

RECOMMENDATIONS

CG.12.16.2025 Information Distribution to All Families at the Time of Enrollment

Date: December 16th, 2025

To: TDSB Staff

From: Mothers on Initiating the Vote and Equity (MOtiVAtE) (Community Group)

SUMMARY

Two-thirds of Toronto District School Board (TDSB) students come from immigrant families. Many immigrant parents have shared how difficult it is to understand and navigate the TDSB system. The mothers of the MOtiVAtE community group have identified persistent barriers to supporting their children within the TDSB. Many immigrant parents and caregivers are unaware of key services available within the TDSB that could help them be more engaged in their children's education. Many report that TDSB staff are unwilling or unable to share resources with them and do not provide guidance that reflects their children's academic or career goals. Families with children who have exceptional needs are especially vulnerable, as parents and caregivers cannot effectively advocate for their children without knowing what supports are available.

This motion is the first motion brought by the MOtiVAtE community group. MOtiVAtE arose out of a project aiming to reduce the barriers that immigrant women face in decision-making and participation related to their children's education at the TDSB. However, we understand that this is a city-wide issue impacting all parents. To help address these barriers, we are calling on the TDSB to adopt a clear and consistent procedure across all schools: to provide every family with a comprehensive orientation package when they register their child – and a simplified version every school year thereafter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The MOtiVAtE Community Group recommends that the Toronto District School Board implement a procedure to ensure that all families receive a comprehensive orientation package upon registration of their child into the TDSB for the first time and receive a school-specific orientation packet at the start of each year thereafter.

This initial package would: list school-based services (e.g., Settlement Workers in Schools, guidance counsellors, social workers), share information to help families support students through key milestones (e.g., EQAO assessments, transitions), explain available supports for students with exceptional needs and disabilities (e.g., Individualized Education Plans (IEPs),

rights, accommodations, timelines), offer information on financial assistance and invitations to parents committees (e.g., Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and include school-specific items such as calendars, trips, and after-school programs.

The package should be delivered in plain language and multiple formats to meet diverse needs. This approach supports the TDSB's Equity (P037) and Parent and Caregiver Engagement (P023) Policies, to make sure all families feel informed, included, and empowered from day one, and strengthens the home-school connection to help parents set students up for success.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to PIAC resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

This is a brand-new item.

COMMENTS

The Project

Mothers on Initiative the Vote and Equality (MOtIVAtE) is a transformative, two-year community-building project aimed at engaging immigrant women to the democratic processes by introducing them to decision-making and policy development.

The project focuses on empowering immigrant mothers to actively engage with the TDSB by:

1. Identifying and removing barriers that prevent immigrant women from influencing decision-making at the TDSB.
2. Strengthening democratic engagement by equipping immigrant mothers with the tools to work collaboratively with the TDSB.

The program received 155 registrations from immigrant mothers who aimed to strengthen their advocacy skills and support their children's education. Out of this group, 80 participants completed the full program and have become changemakers in their communities.

The Process

A researcher was onboarded to work with the women to identify key needs as well as the policies that would be up for review at the Trustee Board in the 2025-2026 school year.

Through a total of 59 events, consisting of surveys, interviews, and observations 3 key needs were identified as well as 3 policies that were up for review, P069, P023, P092. The ask is collaborative work between the women, researcher, and project team.

Through different research methods, our petition encompasses all 155 mothers, providing a thorough understanding of the experiences and barriers faced by newcomer families.

Mothers came from over 40 countries, with the largest groups represented by Nigeria (33), Colombia (13), Ukraine (13), Mexico (10), Bangladesh (7), Ethiopia (6), India (5), Kenya (5), Venezuela (4), China (4), Uganda (4), the Philippines (3), Sri Lanka (3), Pakistan (3), Zambia (3), and many more from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. Such diversity confirms that the challenges identified in the program are systemic and shared across different communities.

The immigration statuses of registered mothers highlight the diverse experiences of newcomers. The breakdown includes 51 Permanent Residents, 51 Refugee Claimants, 13 Convention Refugees, 12 CUAET families, 10 Citizens, 6 international students, 5 work permit holders, 3 temporary residents, and others. This variety shows that systemic barriers in the school system affect families across all immigration pathways.

From surveys, interviews, and direct observations of all the workshops, mothers highlighted recurring systemic barriers that hinder their ability to support their children's education. These concerns included: Class resources and teaching transparency, lack of parent training on homework, no invite to be involved as parent, underprepared staff for different educational needs, lack of information on the process of school system for exceptional children and other services, lack of communication from the school, lack of knowledge about education and TDSB programs for newcomers, among others.

These concerns emerged consistently across multiple sessions, reinforcing the need for systemic solutions. Moreover, through facilitated discussions and a voting process, participants selected the three core issues affecting newcomer families:

Issue 1: Provide better access to information for parents of exceptional children, and greater transparency and accountability about the process to get assessed, placed, and supported.

- Educators and schools may require specialized training on support
- Provide more tools for learners.
- Should have opportunities for parental involvement in decision making

Issue 2: Provide opportunities for parental involvement to be involved on school committees.

- Provide a point person to ensure that information is distributed to every parent in the school through email, mail or phone call in accessible language with translator or translations of information where needed.
- Inform and invite every parent to join councils and committees.
- Provide an overview of all planned school activities and associated costs and opportunities to find funds in case of hardships

Issue 3: Provide a Newcomer Orientation Week or Day to every parent to attend with their children to ask questions, be given opportunities to get involved, and make informed decisions.

- Provide an overview of all planned school activities and associated costs and opportunities to find funds in case of hardships.
- Make every student feel included, welcomed, and prepared for success when they start the school year and throughout.

The final research report is expected to be completed by September 2026. This report will encompass all findings, analyses, and recommendations derived from the research conducted throughout the project's duration.

The Ask

After months of training, dialogue, and collective reflection, the mothers reached a unified request:

We are calling on TDSB to implement a clear and consistent procedure across all schools: to provide every family with a comprehensive orientation package when they register their child — and a school-specific one every school year thereafter.

It is not about paperwork—it is about equitable access to information, clarity, parent empowerment, and ensuring that all students begin the school year feeling welcomed, prepared, and supported. This is a system-wide solution to a system-wide problem, and it reflects the collective voice and leadership of newcomer mothers committed to improving the school system for all families.

Future Actions

1. TDSB implements a procedure that ensures all schools provide both a TDSB wide and School-Specific system-level orientation practices to parents.
2. Work with TDSB staff to compile relevant resources for the package.
3. Work with TDSB staff to consider ongoing support for parents with orientation needs.

SPONSORS & CO-SPONSORS

Sponsor: MOtIVAtE Community Group

SIGNATURE

Rahel Gettu, MOtIVAtE
Community Group

ATTACHMENTS

APPENDICES

None