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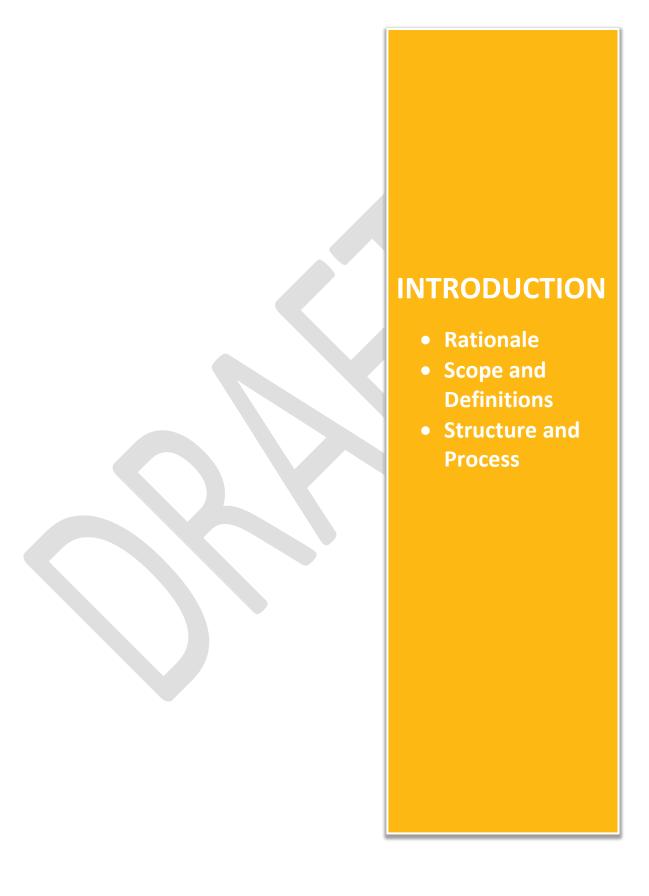
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INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE

The Toronto District School Board is a leader in equity, but it recognizes that more can be – and must – be done to support students. The Board's commitment to finding solutions in partnership with the community is evident through the creation of the Enhancing Equity Task Force.

The Task Force aligns closely with the TDSB's directions outlined in the Vision for Learning, the Integrated Equity Framework, and the new draft Equity Policy, which lays out the Board's clear commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance and inclusion for all. Along with these new directions, there has been a shift from anchoring the equity work within an Equity Department to a mindset that "equity for all" must be infused with every aspect of the Board's work because equity is the foundation for both student achievement and well-being.

Over the past year, the Task Force launched a complementary community engagement process to explore what equity strategies have worked and identify where challenges remain. Conversations were sharpened by asking: if we largely know what the problems are and what needs to be done, what is keeping us from making progress?

The recommendations that follow offer guidance to the TDSB on how to enhance delivery of an equitable education by providing direction for resource allocation and developing mechanisms to track progress. And, perhaps most importantly, seek to answer the question, "now what?"

SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

Any discussion around equity within the TDSB must reflect on structural challenges in Toronto and even the country. It is important for the Board to recognize that as a public education institution, regardless of intent, the impact of a system rooted in a traditional framework tends to perpetuate certain entrenched systems of power and privilege. Being a long-time leader in taking actions around equity, the TDSB is willing to acknowledge that more needs to be done to understand and address the evidence of troubling patterns and the ways the system may have inadvertently created or perpetuated these patterns. The Task Force believes the TDSB holds a firm commitment to facing the systemic and structural issues, and to making real change that will impact not only students, but also the whole system including educators, administrators, support staff, families, and community partners.

Now it is time to be bold. This will not happen unless the system is willing to connect itself directly to the issues it is facing, to actively work to centre the most disproportionately affected

individuals and/or groups within the broader scope of equity work, and most importantly, to put in place accountability structures and measures that are made clear to TDSB stakeholders and the larger public.

Throughout the Task Force's work, it became evident that there is an ongoing challenge around what exactly 'equity' means to different people. The Task Force has taken a broad approach to the definition, recognizing the need to consider equity *within* equity for all students. This includes constantly working to centre the conversation around the effects of inequity, oppression, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of hate and discrimination specifically for racialized students. It is also critical to acknowledge the disproportionate way that Black students are impacted by these issues. These issues are also felt deeply by the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations.

Having said that, the Enhancing Equity Task Force adopted the definition of equity as outlined in the TDSB's new 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)

Hence, the Task Force employed the definition of equity as stated in the policy[1]:

> "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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[1] See Appendix A for a detailed glossary from the Draft Equity Policy**.**

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The Task Force evolved out of a motion passed by the Board of Trustees reconstituting the Model Schools Inner-City Task Force in June 2016. Meta Strategies is a consulting firm that was commissioned to work with a Planning Group to explore the Board motion and develop an approach to undertake the work. During those deliberations, it became clear that the nature of the work went further than what the Inner-City Task Force originally addressed. Within the Board, the term "inner-city" has come to mean addressing primarily the economic issues encountered by students and families living with poverty. The mandate was therefore broadened to look at issues both socially and economically, including issues of race and other aspects of identity, in addition to class and socio-economic status. The name of the Task Force was changed to the "Enhancing Equity Task Force" to reflect the expanded mandate.

The Task Force chose a structure that would support direct involvement of a wide variety of stakeholder groups and members. It adopted the "Big Tent Approach" to accommodate the growing number of individuals who had expressed an interest in the work of the expanded Task Force. Specifically, the structure and process of the Task Force include the following components:

- Enhancing Equity Task Force Planning Group: The Planning Group was comprised of TDSB staff, Trustees, community organizations and representatives, and academics. It met monthly to guide and support the overall Task Force process.

- Four Learning Centre Working Groups: Based on the newly created structure of four Learning Centres within the Board, four independent Learning Centre Working Groups were created. Each Working Group was made up of a multi-disciplinary group of staff from different parts of the system, including Board staff, Trustees, Community Advisory Committee members, parents/caregivers, community partners, and academics. The groups ranged in size from 18 to 35 members.

  Each Learning Centre Working Group met four times in 2017. In their first meeting, the Working Groups considered the existing challenges and the conditions of success for making improvements on equity. They reviewed research materials and data prepared by the Board's Research and Informaiton Services, and worked to identify barriers that could be holding the system back from making progress on equity. The third meeting focused on drafting recommendations as a group. The results of the first three meetings were summarized and presented by each Working Group to the Enhancing Equity Task Force

Summit in June 2017. The fourth and final meeting was used to review and provide feedback on the draft Task Force Report and recommendations.

- Eight Joint-Ward Forums: Public meetings where two or more Trustees jointly hosted were held to engage school teams and the broader public across the system overall. Each school was asked to send a team that could include a principal, teachers, support staff, students, and parents/caregivers. More than 1,300 people participated, with an average attendance of 150 to 200 people per forum.

  The Forums were an opportunity for people to share what they saw as the challenges, barriers and biases affecting student well-being and achievement at their school. After learning about how the Board operationalized equity, teams were asked to generate a list of ideas they had to improve student outcomes, noting that the ideas could be current activities or ideas they were considering for their school.

  The teams were also introduced to a 20-item survey tool to capture baseline data on the culture of equity in their school. The tool, called Enhancing Equity School-based Feedback Form, was to be completed collectively by each school-based stakeholder group through group members' discussions about each of the 20 survey items. The data were collected in the summer and fall of 2017. The results will be shared with individual schools to support their local plans on improving the culture of equity in school and to track progress over time.

  All the ideas generated at the Ward Forums were analyzed and organized into a summary chart (Appendix B). A summary of the themes was compiled and shared with the four Working Groups and at the Summit. Detailed notes taken at each of the eight forums were emailed to the participants, and were also posted on the TDSB website.

- The Task Force Summit: The Summit was an opportunity for the four Working Groups to share their draft recommendations with each other, and for Summit participants to discuss, refine and build on those ideas. Participants included members of the Planning Group, the four Working Groups, Senior Leadership Team, Trustees, and principals with identified experience at removing barriers related to equity. In the spirit of the "Big Tent Approach" others who expressed an interest in attending were included. There were as many as 150 participants at the Summit.

  The Summit opened with a short video of student stories prepared by the Student Equity Program Advisors. Students shared their lived experiences with an understanding of the context within which their stories would be used, and that their sharing would be part of a

larger Board process to engage with students as knowledge-keepers to enact change. For the events, participatory methods were employed to surface all the voices in the room. These methods were designed to distribute power and to build ownership for the emerging insights, ideas and recommendations

- Specific populations: Within the Board, specific groups were identified for additional engagement. For rxample, opportunities were created to meet directly with students and parents/caregivers from the Model Schools' Parent Academies. Two Community Advisory Committees – the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee, and the Special Education Advisory Committee – submitted specific recommendations to the Task Force (see Appendices C and D). Students identified through the Student Equity Program Advisors also submitted a set of recommendations to the Task Force (see Appendix E). Meetings were also arranged with the Aboriginal Education Centre and a group of staff who have been deeply involved in equity issues.

- Research support: In addition to broad consultation with different stakeholder groups, the work of the Task Force was also supplemented by the Board's Research and Informaiton Servies Team, which offered various levels of research support:

  o Four research briefs were prepared for the Task Force to provide participants with key contextual information for their consultation. These include a scan of the social and economic conditions of the City of Toronto where TDSB students reside; a bird-eye view of the multi-level 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 about TDSB students – including demographics, school community characteristics, achievement, safe schools, in-school and out-of-school experiences, and well-being – were compiled for each Learning Centre Working Group to inform participants' discussion and recommendations.

  o On-line Enhancing Equity School-based Feedback Forms were developed based on the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education's document named, *Equity Continuum: Action for Critical Transformation in Schools and Classrooms* (2011). The forms were to be completed at the school level by school administrators and collectively by each of the four stakeholder groups – teachers, school support staff, students and parents/caregivers. The purpose was to gauge the stage TDSB schools were at in creating equitable experiences and outcomes for their students. The data collected

were to help guide schools for their local planning and action, as well as to help inform the Task Force in its recommendations for the Board.

- o An inventory of TDSB's equity-related efforts since its amalgamation in 1998 was created. The inventory captures numerous ongoing endeavours the Board has engaged in to promote equity through, for example, policy development, formation of Advisory or Steering Committees, task forces, task groups, special programs and initiatives, research undertaking, funding and budgeting.

- o An extensive literature review was conducted to identify exemplary equity-related practices from other jurisdictions and sectors. A range of topics were covered, including destreaming/detracking, special education, school choice, employment equity, and parent and community engagement.

In addition, the Research team worked closely with Meta Strategies to synthesize and categorize all the consultation notes and recommendations captured (see Ward Forum Summaries, Appendix B), and to draft this Task Force Report.

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FINDINGS

- **TDSB Strengths and Challenges**
- **What We Heard**
- **Observations and Insights from What We Heard**

FINDINGS

TDSB STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

A review of the TDSB history clearly indicates that since its amalgamation in 1998, the School Board has made ongoing dedicated efforts to address equity.

