

Learning Centre 2 Working Group

Curtis Ennis, Superintendent of Education
Anita Paul, Executive Assistant to SOE
Trustee Tiffany Ford
Trustee Alexandra Lulka
Trustee Manna Wong
Cherilyn Scobie, Principal, Westview Centennial SS
Maria Palermo, Principal, Emery CI
Susan Yun, Principal, Finch Avenue PS
Helen Fisher, Central Coordinating Principal
Amita Handa, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Bernard (Patrick) Lee, Adult Education Representative
Rodrigo Fuentes, Caring & Safe Schools Representative

Lawrence Smith, BSAAC
Heather Mitchell, CUSAC
Abdul Hai Patel, EPAC
Alice Cheng, ESAC
Sharma Queiser, ICAC
David Lepofsky, SEAC
Heather Martinez, SNAC
Anna Hutchison, Vice-President, Unit C, CUPE 4400
Colleen Huggins - CSW
Lisa Kness - Autism Ontario
Rick Kusturica, ASAC
Derik Chica, Northview Heights SS, OSSTF
Gregory Birkett, teacher
Joy Martyr-Andre, teacher

Appendix A

Learning Centre 3 Working Group

Andrew Howard, Superintendent of Education

Melissa Shimmerman, Executive Assistant to
SOE

Trustee Jerry Chadwick

Trustee Parthi Kandavel

Harpreet Ghuman, Principal, Crescent Town PS

Colin Dye, Principal, Bendale BTI

Diane DeiAmoah, Central Coordinating Principal

Koryn Marshall, Student Equity Program Advisor
(SEPA)

Michelle Cho, Gender Based Violence
Prevention SEPA

Nicole Seck, Community Support Worker (CSW)

Jason Smit, ASAC

Yvette Blackburn, BSAAC

Patrick Rutledge, CUSAC

Margret Blair-Grant, EPAC

Annie Slater, ESAC

Terry Singh, Principal, Tecumseh PS

Paul Junor, Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI, OSSTF

Jolly Abrakasa, Cedarbrae CI, OSSTF

Dr. Laurie Green, ICAC

Katie German, SNAC

Colleen Costa, Unit C Vice-President, TEW Local
4400

Steve Salfarlie School Council at HA Halbert

Darrell Bowden Chartland School Council

Seema Mitchell - SNAC

Jean-Paul Ngana - SEAC

Mark Varvas, TDSB Staff representing Aboriginal
Learning and Perspectives

Claudette White, Principal, Brimwood
Boulevard PS

Veni Rajkumar, Vice-Principal, Macklin PS

Abhi Arulanantham, Teacher, Brimwood
Boulevard PS

Stephanie Howe, TAIBU - Community Health
Org.

Keisha Watson, TAIBU - Community Health Org.

Sharon Grant, Student Engagement and
Experiential Learning, OSSTF

Learning Centre 4 Working Group

Jane Phillips Long, Superintendent of Education

Josellyn Nalli, Executive Assistant to SOE

Trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher

Trustee Chris Moise

Cynthia Nguyen, Vice-Principal, Etobicoke
School of the Arts

Tanya Senk, Central Coordinating Vice-Principal,
Aboriginal Education

Alison Gaymes San Vicente, Central
Coordinating Principal

Chelsea Takalo, Student Equity Program Advisor
(SEPA)

Javier Davila, Gender Based Violence Prevention
(SEPA)

Alison Rutherford, MSIC Coordinator

Rebecca Holzman, ASAC

Sumika Motoki, ASAC

Jamea Zuberi, BSAAC

Dave McNee, CUSAC

Marjolein Winterink, EPAC

Linda-Sue Thomas, ESAC

Josette Holness, ICAC

Vince McCormack, SNAC

Terri Preston, CUPE

Karen Sappleton

Michelle Murdock CSW

Erika Pintyo CSW

Duane Spencer CSW

Eunice O'Mahony, Central Toronto Academy,
OSSTF

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Planning Group Members

Jennifer Arp, TDSB Trustee and Vice-Chair

Sarah Blackstock, Poverty Reduction Strategy Office City of Toronto

Yvette Blackburn, BSAAC

Vicky Branco, Superintendent of Education LC1

Sheila Cary-Meagher, TDSB Trustee

Jeewan Chanicka, Superintendent of Education, Equity, Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression

Chris Chandler, Executive Officer, Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF)

Jenny Chen, OSSTF

Mike Creek, Director of Strategic Initiatives at Working for Change

Diane DeiAmoah, TDSB CCP Learning Centre 3

Margaret Douglin, TDSB Research

Enakshi (Ena)Dua, York University

John Duwyn, TDSB CCP Learning Centre 1

Diane Dyson, WoodGreen Community Services, Director, Research and Public Policy

Sonia Ellis-Seguin, Elementary Teachers of Toronto

Helen Fisher, TDSB Central Coordinating Principal - Learning Centre 2

Alison Gaymes San-Vincente, Centrally Assigned Principal, Principal Coaching & School Improvement LC4

Karima Hashmani, Toronto Community Housing

Areej Hasso, Manager Community Investment - United Way

Lindsay Holley, TDSB Communications

Rob Howarth, Executive Director, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

Carl James, Professor, York University

Sophie Kroesen, ETFO – Elementary Teachers of Ontario – Toronto Occasional Teachers

David Lepofsky, Special Education Advisory Committee – Co-Chair

Jabari Lindsay, Toronto Youth Cabinet

Mary Linton, Toronto School Administrators' Association (TSAA)

John Malloy, TDSB Director of Education

Shams Mehdi, TDSB Student Trustee

Ralph Nigro, Toronto School Administrators' Association (TSAA)

Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, Aboriginal Education Centre

Tanya Senk, Central Coordinating Principal, Aboriginal Education

Ginelle Skeritt, ED - Warden Woods Community Centre

Jim Spyropoulos, Executive Superintendent, Equity, Engagement and Well-being

Ian Turner, Principal Glamorgan Public School

Christopher Usih, TDSB Associate Director, Equity and Achievement

Saad Wazir, TDSB Student Trustee

John Weatherup, CUPE President

Maria Yau, Research Co-ordinator, Research & Information Services, TDSB

Marjolein Winterink, Equity Community Advisory Committee - Co-Chair

Appendix A

tdsb

Helping all Students Succeed.

Director's Response to the
Enhancing Equity Task Force Report

January 31, 2018
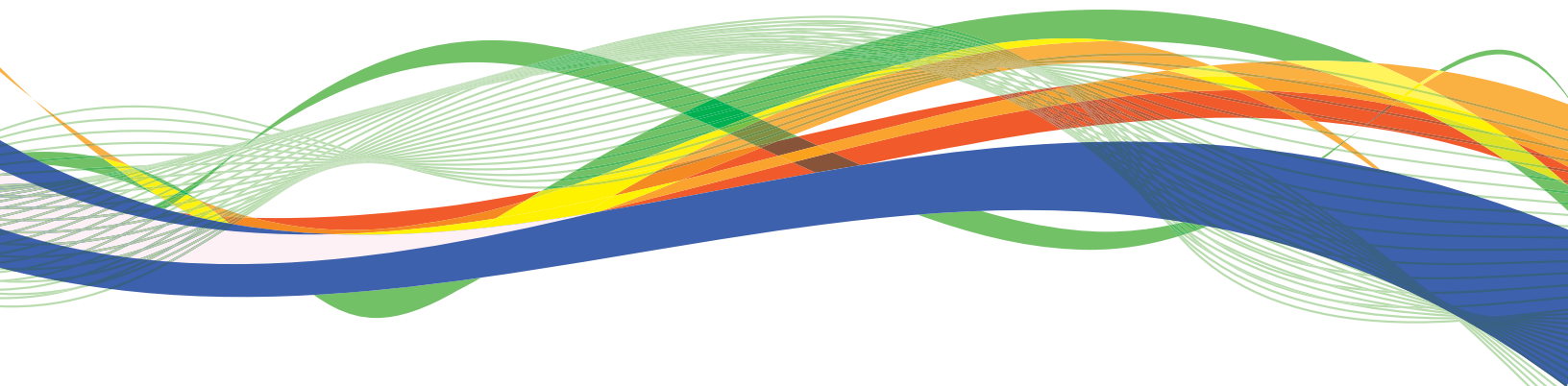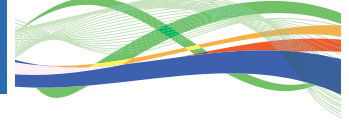
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Introduction

The Toronto District School Board is the largest and most diverse public education system in Canada. Public education is for everyone and it is our goal and responsibility to ensure that each and every student has the tools, resources, supports and opportunities they need to thrive.

Equity is the foundation of everything we do to support student achievement and well-being. We begin by identifying the strengths, interests and needs of our students. When we remove the barriers, raise expectations and create access and opportunity for our students, we not only support those who have been underserved, but we raise the bar for everyone.

Evidence-based data and ongoing discussions with our students and communities have demonstrated again and again — as illustrated in the report of the Enhancing Equity Task Force — that lack of access to programs and learning opportunities is a barrier that prevents a significant number of students from achieving.

The Task Force took a bold new approach to connecting with our parents and students. Their work illuminated the systemic barriers in the TDSB that many students face. The report highlighted and reinforced the specific areas we need to focus on to achieve effective large-scale system change. The 37 recommendations developed by the Task Force aimed to identify ways to better support students, especially those who have historically been underserved and/or marginalized.

The Task Force organized its recommendations to:
- Ensure equitable educational access, experiences and opportunities for all students in all schools;
- Effectively address school incidents and complaints, making students "whole";
- Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools;
- Meaningfully engage students, families and communities in building a culture of equity at school;
- Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer and promotion; and,
- Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all.

Some of the work proposed in the recommendations is already in progress, including examining practices that result in inequitable access to specialized programs; reviewing curriculum based on equity, anti-oppression, and human rights principles; and delivering systematic and comprehensive professional learning for all educators to examine bias, power, and privilege.

Through the Enhancing Equity Task Force, we heard from thousands of community members. We learned that our communities have strong, divergent views on how we support students. While our communities may not agree on everything, there emerged a strong consensus that every student deserves a great education; that student well-being and learning should be at the centre of every decision we make; and that access to opportunities and experiences must be made available in an equitable and inclusive manner.

The Task Force noted clearly – and we strongly agree – that every decision made in the TDSB should be guided by student voice and our principles of equity, which are to:
- Support each and every student with an equitable and inclusive learning culture;
- Identify, confront and eliminate barriers;
- Ensure that all local schools and programs have the resources they need;
- Share leadership and build staff capacity; and
- Empower staff, students and community members to contribute their voices and perspectives.

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The work of the Task Force is now complete. Senior staff have reviewed the recommendations and are now bringing to the Board a proposed direction that, should the Board approve it, will inform our Integrated Equity Framework and our new Multi-Year Plan, as well as all the work plans that flow from these.

We believe this strategic and coordinated approach will lead to the thoughtful, intentional systemic and cultural shifts necessary to make an enormous difference in schools and classrooms. Meanwhile, innovation and action at the school level will ensure that each student is thriving in an accessible, inclusive and engaging environment.

We recognize that many families are satisfied with their experiences in our schools, while many others are not. This does not mean taking away the rich learning experiences from those who are thriving, but it means ensuring that these programs, opportunities and experiences are available and offered to everyone.

We will:
- Continue to offer choice through specialized schools and programs and improve access to the programs that all students need;
- Continue to support students with special education needs, including Gifted, through parent choice of home school placement or congregated sites; and
- Continue to study the impact of our programs, practices, and structures on the achievement and well-being of our students.

With this in mind, school staff members should each ask themselves the following questions with regard to every student: "What do I know about you? How will that help me provide learning opportunities that play to your strengths and interests and that honour your experiences? What biases might I have that may affect your learning? How do I counter these biases?" The answers to these questions will help staff teach and lead in ways that are relevant and engaging for our students.

Staff members should be prepared to answer the questions parents and caregivers may ask of them: "What do you know about my child? How do you respond to their needs?" In answering these queries, we demonstrate our commitment to include and listen to student voices, and to teach and lead in ways that value the lived experiences of our students and their families.

This work is urgent and involves staff, families, and communities. The actions proposed below are intended to work together. They are in keeping with our equity goals and will influence innovation in the system, schools, and classrooms that will, in turn, lead to greater success for all students.
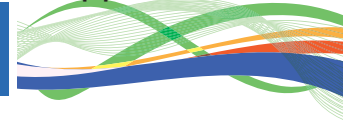
1. **Professional Learning**
   Effective and knowledgeable leaders throughout the Board, regardless of position or title, are the backbone of a strong school system. Ongoing professional learning is essential for staff to build capacity and an understanding of how best to support students and create inclusive and equitable schools, classrooms, and workplaces.

2. **Challenging Streaming and Exclusion to Improve Achievement and Well-being**
   Setting high expectations and increasing access to programming and supports is critical to the success of all students. These principles must begin with our youngest learners and extend to changes to special education programming, transitions to secondary school, Grades 9 and 10 programming, and student discipline.

3. **Examination of the Policies, Procedures, and Practices that affect Access, Opportunities, and Outcomes**
   We must continually review and assess our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion, and human rights and make changes where necessary.

4. **Enhancing Engagement and Voice Towards System Change**
   Student and parent voice and engagement are critical; they are key drivers of student achievement and well-being. When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and enjoy school more. Staff engagement and effective collaboration with our union and leadership partners is critical to our equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism and human rights work. Staff should also feel safe, valued, and able to contribute to the best of their ability.

