

## Student Exit Data Collection Initiative

### Summary

According to a 2024 report by the Auditor General of Ontario, between the 2017/18 and 2022/23 school years, TDSB enrollment declined by 4%—from 251,057 to 240,178 students. This represents a net loss of 10,879 students. At a per-student funding level of \$14,101, this equates to a potential annual revenue loss of approximately \$153.4 million.

Several factors may explain declining enrollment. While some attrition may reflect the impact of the pandemic and demographic changes in Toronto, other students withdraw due to concerns about educational quality, school climate, equity, or unmet learning needs. When a student leaves for reasons other than relocation, it signals a serious failure of the Board to fulfill its mandate.

Currently, the TDSB lacks a standardized mechanism to capture why families withdraw. Collecting and analyzing this data would enable evidence-based, targeted actions to address deficiencies and improve student experience.

Such a process would:

1. Promote transparency and accountability;
2. Create evidence-driven opportunities for system improvement;
3. Support enrollment retention and growth, addressing budgetary shortfalls not just through cost control or increased funding, but by reducing student attrition itself.

### Recommendations

#### Motions to PIAC

PIAC recommends that the TDSB prioritize the development of a system-wide initiative to collect and analyze data on voluntary student withdrawals. This process should aim to uncover systemic issues, improve school experiences, and strengthen the TDSB's ability to serve all students effectively.

#### Motions to the TDSB

The TDSB should develop and implement a standardized, board-wide process for collecting withdrawal information. This process should:

- Be embedded into school administrative procedures;
- Include confidential, voluntary surveys and/or interviews;
- Identify key themes (academic programming, school climate, equity, discrimination, special education needs, etc.);
- Disaggregate data by age, region, and equity characteristics where possible;
- Report findings annually in aggregate form to Trustees, staff, and the public.

### Recommendations to the Director of Education

The Director of Education should:

1. Convene a working group to design and pilot the exit data process in 2025/26;
2. Ensure the process is respectful and protects privacy;
3. Integrate findings into system planning, staff development, and policy review;
4. Include key insights in annual budget and enrollment strategy reports;
5. Leverage the Research Department's expertise to ensure rigor and sustainability.

### Financial Impact

Minimal. Costs are limited to survey development, distribution, and analysis—functions already supported by the Research Department. Compared to potential revenue losses, the investment is minor. Retaining even a fraction of students lost in recent years would yield substantial funding benefits.

### Comments

Student departures—unless due to relocation—should be treated as warning signs that the system has failed to meet its obligation. Understanding why families leave is essential to building a stronger TDSB: one where families stay because their children thrive.

Sponsor:

Mark Unger

PIAC representative, Ward 10

Signature:

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Co-sponsors:

Katrina Matheson

PIAC representative, Ward 10

Signature:

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Mercy Charles

PIAC representative, Ward 6

Signature:

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Aaron Kucharczuk

PIAC representative, Ward 5

Signature:

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