In its first year, the newly amalgamated Toronto District School Board established the Community Equity Reference Group (now known as the Equity Policy Advisory Committee) to develop a comprehensive Equity in Foundation Statement and the commitments to equity policy implementation: antiracism and ethno-cultural equity; anti-sexism and gender equity; anti-homophobia, sexual orientation and equity; anti-classism and socio-economic equity and equity for persons with disabilities. At the same time, a newly formed Equity Department was tasked to help develop and implement programs, policies and procedures on equity education, inclusive curriculum, human rights discrimination and harrassment 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 and ethno-cultural equity, community use of schools, human rights, discrimination and harassment, as well as parent, student and community involvement.

In line with the Education Act, during the first year the Board also formed its Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), which released in the second year its Special Education Plan acknowledging that "inclusion in the home school is the first option for all students." Aligned with all these efforts were the formation of the Parent and Community Reference Group (later called Parent Involvement Advisory Committee) and Community Liaison Groups, and the creation of two student trustee positions as the voice of the 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 Advisory Committee, and recently the Black Student Achievement. Also early on, there were already discussions about school-based fundraising policies, and about the importance of the budget process to be driven by equity issues regarding programs and services rather than vice versa.

With regard to practices and programs, soon after its establishment the new Board not only continued some of the exemplary efforts of former legacy boards, but also expanded them across the bigger district. These include the development and use of the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) for resource allocation; the expansion of Parenting and Family Literacy Centres to other high-needs communities, beyond the former City of Toronto, to foster young children's school readiness and parent engagement; the formation of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success as the Board's charitable arm to extend student nutrition

programs to more inner-city neighbourhoods; and other examples such as Aboriginal Education Centre, and Pathways to Success for at-risk students in inner city areas.

With the new leadership in 2004, the TDSB further explored and adopted some of the groundbreaking work of the former boards to further its equity efforts. For instance, learning from the Every Student Survey of the former Toronto Board of Education, the TDSB finally mandated the collection of identity-based and experiential data through the Student and Parent Census with the goal of helping the system understand the demographic makeup of its diverse student population, identify issues and gaps experienced by students from different backgrounds as an evidence-based way to inform decisions and actions, and to track progress. Based on different data sources, specific responses were developed to address inequities and in many cases have proven to be successful. For example, building on the former Inner City Project School initiative, the Inner City Task Force was formed in 2004. As a result of the Inner City Task Force recommendations, the Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) initiative was launched – starting with three schools in 2006-07 to 150 MSIC schools by 2012-13 – as a systemic effort to improve student outcomes in low socio-economic communities. Annual formative evaluations and 10-year summative research have demonstrated its effectiveness in narrowing the achievement and opportunity gaps for students in high-needs neighbourhoods (see Research Brief 4, Appendix F).

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 also formed at least 10 equity-focused task forces to address various issues related to inner city students (mentioned above), immigrant and refugee students, Portuguese-speaking students, students of Somali descent, student nutrition, optional attendance, safe and compassionate schools, community use of schools, employment equity, and the current Enhancing Equity Task Force. The TDSB has had religious accommodation guidelines since 2001 and accommodation 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, Beyond 3:30 After-school Program (see Research Brief 3 in Appendix G), and the recent pilot program efforts to encourage students to take academic level courses in Grades 9 and 10.

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).

Being the largest school system in Canada with 245,000 students, nearly 600 schools and 37,000 employees, has posed challenges in scaling successful programs or transferring promising practices has not always been easy. And, while the TDSB benefits from being in a large city with great diversity, the Board has faced changing external factors such as the fluctuating natures of communities and the social and financial realities of Toronto and its citizens. These uncontrollable external factors, as highlighted in Research Brief 1 (Appendix H), along with the overall declining enrolment, are ongoing challenges that the school system has to manage with its finite resources. Although achievement and opportunity gaps among students from different socio-economic backgrounds have narrowed over time due to its MSIC program and other equity efforts, disparities continue to exist, especially among the most historically marginalized populations (see Research Brief 2 in Appendix I), and further work needs to be done.

WHAT WE HEARD

While the Task Force heard throughout its process that the TDSB is a recognized leader in this work, the Task Force also heard that there is still work to be done. In fact, the question of what will be done *differently* this time around became a central theme of the Task Force's work.

During consultation with different stakeholder groups, the Task Force uncovered a common sense of need around getting clear on what the TDSB means by 'equity'. Some Task Force members felt that discussions around equity often remained surface-level, such as ensuring that nutritious food programs and technology resources were available at each school. The Task Force members saw the need to go further on tackling deeply rooted issues of colonialism and institutionalized racism, particularly towards Indigenous and Black students, and other expressions of oppression, marginalization, discrimination and xenophobia affecting other racialized and historically marginalized groups.

Through analysis of all the consultation notes, the Task Force identified a number of areas of concerns, challenges and needs raised by different stakeholder groups including:
- Barriers to equity
- Bias and discrimination
- Need for more inclusivity
- Need for more student voice
- Need for more authentic parent and community relationships
- Special Education
- Need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force
- Need for more professional learning

- Accountability and transparency

Barriers to Equity

Inequities between Schools, Students, and Neighbourhoods

Socio-economic Issues

Teachers, students, and parents/caregivers drew attention to socio-economic inequality *between* schools as a major barrier to equity. And, inequitable distribution of programs and resources between schools was a major concern. Participants also explained that disparity in fundraising capacity between schools in affluent and low socio-economic areas led to an inequity of opportunities for students. They indicated that Parent Councils in low socio-economic neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods impacted by gentrification are less capable of raising money to support students and resulted in, for example, inequitable access to technology creating yet another barrier. Also, as noted by one parent, "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 capacities of schools. It was further recommended that efforts should be taken to ensure that financial difficulties do not prevent students from accessing enriched or extracurricular activities, such as putting a cap on cost of field trips and offering more cost-friendly or free activities.

The Task Force also heard concerns about how the LOI is used to determine a set number of Model Schools constituting the first 150 schools on the Index. The Task Force heard within schools which fall above 150 on the LOI rankings have very similar challenges and for schools higher up on the Index, and that there are pockets of students experiencing challenges such as low socio-economic status which negatively impact their school experience. Comments included a need to review not only the Index but additional means to assess the changing external factors impacting student success and in order to determine how resources should be distributed equitably among schools.[2]

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[2] 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

With these discussions, the Task Force noted that the resources from the Ministry of Education, local school communities ability to generate funds, and the tools used by the Board to assess schools for resource allocation could hold the potential either to achieve greater equity or to drive schools and the students who attend them further apart. The Task Force therefore recommends the need for further exploration of these issues in order to assess the current practices and develop approaches to ensure greater equity.

<u>Structural Issues</u>

Participants also raised that catchment areas, Optional Attendance (where students can attend a school outside their designated local school), and the location of schools with specialized programs are not equitably distributed or accessible throughout the city. This can have a negative impact on specific neighbourhoods that may be located far from specialized schools or transit. Several challenges caused by the practice of Optional Attendance and its role in deepening divisions within and between schools were noted and reinforced by literature, such as studies examining the over-representation of White students in Arts programs and schools (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017). It was felt that often the students who are able to choose a different school have the economic and social mobility to enable that.

Moreover, the 'flight' of students towards what are perceived as 'good' schools is seen to result in many students being left behind, further entrenching the idea that some schools are better than others. It was noted that this can also affect the morale of administrators and educators who teach at the schools where many students are leaving.

It was also noted that programs such as the Gifted and Home School programs and practices such as streaming are deepening divisions along socio-economic and racial lines, and contributing to the deficit mentality towards certain students, especially Indigenous and Black students, that educators, administrators, and even fellow classmates may hold.

Bias and Discrimination

<u>Racism</u>

Racism was frequently raised as a concern by a very wide variety of stakeholders, notably by families and students. Explicit and implicit forms of racism were reported,

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expressed in both subtle and strong ways. Stories ranged from a teacher making a casual jokes about lynching to a teacher allowing racist comments to be said in the classroom and telling the class that everyone is entitled to their opinions. The Task Force found that when educators do not address unacceptable occurrences in their classrooms appropriately, harmful perspectives and behaviours are legitimized and perpetuated at the expense of other students.

Participants further reported how bias and discrimination affect decision-making for students, due to a deficit mindset held by some staff. As noted earlier, streaming was raised many times as an example of this pattern, as assumptions are made about students from certain races and backgrounds. These experiences were supported by research (James & Turner,2017; Queiser & De Araujo, 2017). Students shared how this impacted their well-being and morale in negative ways. Specific attention was drawn to anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, and recent reports examining the relationship between race, achievement, and well-being were cited supporting peoples' stories and lived experiences. The Student Resource Officer (SRO) program was also frequently raised as an example of perceived criminalization of racialized youth, due to the over-representation of SROs in more racialized schools. Many of these related concerns were reflected in the recommendations shared with the Task Force by the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee (see Appendix C).

Islamophobia

Participants felt that the Board is not doing enough to address the problem of rising Islamophobia and the negative impact this has on Muslim students. Participants reported instances of school staff planning school events without taking into account of religious holidays that affect Muslim students. Some students and parents/caregivers expressed frustration at having to explain and advocate for their need for religious accommodation.

Biased Curriculum and Materials

Participants raised the issue of bias in the curriculum and textbooks, noting in particular the Eurocentric orientation of both. Many felt that students often struggle to see themselves represented in schools. It was felt that de-centering this Eurocentric curriculum and providing more training for teachers in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is needed.

Biased Teachers and Staff

Some participants spoke out about experiencing prejudice from school staff, particularly on the basis of their socio-economic or racial background. They stressed that it is the duty of the Board to ensure that staff do not perpetuate such prejudices. It is felt that Board staff need to self-reflect and challenge their own biases. Participants were clear that it is necessary to hold challenging conversations about racism, oppression, privilege, classism and other barriers to equity. People also felt that partnering with faculties of education and unions to ensure teacher training is culturally reflective and diverse would help reduce the bias educators hold.

Need for More Inclusivity

Cultural Representation and Appreciation

In addition to representative textbooks and the curriculum, students expressed struggling to see themselves reflected more in their schools generally. More positive representation of marginalized groups in the curriculum and in the school itself is needed. Participants gave examples such as making efforts in schools to celebrate cultures and languages in local neighbourhoods through multicultural events, celebrating and being mindful of prominent holidays, honouring the home languages of students, and events like cultural fairs. It was felt that some schools do touch on large cultural holidays, but provide few other ways to immerse in cultural identity, affecting how included and reflected students feel in their learning environment.

Many participants cited the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students. Land and treaty recognitions were seen as a positive step, but it is felt that much more is needed. Filling the knowledge gap on Indigenous education is seen as a high priority, as well as gestures such as hanging Acknowledgement Plaques of treaties and territories, the inclusion of Indigenous music and art into daily activities, and partnering with First Nations schools.

Needs of Newcomers and Refugee Families

The well-being of immigrant students who may be experiencing culture shock was raised as a concern, particularly for refugees. More supports for English as a Second Language (ESL) students, especially in the Early Years and Primary grades, were suggested, as well as more professional learning opportunities to support ESL students.

Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation

Although inequity based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation was not as frequently raised as other issues during the consultation process, participants did note actions to address inequity on those bases being undertaken and considered in their schools. Common examples were resource hubs/notice boards and gender-neutral restrooms in their schools, as well as student-led gender equality conferences, gender-sexuality alliance clubs, and gender-based violence prevention work. These are some of the positive examples of how staff and students are responding to issues of discrimination. It is important to consider that the low amount of feedback may suggest a discomfort or fear of coming to consultations or community meetings due to not feeling safe in the space.