5. **Equitable Resource Allocation Review**
   Our system must align its budget with our strategic priorities and must build operating budgets that consider the barriers and system biases that currently affect student achievement and well-being. As a school board, we need to realign budgets to ensure that all schools and departments have the resources they need to create the conditions that allow for the success of all our students.

6. **Development of a Strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence**
   It is critical that the TDSB acknowledge the achievement and opportunity gaps that currently exist for Black students and that it develop a focused approach to close those gaps. This strategy is necessary to make the fundamental change that is needed: changes to staff bias and mindset as well as structural changes to policies, procedures and budget allocations.

7. **Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Placement**
   The TDSB is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining employment and promotion policies, practices and procedures that result in and sustain a workforce that at all levels reflects, understands and responds to our diverse student population.
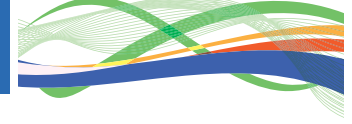
This work will continue to build on the strong foundation of equity in the TDSB. Nearly two years ago, our Vision for Learning set out the Board's commitment to a system improvement plan built on the principles of equity and inclusion for all, service excellence, shared leadership and focused improvement. The Integrated Equity Framework that followed further detailed the actions necessary to specifically address our equity commitments. The Enhancing Equity Task Force has helped us deepen our understanding of how to best adjust and revise our focus on the seven areas identified in the Board's Integrated Equity Framework, including: policy, budget, school improvement, access and secondary programs, leadership capacity plan, inclusion and special education and employment equity.

This report — the Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force — is the next step of our equity commitment. Its proposed direction is based on the Task Force's final recommendations. It will inform Years 2 and 3 of the Integrated Equity Framework and become the foundation for the Multi-Year Plan, both of which will come to the Board for discussion by June 2018.

Each and every one of our students deserves a quality education that meets their specific needs, honours their voices, and effectively prepares them for life after high school. The voices of our students should be at the centre of everything we do as an organization. The decisions that we make in our schools, in our service departments, and in our Boardroom should be based on the best interest of all of our students.

Equity work is critical to ensure that the TDSB provides excellent education and pathways to high achievement and well-being for all our students. We must and we will make the TDSB work as well for historically marginalized students as for those who currently thrive. We will maintain standards of excellence in education for all our students as we undergo the necessary changes.

We are asking the Board to affirm the directions outlined in this report; as we move forward with specifics, we will return to the community for consultations. Together, we will work to make the TDSB a global model of equitable education.

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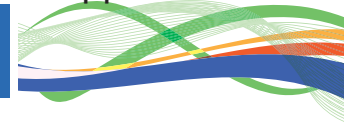
Professional Learning

Targeted professional learning for staff is essential to ensure that staff are equipped with strategies, tools and resources to make the systemic transformation that will address achievement gaps, improve access to opportunities and change outcomes for underserved students. Such learning is also a critical part of building a culture of shared leadership.

Professional learning is integral to school improvement that focuses on student achievement and well-being. Professional learning must incorporate an understanding of equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression; strong instructional strategies; inclusive classrooms and schools; and global competencies, supported by technology.

Professional learning provides the ability for all of us to collectively challenge and address persistent opportunity and outcome gaps, and to create a system and school culture that is responsive, reflective, and engaging of the individual identities and experiences of our students.

Research indicates that professional learning alongside necessary system changes can lead to significant improvements in student achievement and well-being (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). Professional learning is key to helping staff integrate and include the voices of all students into their work.

All staff, including those who do not work directly in a school, will be provided with professional learning to be able to support our students with more individualized support.

We are committed to providing all staff with professional learning in:
   • Equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and human rights, alongside our leadership and union partners;
   • Indigenous education, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are committed to providing some staff with additional professional learning, as connected to their roles, in:
   • Student improvement in literacy, numeracy, and global competencies;
   • Supporting the needs of students with identified special learning needs;
   • Intentionally supporting the mental health and well-being of students; and,
   • Providing the leadership development necessary for current and aspiring leaders in formal leadership roles.

More specifically, professional learning will cover these areas:

Professional Learning for Equity, Anti-Oppression, and Human Rights

Persistent achievement and well-being gaps continue to be a reality in our system (TDSB, Enhancing Equity Task Force, Appendix B, 2017). This requires us to take a targeted approach and to understand how identity, power, and privilege shape our interactions and our policies/structures in ways that permit these gaps to endure.

It requires us to understand the ways that marginalization, oppression, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, the discrimination faced by students with physical and intellectual disabilities, and other forms of historic institutional discrimination can be the unintended impact of attitudes and behaviours and system processes. It also requires us to have a deep
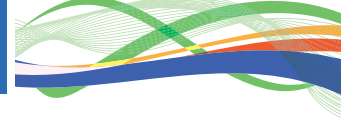
understanding of human rights and to ensure that we honour the rights of all stakeholders. And it requires us to ensure that there is no discrimination according to the 17 grounds protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Professional learning based on biases and barriers, anti-oppression and global competencies is critical to achieve the goal of creating equitable learning environments for all students from early years to post-secondary pathways and to eradicating persistent gaps in achievement and well-being.

Professional Learning for Indigenous Education, TRC Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, all TDSB staff will engage in learning about Indigenous perspectives, histories, contemporary contexts, cultures, contributions and achievements.

This will include treaty education, the impact of colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous law, and Crown-Indigenous relations. This reflects our commitment and responsibility to work with and learn from Indigenous peoples to rebuild relationships based on trust and respect with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Professional Learning for Literacy, Numeracy, and Global Competencies

We must prepare our students for life in a rapidly changing world with a model for teaching and learning that incorporates the global competencies: creativity, inquiry and entrepreneurship, global citizenship and character, collaboration and leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, assisted by the integration of digital learning tools and resources. We will ensure that students have access to the necessary technologies to achieve this goal.

Through professional learning, teachers will learn how to differentiate and adapt materials and choose resources appropriately for all their students. This learning will also help teachers transform their classrooms and provide learning opportunities that allow students to engage in their learning, collaborate with classmates and engage in real life problems in their school, community and society. We expect this learning to help reduce gaps in Early Years reading, ensure better access to academic programming in Grades 9 and 10, and improve graduation rates. We also expect to see increased achievement, expanded opportunities, and improved well-being for identified learners, regardless of placement.

Professional Learning for Special Education

Professional learning that fosters inclusion for all students with special education needs is a collaborative process. We will continue to support staff to meet the individual needs of students so that they can achieve their highest potential. This learning will lead to improved support for students, staff, and families and to provide them with greater access to opportunities and improved outcomes.

We will incorporate into all appropriate professional learning opportunities at the school and system level, effective instructional and assessment practices for students with special needs which will also support all students. We will provide learning opportunities for teachers and staff who may be supporting a student in a home school placement who may have historically been placed in an ISP program.

We will provide professional learning for at least one teacher in every school to support the capacity-building of all staff with regard to teaching strategies to support all learners, including assessment and evaluation, assistive technology and creating an inclusive classroom.

We will provide mandatory professional learning for all principals and vice-principals with regard to Special Education processes, including school support team meetings, individual education plans, and Identification, Placement and Review Committees. Opportunities will be provided for school-based support staff, teachers, principals and vice-principals to participate in professional learning with regard to specific learner profiles and how to improve outcomes for these students.

Professional Learning for Leadership

All staff will gain a deeper understanding of the impact of equity which will allow them to focus on the achievement and well-being of all students, and especially, those who have traditionally been marginalized.

We expect staff to hold high expectations for all students. To that end, we will provide staff with the knowledge and tools to better support underserved students. Specifically, all staff will be asked to identify their own power, bias, and privilege to better assist them in their support of students who are most underserved and/or not achieving at the provincial level. This learning will allow staff to better identify and understand those students and their experiences and to better support them. The ability to centre students' lived experiences, stories, histories, gifts, assets, strengths, and abilities will go an enormous way to challenging historic power imbalances and to changing the dynamics that have often stood in way of some students' success.

Specifically:
- Principals and staff will be able to articulate the complex demographics of their school communities and identify the appropriate supports that have been put in place to improve achievement and well-being;
- Every classroom will promote critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, entrepreneurship and citizenship because learning opportunities start with each student' strengths and needs
- Principals and staff will have a greater awareness of Indigenous histories, perspectives, contemporary contexts, and cultures;
- Students will have increased understanding of different cultural ways of knowing and understanding and mutual trust;
- Each school will be able to identify which students are well-supported and the changes needed to support those who are not yet successful;
- We will see improved achievement for all students, including for groups and social identities that have historically been marginalized;
- The well-being of students will improve; and
- We will experience a reduction in complaints from students and families tied to discrimination and/or marginalization such as, but not limited to, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, transphobia, homophobia, or ableism.

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Challenging Streaming and Exclusion to Improve Achievement and Well-Being

Academic streaming or tracking refers to the practice of assigning students to instructional groups on the basis of ability. Streaming into particular pathways has an enormous impact on a student's potential outcomes in the educational system (Parekh, 2013). We will confront and address patterns of academic streaming with the aim of creating more equitable outcomes for all students. The issue of streaming may be addressed by examining the bias and barriers in areas including the Early Years, Special Education, disciplinary processes in suspensions and expulsions and academic programming and the impact of these on students' mental health and well-being.

Research clearly indicates that streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes for students and particularly disadvantages specific groups of students — including those who are racialized and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. (Zheng, 2015; Zheng, S & De Jesus, 2017). This work takes on greater urgency in light of growing economic disparities within our city, illustrated by the stark reality that the annual, combined family income of 49% of TDSB families is below $50,000 (TDSB, Student and Parent Census, 2012).

"Demographic data from EQAO, along with 2006 Census data, show that schools with higher percentages of students from low-income families also have higher proportions of students in applied mathematics. And, a recent TDSB study found that only six per cent of students from the highest income neighbourhoods took the majority of their courses as applied courses, compared to 33 per cent of students from the lowest income neighbourhoods." (People for Education, 2015).

Early Years

The pathway to different outcomes for our students begins even before they enter Kindergarten. Disparities in student achievement based on social identities (e.g., gender, race, or socioeconomic status) begin to appear soon after children enter school as four-year-olds. An achievement gap in the early years, if unresolved, may ultimately contribute to illiteracy, innumeracy, and under-achievement, especially among students with historically disadvantaged social identities.

Students who struggle with math and reading are at greater risk of not graduating and/or becoming disengaged from school. Research has demonstrated that the achievement gap is harder to close as children get older.

Literacy is an important indicator of success in both school and work environments. Research shows that literacy experiences in the early years are a means to improve children's later achievement (McNaughton, 2002; Nuttall & Edwards, 2007; Roskos & Christie, 2007). This is also true of early math experiences. Supporting the development of young children's mathematical knowledge contributes to their long-term success in school (The Kindergarten Program, 2016, p. 75).

Our goal is for all students, regardless of social identity, to be able to read at level by the end of Grade 1 and to possess the required math skills by the end of Grade 2.
The end of Grade 1 is critical for a child's reading to be at level because by Grade 2:
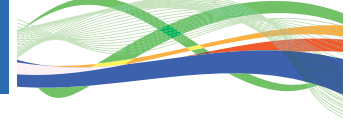
- A gap or deficit requires additional time and resources to fill;
- Corresponding gaps usually emerge in other areas of the curriculum; and
- Negative consequences for the child's well-being, engagement, and confidence in school may emerge. (Adapted from Clay, 2005, p. 28)

In order to achieve our goals, appropriate interventions will be put in place to support students who are struggling in reading and math in Kindergarten through Grade 2, including:

- Professional learning in oral language development, reading instruction, equitable assessment practices, and early mathematics;
- Professional learning that demonstrates how literacy acquisition is a social activity and therefore must be taught with a focus on equity and an awareness of bias;
- Strategies in school teams to ensure students receive the support they require to be successful when they enter school and transition through the primary grades; and,
- Superintendents ensuring that teachers and students have access to a variety of interventions and resources to close gaps and accelerate learning in early math and early reading. Additional support, where appropriate, will be made available outside school hours and in the summer months.

Teachers in the Early Years must engage in learning that will:

- Create learning environments that are engaging and reflective of students' experiences;
- Support system-wide standards with regard to what interventions are possible and expected;
- Assist in fulfilling the commitment that all students are reading by the end of Grade 1; and,
- Ensure a seamless transition into school, supporting pre-kindergarten programs where appropriate and necessary.

Special Education

The issue of streaming students must also be addressed in relation to special education delivery models, including Intensive Support Programs (ISPs), the Community Based Resource Model (which includes the Home School Program), and the Secondary Resource Program. ISPs are special education classes that have been designed to support communities of exceptional students who have similar kinds of instructional program and resource needs. Home School Program (HSP) is a special education class available in most elementary schools that provides needs-targeted instruction for a mix of exceptional and non-exceptional students. We will confront and challenge the deficit thinking that organizes students by perceived ability. We will continue to offer ISP placement options. We will continue to look at more inclusive models in the delivery of the Grade 4 to 8 Home School Program.

Additionally, we will review our Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) processes to ensure greater clarity, transparency, and accountability so that parents, guardians, and students feel valued and included. We will examine our practices with the following question in mind: "Is this IPRC process providing equity of access, opportunity and outcome for all students with special education needs, especially for those who have complex learning needs?"

We do not recommend phasing out Gifted programs or congregated school sites.

Changes to the Home School Program
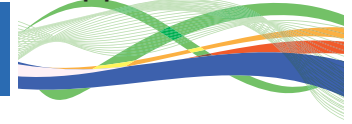
We will phase out Home School Program for students in Grades 2 and 3 at the end of the 2017-2018 school year, as was communicated in a parent/guardian letter distributed in May 2017.