Embracing Many Learning Styles

Many cited a need for educational strategies that appeal to students with different learning styles, so they are afforded equal opportunities to learn. Examples given included more inquiry-based learning in the curriculum, allowing for more alternative ways of evaluating students, adopting strength-based pedagogical approaches, and offering more online/hybrid resources for students with special needs.

In summary, it was expressed that the Board must recognize that the current education system was built to serve a specific demographic, and that until students can see themselves reflected somehow, there will not be a strong sense of belonging.

Need for More Student Voice

Student voice was often identified as an issue, with several participants citing a lack of opportunity for students to speak and be heard. Students also stressed their desire to participate in the discourse on such important issues as equity. It is true that at some schools, students are already taking a leadership role in equity initiatives, for instance, through student-led Equity Councils, student equity clubs and forums, and pushing for student representation on school committees. Nonetheless, it is seen as essential for staff to support and advocate for students in opening up opportunities for their participation. The Task Force also heard a need to collect data (e.g., surveys, interviews) to better understand students' experiences and needs regarding equity.

Need for More Authentic Parent and Community Relationships

Building better relationships between school staff and parents/caregivers is essential for success in equity work. Feedback from many educators, parents/caregivers, community partners, and others suggested that many groups still feel disenfranchised in various ways. For instance, parents/caregivers from a variety of areas described feeling isolated, wanting better or more meaningful communication, experiencing general frustration with the system, and feeling unwelcome in their child's school. One parent shared the experience of working in a school for several months, but was unrecognized by a support staff she interacted with regularly. Many parents/caregivers reported that they do not feel welcome in schools.

Some parents/caregivers specifically raised the concern of their voices being minimized in larger community gatherings, particularly in the presence of more 'professional' or 'expert' voices from community agencies. It was noted that even within parent councils, there can be a hierarchy that puts parents/caregivers who have the time, resources, and ability to engage with their school at the top, and those who do not have these resources at the bottom. Often those at the top are seen to carry many social privileges, especially socio-economic status and class. Paying attention to who is excluded and taking deliberate action to include people was seen as imperative.

Members of the community shared that establishing partnerships with the TDSB is a challenging and sometimes inaccessible process. Exploring new partnerships with community organizations and strengthening the capacity of Community Support Workers could bolster schools' connectivity with their neighbourhoods.

Participants also mentioned 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. This espouses the idea of each school being a strong neighbourhood resource in partnership with other levels of government and local community organizations that can provide connections and resources around language, settlement, health, mental health and well-being, and beyond. In a broad sense, this encapsulates a feeling from families and community that school buildings can become a welcome and critical resource in the neighbourhoods they are in and contribute to local community development.

Special Education

The Task Force heard that the existing Special Education programming and delivery can be divisive and exclusionary, especially to students' families. It was noted that this challenge is not unique to the TDSB, but is rather a reflection of the education system in Ontario. Parents/caregivers and families expressed frustration and feelings of being shut out from decisions that are made on behalf of their children. The Task Force heard Black students were over represented in Special Education programs and this is supported by research both by the TDSB and others (Brown & Parekh, 2010; Parekh, 2013a, Parekh, 2013b). There were suggestions that parents/caregivers need to be more involved in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other choices impacting students, and have a clear understanding of how to appeal decisions.

There was also significant debate around specific issues such as integrated classrooms, and the Home School Program. The Task Force heard the need to end the Home School Program. Many participants agreed that more resources, staff, and professional learning were required for the Board to adequately meet the needs of its most vulnerable students and its goal of including students in classrooms rather than segregating them. The current model was cited as problematic by many participants who felt that supports needed for Special Education students in blended classrooms are not sufficient. More professional learning for staff related to students with Special Education needs, and specifically more support staff with the required knowledge and skills to work with students was put forward.

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

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) did provide a set of detailed recommendations for the Task Force (Appendix D). The Advisory Committee also proposed for an Independent Review on the delivery of Special Education within the TDSB, while the Board moves ahead on other specific items in order to provide more concrete direction moving forward.

Need for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force

Many participants cited the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students. The land and treaty recognitions are seen as a positive step, but much more is needed. The Task Force heard that recognizing and

upholding relevant actions from the TRC's 94 Actions is seen as an important responsibility of the TDSB in supporting Canada's continuous efforts towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. A TRC Task Force for Indigenous Education was proposed to examine the 94 Actions, discern what it means for the TDSB and Indigenous education governance, and provide supports and education to implement action.

This is particularly important given that many Indigenous students and families are 'hidden in plain view' and feel fearful in self-identifying as Indigenous. Further, given Canada's history of Residential Schools, there is importance in honouring and talking about the significance of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and continuing the efforts already underway to decolonize education. The Task Force heard several times that the learning events and resources developed by the Aboriginal Education Centre provided valuable and important experiences for students and educators. Education is seen to be a key to Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

Need for More Professional Learning

Providing robust opportunities for ongoing, expert-led, intersectional, immersive professional learning and development for leadership, administrators, educators, support staff, families, and students was seen as imperative to the sustainability and longevity of this work moving forward. This theme was consistently brought up throughout the Task Force's process, and is seen as a foundational piece that must be in place to support the recommendations. It was felt that adults in the system must be the ones that provide leadership around doing the uncomfortable work of equity.

Need for Accountability and Transparency

Participants suggested that parents, caregivers and community members must be able to keep the Board accountable on advancing equity through specific modes of accountability and performance, and all stakeholders must be involved in brave conversations about the barriers to equity. There is a need to collect data for accountability purposes. For instance, school-level assessments that detail the strengths and weaknesses of each school should be undertaken so actions can be planned and progress measured.

The current process to identify and address an issue was identified as an opportunity to improve accountability. The Task Force heard how the experience of following the Parent Concern Protocol process can vary greatly between schools depending on the people involved. The existing parent process could be reviewed and expanded to apply

to all stakeholders (students and staff) and strengthened to reflect the identified needs for responsiveness. More work could be done to develop a better understanding of the process, ensuring anyone who needs to use the protocol knows what to expect and what to do next if their efforts at addressing concerns remain unresolved.

Concerns were raised over what may happen when there are changes to leadership within the Board, because improper or inconsistent implementation or tracking and reporting on progress could deepen challenges. Overall, the Board must secure strong accountability measures for the actions that will emerge out of the Task Force, to ensure that we move beyond discussion and get to action.

OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT WE HEARD

The Problems of Social and Economic Inequity are Greater than the Toronto District School Board.

Whatever improvements can be made regarding equity within the TDSB, one must recognize that the school system exists within a broad social framework which is often hostile to, or uncaring about issues of equity.

For instance, as described in Task Force's Research Brief 1 (Appendix H), Toronto is the child poverty capital in Canada where more than a quarter of the children live in poverty. These children face enormous disadvantages in employment, income, housing, health care, child care, accessibility, and transportation. It is unreasonable to expect that the education system can solve these disparities alone – large scale public action is required to reduce these levels of disparity. Many of these children are all part of the Toronto school system.

While the TDSB does not have the ability to resolve larger issues of income disparity, it can play a strong role in addressing disparity within its systems. Given its leadership role to date, it is no embarrassment for the Board to recognize its shortcomings and take steps to overcome them. This Task Force's proposed recommendations aim to further enhance the Board's ongoing efforts.

During the course of the Task Force consultations, a number of reports were released (Diversity Institute, 2017; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017) documenting the ongoing racial discrimination and oppression felt by many in our society. Other institutions, such as the City of Toronto, have developed strategies to address poverty reduction and are in the process of developing a strategy to address Anti-Black Racism. Efforts in public health to advance the broader social determinants of health and health equity are foundational in understanding the issues. Provincial efforts to confront racism and require accommodation for Ontarians with disabilities are reflective of efforts at a societal scale to confront and dismantle the structures sustaining inequity.

Divisions Between and Within Schools

As the work of the Task Force turned to focus on the reasons why progress on equity was stalled, there was an acknowledgement of the systemic nature of the challenges. The structures of how the education system is designed and delivered became a focus for the Task Force Working Groups. It was noted how practices like Optional Attendance (the ability to choose to attend a school other than your local school) and specialized programs in schools (such as Arts

Programs or International Baccalaureate Programs) resulted in divisions between schools. While these programs might have opened pathways for postsecondary opportunities for some students, they have unintentionally created barriers for others.

Wherever there were divisions between schools, traditionally marginalized students ended up being under-represented and not having equitable access to these opportunities as other students. The creation and expansion of many of the specialized programs can be traced back to the beginning of the decline in student enrollment. The programs were intended to attract students to the system, however, the reality was that these programs resulted in moving students from one part of the system to another. Strong direction emerged from the Working Groups to end practices such as Optional Attendance and other specialized programs, seeking instead to transform every local school to a strong neighbourhood school as a school of choice for every student.

Structural elements within schools that divide students include programs such as structured pathways moving students in Grade 9 into different programs of study, or the Home School Program which segregates students based on their identified learning needs and abilities. Again, research has demonstrated consistently how racialized students are under-represented in academic streams and students with identified learning needs do better when they are fully integrated into the classroom with supports, as needed. The TDSB is actively exploring phasing out the Home School Program and encouraging all students to participate in academic level classes. Successful pilot programs within the Board have shown that, given the opportunity and the right supports, all students can succeed in the academic stream. Task Force feedback consistently supported this direction.

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

How students and their parents/caregivers experience the TDSB is fundamentally through the relationships they have developed with the teachers and 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 in the classroom, on the sports field or in the performance hall. In the face of precarious work and challenging economic times, education is often seen as the one thing anyone can have to make their life better for themselves and their families. As one of the Planning Group members expressed, for many, education is the path to hope and a better future. However, not every student experiences these positive relationships.

The TDSB's stated aim of equitable and inclusive education unfolds in these relationships every day to a greater or lesser extent. The Task Force heard from participant that there are inconsistent practices and expectations resulting in inequity. Within the anti-oppression/anti-racism framework the TDSB has now adopted, there is recognition that everyone has implicit bias. While identifying or challenging bias could lead to respectful exchanges that seek understanding and learning about the challenges, it could also result in assumptions and judgement that may result in discrimination, racism or in the worst case, experiences of hate and violence.

The phrase "teacher knows best" or "professional knows best" must be married with "parent knows best" for true partnership to happen. As education has moved to embrace the total learning environment – recognizing that the time spent in school is only about a third of the child's total learning opportunity, partnering with parents/ caregivers and community is required for students to learn in formal and informal settings. The mindset required is a shared belief for the teacher, other staff, and the student and parent/caregiver to determine together what is best.

For instance, with special education students, the Task Force heard how parents/caregivers have felt excluded from assessments for identified learning needs or disabilities. They may be invited to provide input, but no formal meeting process is required, and decisions are often made without their input. These concerns have been documented by the TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee. Action is required in terms of providing good information, a clear process of collaborative decision-making, and a communicated process to appeal decisions.

With students, the Task Force heard about instances in which educators would not accommodate an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or how educators would tolerate students making racist, sexist, homophobic or Islamophobic statements, or used racist language. Students expressed they often did not know what to do when these experiences happened. For those who did report the problem, they were mostly not satisfied with the response of the staff in the school, feeling that nothing would happen despite their complaint.

The Need for Tracking and Reporting

The Task Force learned that there is no central system for recording or tracking incidents based on discrimination, racism or hate in schools. When incidents do occur, how they are dealt with varies widely. For instance, in one school swastikas were carved into the wooden stage in the gym. In this incident of anti-semitism the school took the following actions: immediately reported the incident, closed the gym until the swastikas were removed; alerted to all staff and

students about the incident; and, putting out a clear statement condemning the actions and indicating that those found responsible would be held accountable. This series of responses signaled a clear expectation that this type of behaviour was not tolerated and that immediate action would be taken. 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 re-painted, no discussion took place between the administrator and the teacher who reported the incident and no alert was made within the school to advise students about the incident and the steps that were being taken to re-establish a safe and caring environment.

More needs to be done to establish every school as a place free from discrimination, racism and hate. There is a need to set clear expectations that these behaviours are not tolerated. When an incident does happen, it needs to be recorded and a response generated that addresses the concern and seeks to protect the targets of the actions. In some jurisdictions in the United States, mobile phone-based software is used to report and track incidents. Solutions like these need to be explored (http://stopitsolutions.com/stopit-solutions-education).

In summary, critical factors in moving this work forward include seeking cultural relevance and pluralism, building upon previous work, and ensuring that there is a commitment of resources to support this work moving forward. Most importantly, it was felt that clear accountability, authentic engagement, and a focus on building trusting relationships within the context of a strong anti-oppressive, anti-racist pedagogy and framework is at the core of this work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Vision for TDSB Schools

Based on what has been learned from the wealth of stories, insights, research findings and suggestions for improvement gleaned over the last 10 months of the Task Force consultation and data collection process, one clear vision has emerged. In order to fully realize the Board's Vision for Learning goals of ensuring equity, well-being and achievement for all students, bold steps need to be taken to transform all TDSB schools into **strong neighbourhood schools**, so that all students can attend and benefit from their local schools, all of which have the following attributes:

- Equitable learning opportunities, free of barriers, for all students to reach their full potential
- Programming and staffing that is reflective, relevant and responsive to the cultures, identities and needs of the students and the community served
- A school culture that is safe, welcoming, caring and actively stands against bias and discrimination including racism and hate
- Active engagement with parents/caregivers and the community as authentic partners in promoting students' learning and well-being

Enhancing Equity Task Force Recommendations in Six Areas

To achieve this vision of transforming every TDSB school into a strong neighbourhood school, the Enhancing Equity Task Force proposes the following six areas of recommendations for the Board to consider for action.

A) Ensure Equitable Educational Experiences and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools
B) Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources among Schools
C) Engage Students, Parents/Caregivers and the Community in Building a Culture of Equity in School
D) Address School Safety, Incidents and Complaints through an Equity Lens
E) Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer and Promotion
F) Provide Equity Training for ALL

The recommendations below are based on analysis of the input from hundreds of participants in the Task Force's Planning Group, the four Learning Centre Working Groups, the eight Ward Forums, and the Task Force's Summits. It should be noted that the recommendations are also informed by existing research, the ongoing equity-related efforts of the Board, and the recent recommendations made by various Advisory Committees, such as the Special Education Advisory Committee, and the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee, as well as students (See Student Recommendations in Appendix E).

(A) Ensure Equitable Educational Experiences and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools

- Eliminate disparities *between* schools: The Task Force recognizes that specialized schools and programs, along with optional attendance, while benefitting certain populations, have inadvertently resulted in greater competition and disparities between schools. In many cases, these schools and programs have served to limit enriched learning opportunities for students, especially those from the most marginalized communities, who experience barriers to accessing optional attendance. Therefore, it is recommended that:

  - Resources and supports be realigned so that all schools, at least every cluster of local schools, can offer a variety of specialty programs.
  - Once this in place, and ALL students have equitable access to enriched programming, optional attendance should be phased out.
  - Establish practices that will see all students reading by Grade 1, graduating to grade 9 into high schools where all students are placed in Academic classes, and graduating Grade 12 with 30 credits or with a Certificate.

- Remove structural barriers *within* schools: It is acknowledged that barriers exist within schools for some students, inhibiting their opportunity to reach their full potential. These barriers are due to placement of students based on assessments of perceived ability by educators/administrators/professionals. Therefore, it is recommended that:

  - Destreaming for Grades 9 and 10 be phased in with new programming supports, and be built on the exploratory work of the Board's Equity and Inclusive Schools department on "Sifting, Sorting and Selecting" (San Vicente, Ramon, & Seck, 2015).[3]
  - Special Education programs, in particular the Home School Program and the Gifted Program, be reformed, taking into account the principles of the recent recommendations made by the Special Education Advisory Committee (2016-17), specifically in terms of:
    - Appropriate placement and integration of students with special education needs into regular classes with the necessary supports.
    - Ensuring that every teacher has the skills to support ALL students, including those with special education needs, in the classroom.
    - Eliminating both physical and attitudinal barriers against students with disabilities and those who are racialized or historically marginalized.

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[3] 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.

o   Ensuring that all families, including those new to Canada and whose first language is not English, can respectfully navigate the Special Education system with confidence.

(B) Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources Among Schools

- <u>Distribute funding and resources equitably among schools</u>: Recognizing that discrepancies among schools also occur due to disparities in school fundraising capacity, which leads to inequitable access to and quality of resources, such as technology, the Task Force recommends that:

  ▪ Extra funding be directed to schools with higher levels of need, as in the case of the Model Schools for Inner Cities program, but based on multiple measures in addition to the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI). Additional sources of information can include, but are not limited to:
    o   Supplementary data on ongoing changes in schools.
    o   Input based on student voice and community consultation.
    o   Annual school resource audits of school needs and assets.

- An ad hoc cross-sectional, interdisciplinary group, including parents and community members, be formed to examine how current resources are generated and distributed, and to develop a solution for ensuring greater equity among schools with different socio-economic status. This includes reviewing the LOI, the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) and school based fundraising practices.

(C) Engage Students, Parents/Caregivers and the Community in Building a Culture of Equity in School

In addition to equitable provision of funding, resources and programming to schools, the culture of individual schools needs to be equity-driven in order to ensure that students, parents/caregivers and the community are all engaged in building strong neighbourhood schools. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- Student Engagement: All students need to feel that they belong, are heard and are cared for through the creation of more inclusive, representative and relational cultures [4] in school:

  - Equity-based Curriculum: This includes the incorporation of equity courses and content into the curriculum; relevant subjects that reflect student demographic characteristics and the population of Toronto; and lessons on Indigenous rights and land recognition.

    This incorporation should be supported by:
    - A team of equity specialists in the practical application of equity curriculum and course content integration.
    - Training and access to materials such as Model Schools for Inner Cities' social justice curriculum, Africentric curriculum or Indigenous education.
    - Partnering with research faculties – e.g., Aboriginal Partnership with York University, and Centre for Urban Schooling from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

  - Student voice, leadership and support: Create in-school support systems to:
    - Foster student self-advocacy and empowerment, including student and peer leadership.
    - Ensure that students have dedicated caring adults in school to mentor and advocate with and for them.

- Parent and Community Engagement: Building on Model Schools for Inner Cities' "School as the heart of the community" successful practices, all schools should:

  - Engage families as authentic partners in the education of their children, especially those from historically marginalized or currently underserved communities.
  - Develop community partnerships with social agencies, such as Community Health Centres, public libraries, and the City of Toronto, and non-profit groups.
  - Function as a resource and gathering space, especially for underserved communities (e.g., medical, employment related, social/emotional, recreational, childcare, adult education[5].

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[4] 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.
[5] Existing examples to model on include Northview Hub and Nelson Mandela Park Public School's Open School Project.

(D) **Address School Safety, Incidents and Complaints from an Equity Lens**

It is acknowledged that current suspension and expulsion practices have a disproportionate impact on students from racialized backgrounds, students from low-income families, and students with special education needs. It is also recognized that discrimination, racism and hate do exist in schools, and that transparent and accountable steps need to be in place to address incidents experienced by anyone in the school system (students, parents, staff) ensuring everyone knows what to do if something happens. In order to bring consistent expectations and have accountability fall within the existing management structure, it is recommended that:

- Current suspension and expulsion practices be reviewed by:
    - Conducting quantitative and qualitative research on school safety.
    - Examining staff bias and reasons for the over-representation of some populations such as Black students being suspended and expelled.
    - Gathering input from those most impacted including students and decision-makers.

- Preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice and mediation approaches be considered while acknowledging Provincial regulatory constraints:
    - Increase the number of youth outreach workers and support programs run by community groups, especially those that are representative of student demographics.
    - Review and end the Student Resource Officer (SRO) Program;
    - Increase funding for the Indigenous Led Restorative Justice Program.
    - Consider and follow through on recent recommendations made by the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee.
    - Create a central structure for handling and overseeing student complaints, and advocating for students in that capacity. A parallel process should be in place in each school with information clearly stated in school agendas and websites and in accessible and multiple languages.
    - Develop or acquire a system to gather and track reports of incidents and complaints related to inclusion, discrimination, racism and hate and report this information to the Board of Trustees including outcomes and strategies used to seek resolution and prevention.

(E) **Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer and Promotion**

To ensure that staffing models and delivery reflect equity and the diversity of the community served by the Board, it is recommended that:

- Employment Equity practices, including hiring, transfer, and promotion, be implemented across all levels of the Board with the following in place:

  - Collect and analyze data on hiring practices using an equity lens.

  - Examine and act on inequities in staffing promotion and transfer processes – ensure employment equity.

  - Prioritize the hiring of diverse staff with an equity lens and that are representative, especially in terms of racialized backgrounds, of student bodies and the multicultural nature of Toronto.

  - Provide training for staff with hiring responsibilities on diverse hiring practices.

  - Create more flexible staffing structures and processes at the local school level to achieve greater equity – e.g.,
    - Move principals every 5-7 years, but also ensure that there is flexibility where appropriate.
    - Allow local schools to add statements of hiring needs based on community-specific needs, and staff needs and choices for the school.
    - Aside from school superintendents, the hiring panel for the school principal panel should have representation from other stakeholder groups including parents, caregivers, students, and community representatives.

- Work in partnership with Labour Unions to discuss how to align transfer and surplus processes, design continuous learning plans, and how best to collectively serve students.

(F) Provide Equity Training for ALL

Knowing that authentic and sustainable change cannot be effectively realized without transforming the mindset and deepening the understanding of all stakeholders, the Task Force recommends that:

- Systematic and comprehensive equity training needs to be in place for all stakeholder groups with the following considerations:

  - The content should focus on examining bias, power, privilege, and existing laws and policies, as well as on practices, frameworks, and pedagogies that critically examine and address

anti-oppression, anti-racism (specifically anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism), and specific challenges faced by Indigenous students, those with physical and intellectual disabilities and those facing Islamophobia, homophobia, and transphobia, anti-semitism and other forms of historic, institutional discrimination.[6]

- <u>Apply an equity framework to all professional development</u> learning activities, with the understanding that this learning will have an impact on all aspects of educational programs and services. Furthermore, professional learning will enhance student learning when considering the needs of students who are most underserved, most pushed-out, most marginalized and are most impacted by the barriers in our systems and structures.

- <u>The audience</u> for the training should be all stakeholder groups including the Senior Leadership team, school administrators, educators, support staff, as well as the Board of Trustees, students, parents, and caregivers. Joint training can be delivered across departments and levels of the Board, and with Labour Unions.

- The training should be delivered <u>by experts</u>, supported by centrally assigned principals and K-12 learning coaches.