We will also examine how to be more inclusive and effective in Grades 4-8, realizing that we may need to have some support for students with special needs in the school but away from the regular classroom for short, defined periods of time. The goal is to ensure that students are most often with their peers in the classroom, supported by staff, programming, and technology (Ability Grouping, Mitchell, 2010).

We believe in parent choice and voice in this process. Some families want their child in a home school placement while others want congregated schools and program placement. Through our IPRC process, we are committed to offering both home school or congregated placements for those who want it for their children. We will continue to measure the impact of all Special Education placements on the achievement and well-being of our students.

We will encourage schools to help students, staff, families and communities to use Home School Program (HSP) resources in more inclusive ways. For example, staffing allocations previously given for HSP will remain in place but may be used differently.

We will ensure that all Learning Centre supports are working together (e.g., Special Education consultants and co-ordinators, early reading and renewed math strategy coaches, Professional Support Services) and that staff have regular opportunities to confer and collaborate.

More students with special education needs will transition out of the Home School Program and be successfully taught within the regular class at their neighbourhood school. We expect that the achievement and well-being of these students will improve when they experience more inclusive classroom environments.
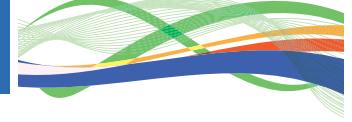
Individual Education Plan and Identification, Placement and Review Committee Processes

Parents and guardians perspectives will be honoured in the Individual Education Plan and Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs who desire a local neighbourhood school placement with appropriate accommodations, modifications, and/or alternative programming will receive this placement through the IPRC process. They will have increased voice and input into placement options. Parents and guardians will feel that their voices have been heard and their preference of placement has been honoured. We will continue to provide special education programs and schools for students with special education needs as a necessary and differentiated approach to supporting all students.

The important perspectives of staff will be considered in the IPRC process but parent preference will be accommodated. This means the culture of our IPRC process may need to change. To guide this process, an IPRC Procedure has been developed.

We will clearly explain the IEP consultation process for parents, guardians, and students. Disagreements between parents/guardians/students and school staff should be addressed to the school principal, as per the Parent Concern Protocol. If the disagreement persists, the Superintendent of Education will intervene, always focusing on the student and with the aim of maintaining respectful relationships. This will also provide further opportunities to identify areas of concern and find solutions.
Suspensions and Expulsions

Student discipline proceedings and processes also act as a powerful vehicle towards "streaming" students towards specific pathways and outcomes. Research indicates that identified special education students tend to be suspended from school at a greater rate than their peers; that students who experience less success in school are more likely to be suspended or expelled; and that students who are suspended or expelled from school are more likely to be enrolled in Applied level courses. Data also indicate that certain groups of students are highly overrepresented in suspension and expulsion data compared with their representation in the overall school population, specifically Black and Indigenous students (Zhang, 2017). To address these disparities, we must examine and rework the manner in which we deal with student discipline in the Board, especially with respect to suspensions and expulsions.

We will support concrete change in the area of Caring and Safe Schools to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to succeed. We will:
 • Promote and foster changes in attitude and behaviour and a shift in culture as well as an examination of our own biases;
 • Review and revise our policies, procedures, practices, and structures to decrease suspensions and expulsions, as well as to address the disproportionate number given to racialized students, especially those who are Black and Indigenous;
 • Only suspend Kindergarten students as a last resort and only after all other possible actions have been exhausted; and
 • Be more specific and concrete when imposing suspensions or expulsions in order to lend greater transparency and accountability to our processes.

Additionally, if we are to respond appropriately and effectively to behavioural issues, we need to understand why inappropriate behaviour occurs and the messages students are communicating through their actions. Disciplinary action should only be taken after these factors have been taken into account. We know that to address issues like systemic racism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and issues of poverty, this work must begin with the learning that the adults in the system must do. It will require putting in place different processes to support change, such as creating a culture of restorative practices, with a focus on coopera-tive ways of resolving conflict. Our school-based staff will require professional development and training to apply these practices.

Student input will be critical as we create a more accountable and responsive system. We must engage and empower all of our students in unique and creative ways. In doing so, we will ensure that their perspectives on identifying, confronting, and removing barriers are helping us to shape more equitable and inclusive learning cultures.

We will create a Student Concern Protocol to provide clarity on how student concerns are addressed within our system. In addition, we will learn from other jurisdictions how they have used reporting applications to support more timely reporting and tracking of student concerns. We will introduce this type of application in our Board to more effectively respond to student concerns.

While we continue to affirm our expectation that each and every student has a caring adult within their school setting, we will strengthen the impact that student voice has on our policies, procedures, decisions, learning environments, and learning opportunities (e.g., course options and e-learning).
We will examine our human resources, within the schools and beyond, to ensure responsiveness to student
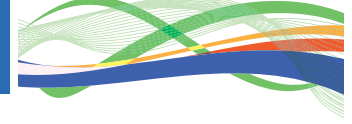
voice and to promote student mental health and well-being. We will leverage all staff, including guidance counsellors, professional support services staff, mental health leads, student success teachers, itinerant elementary counsellors, ESL teachers and counsellors, social workers, student equity program advisors, and school-based safety monitors, in support of more equitable outcomes for all students. To this end, in consultation with students, staff, and union partners, we will also explore the feasibility of creating new positions.

The data that is collected through our Caring and Safe Schools data base, our student and parent census, and our school climate surveys will allow us to effectively monitor our progress.

Grades 9 and 10 Academic Programming

Closely connected to the concept of "streaming" is Grade 9 and 10 programming, the secondary school "level of study" destination for students. Research has found that students who study at the Applied level in Grade 9 are less likely to graduate and have fewer post-secondary opportunities (Burris 2014; Clandfield et. al., 2014).

Global research clearly indicates that streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes for students and particularly disadvantages specific groups of students, including those who are racialized and those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012).

The current streaming structure under Academic, Applied, and Essentials has led to inequitable outcomes, particularly for students from marginalized, underserved groups. In some cases, it also has the potential of limiting post-secondary pathways (Structured Pathways: An Exploration of Programs of Study, School-Wide and In-School Programs, as well as, Promotion and Transfer across Secondary Schools in the Toronto District School Board, Parekh, 2013).

Based on a three-year phased schedule, we will begin to support the majority of our students in academic level programming for Grades 9 and 10. Detailed plans will be developed based on further consultation. This is one significant way of addressing the inequity in educational outcomes and the achievement, opportunity, and participation gaps that exist for certain groups of students in our system. Where necessary, students will have access to additional supports. This process will always align with Ministry of Education curriculum policies in the province of Ontario.

Transition Team support for staff will involve:
- Professional Learning teams for Grades 7 through 10. Teams will include curriculum leaders and Grade 7 and 8 teachers. They will focus on differentiated instruction through demonstration classroom and job-embedded opportunities. This will assist in helping staff see themselves as jointly responsible for Grades 7 through 10.
- Focus on the role of the Guidance Counsellors and Student Success Teachers in their respective roles at the elementary and secondary levels as integral to more effective transitions for all students.

There will also be increased support for students:
- We will examine class size to better meet the needs of the students. Staff in Employee Services will seek input from school principals and superintendents on how to best realign resources so as to provide support for class sizes that are smaller than the current maximum in our collective agreement for Grade 9 and 10 academic level programming. Employee Services will work collaboratively with Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation in reviewing these parameters in order to support successful academic programming for the majority of Grade 9 and 10 students.

We expect that the persistent gaps in achievement that have existed for specific groups of students will begin
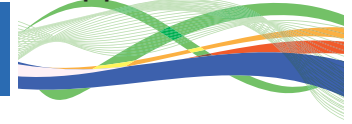
to shrink. The major premise of this work is that we should have high expectations for all students from the outset of their school experiences. When we are able to combine these high expectations with appropriate teaching strategies and more inclusive curriculum, the outcomes for all students will improve. We expect to see:

- Improved overall achievement and student well-being correlated with improved reading and math achievement (demonstrated in classroom and school assessments and report card marks);
- More parity in Reading and Math achievement among schools;
- Lower rates of suspension in the primary grades correlated with improved reading and math achievement;
- Uniformly higher levels of reading and math achievement with little or no differences, over time, among specific groups of students; and,
- Improved post-secondary choice at the work, college, apprenticeship, and university levels for all students.

Teaching all students at the academic level does not mean lowering standards. It requires effective transitions to high school, effective teaching strategies, more inclusive curriculum and higher expectations.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Students who are experiencing mental health challenges may feel excluded from their school community. Preliminary data gathered from secondary school students as part of the 2017 Student Census indicates that we must pay closer attention to the mental health and well-being of our students.

Through the TDSB's Mental Health Strategy, we know that mental health and well-being is essential to student success. Schools can promote positive mental health, identify and intervene early to prevent the onset of problems and respond to students in distress.

Every student in every school must feel the presence of a caring adult. We will create the conditions for this to happen by providing educators with a deeper understanding of how they can enhance the well-being of students individually through relationships and in classrooms, curriculum, and school environments. The well-being of students must be taken into account in all aspects of our work, including how we teach, assess, support, and relate to students.

This is essential to student success and achievement. Student mental health and well-being is the responsibility of everyone. In decreasing stigma and increasing understanding and awareness of mental health, we are confident that students, families, and TDSB staff will be better able to identify concerns and know what to do when they, or someone they know, needs help. Privilege, power, biases, racism, discrimination, and other barriers all affect the mental health and well-being of students: solutions must take these into consideration.

Our strategies must be connected to our School Improvement Processes. Every school in our Board is focused on well-being. We will be able to measure our progress through our census and school climate surveys.

Toronto District School Board
January 31, 2018
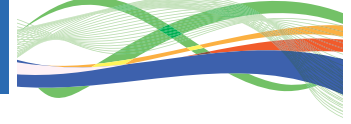
Examination of our Policies, Procedures, and Practices that Affect Access, Opportunity, and Outcomes

The TDSB has been offering specialized programs that have changed the concept of "neighbourhood schools" by providing more choice to families and resulted in some students leaving their home neighbourhoods. The TDSB's optional attendance policy allows students to apply to attend a program/school of their choice. Twenty-two per cent of elementary school students and 47% of secondary school students attend schools outside of their "regular program" neighbourhood school (as determined by the junior, intermediate, and secondary school boundaries) to attend, for example, specialty programs/schools or French immersion programs. The TDSB is committed to ensuring that every school is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to all students, regardless of specific program offerings, areas of specialization, or tracks.

While program choice can result in students' needs being better served, it can also segregate students by ability, income, or ethnic and racial background.

Research has indicated that in some areas our policies and procedures are serving students well but in others they do not reflect our student population. TDSB research, including *Programs of Choice in the TDSB: Characteristics of Students in French Immersion, Alternative Schools, and Other Specialized Schools and Programs (2010) and Structured Pathways: An Exploration of Program of study, School-Wide and In-School Programs Across Secondary Schools in the Toronto District School Board (2013)* has demonstrated that, with few exceptions, students who attend French Immersion and other specialized schools and programs such as Gifted, the Elite Athlete program or the International Baccalaureate are more likely to come from families with a higher socioeconomic status, a two-parent structure, and parents with a higher level of education. Enrolment in programs such as Special Education is more likely to be disproportionately represented by students from historically marginalized populations.
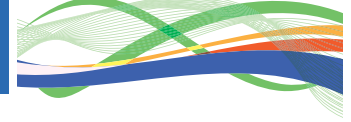
In addition, program choice can create divisions between schools. The flight of students from some neighbourhood schools can result in low enrolments, which affects programming for the remaining students. Some community members believe that they do not have access to the learning environments, learning opportunities, or programs they need. We have heard resoundingly from thousands of students, families and community members who feel that the TDSB should improve access to programming for all students.

We do not recommend phasing out optional attendance, specialty schools/programs, gifted programs or congregated school sites. However, we will examine our policies, procedures, and practices to determine whether they are creating and/or exacerbating inequity and we will work to increase access and opportunity so that those programs are more reflective of the TDSB student population.

In particular, we will review policies and procedures with an anti-oppressive approach to understand how our policies may be inadvertently creating barriers and perpetuating the outcomes we are dedicated to challenging and changing. We will engage our community as a part of the process of changing policies, including those related to:
 • Admissions to specialty schools and programs and optional attendance; and
 • French programming.

Admission criteria to some of the specialized programs and schools may not be responsive to the wide range of talents and skills that our students have. This results in some students being excluded from certain programs. For example, Arts programs may not recognize all forms of dance under current admission criteria.

Data, including student census data, enrolment data, and school climate information, will be used to review and establish an equitable admissions policy, including admission/audition requirements for our specialty schools and special programs. We will also create operating procedures and monitoring mechanisms for this policy to ensure system-wide consistency. We will review all specialized schools and programs to ensure equitable access, increased opportunities, and improved outcomes. These programs will be expanded where necessary to reflect current and future student needs. Alternative Schools and Elementary Alternative Learning Opportunities (Academies) will be included to ensure equitable and increased access and admission to students based on need.

Equitable access to programs and opportunities should result in an increase in diversity and inclusion in these schools and programs. We expect to see greater access for those members of our community who are underserved and are reporting that they are not able to access the learning environments, opportunities, and programs they need. Over time, French, alternative and/or specialized schools/programs should reflect and be consistent with board-wide demographic data.

As approved at the Board in June 2017, we will conduct a review of our French Programming in spring 2018 to ensure the effectiveness of the program and to better understand how resources are used. This action will involve further consultation with staff and community. The review will look at the challenges and successes of all French programs in the system, including Core French. It will provide a status update in many areas, including staffing implications, program viability, entry points, opportunities, equity of access, child care and transportation.