- The professional learning should be <u>ongoing</u> to encourage an environment of continuous learning and improvement.

- There should be clear <u>accountability</u> for staff by having, for example, annual, online equity assessments for staff as part of equity training, with an 80% pass rate required.

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[6] For example, the training can help teachers to open up their perspectives and expectations of students by self-evaluation of perceptions and biases. Another example is a teacher bias pilot project which aimed at understanding teacher bias in student assessment using moderated marking, i.e., students marked by multiple teachers, those in different schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY
Developing Mechanisms and Tracking Progress into the Future

Finally, it is important that the Board establishes clear accountability structures to ensure that the Task Force recommendations are followed through, to monitor their implementation, and to report to the Board of Trustees annually on progress made. The work of enhancing equity will be an ongoing responsibility and accountability mechanisms should reflect this requirement.
As such, it is proposed that:

At the Board Level

Develop a tracking and reporting framework to monitor progress on the recommendations of the Task Force, developing a set of progress indicators that would help the Board and all of its stakeholders monitor progress on enhancing equity. These should include indicators that address all six recommendations.

Use the existing Equity Policy Advisory Committee as the core Board Committee to track and monitor progress on Equity overall and specifically to track progress on the Task Force Recommendations. Ensure that all advocacy and advisory committees have a role in tracking equity as it relates to their focus.

Develop a mechanism to track and report incidents of discrimination and racism.

At the System Level

Initiate an Annual Equity Summit to invite students, parents and community partners to join with staff and Trustees to review progress and engage in dialogue on the emergent issues and challenges.

Create four Learning Centre based Enhancing Equity Committees made up of staff, Advisory Committee members and community partners to support action on proposed changes and work together on making progress.

At the School Level
- Provide the learning and supports required to set goals and track progress on equity at the school level supported by local school data. Implement a system to track and respond to incidents of discrimination and racism.
- Establish a focus on equity through existing School Improvement Planning processes with the engagement of students, parents/caregivers and community partners.
- Provide information and deepen understanding on how to access existing accountability processes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Draft Equity Policy Glossary

Appendix B: Ward Forum Summaries

Appendix C: Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee Recommendations

Appendix D: Special Education Advisory Committee Recommendations

Appendix E: Student Recommendations

Appendix F: Research Brief 4 - An Overview of TDSB's Model Schools for Inner Cities Program, 2006-2016

Appendix G: Research Brief 3 - Evaluation of TDSB's School-based Equity Programs

Appendix H: Research Brief 1 – A Scan of Current Conditions in Toronto Impacting Equity

Appendix I: Research Brief 2 – Evidence of Need among TDSB's Diverse Student Population

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: DRAFT EQUITY POLICY GLOSSARY

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

1. http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/age-discrimination-brochure
2. http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/discussion-paper-toward-commission-policy-gender-identity/definitions
3. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf
4. http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rr07_vic1/p5.html
5. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/climate.html
6. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/87-542-x/2011001/section/s3-eng.htm
7. http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/equity_in_education/docs/csi%202003.pdf
8. http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/cost-caring-report-consultation-discrimination-basis-family-status/iv- defining-family-status
9. http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/nationality?q=nationality
   http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/origin?q=origin
   http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/gender-identity-and-gender-expression-brochure
   http://www.opseu.org/membereducation/activitiesandtools/Prohibited%20Grounds.pdf
   http://www.chegg.com/homework-help/definitions/social-identity-49
   http://www.toronto.ca/grants/pdf/grants_policy_anti-racism_access_equity.pdf

Draft

Main Concerns and Suggestions - extracted from 9 EETF Ward Forums and 2 Parent Academy Meetings
Research & Information Services (June 26, 2017)

Bias and discrimination	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered

• **Racism**
  o Racism was a frequently raised concern; some participants shared stories of traumatizing experiences related to racism within the board.
  o Participants cited racism in general as a major concern, though specific attention was drawn to anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism; the recent Carl James report was cited.
	• Supporting staff in participating in difficult conversations about racism and in reflecting on their own potential biases
	• Training in anti-racism for staff and specific actions to combat anti-black racism in all schools
	• Maintain high expectations for students, especially racialized and poor backgrounds

• **Islamophobia**
  o It was felt that Islamophobia was on the rise, which was having a negative effect on Muslim students and that board was not doing enough to address this problem
  o School staff sometimes lacked knowledge or consideration around planning of schools events re: religious holidays affecting students. Some noted that students and parents expressed frustration at having to explain and advocate for their need for religious accommodations.
	• Better staff knowledge and consideration of the needs of Muslim students, for example, planning of trips and events in relation to religious holidays
	• Offering religious accommodations such as offering halal food in the school or on excursions/events
	• Professional development activities for staff on Islamophobia

• **Biased curriculum and materials** o Participants raised the issue of bias within curriculum and textbooks, noting in particular the Eurocentric orientation of both. Many felt that students often struggled to see themselves represented.	• Incorporate equity into curricular approach and "de-center" the Eurocentric curriculum. • Provide more training for teachers in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy • Provide textbooks and materials that are more representative of the varied cultural and linguistic student bodies
• **Biased teachers and staff** o Some participants spoke out about experiencing	• Provide professional development related to equity for all staff, including mandatory training for staff in anti-racism and

prejudice from school staff, particularly on the basis of their socioeconomic or racial background.

  o They stressed that it was the duty of the board to ensure that staff do not perpetuate such prejudices.

- **Gender and sexual identity**
  o While inequity based on gender and sexual identity was not frequently raised as an area of concern by forum participants, they frequently noted that actions to address inequity on those bases are being undertaken and considered

anti-oppression

- Board staff need to self-reflect and challenge on their own biases; participants were clear that it is necessary to hold challenging conversations about racism, oppression, privilege, classism, and other barriers to equity
- These suggestions included offering gender neutral washrooms; displaying the LGBTQ flag in schools; using gender neutral language on forms
- At many schools, initiatives were undertaken such as student lead gender equality conferences; gender-sexuality alliance clubs; and gender based violence prevention work

Barriers to equity	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered

- **Socioeconomic inequality between schools, students, and neighbourhoods**
  o Teachers, parents, and students drew attention to socioeconomic inequality between schools as a major barrier to equity.
  o Inequitable distribution of program and resources in schools was a major concern. location of said schools far from marginalized communities creates socioeconomic segregation.
  o Participants explained that disparity in fund raising capacity between schools in affluent and poor neighbourhoods lead to inequity of opportunities for students.
	- Participants suggested devising strategies to produce parity in the fundraising capacities of schools. They noted that Parent Councils in poorer neighbourhoods are much less capable of raising money to support students.
	- Efforts to ensure that financial difficulties don't prevent students from accessing enriched or extracurricular activities should be taken. Offering more free or cost friendly activities, putting a $ cap on field trips.
	- Move towards more equitable distribution of specialized programs among schools, allowing greater access to students in marginalized neighbourhoods; encourage more diversity in alternative schools.

- **Insufficient resources**
  o Inequitable access to technology from school to school
  o Class sizes being too large was a commonly cited problem, especially for FDK and primary panel.
	- Find strategies to provide more funding and resources to reduce class sizes, especially at the most challenged schools and for early years students.

- **Needs of immigrant and refugee families** o Well-being for immigrant students, who may be	- More supports are needed for ESL students, especially in the Early Years and Primary panels. More professional

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experiencing culture shock, higher needs; even moreso for students from refugee families

- **Structural issues**
  - Some participants raised the issues of streaming, catchment areas, and optional attendance as having a negative impact on students from marginalized communities educational outcomes and experiences

- development activities for supporting ESL students.
- Improvements to translation/interpretation services
- Some participants suggested eliminating the practice of streaming

Accountability and transparency	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered
Need for accountability - Participants urged the need for the Task Force process to precede in a transparent manner and conclude with concrete actions being taken to enhance equity along with a clear system of accountability at the system and school level. - It was raised that parents and community members must be able to keep the Board accountable on advancing equity.	- Participants repeatedly called for the need for all stakeholders to be involved in brave conversations about the barriers to equity - Specific modes of accountability specific performance measures on equity issues, and embedding accountability on equity into TPA competencies. - Need to collect data for accountability purposes, for example, school level assessments detailing the strengths and weaknesses of each school were suggested.

Leadership, voices, and relationship building	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered
Student voices - Student voice is often lacking, with several participants citing lack of opportunities for them to speak and be heard. They also stressed their desire to participate in the discourse on important issues, including equity. - It was essential for staff to support and advocate for students in opening up. **Parent and community relationships** - Building better relationships between school staff and students/parents was seen as essential for success in equity work.	- At some schools, students are already taking a leadership role in the equity push; examples, student lead equity councils, student equity clubs and forums, student representation on school committees - Need to collect data (surveys, interviews) to better understand student's experiences and needs regarding equity - Specific efforts needed to welcome immigrant families; several participants mentioned a specific need to welcome East Asian parents and families into schools - Conduct activities to incorporate parent's voices into the

- Relationships between school staff and parents/community was barrier; greater cultural understanding of local neighbourhoods was needed.

equity push; examples are Parent and Community Equity Committees, engaging Parent Councils on equity issues, parent workshops and training on equity.
- More communication with parents and community; especially more social media outreach. Use plain, accessible language when communicating with parents and community members.
- Encourage more family participation and engagement in school, examples: Family night/curriculum night, community walks,
- Need to collect data (surveys, interviews) to better understand parent's experiences in the school

Inclusivity	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered

Cultural representation and appreciation
- In addition to the textbooks and curricular materials, students often struggled and desired to see themselves reflected more in their schools, e.g., through recognition and acknowledgement of the varied backgrounds of students and local neighbourhoods.
- More positive representation of marginalized groups in curriculum and in the school itself is needed.
- Many participants cited the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students; the land and treaty recognitions were seen as a positive step, but much more is needed.

- Make efforts in schools to celebrate cultures and languages in local neighbourhoods: examples, multicultural events, celebration of prominent holidays, honouring home languages of students.
- Events like Many Faces (cultural fair that shares performances, food, facts, and activities like sports from different countries around the world)
- Aboriginal education; land and treaty acknowledgements; filling the knowledge gap. Acknowledgement Plaque of FN treaties, cultures, territories; partnership with FN school; inclusion of Indigenous art and music into daily activities

Embracing many learning styles
- Many cited a need for educational strategies that appeal to students with different learning styles, so that they are afforded equal opportunities to learn.

- Include more inquiry based learning in the curicculum
- Allow for more alternative ways of evaluating students
- Adopt strength based pedagogical approaches
- Offer more online/hybrid resources for students with special needs

Well-being

Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered
Student's opportunities affected by well-being issues ○ Adopt a holistic approach to student well-being including health, nutrition, self-regulation and emotional wellness. ○ Most vulnerable students ○ Many added that it was vital to understand student's needs in terms of wellbeing, citing a need for gathering data ○	• More programming aimed at improving wellbeing, such as mindfulness, yoga, self-regulation, exercise, safe spaces, a 'help line' for students to call • Many schools have reported success with nutrition, healthy snack, and breakfast programs • More professional development for staff on supporting student's well-being is needed. • A better understanding of student's needs regarding well-being is needed, gather data on student's well-being and school experiences
Mental health issues on the rise for students ○ Relationship between emotional wellbeing and mental health and achievement needs to be understood/acknowledged more ○ Mental health issues among students on the rise, more supports for these students are needed	• More support staff needed to support students with mental health needs, e.g., counsellors, psychologists, social workers. • Provide specific and appropriate programming on including mental health awareness week, mental health day, year round discussions on mental health. • Provide more professional development for staff related to supporting student's mental health

Special Education	
Concerns	Actions being undertaken or considered
Many special education student's need not being met ○ Many agreed that more resources, staff, and training were required for the Board to adequately meet the needs of its most vulnerable students ○ The Special Education inclusion model was cited as highly problematic by many participants, who felt that the supports needed for special needs students in blended classrooms were not sufficient.	• More training for staff related to students with special education needs. Specifically, more support staff with specialized training available to support students with autism spectrum disorders • More resources and staff needs to be made available to support students with special needs and/or behavioral issues in blended classrooms.