In schools where we have multiple programs, e.g., ISP, French, and programs for students who live within the boundary, programming sometimes operates as a "school within a school" as opposed to operating as one inclusive school community. In other words, we will create schools where all students have the opportunities to know one another and parents and staff have the opportunity to work together regardless of the program the student in which the student is enrolled.

Our commitment to succeed will be evidenced by a robust school improvement plan reflective of the data from the Task Force report. All our revisions will be based on the equity principles outlined in the introduction.

We will also respond to the perspectives we have gathered from secondary students regarding the type of high school experience they desire and the types of learning opportunities they need. Realizing that the size of a secondary school affects what can be offered and how it can be offered, we will analyze our current reality in secondary schools vis-a-vis what our students are asking for and bring this analysis to the Board for their consideration. Suggestions may include changing school configuration (semestered or full year), campus model, year-round schooling, or virtual high schools.

These suggestions will be recorded in the Board's Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy. This strategy, which is a pivotal planning process that considers student enrolment trends, program, and space needs across the TDSB, will also need to be reviewed from an equity perspective. It has served as a roadmap for addressing program and accommodation issues for the past four years. Staff will determine whether access barriers exist in terms of the types and locations of various programs. The program drivers that guide this process will also be examined to ensure that they meet TDSB's equity principles. Any changes to program placement drivers will be brought to the Board for approval.

We are committed to strong unifying schools that are welcoming, diverse, inclusive, effective, and caring. As such, we will rigorously pursue structures and strategies for all students, family, and staff that promote a sense of belonging to the school rather than to any single program. To do this we must acknowledge gaps school by school and identify what we will do to transform the culture, focusing on effective instructional strategies while simultaneously addressing anti-racism, poverty, and marginalization.
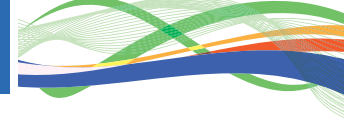
Enhancing Engagement and Voice Towards System Change

The focus of all our engagement efforts in the TDSB must be directed towards improving student achievement and well-being. All of our work must centre on the needs of students, which includes effectively capturing and integrating student voice and input.

Our students will be actively involved in their own learning and in the decisions made about their learning. We will move beyond traditional initiatives and structures and continue to increase the role of the student census and student forums, to capture student voice, and to support students in influencing and shaping their school communities. While we will continue to use the Student SuperCouncil and Student Trustees, we will also go further to connect directly with students whose voices have been left out or discounted. The Student Equity Program Advisors are in the ideal position to undertake this work and we will explore new possibilities to encourage student engagement. One of our goals in this area will be for school programming to be more effectively driven by student choice and voice.

Parent/caregiver engagement is a key factor in the enhancement of student achievement and well-being. When schools, families, and communities work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and enjoy school more. We will support our staff to deepen understanding and enhance opportunities for this work to happen in our schools. Furthermore, students are more likely to be motivated, earn higher grades, have better behavioural and social skills, and continue their education to a higher level when their parents are actively engaged in supporting their success at school (Cole-Henderson, 2000; Harris & Goodall, 2007; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Reynolds, 1989; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000; Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995).

Parents can, and should, be engaged in a number of ways. Their relationship to the school must extend into the school improvement process so that their voices and perspectives may inform the work. Parents and caregivers are perfectly positioned to help staff answer the following questions:
 • What barriers exist in the school that might be keeping students from achieving?
  • What biases might staff hold with regard to what certain groups of students are able to achieve?
  • What needs to change in terms of the instruction, the environment in the school, and the relationships in the school to improve achievement and well-being for all students?

Parent and caregiver voices are critical to our understanding the experiences and lived realities of our students. The more we engage with parents and the more culturally aware and responsive to our students' lived realities that we are, the more likely we are to understand and effectively respond to their voices and needs.

We must engage our parents through traditional means such as our Advisory Committees as well as through more community-based channels, supported by our Community Support Workers. Our Parent and Community Engagement Office will lead the work of supporting principals to more effectively include parent/caregiver voice in the school improvement process.

Encourage Mediation and Restorative Practices for Conflict Resolution

We will improve our communication about the Parent Concern Protocol and support staff to resolve conflicts in creative ways by using mediation and restorative practice strategies as required.

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January 31, 2018
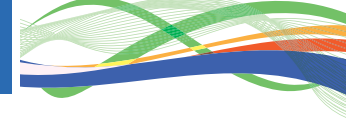
The Parent and Community Engagement Office of the Board will collaborate with parents and school administrators to develop a communication plan to create a broader awareness of the protocol and how it is used to address and resolve conflicts. The Board will also introduce a position with a mediation/restorative practice focus to more effectively support staff in responding to and resolving conflicts. Principals and superintendents will have greater knowledge of how to resolve human rights issues through conflict resolution strategies and will be able to access other resources to help them resolve conflict situations.

This work will support staff's capacity to address situations and will help parents be more attuned to how their concerns are addressed within the system and what to do when they have reached an impasse.

Develop Community and Family Engagement Standards

We will develop Community and Family Engagement Standards that will strengthen the relationship among the school, the family, and the community and support the achievement and well-being of all students. The Community and Family Engagement Standards will be collectively constructed by parents/caregivers, community members, and staff, specifically the Educational Partnership Office and the Parent and Community Engagement Office. Our partners must be able to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to these standards and to the equity goals of our Board.

These standards will include how we partner with community agencies and other community groups to serve our students and their families. They will also acknowledge that the school is often the centre of the community and that community access to the school is important.

As part of our policy review schedule, we will review the Parent and Community Involvement Policy (P023), Community Use of Board Facilities (Permits) (P011), the operational procedures (PR558), Parent and Community Involvement (PR558), and Community Use of Board Facilities (Permits) (PR666), to update the Board's framework for building and supporting parent and community involvement in the Board. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring equitable access to partnerships with community groups/agencies representing communities that have been historically marginalized or underserved. The intended outcome is to create more equitable access to the Board for all potential partners while optimizing the opportunities available to our students and schools. The Community Advisory Committees of the Board will also contribute to the development of these standards in support of the governance structure of the Board.
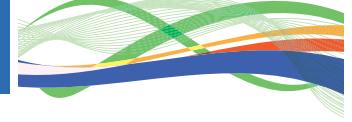
We will effectively track and monitor our progress through annual updates provided by our Advisory Committees. We will measure the impact of our partnerships through review cycles as part of our partnership agreements.

Our staff engagement efforts include continuing to foster positive working relationships with our leadership and union partners. Further, staff engagement and well-being are important. We will use our staff census and data collected through our Vision for Learning surveys to strengthen staff engagement through shared leadership and the creation of learning communities in every school and department.

As a result of our work we expect:
- Deeper parent/caregiver involvement in the school improvement process;
- Student voice integrated into all elements of work that occur in the Board;
- Workplaces where employees are committed to learning in teams;
- Higher rates of job satisfaction among our staff; and,
- Safer, more positive, and more inclusive schools and workplaces.

We will continue to measure our success by collecting data through our student and parent census, staff census, and other methods.

Equitable Resource Allocation Review

Facilities

The TDSB operates 583 schools which have an average age of 60 years and significant capital needs. As of September 2017, the TDSB has a renewal backlog of $3.7B, which represents the amount of outstanding work required to bring our buildings into a state of good repair. In 2017-18 the TDSB received $300M to address this backlog. It is against this backdrop that we look at how we can more equitably allocate capital funding.

Schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are perceived to not be well supported by the system. With respect to facility improvements, there have been several issues that have contributed to this perception, including:
- Ministry requirements to use funding for specific purposes;
- A requirement to make Health and Safety issues a priority;
- A focus on infrastructure versus aesthetic work;
- Political and community pressures in more affluent neighbourhoods; and,
- Lack of a process to review equity as a criterion for allocating capital funds.

Staff will review existing data to determine the validity of the perception that schools in disadvantaged areas are not supported to the same extent as those in affluent neighbourhoods. Should this perception be confirmed, we propose to dedicate a portion of capital funding to be allocated to schools using an equity-based approach. Staff will develop a clear and transparent process for this capital allocation, using equitable criteria to ensure that the needs of schools are met. This would be in addition to the current allocation of discretionary capital funding provided to each school to assist with local decision-making. Project schedules will be reviewed to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of work in all areas of the Board. Finally, we will review project schedules specifically related to accessibility projects to ensure that equity is taken into account in the decision-making process.
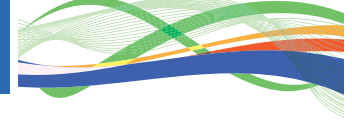
Physical environment plays an important role in student success. Many of the schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods show signs of disrepair. Our actions are expected to improve the physical environment at identified schools, resulting in better learning environments for all students. We will be able to measure the impact of this work through feedback from our communities, as well as through quantitative data connected to our capital renewal backlog and inspections of our building conducted by Facility Services.

Discretionary Operating Funding

The Grant for Student Needs (GSN) provides funding for the TDSB. The use of some of these funds is directed either by Ministry regulations or labour agreements.

The remaining funds that school boards have the ability to allocate based on local needs to support their students are referred to as discretionary funding. Although attempts have been made through various initiatives to allocate discretionary funds in a more equitable manner, this goal has not been achieved as several of our resource allocation methods have been subject to historic political pressures. Current resource allocation processes and practices are not equitable; there are some schools and programs that benefit from supplemental funding that is not available to all. For example, in some cases, additional financial resources are provided to support specialty programs and schools. In addition, bussing is provided for some programs and not for others.

Staff are not currently recommending changes to specific resource allocations, but rather are proposing that we look at our current resource allocation methods and processes to ensure that more equitable opportunities and outcomes for students are achieved.

We will also address inequities connected to school fundraising. Schools have two sources of funds to support their work: school budget allocations and fundraising. Many affluent communities have the ability to raise significant amounts of money to pay for playground enhancements and technology upgrades, among other things. This type of fundraising may not be possible in less advantaged neighbourhoods, which results in further inequities. While Ministry guidelines do not allow fundraising dollars to be used to support operating costs covered by the Grant for Student Needs, some schools have access to significant fundraised dollars and others do not. We will examine methods to address the inequity of funds available to schools as a result of their fundraising ability. Ideas such as Board-wide fundraising campaigns, policy changes, or the development of a central equity fund to support individual students will be examined. Recommendations resulting from the analysis will be brought forward to the Board for consideration. Having said all of this, we are not limiting fundraising in our schools in any way.

Funding from such grant allocations as the Learning Opportunities Grant, English as a Second Language, and French as a Second Language provide flexibility to support student achievement. Staff will identify all sources of funds that have flexibility in their use to allow for local decision-making in support of student achievement and well-being. We will also provide an analysis of how these funds are allocated to support all students equitably. Where we find the funds do not address student achievement or well-being equitably, we will report back to the Board with recommendations on how to better serve all of our students across the system.

As part of this work, staff will also review the uses of the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI), which is a tool that ranks schools based on measures of external challenges affecting student success, to ensure it is achieving an equitable distribution of resources. If the review reveals a need to update/change the tool, in terms of its measurement of need or its use, staff will bring forward recommendations to the Board.

Resource allocation will be conducted in a transparent manner that is linked clearly to student needs and to ensure that students are supported in an equitable manner, within the constraints of TDSB's finite resources. We are committed to ensuring that students have the opportunity to succeed in whatever paths they choose. We will know we have achieved this when all students' academic results improve across the system, especially those from groups with current and historic achievement gaps.
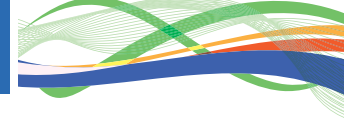
Staffing

Our staff are our greatest asset. Given our limited human resources and the context within which we work, we must ensure that staffing allocations are deployed where needed to provide the best possible outcomes for all students.

The processes by which our human resources are allocated across the system attempt to consider the external challenges that might affect student achievement and well-being so as to ensure that our allocation models are equitable as opposed to "equal." However, the goal of equitable allocation has not yet been achieved because resource allocation methods are often based on historic initiatives and legacy practices. For example, some schools have access to staffing resources that are not available to other schools. These allocation methods do not address current student needs and as a result exacerbate the inequitable use of TDSB's limited resources.

We propose to consider three key areas of our staffing allocation distribution processes to determine if we can more equitably allocate human resources:
- We will review sources of information and data beyond the Learning Opportunity Index, such as student achievement results, to help allocate staffing resources.
- In an effort to ensure that resources are closer to schools, and where flexibility exists, we will make staffing allocation decisions locally as opposed to on a system-wide basis.
- Finally, we will conduct a thorough examination of historical/legacy resource allocation practices using an equity-focused approach so as to determine their suitability to meet current student needs.

These actions will allow us to better support students in each of our schools. We will know we have achieved our goal when staff allocations result in greater student achievement for all students.

Toronto District School Board
January 31, 2018

Development of a Strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence

Black students – in particular Black boys – continue to be the least successful demographic in our school system. Key data show these students are overrepresented in suspensions and expulsions and underrepresented in such areas as Gifted identification. As a group, they continue to experience a lack of access and opportunities. A targeted and focused approach to address Black student achievement and excellence will aim to address these gaps.

As the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report indicated:

> Black students in general are less satisfied with their overall school experiences, more likely to report being bullied physically, and have less positive relationships with adults and peers in school (Yau et al., 2015). School safety data show that they have higher suspension and expulsion rates than other students (Zheng, 2013, Zheng et al., 2017). By the time Black students finish high school, 42% have been suspended at least once, compared with 18% of other students (James and Turner, 2017). Of the 200 students who were expelled between 2011 and 2016, nearly half self-identified as Black. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2017 report, which supports that statistic, notes that "racialized students receive harsher treatment or punishment than their White peers for similar behaviour."