Recommendations of the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee-BSAAC

Rational: TDSB through its integrated Equity Framework, has highlighted six key areas for the Board. While these areas address a board spectrum, it fails to identify or address the issue of Anti-Black Racism particularly as it pertains to System wide training. TDSB requires individuals and/or companies that are removed from our system but have the knowledge and insight germane to aiding our organization move forward and address the deficiencies we've encountered along our journey to full implementation of Equity, Engagement and Inclusion of our Black students, parents, and staff within our system. The data clearly shines the glare of light on our deficit whether well intentioned over the decades. Anti-Black Racism training will develop a competency in our Board without changing our system yet, providing us with a different perspective to focus our thinking resulting in materialized measureable outcomes addressing and meeting the concerns of our various stakeholders.

1. Anti-Racism,/Oppression Training

The Committee recommends that the Board hire a firm/company or individual(s) who are steeped and have demonstrated expertise, certification in Anti-Black Racism training, facilitation and reporting. This entity will undertake and implement all required training and facilitation of staff/system wide within the Toronto District School Board.

Rationale: The according to the Boards Equity goals, it will measure how effective our employment practices are at supporting equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion and succession planning. Further, to ensure all of 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 to their development needs. In order to effectively ensure we are truly reflective in our goals, the Black community requires these processes to be undertaken and implemented

2. The Committee recommends that the following be imbedded into the Equity Framework Action Plan/Employment Equity:

That the Hiring Process be revamped to contain a three part interview phase that assess and prioritize Equity competency of all potential employees/staff. The specificity of the process is: Oral interview, Written, and Past Experience or Experiential competencies to be weighted. In addition, the advertising of job postings is to be tweaked to appropriately entail the specifics of the Equity framework.

Rationale: The TDSB needs to get to the "root" of Equity and the "systems" that manifest to create the inequalities within the system. It has been fully stated throughout all research data and analysis of TDSB, that families of African descent face numerous aspects of discrimination, lack of representation in both staff and curriculum along with a distrust of the system. The Equity framework along does not recognize nor address Anti-Black Racism and it must be acknowledges within the framework and all policies acknowledging past transgressions and moving forward.

3.   The Committee recommends that the Board embed a specific statement of Anti-Black Racism within all Board policies, procedures, memorandums, such as, its Vision of Learning, Board Improvement Plan, Equity Framework, Leadership capacity plan, etc.

Rationale: Within the Equity Framework, an accountability of multiple infractions of members throughout the system must be captured and measured in order to be able to track and fix the problematic behaviours and attitudes. The Board must be able to take the 'pulse of inequity' and pinpoint areas of infractions and individuals who are habitual or repetitive in their violations. This complaint mechanism allows a confidential reporting system that disaggregates anti-oppression, anti- Black racism and harassment that have transacted through informal conversations or contacts; non reported. The captured information will allow for an internal review of how Board policies and initiatives are working, deficiencies, training required, etc.

4.   The Committee recommends that an electronic Complaint Accountability Mechanism be established by the Board that captures and disaggregates various complaint data generate via system, students, parents such as; the occurrences, nature of infractions, complaints and accused. To date, there is no tracking policy or framework outside of the Human Rights complaints process.

Rationale: The OGAP 2.0 Action Plan generated by the Equity department is a launching pad for closing the gap for underachieving students. However, minimal action has been made on this Action Plan regarding Black Student Achievement and success since its submission and acceptance to the Board. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Board:

(a) Allocate necessary financial and human resources required to implement the Families and students of African descent section be immediately allocated for implementation.

(b) Update the OGAP 2.0 Plan to accurately reflect an Anti-Black racism framework.

(c)The plan must specifically address the initiatives relevant to Black Student Achievement.

 (d) Effective of September2017 all Black students will be allowed access to de-streamed courses going forward. In addition, all current Black students will be transitioned appropriately to accommodate de-streamed courses to complete their academic pursuits.

(e) The Committee recommends that the Board undertake a full review of all IEP's registered for Black students designated as "informal". The process is very specific regarding the multiple steps required to designate our students yet, "informal" IEP's are being created at the discretion of teachers without an Expert diagnosis or rendering being provided to substantiate the claims. Thus, it should be simple differentiated instruction applied to accommodate every learner in a classroom as taught during practicum and instructional teaching of Teacher's College.

(f) In addition, that the Board engage in a feasibility study to ascertain the financial sustainability of a separate department that organizes and coordinates services and programs targeted at closing the gap of Students of African Descent.

Rationale: It is determined that the processes of the BSAAC is far too prescriptive and directed by staff. According to the Terms of Reference, it is at the direction of the Committee that BSAAC is to govern their interactions and operational structure. The spirit and intent of working together to bring forth meaningful change must be paramount in building trust and maintain genuine working relationships. It cannot be seen to be a system of roadblocks or an exercise in futility not honest in wanting to bring forth change. The BSAAC must be guaranteed that the process is judicious in exercise and expeditious in implementation.

5. The Committee recommends that the reporting structure of the BSAAC be the sole discretion of the Committee. All aspects regarding the establishment of the agenda to guest speakers are clearly defined by the committee. There is to be no encroachment of this process by Board staff or others to determine the direction lay out by Committee.

Rationale: Special Education is an area in which an intersectionality of Safe schools, CAS and Mental Health and Well-being. This is evidenced through data showing the criminalization of Black students; an introduction of CAS into our Black students lives, and low self-esteem issues from continual belittlement and berating of their intelligence and omission of value in the curriculum and classroom. There is a disproportionate representation of Black students sitting on IEP's, in Section programs/schools and Behavioural programs. Since the Ministry has implemented a new desegregated classroom format of integrating all learners into a regular/inclusive classroom, the Committee recommends:

(a) That a review be undertaken to assess the number of police calls or intervention occurred in our schools regarding Black students;

(b) The number of CAS reports that were generated by staff and/or Administrators;

(c) The interactions of SRO officers and students in the Secondary panel; how many have resulted in TPS calls and charges being laid;

(d) Safe Schools protocols being utilized throughout our system; how many interactions, programs

offered; recommendations accepted by Administration and how many refused or rejected; ratio of staff to student population in TDSB;

(e) The number of students in Section Programs and their identifications;

(f) How many students in Behavioural programs and broken down by grade level; programs offered; curriculum delivered; reintegration rate to regular classrooms;

(g) The number of suspensions and expulsions rendered and the categories they fall under;

(h) The IEP processes and the nature in which Black students are being identified;

(i) The resources/supports being offered to families and the students for reintegration from Behavioural and Section Programs;

(j) The resources/supports and training offered to staff upon reintegration of student back into the classroom of the teacher who made the report/allegation to CAS, police, etc

6. The Committee recommends that the team tasked to rewrite the Equity policy be comprised of individuals who are certified in Human Rights law and have Anti-Black Racism and Oppression training in order to ensure that an inclusive policy is created that does not mitigate or omit the Rights, the Charter and TDSB tenants established as an Organization.

7. The Committee recommends that the team tasked to rewrite the Religious Accommodation policy/document must be comprised of individuals who have degrees in Theology and Philosophy along with various faith based understanding of traditions, customs and practices of our diverse religious affiliations within TDSB. In particular, Muslim/Islam, Hindu, Christianity, and Judaism.

8. The Committee endorses the Motion, 'Addressing Systemic Racism and Implementing Meaningful Change Through the Curriculum Review Process' moved by Trustees Shan and Stiles on October 26, 2016.

APPENDIX D: SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Passed on June 7, 2016
The following four motions were passed at the June 13, 2016 meeting of the Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee.

Motion #1 (June 7, 2016)

The Right of Parents, Guardians and Students with Special Education Needs to Know about TDSB Special Education Programs, Services, and Supports, and How to Access Them

BACKGROUND

Parents and guardians of students with special education needs and, where practicable, students with special education needs themselves, need direct, easy access to important information about special education opportunities, supports and services at TDSB. They have a right to know all the important information they need including, for example, in these areas:

a) What is "special education" and who is entitled to receive it.

b) TDSB's duty to ensure that the educational needs of students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights. TDSB itself needs to understand what the Code and Charter refer to when talking about duty to accommodate. This gives TDSB an opportunity to establish what the requirement is and to convince front line workers that it is what they need to do – a potential paradigm shift for the board.

c) The range of options, placements, programs, services, supports and accommodations available at TDSB for students with special education needs.

d) What persons and what office to approach at TDSB to get this information, to request placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations for students with special education needs, or to raise concerns about whether TDSB is effectively meeting the student's education needs.

e) The processes and procedures at TDSB for a parent, guardian or student to request or change placements, programs, services, supports or accommodations for students with special education needs. This includes formal legislated processes like the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) and the development and implementation of the students Individual Education Plan (IEP). It also includes other informal processes like requests for programs, services, supports and accommodations in the classroom that are not covered in an IPRC or IEP.

This information must be easy for parents, guardians and students to find. It should be available in plain language for parents and guardians of students with special education needs who have a

wide range of skills, abilities and education. It should be available in a wide range of languages to meet the diversity of linguistic communities in Toronto that TDSB serves.

At present, TDSB is not effectively meeting these important needs. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs too often find it very difficult to find out the important information described above. Even when some of it is provided at all, such as the TDSB Parents Guide to Special Education, it is often only provided within two weeks before an IPRC meeting. That is long after parent, guardian or student first needed this information.

This information is not now easy to find on TDSB's website. The website does not consistently use plain language. Some of it is not available at all. TDSB's website too often uses terminology that parents and guardians of students with special education needs may not know. Moreover, TDSB's website has accessibility deficiencies.

Some of this needed information is found on the TDSB website, but it is buried somewhere in the TDSB Special Education Plan. Few parents would even think to struggle through that long, highly technical and detailed document. Moreover, the TDSB Special Education Plan includes clearly inaccurate information. It would misinform parents and guardians of students with special education needs about certain TDSB special education options. It inaccurately describes eligibility for and the focus of both TDSB's Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) and Developmental Disability (DD) Intensive Support Programs. This is so even though SEAC alerted TDSB staff to this, and sought its correction last year.

The 2016 final report of the Barbara Hall review of TDSB governance further documented that TDSB is not effectively ensuring that parents, guardians and students have the information they need. It found:

"Parents expressed frustration at their inability to advocate for their children's special education needs in an effective way. They feel isolated, afraid and unsure of how to work with the school board administration to support their children's learning needs. They also said that the specific information they require to be informed about the options available to support students is not easily accessible on the website or from any other source."

TDSB has told SEAC that it leaves it to each principal at each of its 550 schools to convey much of this information to parents and guardians of students with special education needs. We have asked TDSB for any instructions that TDSB gives to principals regarding the provision of this information. We have not been shown anything that shows that TDSB has in place a process to ensure that all parents and guardians of students with special education needs are effectively given the information they need, and that this is done as soon as possible during a student's engagement with TDSB.

It is inefficient and unreliable to leave this responsibility to 550 principals, spread across Toronto, to each deal with this as they choose. When it is left to each principal, without clear policy directions

and pre-prepared materials for parents, guardians and students, TDSB won't be able to ensure that this important need is met.

Some of this information can be needed by any of the parents or guardians of all 240,000 TDSB students. Some of this information is important specifically for the parents or guardians of the 46,000 TDSB students with special education needs.

Some of those families do not have internet access. Some do not speak English. A failure to provide the needed information and in a timely and accessible way can undermine the effective accommodation of at least some students with special education needs.

As one important example, there could well be many students who have special education needs but that TDSB does not know about, among the 200,000 TDSB students who have to date not been formally or informally identified as having special education needs. TDSB has told SEAC that TDSB does not send a communication to all parents and guardians of all TDSB students at the start of each school year, alerting them that if a student is having any difficulty learning or taking part in TDSB educational programming, they can approach TDSB to explore whether the student has any special education needs, and find out options for TDSB to meet those needs. To identify that a student may have special education needs, it is left to the classroom teaching staff, or to parents and guardians to bring this forward on their own initiative.

As another example, TDSB does not have a standard form to ensure that parents, who receive a draft IEP from a school, know at that point what avenues or options they have for agreeing to it, disagreeing with it, or seeking its improvement. TDSB has indicated that this is left to each school to communicate as it decides.

As a result, TDSB operates either as a restaurant that has no menu, or that is not providing its menu to all of those who need it. If parents and guardians of students with special education needs do not have easy and timely access to this needed information, this reduces their ability to ensure that TDSB effectively meets the special education needs of all of its students with those needs. By sharing an information package with all families, and not just with those that have been formally or informally identified as having special education needs, TDSB can help educate all families about special education. This will help smooth and reinforce the TDSB's efforts on inclusive education.

RECOMMENDATIONS
SEAC therefore recommends as follows:
1. TDSB needs to develop and provide all parents with effective information resources on services for students with special education needs. TDSB should ensure that parents, guardians, and where practicable, students are informed , as soon as possible, in a readily-accessible and understandable way, about such important information as:

a) What "special education" is and who is entitled to receive it.

b) TDSB's duty to ensure that the special educational needs of students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights.

c) The range of options, placements, programs, services, supports and accommodations available at TDSB for students with special education needs.

d) What persons and what office to approach at TDSB to get this information, to request placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations for students with special education needs, or to raise concerns about whether TDSB is effectively meeting the student's education needs.

e) The processes and procedures at TDSB for a parent, guardian or student to request or change placements, programs, services, supports or accommodations for students with special education needs. This includes formal legislated processes like the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) and the development and implementation of the students Individual Education Plan (IEP). It also includes other informal processes like requests for programs, services, supports and accommodations in the classroom that are not covered in an IPRC or IEP.

2. Without restricting the important information that must be made readily available, TDSB should ensure, among other things, that:

a) Parents and guardians of students with special education needs can easily find out and, where necessary, visit different placement, program, service and support options for a student with special education needs, before the parent, guardian or, where practicable, the student must take a position on what placement, program or services should be provided to that student.

b) Parents and guardians of students with special education needs and, where practicable, students with special education needs themselves, should be given clear, understandable explanations of their rights in the special education process. For example, when TDSB presents parents or guardians with a proposed IEP, TDSB should carefully explain to them that they need not agree to the proposed IEP, that TDSB is open to their suggestions for changes to the proposed IEP, and the avenues by which parents or guardians can seek to get TDSB to make changes to the proposed IEP.

3. TDSB should now implement a comprehensive plan to substantially improve its provision of the important information, described above, to all parents and guardians of TDSB students, and to all TDSB students where practicable, and especially to parents and guardians of students with special education needs. Every parent should have an option to receive

information digitally and/or in hard copy, and to be able to opt in or opt out of the format they prefer:

a) This plan's objective should be to ensure that all parents, guardians and where practicable, students, have the important information they need to ensure that students of all abilities can fully access and benefit from the educational opportunities available at TDSB.

b) TDSB should not simply leave it to each principal or teacher to make sure that this important information is effectively provided. TDSB should instead have an effective system in place to ensure that this information actually reaches all parents and guardians,

c) TDSB should ensure that all of this important information is fully and readily accessible in a prompt and timely way to all parents, guardians and students, in accessible formats and in jargon-free plain language, in a diverse range of languages. It should be easy to find this information, without having to call all around TDSB.

d) TDSB should not simply rely on its website to share this information since this will not serve those families that do not have internet access. Instead, TDSB should both improve its internet content on this information, and ensure that this information is provided to parents and guardians in written form.

e) This plan should include TDSB sending home information at the start of each school year in a package of information to all families, and not merely families of those students who are already being served as having special education needs. This package should include, among other things, a Question and Answer format to help families think about how this information could relate to the student in their family.

f) This plan should include the creation of a user-friendly package of information to be provided to families who first approach TDSB about the possibility of enrolling a child at TDSB, e.g. when they register for kindergarten.

g) This plan should also include hosting events at local schools to help families learn how to navigate TDSB processes like the Individual Education Plan and the Identification and Placement Review Committee processes.

Motion #2 (June 6, 2016)
Ensuring that Parents, Guardians and Students Have a Fair and Effective Process for Raising Concerns about TDSB's Accommodation of the Education Needs of Students with Special Education Needs
BACKGROUND

For decades, Ontario's school system was not designed to be fully inclusive for students with special education needs. Therefore it is often necessary to provide modifications, supports or other

accommodations to those students so that they can fully benefit from and be fully included in Ontario's education system. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is meant to document these goals and measures. This is to help ensure that those are provided.

The TDSB gives 46,000 students with special education needs an IEP. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is an absolutely essential part of TDSB's process for trying to ensure that the educational needs of students with special education needs are met.
Ontario Regulation 141/98 includes the following regarding an IEP:

"(3) The individual education plan must include,
(a) specific educational expectations for the pupil;
(b) an outline of the special education program and services to be received by the pupil; and
(c) a statement of the methods by which the pupil's progress will be reviewed.
(4) Where the pupil is 14 years of age or older, the individual education plan must also include a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities, such as work, further education and community living.
(5) Subsection (4) does not apply in respect of a pupil identified as exceptional solely on the basis of giftedness.
(6) In developing the individual education plan, the principal shall,
(a) consult with the parent and, where the pupil is 16 years of age or older, the pupil; and
(b) take into consideration any recommendations made by the committee or the Special Education Tribunal, as the case may be, regarding special education programs or special education services.
(7) In developing a transition plan under subsection (4), the principal shall consult with such community agencies and post-secondary educational institutions as he or she considers appropriate.
(8) Within 30 school days after placement of the pupil in the program, the principal shall ensure that the plan is completed and a copy of it sent to a parent of the pupil and, where the pupil is 16 years of age or older, the pupil."
Ontario's special education regulations do not spell out important and much-needed details on such things as:

a)   Exactly how the IEP is to be developed, and how parents, guardians, and where practicable, the student is to be involved in that process;
b)   What parents and guardians of students with special education needs are to be told in advance or during the IEP development process, about the IEP development process, and their rights in the IEP development process;
c)   Establishing a prompt, fair, independent and impartial process within TDSB for parents and guardians of students with special education needs to go if they are not satisfied with the IEP that a school board proposes, in order to get a review of the proposed IEP;
d)   Establishing a prompt, fair, independent and impartial process within TDSB which parents and guardians of students with special education needs can use, if they believe that TDSB is not fully implementing a student's IEP.

TDSB has an IEP development manual for staff. It sets out procedures governing how TDSB staff are to develop an IEP. However, we are not aware of TDSB monitoring or auditing to ensure that these procedures are followed. Moreover, these procedures are inherently insufficient.

For example, TDSB does not proactively try to ensure, as much as possible, that the IEP is written by TDSB jointly with a student's parent or guardian, at a school/family joint IEP development meeting. Instead, TDSB first sends the parent or guardian a form letter that invites written input, or a meeting if the parent or guardian wishes. However, that letter does not offer the parents or guardian the opportunity to take part in a joint TDSB/family IEP development meeting, with a view to writing the IEP together at that meeting. SEAC anticipates that many If not most parents or guardians do not have a face-to-face joint IEP development meeting with all involved professionals and teaching staff, where the IEP is written together.

TDSB has a limited internal process for parents and guardians of students with special education needs, to raise concerns with the IEP's contents or implementation. They can raise these concerns first with the teacher, and then with the principal, and after that with the relevant superintendent. SEAC anticipates that many if not most parents and guardians are not aware of that process.

Otherwise, aggrieved parents, guardians or students must resort to filing a human rights complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. Filing a human rights complaint involves great legal expenses, delays and hardships to a family. A school board has access to public funds to hire lawyers in opposition to families who resort to a human rights complaint. The relationship between a family and a school board can be made more difficult by the costs, delays and human rights adversarial process.

TDSB in effect has 46,000 special education accommodation cases to assess and address each school year. In contrast, many large organizations in the public and private sector set up internal human rights and discrimination units. These are offered as a voluntary internal process for investigating and resolving workplace human rights complaints and concerns without the need to resort to the Human Rights Tribunal process. An employee can voluntarily opt for that process if they wish. They can always choose at any time to go to the Human Rights Tribunal, if they prefer.

It would help both families and TDSB for TDSB to create a fair internal appeal process for IEP and other education accommodation issues. Ontario special education regulations do not prevent TDSB from doing so. Such a process is especially important for a school board as large as TDSB. The IEP development process is critically important to all students with special education needs. While only half of TDSB students with special education needs have had an Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC), all have an IEP.

The 2016 final report of the Barbara Hall review of TDSB governance made findings that support the need for substantial improvement in this area. It concluded:
"Parents expressed frustration at their inability to advocate for their children's special education needs in an effective way. They feel isolated, afraid and unsure of how to work with the school

board administration to support their children's learning needs. They also said that the specific information they require to be informed about the options available to support students is not easily accessible on the website or from any other source."

These new procedures will better serve families and students. They would ultimately save TDSB money, while improving the delivery of education services to these students. TDSB may wish to first try a test period with such new processes. This would let TDSB get experience, and explore what works the best.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEAC therefore recommends as follows:

1. TDSB should establish an improved process for parents and guardians of students with special education needs to more effectively take part in the development and implementation of a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). This should include giving parents in advance, complete, timely and readily-understandable information about the IEP development process, and the parents/ guardians' rights and opportunities in that process (in accordance with Motion #1 – Parents/Guardians Right to Know)

2. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs, and where practicable, the student, should be invited to take part in a joint TDSB IEP development meeting, where the IEP will be written. TDSB should bring to the table all key professionals who can contribute to this. The family should be invited to bring to the table any supports and professionals that can assist the family. Parents/families should be given a wide range of options for participating e.g. in person or by phone. They should be told in advance who will attend from TDSB. Any proposal for a draft IEP should include a summary of key points to assist families in understanding them.

3. If TDSB refuses to provide an accommodation, service, or support for a child's disability that a parent, guardian, or where appropriate, the student requests, TDSB should, on request, promptly provide written reasons for that refusal.