> …Moreover, a greater proportion of Black students are streamed to the "lowest academic level classes," specifically, Applied or Essential programs in secondary school: 48%, versus 19% of White students or 21% of others. A greater percentage of Black students are identified as having non- gifted exceptionalities, unidentified special needs, and/or in need of an Individual Education Plan requiring special education support: 26%, as opposed to 16% of White students or 9% of others. As James and Turner state, "behind [these] numbers are families who have dreams for their children, and Black children who are ambitious, excited about learning, and deserve the education offered to other children..." (Enhancing Equity Task Force report, 2017, p.37).

Current structures and attempts to address the realities of anti-Black racism and its underlying systemic issues have been unsuccessful at making a significant impact on the experiences of Black students in our system. To this end, a strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence will provide a targeted and focused approach to address excellence and success for Black students in all areas.
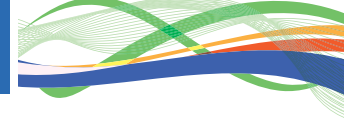
A strategy to support Black students will operate within the context of our equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression work until we are able to make meaningful gains for Black Students in the areas of Early Years reading, graduation rates, suspensions and expulsions, access to academic programming, and changes to trends in Special Education and to family and community engagement.

A requirement of this strategy is to ensure that, in all areas, including professional learning, policy updates and creation, hiring practices, and school improvement planning, we consider the impact on access, opportunities, and outcomes for Black students. We welcome key voices at the table to help us consider these realities. The impact must be actively monitored and measured and be built on the understanding that these strategies, while necessary for some, will ultimately be beneficial for all students.

Toronto District School Board
January 31, 2018
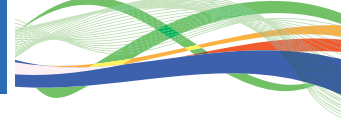
In classrooms and schools it will require a targeted look at the learning necessary to support Black Student Excellence and the transformation of classroom practices, curriculum materials, and school environments so that Black students can thrive and reach their highest potential. This learning will be embedded explicitly in our system-wide professional learning.

Success in this area would result in an increase in achievement rates of Black students, specifically in the areas of Early Years literacy and numeracy; an increase in Black students taking Academic level programming in secondary school; improved classroom curriculum and learning opportunities that reflect the lived experiences, cultures, and histories of Black communities; improved graduation rates for Black students, in particular Black boys; a reduction in the suspension and expulsion of Black students; and increased engagement of the parents and families of Black students.

Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Placement Processes as Aligned with Principles of Human Rights

The TDSB has a strong history of examining and reflecting on recruitment, hiring, promotion, and placement processes from an equity and human rights perspective. The Board's Employment Equity Policy (P029) affirms our commitment to the development, implementation, and maintenance of employment and promotion policies, practices, and procedures that result in and sustain a workforce that, at all levels, reflects, understands, and responds to our diverse population.

As we continue to engage in this work, our goals will be:
- To measure how effective our employment practices are at supporting equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, placement, and succession planning;
- To ensure that all our employees have equitable opportunities for advancement; that their skills and knowledge are valued and used appropriately; and that they have equitable access to available support for their professional development needs;
- To support the creation of schools and workplaces where all staff feel valued and safe so that they can work to their full potential;
- To identify workplace factors known to have a strong impact on organizational health and the health of individual employees (e.g., organizational culture, workload management, engagement, growth and development, recognition and reward, etc.);
- To consider how the means by which we welcome and assist new staff in understanding their work within the TDSB relates to the significant work we are doing with respect to equity;
- To build upon positive relationships and include the voices of our various federations, union, network, and association partners by effectively collaborating on our work in equity and anti-oppression.
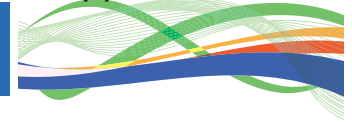
Equitable Recruitment, Hiring, Placement and Promotion Practices

To further support the objective of creating schools where students feel welcomed, included, and heard, we will work towards a culture in schools where students see themselves reflected in the staff. This will include a review of current recruitment, hiring, promotion, and placement processes as part of building on our work to better reflect the diversity of our students and communities. This will help students see themselves reflected in their learning environments by learning with staff who reflect their own identities and experiences.

We will provide learning opportunities to those involved in hiring processes so that an equity competency and anti-oppression stance is explicitly embedded throughout the entire process and its weight as a competency will play a significant role in determining hiring, promotion, and/or retention. We will hire staff who demonstrate competency related to Board's equity, anti-oppression, and human rights principles. And, while we are mandated to follow existing provincial regulations regarding teacher hiring, we will continue our efforts to hire teachers who reflect the diversity of our community.

We will provide training to all staff involved in hiring and promotion to build capacity about equity and anti-oppression and to build knowledge of how their own biases may affect selection processes, as well as how to best address this reality.

We will collaborate with faculties of education and other professional colleges/training bodies to ensure that pre-service training assists in the elimination of many conscious or unconscious biases.

If we are successful, we will continue to see an even more diverse work force that is representative of the communities we serve.

Improvement of Staff Well-Being

Staff need to feel a sense of safety, support, and commitment from the Board. While our staff may generally have very positive experiences in the work environment, we must develop a deeper understanding of their overall positive connection to the TDSB as a whole and intentionally support their well-being. The recent staff census collected well-being data for the first time and we are currently reviewing and analyzing the results to determine areas of focus and ways in which we can be more supportive to staff in collaboration with union and non-union groups.

Effective Orientation to our Organization

Even with recruitment and hiring practices that enable us to attract and then select the best applicants, their success in their role is dependent on our providing them with a robust understanding of our complex organization, our priorities, and how their individual work directly supports our collective work.

We will strengthen our onboarding and orientation strategies so that new TDSB staff will be able to successfully fulfill their responsibilities in the context of our strategic directions and our commitments to equity. The work of our Professional Learning Unit and many central departments to support aspiring leaders and new administrators also ensures a perspective that focuses on these same areas.

Connecting our new staff to key learning upon entry to the TDSB establishes a two-way commitment between employees and the Board. They will understand that we have a desire to provide deep support during this transition into the organization and they will also have a better understanding of what learning is required.

We expect to see a more prepared workforce within the Board that feels supported and has an increased ability to meet the challenges of their roles.

Effective Partnership and Collaboration with our Unions, Federations, Associations, and Networks Regarding Equity, Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism, and Human Rights

The TDSB values positive relationships with our union, federation, association, and network partners and prioritizes effective collaboration with them on our equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and human rights-based learning.

We will continue to work with our partners to provide individualized feedback to staff as a way of promoting professional growth. Respecting our unique and different roles, we will review the results of our most recent staff census together with our union partners to identify gaps and areas of need and to create learning opportunities to address these.

Furthermore, we will engage in meaningful dialogue and brainstorming with our unions with regard to how to create staffing models and processes that result in equitable staff placements that reflect the diversity of the communities served by the TDSB.

Through mutual understanding and collective problem solving, we will develop best practices to improve equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and human rights learning and the consistent implementation of that learning. Collaboration with all employee groups will result in increased engagement and motivation of our staff and ultimately a stronger commitment to these priorities and their impact on student achievement and well-being.
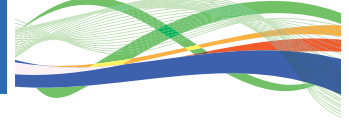
As a result of this work we expect to:
- Develop recruiting, hiring, promotion, and placement practices that addresses bias and removes barriers;
- Create safer and more welcoming workplaces for all staff;
- Provide effective induction support to all new employees; and,
- Be seen as an employer of choice within the city and across the country.

Various data collection points will allow us to track our progress. We will use employee data collected at the point of application as well as the point of hire. Our staff census will be an important source of information. We will collect feedback from our staff as they participate in different types of professional learning. We will also pursue the goal of being named Canada's Top Employer with respect to diversity.
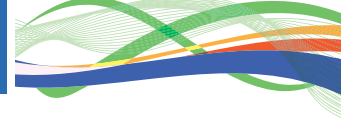
Conclusion

We are committed to helping each and every student succeed. It is about providing them with the tools, resources, supports, access and opportunities they need to thrive.

For the past two years, guided by our Vision for Learning, we have taken a bold approach to improve the achievement and well-being of all students while closing the persistent achievement, opportunity and participation gaps that have existed for some.

Through the voices and experiences of our community, the Enhancing Equity Task Force, and our continued listening and learning, we will revise our Integrated Equity Framework to keep this work moving forward.

Thank you to all students, staff, families and community members who have participated in this process. We appreciate your commitment and involvement in the process.

Together, we will make the necessary changes to ensure that each and every one of our students can reach their full potential.

Appendix C

System Data for Black Student School Experiences

Anti-Black Racism takes place in institutional, structural, and systematic levels and manifests itself in numerous ways within the TDSB. While 11% of all TDSB students self-identify as Black, a variety of data and analytical analysis shows that TDSB students that self-identify as black represent a far larger proportion of students that have far less successful experiences in schools from Kindergarten right through to Grade 12. As exemplified in these data:

- Suspensions and Expulsions: In 2018-19, TDSB schools either suspended or expelled a student 5,562 times. 33% of these suspensions and expulsions were given to Black students (TDSB, 2018a).
- Special education: Among the approximately 7000 students (3%) across the TDSB in fully contained special education classes, Black students represent 26% of these students (Spence & Cameron, 2019), the highest representation when compared to other ethno-racial groups
- Student Wellbeing and Schools Belonging: Self-identified Black students, compared to all students in the TDSB, have much higher proportions of students who report positive feelings about themselves and their future. However, these higher proportions do not hold when asking students about how they feel about their school experience as they have significantly lower proportions of students reporting positive feelings about their school experience compared to all other students in the TDSB.
- Learning Skills: There is system level evidence that Learning Skills assessments on the report card are subject to racial bias across the elementary grades. For example, in Grade 3 just under 60% of black students that performed at the highest level in the EQAO Reading assessment also scored an average of 'Excellent' on their Learning Skills in the report card compared to almost 80% of white students in the same assessment in the TDSB. This pattern holds across assessments, grades, and years analyzed.
- Post-Secondary Success: Factors such as attendance (absent 10% of school days), suspensions (at least 1), and fully contained special education classrooms have a direct impact on students' post-secondary success: 50% of students that do not go onto college or university have experienced at least one of these factors and 88% have experienced all three of these factors (Brown, Gallagher-Mackay, and Parekh, 2019).
- Streaming: Black students are disproportionately streamed into applied courses, which lead to fewer university pathways (James & Turner, 2017). For example, in 2016, 63% of Grade 9 and 10 black students were enrolled in academic courses compared to 85% of white students. In 2019, this figure has risen by 15 percentage points to 78%. However, falls 12 percentage points below the proportion of white students in academic courses at 90%. (Cameron, 2019).
- Graduation rates: Black student graduation rates have been growing at one of the fastest rates compared to all other ethno-racial groups in the TDSB (Brown & Parekh, 2019). However, overall Black student graduation rates are still one of

the lowest when compared to other ethno-racial groups in the Board (Brown & Tam, 2017; Brown & Parekh, 2019).

- Academic achievement: Black students consistently receive some of the lowest EQAO and report card scores in comparison to the rest of the Board (Brown & Sinay, 2008; Spence and Cameron, 2019).

Overall school experience: Black students felt school is a friendly and welcoming place less than other students in the Board, reported feeling less likely to get the help and support they need, reported a lower sense of school belonging, and claimed to enjoy school less than other students (Cameron, 2019; Yau, 2017). Inside classrooms, the curriculum Black students receive is also not reflective of their experiences, histories, or cultures (The Turner Consulting Group, 2015).

Reference List:

Brown, R., Gallagher-Mackay, K., and Parekh, G. (2019). Redefining risk: Human rights and elementary school factors predicting post-secondary access. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 27 (*number X).

Brown, R. & Parekh, G. (2019). *Graduation and post-secondary pathways over a generation: Toronto Board of Education Long-term trends.* Presented at the Canadian Society for Scholarship in Education Conference, Vancouver, BC.

Brown, R.S. Sinay, E. (2008). *2006 student census: Linking demographic data with student achievement.* Toronto District School Board.

Brown, R. & Tam, G. (2017). *Grade 9 cohort graduation patterns, 2011-16. Fact sheet 2, November 2017.* Toronto District School Board.

Cameron, D. (2019) *Use of Data for Equity*, [Presentation for Asian Network for Global Cities Education Network Symposium, *Creating Equitable School Systems: Learning from Toronto and Ontario* January 30 – 31, 2020, Toronto, Ontario.

Spence, J., & Cameron, D. (2019). *Tensions and complexity inherent in the research-policy relationship: Use of evidence and data as a means to refine and improve public education* [PowerPoint presentation]. Toronto District School Board.

Toronto District School Board. (2019). *Caring and safe schools report 2018-2019. Research and Development Dept.,* Toronto District School Board.

Turner Consulting Group. (2015). *Voices of Ontario Black educators: An experiential report.* Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators.

Yau, M. (2017). *Student and parent census: Some key findings about Black students.* Toronto District School Board.

EX29.11

TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism

Date: November 15, 2017
To: Executive Committee
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

Toronto is the most diverse city in the world. However, studies continue to show that anti-Black racism still exists in this city, affecting the life chances of more than 200,000 people of African descent who call Toronto home.

Anti-Black racism is policies and practices embedded in Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization here in Canada.

The legacy of anti-Black racism lies in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of Torontonians of African descent. It is experienced as a lack of opportunity, poor health and mental health outcomes, poor education outcomes, higher rates of precarious employment and unemployment, significant poverty, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice, mental health, and child welfare systems.

To begin confronting anti-Black racism in Toronto, the City of Toronto partnered with Black leaders and organizations to create and implement a four-phase process. Phase one was the development and launch of the Toronto For All campaign in November 2016, naming and challenging anti-Black racism for public education. Phase two was the review of 41 years' worth of research and recommendations about addressing anti-Black racism in Toronto. This review created the foundation for 41 Community Conversations in phase three to determine how best to take meaningful action going forward. Conversations ran from January to March 2017. Black Torontonians reviewed a draft action plan at a citywide workshop in May 2017 and provided feedback. In Phase four, City staff and subject matter experts from across Toronto's Black communities worked together to create work plans and to identify resource requirements to begin implementation.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is the result of this collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and Torontonians of African descent to take corrective action.

This five-year plan leverages the talents, knowledge, and experiences of Black residents and Black organizations as partners in making municipal services, spaces and policies fully inclusive and accessible to Torontonians of African descent in both intent and in practice. The Action Plan includes 22 recommendations and 80 actions to address five issue areas: children and youth development; health and community services; job and income supports; policing and the justice system; and community engagement and Black leadership. This report recommends adoption and implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council adopt the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism as outlined in Attachment A.

2. City Council adopt the 2018 Annual Work Priorities for year one implementation as outlined in Appendix B.

3. City Council refer the new and enhanced request of $0.460 million gross and net for 5.0 positions and $0.535 million gross and net for community partnership initiatives, for a total of $0.995 million gross and net, and included in the 2018 Operating Budget Submissions for Social Development, Finance and Administration for consideration with other City priorities through the 2018 and future-year budget process.

4. City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance Administration, the Acting Director, Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights; and the Executive Director, Human Resources to form the City Steering Committee to lead the internal City systems change work of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and to align this work with other equity-based initiatives to ensure combined impact.

5. City Council approve the establishment of the Anti-Black Racism Partnership and Accountability Circle comprised of diverse Torontonians of African descent to support the implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism in effective, collaborative and accountable ways.

6. Subject to the adoption of Recommendation 5, City Council request the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance Administration, the Acting Director, Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights; and the Executive Director, Human Resources, in collaboration with the Anti-Black Racism Partnership and Accountability Circle to report annually on the progress of implementation and the next year s work priorities.

7. City Council forward the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism as outlined in Appendix A to the Board of Health, Toronto Library Board, Toronto Police Board, and Toronto Community Housing Corporation Board for their consideration.

8. City Council forward Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism as outlined in Appendix A to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Children and Youth Services for consideration on program and funding alignments.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report recommends adopting the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism for implementation over a five-year term, beginning in 2018. Implementation will be based on five annual work plans, starting in Year One (2018), and a corresponding progress report. Annual work priorities will be implemented through a mix of initiatives that can be completed within existing resources and initiatives that may require additional funding.

In Year One (2018), a range of City divisions will lead initiatives, monitor progress and publicly report on key deliverables driven by four priorities: (1) Creating Culture Change at the City; (2) Investing in Black Children & Youth; (3) Connecting Black Torontonians to Civic Decision-Making; and (4) Improving Customer Service. Implementation across these priorities requires the establishment of a Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit within Social Development, Finance and Administration, supported by Equity Diversity and Human Rights, and Human Resources. Five positions are proposed to focus on the key community development, staff learning, policy change and youth development work of the Action Plan. These new staffing resources require strong Anti-Black Racism Analysis and specific expertise to effectively implement the Action Plan. The Confronting ABR Unit will deploy expertise and resources to a range of City divisions and the Toronto Police Service to implement initiatives of the Action Plan.

Funding to support Year One implementation is $0.460 million gross and net for 5.0 positions to implement the Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and $0.535 million gross and net for community partnership initiatives, for a total of $0.995 million gross and net, included as a New Service Priority in the 2018 Operating Budget Submission for Social Development, Finance and Administration. This new and enhanced priority will be referred to the 2018 budget process for consideration.

The Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

EQUITY IMPACT

Anti-Black racism is normalized and deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, often making anti-Black policies and practices appear invisible to non-Black people. Yet, the realities of anti-Black racism are demonstrated in the many social, economic and political disparities of Black people's lives today.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism centres on Black Torontonians as an equity-seeking group taking an intersectional approach. It also specifically examines the experiences and recommendations of Black residents who are also members of other equity-seeking groups, including women, youth, newcomers, queer and transgender people, Francophones, people affected by the justice system, people with dis/abilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

The recommended Action Plan addresses key areas where diverse Black people face disparity and where City action can make demonstrable impact. The Action Plan mandates shared leadership and ownership with people with lived experiences of anti-Black racism at every stage of implementation.

The Action Plan utilizes an equity approach of targeted universalism in order to address anti-Black racism. Targeting equity measures for Black Torontonians will ensure they have access to the full benefits of living in this city like other Torontonians, and simultaneously, benefit other Toronto communities experiencing racism and marginalization, and all Toronto residents.

DECISION HISTORY

On June 19, 2017, Executive Committee considered The Interim Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism and requested the City staff to work collaboratively with subject matter experts from Toronto's Black communities to develop multi-year work plans for implementation, identify resource requirements and recommend a model for partnership and accountability to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.EX26.5

COMMENTS

Anti-Black Racism is Deeply Rooted

"Despite Canada's reputation for promoting multiculturalism and diversity… Canada's history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent which must be addressed in partnership with communities."[1] These were the findings of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent in their final report released September 25, 2017. The report fallowed the Working Group's first official visit to Canada in October 2016 to study the human rights situation of Canadians of African descent. The Working Group expressed their deep concern for the human rights situation of Black Canadians after meeting with representatives from governments, community organizations, and Black leaders working on issues of racism and racial discrimination in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.

During their fact-finding mission, the Working Group was confronted with clear evidence of disparities faced by Black Canadians due to racism. Anti-Black racism is policies and practices embedded in Canadian institutions that reflect and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent. It is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and

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[1] Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. *Statement to the media by the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to Canada, 17-21 October 2016.* Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2016. Retrieved May 25, 2017: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID_20732&LangID=E

colonization in Canada. Anti-Black racism is micro (as seen in day-to-day interactions) and it is structural (as seen in governing laws and policies).

Anti-Black racism challenges the popularly held narrative of Canada as a welcoming, safe haven for enslaved Africans escaping to freedom, and as a country where race relations with Black people lacked the viciousness of American slavery and segregation. Legalized slavery and segregation is also rooted in Canadian history. In 1628, Oliver Le Jeune, an eight year old African boy, became the first recorded enslaved African in Canada. The 47th Article of Capitulation of Montreal, the Peace Treaty of 1763 and The Quebec Act of 1774 were Canadian laws that legally recognized Blacks as property. In Upper Canada, slavery was reinforced by court interpretations of last wills and testaments, transferring the ownership of people of African descent from one white Canadian to another. [2]

Courageous white Canadians did support enslaved Black Americans to come to Canada through the Underground Railroad, but when people of African descent arrived, they were often met with stereotyping fear, and discriminatory laws and policies. Black Loyalists to Ontario were granted land that was isolated and unsustainable for living. The Commons Schools Act of 1850 segregated schools along racial and religious grounds. In the early 1900s, the media was used to reinforce negative stereotypes about Black people, suggesting sexual aggression in particular was in their nature, in an effort to limit Black Americans from settling in Canada en masse after changes to segregation laws in Oklahoma.[3] In 1911, federal policy was introduced to deny entry to Black immigrants because "the Negro race… is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada."[4] Order-in-Council P.C. 1324 was repealed and never took formal effect, but when compared to simultaneous efforts to encourage immigration from Eastern Europe, the discriminatory message at the time that Black people were unwelcomed in Canada was evident.[5]

First enslavement laws, then segregated institutions and customary practices denying Black people from restaurants, hotels, and other businesses, became the norm, embedding anti-Black beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes and practices in Canadian society and institutions.[6] This distinct history of African descendants in Canada has resulted in the perpetuation of anti-Black racism embedded in systems and practices.

The term "anti-Black racism" was spoken by Ryerson University social work professor Dr. Akua Benjamin to language the unique nature of systemic racism that people of African descent experience in Toronto. In his 1992 report on race relations in the province, Stephen Lewis, the Ontario Advisor on Race Relations, first captured the

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[2] Sadler, R. *Anti-Black Racism in Canada: A Historical Perspective. Black History Society*. 2003. Retrieved May 28, 2017: http://www.crrf-fcrr.ca/images/stories/Anti-Black_Racism_in_Canada.pdf
[3] Sadler, 2003.
[4] Yarhi, E. *Order-in-Council P.C. 1911-1324 — the Proposed Ban on Black Immigration to Canada. Historica Canada*. September 30, 2016. Retrieved May 28, 2017: http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/order-in-council-pc-1911-1324-the-proposed-ban-on-black-immigration-to-canada/#h3_jump_4
[5] Yarhi, 2016.
[6] Diversity and Human Rights. *Racism Against Blacks*. Retrieved on May 29, 2017: University of Guelph. https://www.uoguelph.ca/diversity-human-rights/book-page/racismagainst-blacks

term. Within the opening paragraphs of this seminal report commissioned by the Province of Ontario following the 1992 Yonge Street Riots, Stephen Lewis wrote: "First, what we are dealing with, at root, and fundamentally, is anti-Black racism. While it is obviously true that every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout Southern Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus. It is Blacks who are being shot, it is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers, it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools, it is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping-out, it is housing communities with large concentrations of Black residents where the sense of vulnerability and disadvantage is most acute, it is Black employees, professional and non-professional, on whom the doors of upward equity slam shut. Just as the soothing balm of 'multiculturalism' cannot mask racism, so racism cannot mask its primary target."[7]

Twenty-five years later, the situation of anti-Blackness described by Stephen Lewis has remained consistent. The legacy of anti-Black racism lies in the current social, economic, and political marginalization of Black Torontonians. It is evidenced by a lack of opportunity, poor health and mental health outcomes, poor education outcomes, higher rates of precarious employment and unemployment, significant poverty, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice, mental health, and child welfare systems.

Black in Toronto

Toronto, the most diverse city in the world, is not exempted from the recent United Nations' findings. Studies continue to show that anti-Black racism still exists in Toronto today, affecting the life chances of more than 200,000 people of African descent who call Toronto home. Since anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in institutions, policies and practices, this particular form of racism often appears normal or invisible to non-Black people. Yet, evidence shows the great disparities Black Torontonians face in the areas of children and youth development; health and community services; job and income supports; and policing and the justice system.

Children & Youth Development
Almost 88,000 Black children and youth, ages 0-24 live in Toronto.[8] While dedicated parents and strong communities are raising many thriving Black children, as a whole, Black children and youth experience differential outcomes to their non-Black peers.

Forty-two percent of Toronto children in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are Black children, five times their representation in the population overall.[9] Despite the formal ending of academic streaming in 1999, Black students in the Toronto District

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[7] Lewis, S. *The Report of the Advisor on Race Relations to the Premier of Ontario Bob Rae*. June 9, 1992. Retrieved on January 15, 2017: http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/13000/134250.pdf
[8] Statistics Canada. *2011 National Household Survey*: *Data Tables*, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-012-X2011038.
[9] Contenta C, L Monsebraaten, and J. Rankin. *CAS study reveals stark racial disparities for blacks, aboriginals.* The Toronto Star, June 23, 2016. Retrieved May 25, 2017: https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2016/06/23/cas-study-reveals-stark-racial-disparities-for-blacks-aboriginals.html

School Board are twice as likely to be enrolled in applied courses instead of academic courses compared to their non-Black counterparts, closing off their opportunity for a university education.[10] Black youth have higher drop out and expulsion rates than other Toronto children. Black students become "early leavers" of high school at twice the rate – 23% compared to 12% of white students.[11] At 23%, the unemployment rate of Black youth in Toronto is two times higher than the national average.[12] And Black youth report often feeling unwelcome or unsupported in many of the programs that are funded to assist them.

Health   Community Services

Anti-Black racism impacts the health and wellbeing of Torontonians of African descent. Toronto Public Health's 2013 study examining racialization and health inequities found that experiencing racial discrimination contributes to poor health outcomes by "triggering harmful biological, psychological and behavioural responses."[13] Compared to non-racialized people, Toronto's Black residents report higher rates of pain and discomfort, high blood pressure, and overweight and obesity.[14]

Limited access to relevant, safe, affordable, and effective health and community services remain a challenge for Black residents and families living in Toronto. Black Torontonians often experience a 'service desert' in their neighbourhoods. And when services are available, many Black residents report that though these services are funded to support all Torontonians, they are often inadequate in meeting the needs of Black residents.

Job Opportunities   Income Supports

Torontonians of African descent experience lower graduation rates, higher rates of unemployment, and are more likely to be living in poverty than the general population in the city. Black families are about three times more likely to be living on low incomes than white families.[15] Forty-eight percent of Black children live in families with incomes of less than $30,000 a year compared to only 9% of non-racialized children.[16] The newly available Census data shows that low income rates are highest among third and later generations for Black residents within the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area than other population groups.[17]

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[10] James, C.   Turner, T. *Towards Race Equity in Education: The Schooling of Black Students in the Grater Toronto Area*, April 2107. Retrieved May 28, 29, 2017. http://edu.yorku.ca/files/2017/04/Towards-Race-Equity-in-Education-April-2017.pdf

[11] Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS). Newsroom: Ontario's Black Youth Action Plan. Queen's Printer for Ontario, March 7, 2017. Retrieved May25, 2017: https://news.ontario.ca/mcys/en/2017/03/ontarios-black-youth-action-plan.html

[12] Ministry of Children and Youth Services. March 7, 2017.

[13] Toronto Public Health. *Racialization and Health Inequities in Toronto*. October, 2013. Retrieved May 25, 2017: http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-62904.pdf

[14] Toronto Public Health. 2013.

[15] Morgan, A. "*The Blackening Margins of Multiculturalism": ACLC's Feb 2016 United Nations Report on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of African Canadians.* African Canadian Legal Clinic, Toronto, Ontario, 2016.

[16] Statistics Canada. 2011.

[17] Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-400-X2016211.

Black Torontonians have an unemployment rate of 13%, nearly two times the provincial rate.[18] Reviewing national trends, the United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent concluded its official visit to Canada in fall 2016 noting concerns over anti-Black racism in the country's labour market. For example, they found a much higher unemployment rate for Black women at 11% compared to 7% for the general Canadian population, and when employed, Black women make 37% less than white men and 15% less than their white female counterparts.[19] Black residents are often concentrated in part-time and precarious work that is inadequate to meet their basic needs and fails to leverage their talents.

Policing & the Justice System
For over a decade now, Torontonians of African Descent have been the second most targeted community for hate crimes in the city. In 2016, Black residents were victims of 85% of hate crimes in Toronto where racism was the motivating factor.[20] Yet, lack of community trust in police means many incidents of anti-Black harassment and violence go unreported.[21]

Black Torontonians face many disparities related to law enforcement. They are disproportionately impacted by racial profiling and over-policing, and over-represented in federal and provincial prisons. Twenty-seven percent of all carding incidents are focused on Black Torontonians, three times their representation in the overall Toronto population.[22] Over the last 10 years, the number of federally incarcerated Black people has increased by 75%, now accounting for 9.3% of the total federal population despite representing just 2.9% of the Canadian population. Black women and girls are one of the fastest growing incarcerated groups.[23]

This ongoing reality of anti-Black racism in Toronto stands as an obstacle to a truly fair and just city. The City of Toronto, as a government, has a duty to make decisions and take actions that help Toronto become an inclusive and prosperous place for everyone.

Development of a City Response

In April 2016, Mayor Tory requested the Director, Social Policy, Analysis and Research in the Social Development, Finance & Administration Division (SDFA) to initiate a process to acknowledge anti-Black racism in Toronto and develop a comprehensive plan to address it. To begin the process, SDFA partnered with Black leaders and

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, *2016*. http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID_20732&LangID=E
[20] Toronto Police Services (TPS). *2016 Annual Hate/Bias Crime Statistical Report.* Intelligence Services, Hate Crime Unit, Toronto Police Services, December 2016. Retrieved May 25, 2017: https://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/reports/2016hatecrimereport.pdf
[21] Xing, L. *Hate crime reports up, arrests down in 2016, Toronto police say.* CBC, March 17, 2017. Retrieved May 25, 2017: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/hate-crime-reports-up-arrests-down-in-2016-toronto-police-say-1.4029286
[22] McIntyre, C. *Canada has a Black Incarceration Problem.* Torontoist.com, April 21, 2016. Retrieved May 25, 2017: http://torontoist.com/2016/04/african-canadian-prison-population/
[23] Office of the Correctional Investigator. *A Case Study of Diversity in Corrections: The Black Inmate Experience in Federal Penitentiaries Final Report.* Government of Canada, 2014. Retrieved May 25, 2017: http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/rpt/oth-aut/oth-aut20131126-eng.aspx

organizations to create and implement a four-phase process, guided by three principles that emerged from a meeting Mayor Tory held with Black leaders in April 2016 following protests by Black Lives Matter Toronto: (1) build on existing research and recommendations; (2) partner with the community; and (3), engage young leadership in the process.

In phase one, City staff took two actions. First, in fall 2016, the City Manager hosted an Open Dialogue session for City senior leaders to better understand anti-Black racism and its impact on the city. Second, City divisions, in partnership with OCASI (Ontario Coalition of Agencies Servicing Immigrants) launched the second instalment of the Toronto For All public education series to name and support public dialogue on anti-Black racism in Toronto.

In phase two, City staff reviewed 16 seminal reports already written by Black leaders, activists, educators, community groups, and public servants between 1975 and 2016 as the starting point. Staff analyzed these reports and grouped over 113 recommendations into five themes: (1) Children & Youth Development; (2) Health & Community Services; (3) Job Opportunities   Income Supports; (4) Policing & the Justice System, and (5) Community Engagement & Black Leadership.

In phase three, SDFA partnered with 11 community agencies serving Toronto's diverse Black communities to host Community Conversations structured around 41 years' worth of recommendations. Seven additional agencies stepped forward to host conversations, leading to a total of 41 Community Conversations from January 21 to March 22, 2017. Fifteen young leaders of African descent were trained and engaged to guide the Community Conversations about what actions needed to still be taken against past recommendations and current issues.

More than 800 Black Torontonians, from across the city – young and elder, Caribbean and Continental African, Black queer and Black trans youth and adults, Francophone women, parents and caregivers, community workers, artists, and business and faith leaders – shared with us how they would like to build on past recommendations to achieve meaningful action today.

City staff worked with the community facilitators to analyze and compile these community ideas into a draft action plan. Relevant City divisions reviewed the draft action plan for clarifications and additions from their service and policy perspectives. The resulting draft action plan was presented to Black community leaders, organizers and residents on May 13, 2017 in an open feedback workshop hosted by Mayor Tory at Toronto City Hall. This community feedback was used to refine and finalize the recommendations and actions.

In phase four, from September 5 to September 30, 2017, Black community workers, advocates, business leaders and experts joined City staff from across divisions and agencies in five Expert Working Groups supported by Black process facilitators. The Expert Working Groups convened to develop work plans and to identify resources required to implement actions. Additionally, five Black subject matter experts with strong Anti-Black Racism Analysis assisted eight City divisions and one agency to complete the same task. Collaborative meetings, informed by research into existing effective

models, also supported the development of the Anti-Black Racism Partnership and Accountability Circle.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is the result of this collaborative effort between the City of Toronto and Torontonians of African descent.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism

Eradicating anti-Black racism is not a task that a municipal governments alone can do. This is collective work. It requires mutually reinforcing efforts from all orders of government, institutions, businesses, schools, community agencies and individuals. That is how sustainable, long-term, societal impact will be achieved.

Through this Action Plan, the City is stepping forward as one key actor in this collective work to take leadership to enact municipal levers under our influence to increase positive outcomes for Torontonians of African descent.

The City of Toronto has direct administrative responsibility over a number of critical systems that affect Toronto residents on a daily basis:

- The City is one of the largest employers in Toronto, with a wide variety of ' professional positions and entry-level jobs with pathways to middle income ' earnings '

- The City supports Canada's financial and business capital, as one of the most business-friendly cities in North America with more than 89,800 businesses operating from the Toronto

- The City owns a large portion of the housing stock, through the largest landlord in Canada, Toronto Community Housing, home to 110,000 Torontonians, and provides active support for other social housing providers and affordable housing in Toronto for low-income and vulnerable residents

- Through recreation infrastructure, the City supports the second largest system after the school system for social inclusion for children and youth

- Through local planning and community service investments, the City has intimate knowledge of 140 neighbourhoods and leads place-based planning with community partners

- Through the Toronto Police, the City operates the frontline service to the criminal justice system

- The City operates the crisis support systems for Toronto residents through Fire, Paramedics, Police, and shelters.

These are important systems that a municipal government provides to its residents. They need to be leveraged to create a fair, accessible and supportive city for all Toronto residents.

Like other Toronto residents, Torontonians of African descent want to live in a city where the services and spaces meant to serve residents are also accessible to them – this requires removing anti-Black bias, prejudice, and discrimination in policies and practices.

Black residents want to be afforded the same life chances and opportunities to participate as all other Torontonians. Currently, without acknowledgement of anti-Black racism and intentional effort to address it, measures to achieve universal equity often fail to effectively serve Black Torontonians, leading to disparities and disproportionate negative outcomes. Targeting equity measures for residents of African descent will ensure they have access to the full benefits of living in this city like other Torontonians.

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is presented as a five-year plan to leverage the talents, knowledge, and experiences of Black residents and Black organizations as partners in making municipal services, spaces and policies fully inclusive and accessible to Black Torontonians in both intent and in practice. The Action Plan includes 22 recommendations and 80 actions to address five issue areas: children and youth development; health and community services; job and income supports; policing and the justice system; and community engagement and Black leadership. The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is attached in Appendix A.

Whenever governments and service providers work to target the removal of systemic barriers experienced by the most disadvantaged communities, all residents benefit. The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism follows this approach of targeted universalism. The actions, when taken as a whole and executed fully, will benefit all Torontonians, especially other Toronto communities experiencing racism and marginalization.

The Toronto Action Plan lays out actions to help ensure that municipal services, spaces and policies become fully inclusive and accessible to Black Torontonians:

- Some actions leverage Black cultural knowledge and practices to better support positive child and youth development

- Some actions require targeted communication and outreach to ensure Black communities are reached by universal service efforts and job opportunities

- Some actions assess current policies, practices and structures to identify anti-Black bias and take corrective and preventative actions

- In other cases, actions are about piloting new approaches and sustainably investing in programs and organizations that are already achieving successful outcomes.

For each year of implementation, an annual work plan will be created by City staff, in collaboration with community members and submitted to City Council for approval. Each annual work plan will contain key priorities and initiatives to advance the inclusion of Black Torontonians in the short-term. Work plans also include a mix of initiatives that can be completed within existing resources and others requiring new investments. An annual progress report for each implementation year will be reported publicly to help ensure continued improvement and community accountability.

2018 Work Plan

The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism is a five-year plan with implementation scheduled from 2018-2022. In Year One (2018), the Anti-Black Racism Unit will deploy expertise and resources to a range of City divisions to lead initiatives, monitor progress and publicly report on key deliverables driven by four priorities:

1. *Creating Culture Change at the City*

   This priority is about driving systemic change at the City of Toronto by working to shift the City's culture to better understand and actively address anti-Black racism in City practices, policies, hiring and retention strategies and service delivery. This internal focus helps embed an ABR analysis and competency into the institution to enable long-term transformative change. Efforts in this priority area are fundamental given their ability to achieve sustainable systemic impact.

2. *Investing in Black Children & Youth*

   This priority is about ensuring that the City invests in the creation, continuation and expansion of high quality programs and opportunities to support equitable outcomes for children and youth of African descent. Efforts in this priority can meet some immediate needs and seed long-term on positive child and youth development.

3. *Connecting Black Torontonians to Civic Decision-Making*

   This priority supports City actions that leverage the leadership capacity, talents and skills of diverse Black Torontonians into civic and business leadership and opportunities to contribute to the success of the city and its communities. Efforts under this priority emphasize partnership and community leadership as critical success factors in building civic resilience and community ownership in a prosperous Toronto.

4. *Improving Customer Service*

   This priority reflects the intent to improve the quality and effectiveness of the customer service experienced by Torontonians of African descent at the City.

A range of initiatives will happen annually across the corporation, including the Toronto Police Service in order to meet these priorities. Key Year One initiatives can be found in Appendix B.

The Anti-Black Racism Partnership & Accountability Circle

After 41 years of reports and recommendations, Black residents shared one central priority – the focus now must be on taking meaningful actions in partnership with Black community leaders. Residents were clear in their concern that the City not provide yet another report without clear commitment and investment to act. They felt hopeful about the leadership shown by the Mayor and the partnership process facilitated by City staff to develop the plan; however, they have witnessed decades of failure on the part of

governments to effectively address systemic anti-Black racism that have serious consequences for their own lives and those of their families and communities.

With serious commitment by the City, diverse Torontonians of African descent are ready to step forward again to be partners in working to challenge and change systemic practices and policies that can materially affect the life chances of Black Torontonians. Key to this partnership effort is the establishment of an ongoing, Anti-Black Racism Partnership & Accountability Circle.
In Phase four, City staff spoke to community members with interest in supporting the development of an ongoing structure of collaboration, partnership and accountability. Staff also researched several best practices models in Toronto and other jurisdictions.

This report recommends the establishment of the Anti-Black Racism Partnership Accountability Circle comprised of diverse Torontonians of African descent to support the implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism in ways that are collaborative, transparent, effective and accountable to the community. City support to and partnership with the Anti-Black Racism Partnership   Accountability Circle is a key foundational step to ensuring that the City of Toronto better serve Torontonians of African descent.

The proposed model is informed by various indigenous African values, principles and practices and builds on key learnings of other community-government partnership best practices, such as the African Nova Scotian Affairs and the Toronto Indigenous Health Advisory Circle (TIHAC). Key features include:

- Circle membership of 12 comprised from the diversity of Toronto's Black ' communities '

- Inclusion of both elders and youth among the membership

- Use of an independent community facilitator to help build trust and guide the process

- Secretariat support provided by the City's ABR Unit

A high level summary of the Anti-Black Racism Partnership   Accountability Circle is provided in Appendix C. The 2018 Work Plan Priorities includes work to develop the Circle through broad and open outreach and refinement of operating principles and practices with the founding Circle Members.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

In 2016, multiple consultations processes were launched in Toronto and across Ontario, including through the Provincial Anti-Racism Directorate and the Independent Police Oversight Review, and municipally, through the Toronto Police Transformation Taskforce Review. Earlier this year, the Province of Ontario launched A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan and the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan, both to support the Government of Ontario to take proactive steps to eliminate systemic, race-based disparities for Black children and youth and their families. On June 1, 2017, Bill 114, an Act to provide for Anti-Racism Measures was

passed in the Ontario Legislature and received Royal Assent. The new legislation, the Anti-Racism Act, 2017 strengthens the Ontario's government's ability to identify and combat systemic racism in policies, programs and services and provides support for the efforts the City of Toronto is beginning to take.

Intergovernmental cooperation, coordination and investment are required to make sustained, widespread and effective systemic change on structural racism. The City alone cannot solve anti-Black racism. However, the City has an important role to play to take proactive steps in the areas of its jurisdiction, but requires co-investment and policy alignment with the Province most urgently and the federal government to achieve fundamental transformation. Some efforts have started. Staff from the City and the Anti-Racism Directorate at the Province are working together to align their race-based data collection strategies and impact assessment tools. Discussions are beginning about aligning other shared priorities.

From December 4 to 6, 2017, the Michaëlle Jean Foundation will be co-hosting the National Black Canadians Summit in Toronto, a gathering of an anticipated 400 people of African descent and stakeholders to support collaboration around an inclusive Black Canadian strategic action plan. The City is actively participating in the Summit and working with the Foundation to align the Toronto Action Plan with the priorities of the Summit.

Combined, these reviews and the new legislation, coupled with the Toronto Action Plan, create the opportunity for meaningful, comprehensive change. Two years into the United Nation's International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 to 2024), coordinated, aligned and integrated government action is required to fully address anti-Black racism in Toronto and in Ontario.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: The Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism
Attachment B: 2018 Work Plan
Attachment C: Anti-Black Racism Partnership   Accountability Circle

APPENDIX E

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

STRATEGY

As Ontarians, we pride ourselves on our multiculturalism and celebrating people's differences. Diversity is our strength, but for some, it's not enough.

/ The impact and consequences of our history have created systemic barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all parts of society. This is especially true for Black Ont rians of all backgrounds. Whether they're recent immigr nts or descendants of people who were ensl ved, Bl ck Ontari ns live a shared present day experience of anti Black racism.

The stigma and stereotypes Bl ck Ontari ns and communities face have impacted public policies, decision making and services. As a result, in nearly every measure of opportunity, security and f irness in our society, anti Black racism is felt.

Black children are more likely to be in foster care or enrolled in lower ac demic streams.

Black men are more likely to interact with the justice system than their white counterparts.

Black women are more likely than white women to be unemployed, despite having higher levels o educ tion: 8.8 per cent o Bl ck women with university degrees are unemployed, compared to 5.7 per cent o white women with high school diplomas.

The st tus quo is unaccept ble. We cannot thrive as a society when cert in communities ce barriers that prevent them from reac ing their full potenti l.

48% racialized
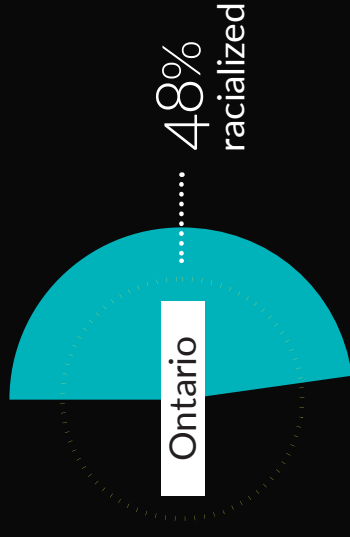
Ontario

/ By 2036, racialized people will account for an estimated 48% of Ontario's population.

/ Systemic racism occurs when institutions or systems create or maintain racial inequity, often as a result of hidden institutional biases in policies, practices and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others.
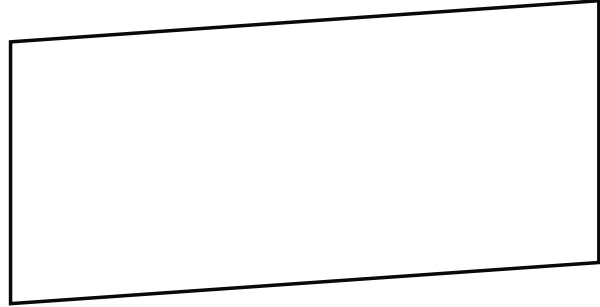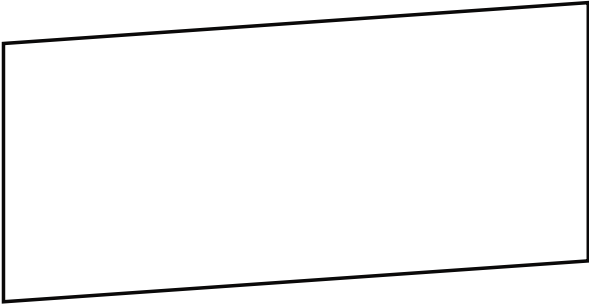
Building on the work we're doing

Initiatives directly impacting Black Ontarians

/ Independent Review of Street Checks Regulation
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS)

Justice Michael Tulloch is conducting an Independent Review of the Ontario Street Checks regul tion. The Terms of Re erence require input from the Minister Responsible or Anti-Racism.

/ Correctional Services Reform
Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS)

MCSCS will establish an advisory committee that will work in consult tion with the Ministry o the Attorney General, the Anti-Racism Director te's Anti-Bl ck Racism Sub-Committee and the Ministry o Children and Youth Services' Bl ck Youth Action Pl n External Implement tion Steering Committee to advise on measures to address the over-represent tion of Black inmates in corrections and support their reintegr tion into the community.

/ Ontario Black Youth Action Plan
Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)

The Ontario Bl ck Youth Action Pl n is a our-year, $47-million commitment to help reduce outcomes disparities for Bl ck c ildren, youth and families. This work will be addressed through four pill rs:

1. culturally focused parenting and mentors ip
2. early intervention and prevention
3. access to higher educ tion and skills development
4. community outreach and promoting anti-violence

/ One Vision, One Voice
Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)

MCYS funded the Ontario Associ tion of Children's Aid Societies to co-develop the OVOV pr ctice fr mework with leaders from the African Canadi n community, which provides c ildren's aid society st ff and caregivers with anti-oppressive and anti-r cist clinic l pr ctice guidelines, with a focus on anti-Bl ck racism.
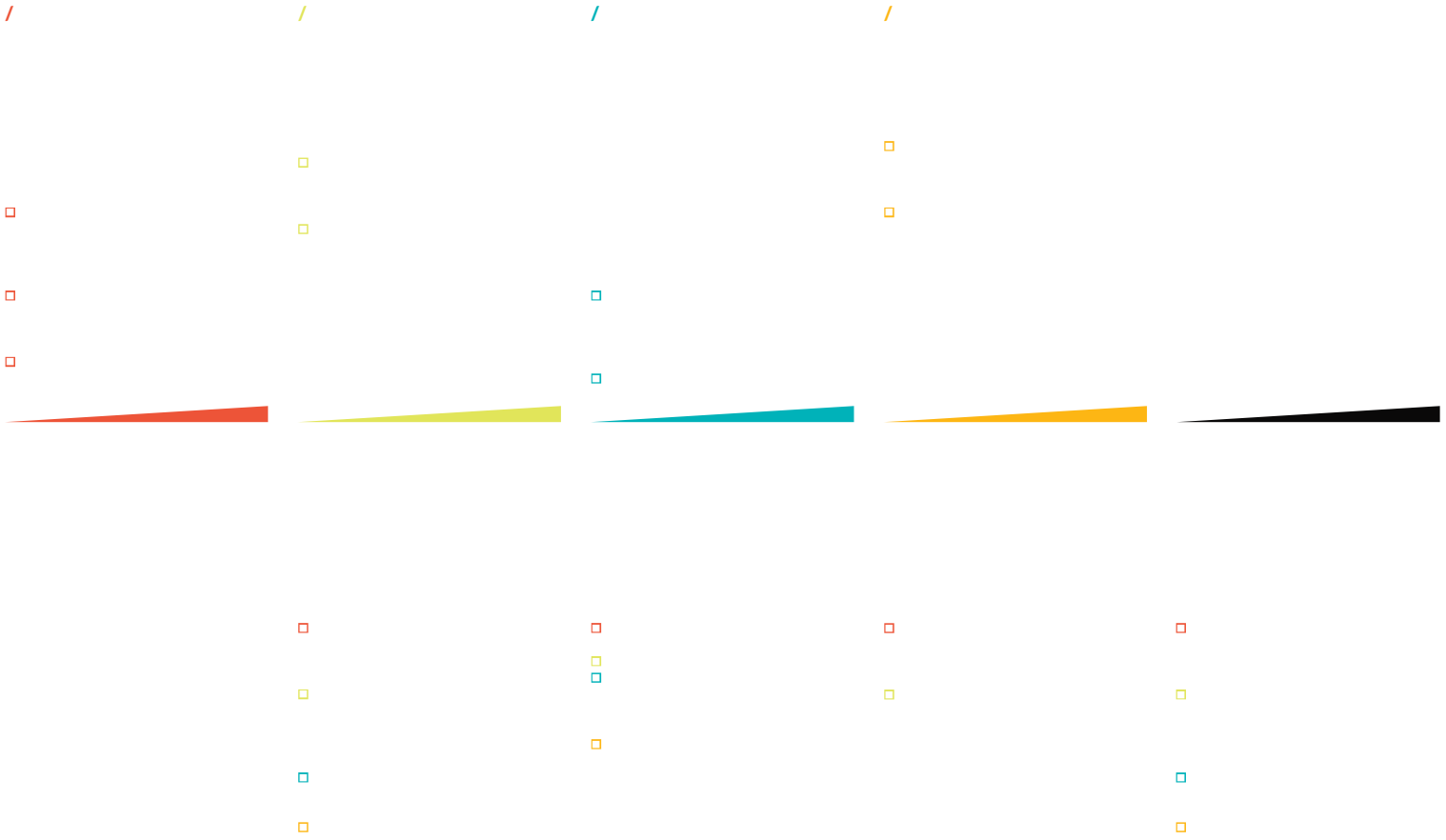
ANTI-BLACK RACISM STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

OBJECTIVES

1

Le d long-term change across systems

INITIATIVES

Ontario.ca/antiracism

Appendix F

Literature Review: The Centre for Excellence for Black Student Success

The topic of Black Cultural Centres in literature connects to Black students in colleges and universities. These accounts attempt to explore the intricacies of Black students' success within predominately white institutions (Patton, 2006; Stovall, 2006). Although the United States boasts most of the publications on this topic, Canadian institutions are beginning to develop and report on their own creations of Black Cultural Centres.

This literature review presents a brief account of the cornerstones of Black Cultural Centres within education. These cornerstones form the foundation for the proposed creation of a Centre for Excellence for Black Student Success within the Toronto District School Board. This literature review therefore showcases that the development of such a Centre will provide Black students with safe spaces to share and develop cultural knowledge; cultivate a sense of belonging; gain leadership experiences; access community resources and increase their positive racial identity (Patton, 2006; Richmond, 2012).

Safe spaces to share and develop cultural knowledge

Research has shown that Black Cultural Centres provides numerous benefits for Black students including providing safe spaces to share and develop cultural knowledge. Black students require safe spaces to support them as they negotiate within predominately white institutions where they are often found balancing acts of discrimination, feelings of isolation and overt racism (Patton, 2006, p.3). A common misconception tied to safe spaces that specifically focus on Black students and communities is that they foster separatism and self-segregation. However, Patton (2006) reminds us that Black students require a space for their own well-being as they are commonly asked to "operate outside of their comfort zone everyday" (p.5).

Cultivate a sense of Belonging and increase Positive racial identity

For academic success, Black students must feel that they belong to the classroom and school environment. They must believe that there is a caring adult – a role model that truly has high expectations and is willing to provide opportunities for them to develop a positive racial and achievement identity as learners (TDSB Research Dept., 2018). While most TDSB students that identify as Black are born in Canada (approximately 77%), the Black student population has diverse family/cultural backgrounds that span large regions of the Caribbean, *West Africa, East Africa, and Canada (TDSB, 2011*). It is important that we recognize there is not a monolithic identity of who identifies as Black and why they require a centralized space. Black Cultural Centres provide students with a sense of connection to their identities and to real world understandings by providing authentic access to cultural resources and community agencies and experiences (Patton, 2006).

Gain leadership experiences and Access Community resources

Research also suggests that there is a need to cultivate agency, leadership and racial consciousness in Black students so that they can make the connections between what they are

learning and the real world. Black students have stated in all the current research that they require the space and opportunities to talk about race and racism so that they can learn to navigate issues of injustice when they arise (TDSB Research Dept., 2018). When looking at leadership development, Patton (2006, 2008) found that student participation at the Black Cultural Centres was the reason for many students becoming involved in school activities and leadership opportunities, thus impacting their social and relational growth (28).

Much of the literature on Black Cultural Centres speaks to the need for structures to support the work of increasing achievement for Black students and ensuring their overall well-being. TDSB's Centre for Excellence for Black Students will offer access to engage in proactive and responsive change.

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Richmond, D. D. (2012). A Case Study of Two Exemplary Black Cultural Centers in Higher Education.

Stovall, A. J. (2006). Why black culture centers? The philosophical bases for Black culture centers. In F. Hord (Ed.), Black culture centers: Politics of survival and identity (pp. 102-111). Chicago, IL: Third World Press.

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