4. If parents and guardians of students with special education needs, and where practicable, the student, disagree with any aspect of the proposed IEP, TDSB should make available an internal appeal process for hearing and deciding on the family's concerns. This internal TDSB appeal process should meet the following requirements:

a) It should be very prompt. An IEP should be finalized as quickly as possible, so that the students' learning needs are promptly met.

b) No proposed accommodations should be withheld from a student pending an appeal. The family should not feel pressured not to appeal, lest the child be placed in a position of educational disadvantage during the appeal process. In other words, a family should not fear that if they launch an appeal, the student will suffer because TDSB will not provide an accommodation or service TDSB has offered, during the time while the appeal is pending.

c) The appeal process should be fair. TDSB should let the family know all of its issues or concerns with a family's proposal regarding the IEP. The family should be given a fair chance to express its concerns and recommendations regarding the IEP.

d) The appeal should be to a person or persons who are independent and impartial. They should have expertise in special education. They should not have taken part in any of the earlier discussions or decisions regarding the IEP for that child.

e) At the appeal, every effort should be made to mediate and resolve any disagreements between the family and TDSB. If the matter cannot be resolved by agreement, there should be an option for TDSB to appoint a person or persons who are outside TDSB to consider the appeal, along short time lines.

f) At the appeal, written reasons should be given for the decision, and especially if any of the family's requests or concerns are not accepted.

g) If, after receiving the appeal reasons, the family wishes to present any new information, it can ask for the appeal to be reconsidered. This should be along short time lines.

h) After the appeal is decided, if the family is not satisfied, it should be able to bring its concerns regarding the proposed IEP to the Executive Superintendent for Special Education, for a further consideration.

5.   TDSB should establish a process for parents and guardians of students with special education needs and where practicable, the student, where they can raise concerns about the implementation of the IEP. For example, this should be available if there is a concern that the IEP is not being fully implemented. These should follow the same procedures as listed above for family concerns regarding the content of the IEP.

6. Once an IEP is established, TDSB should put in place a process for monitoring or periodically checking on a random basis to see to what extent IEPs are being effectively implemented. A synthesis or summary of the results of this audit or monitoring should be shared with the Special Education Advisory Committee and the TDSB trustees, with any identification of students removed. It should break down the information, including showing any differences in the experiences of students in elementary school as compared to those in high school.

Motion #3 (June 7, 2016)

Ensuring a Fully Accessible Built Environment at TDSB Schools

BACKGROUND
The Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights require that TDSB provide accessible buildings in which education is provided to students, unless to do so would cause TDSB (a 3 billion dollar operation) "undue hardship." As well, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires Ontario, including the TDSB, to become fully disability-accessible by 2025, less than nine years from now. That includes the physical accessibility of its schools.

Physical barriers in TDSB schools hurt a wide range of people. The physical accessibility of TDSB schools is required in order to meet the needs of students, as well as any family members and TDSB employees with disabilities. If a school is to be opened up for a public event, physical accessibility barriers also impede members of the public, wishing to attend, who have a range of different disabilities.

Accessibility barriers in the built environment can create obstacles for people with a wide range of disabilities. This includes for example, people with mobility disabilities, people with vision loss and people with hearing loss. The design of the built environment in a school can also help or create problems for people on the autism spectrum.

It is not sufficient for buildings to simply meet the requirements of the Ontario Building Code, or existing accessibility standards enacted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Neither of those laws provides sufficient built environment accessibility requirements.

The final report of the 2015 Barbara Hall review of TDSB Governance concluded:

"We also heard comments about the lack of physically accessible schools, characterized as a disregard for the right to freedom from barriers to access for those with disabilities. We heard that there is no plan to make all schools accessible by the year 2025, as required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Frustration was clearly expressed that equity and accessibility do not seem to be core values demonstrated by the TDSB."

At its March 7, 2016 meeting, TDSB staff advised SEAC that of the 550 schools in the TDSB, only 85 are now disability-accessible. We do not know what measure or standard for built environment accessibility was used to assess those schools. TDSB staff advised SEAC at that meeting that the Ontario Government does not give it any funds earmarked for built environment accessibility retrofits.

In this year, TDSB has dedicated five million dollars, drawn from other allocations, to use on accessibility built environment retrofits. SEAC was told that the use of that five million dollars is expected to raise the number of accessible schools to 140 out of 550.

TDSB staff told SEAC that neither TDSB nor the Ontario Government has created a provincial design standard for the construction of a new school, or for a renovation of an existing school, to ensure that it is fully accessible to people with disabilities. TDSB staff told SEAC that TDSB has a policy that any new construction is to meet or exceed accessibility requirements in the Ontario Building Code.

Complying with the Ontario Building Code does not ensure that a new building is fully accessible. It is wasteful and inefficient to re-invent the built environment accessibility wheel each time TDSB builds a new school or renovates an existing one.

TDSB's duty regarding the accessibility of its built environment is not new. It was not first created by the AODA. It dates back over three decades, to the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights.

In the past, TDSB has treated accessibility issues, like built environment accessibility, as a separate silo from special education. These should be coordinated, and not isolated in silos. SEAC has tried to start the process of breaking down those silos, by including a review of built environment as part of its review of special education at TDSB.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEAC therefore recommends as follows:

1. TDSB should develop a plan for ensuring that the built environment of its schools and other educational facilities becomes fully accessible to people with disabilities as soon as reasonably possible, and in any event, no later than 2025. The focus is to do as much as can be done within available funding, and through school-based decisions. As part of this planning process:

a) As a first step, TDSB should develop a plan for making as many of its schools disability-accessible within its current financial context. Accessibility does not only include the needs of people with mobility disabilities. It must include the needs of people with all disabilities, e.g. those with vision and/or hearing loss.

b) TDSB should identify which schools can be more easily made accessible, and which schools would require substantially more extensive action to be made physically accessible. An interim plan should be developed to show what progress towards full physical accessibility can be made by first addressing schools that would require less money to be made physically accessible, taking into account the need to also consider geographic equity of access across TDSB.

2. If the Ontario Government does not have a detailed and sufficient accessibility standard for the design of the built environment in schools, TDSB should develop an up-to-date list of design criteria for ensuring the physical accessibility of any new construction or renovation, especially at a school. This should meet the accessibility requirements of the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights. It should meet the needs of all disabilities, and not only those of people with mobility disabilities.

3. When TDSB seeks to retain outside design professionals, such as architects, for the design of a new school or a school renovation, or for any other TDSB construction project, TDSB should include in any Request for Proposal (RFP) a strong condition that the design professional must have sufficient expertise in accessibility design. This includes the

accessibility needs of people with all kinds of disabilities, and not just those with mobility impairments.

4. TDSB trustees and SEAC should review design decisions on new construction or renovations to ensure that physical accessibility is effectively addressed.

5. TDSB should look for funding to reallocate to accessibility retrofits, where possible, from within its budget. When doing this, TDSB should recognize that fulfilling its duties under the Charter of Rights and the Ontario Human Rights Code is an important budgetary priority.

6. Where possible, TDSB should avoid throwing good money after bad, i.e. by renovating an existing school that lacks disability accessibility, unless TDSB has a plan to also make that school accessible. For example, TDSB should not spend public money to renovate the second storey of a school which lacks accessibility to the second storey, if TDSB does not have a plan to make that second storey disability-accessible. Health and safety concerns should be the only reason for any exception to this.

7. When TDSB decides which schools to close due to reduced enrollment, a priority should be placed on keeping open schools with more physical accessibility, while a priority should be given to closing schools that are the most lacking in physical accessibility, or for which retrofitting is the most costly. For example, none of the 85 TDSB schools that are now accessible should be closed.

8. TDSB should adopt a policy that TDSB off-site events will only be held at venues with built environment accessibility.

9. TDSB should designate a chief accessibility officer, with ultimate responsibility for all accessibility efforts at TDSB, including accessibility of the built environment. This position should report directly to the Director of Education. TDSB's chief accessibility officer should periodically report to TDSB trustees and to SEAC on TDSB plans and progress on built environment accessibility.

Motion #4 (June 7, 2016)

Ensuring Digital Accessibility at TDSB

BACKGROUND

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Charter of Rights and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, TDSB has a duty to ensure full digital and information technology accessibility, and not just the physical accessibility of its built environment. If TDSB does not ensure full digital and information technology accessibility, its learning environment will include disability barriers that could easily have been prevented.

Accessibility standards enacted under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act already impose specific duties on TDSB regarding digital and information technology accessibility. TDSB must consider accessibility in its procuring goods and services used in our schools. Since 2014, TDSB has had specific duties re web content accessibility. Its digital/information technology duties under the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights supersede these, and require more prompt action than AODA accessibility standards now spell out.

It is far easier to achieve digital accessibility than built environment accessibility. TDSB's digital and information technology landscape is quickly changing. Its web content is constantly being updated. Classroom digital technology is refreshed on a far shorter cycle than is its built environment. Moreover, the steps to ensure digital accessibility can be much easier to deploy. For example, ensuring that a brochure or notice to parents is made available in an accessible format, costs nothing if TDSB takes a responsible approach to its digital and information technology practices.

TDSB's website announces general accessibility commitments under the heading "Accessibility," found at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/accessibility.aspx

Its website commits as follows:

"The Toronto District School Board is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment which actively promotes and supports human rights and accessibility for persons with disabilities.

We are committed to actively removing barriers, whether visible or invisible, so that all members of our community can fully participate in TDSB activities.

We have a variety of policies and procedures in place for staff, students and community members that ensures compliancy with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Also, we have created a Multi-Year Accessibility Plan that outlines how we ensure compliancy with the Act and moving the Board towards a more inclusive environment."

TDSB's website announces its commitments on digital and information technology accessibility. Found at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/AboutUs/Accessibility/InformationandCommunications.aspx under the heading "Information and Communication," TDSB commits:

"Keeping our community informed is critical and making materials available in accessible format is one way we support all members of our community.

The TDSB will:

Provide resources or materials – including education and training documents, student records, school program information, public emergency evacuation information – in an accessible format, upon request.

Provide accessible formats and communication supports upon request in a timely manner and at no additional cost, if any, than the amount charged to others.

Consult with the person making the request to determine the format or support required.

Provide accessible or conversion-ready formats of print, digital, or multi-media resources in school libraries, upon request.

Procure accessible or conversion-ready electronic formats, where available.

Ensure any websites and web content meet WCAG 2.0, accessibility standards."

There are several immediate examples of TDSB failing to provide proper digital accessibility. For example:

❖ TDSB's multi-year accessibility plan, required under the AODA, is posted in a PDF format lacking proper accessibility. It is not also posted in a proper alternative format such as HTML or MS Word.

❖ TDSB's electronic brochure for its April 16, 2016 Parents as Partners conference was circulated in an inaccessible PDF, without being accompanied by a fully accessible alternative electronic format. This was so despite TDSB knowing that there are parents with disabilities who would want access to that information.

❖ TDSB's online form for signing up for the 2016 Parents as Partners conference was not accessible to parents with disabilities using adaptive technology.

Digital and information technology accessibility helps many people at the same time. It helps students with special education needs. It helps parents, guardians and other family members with disabilities. It helps TDSB staff and volunteers with disabilities.

Digital and information technology accessibility is essential to TDSB's inclusion strategy. If TDSB schools and classes have digital and information technology barriers, it will be harder and more costly to integrate students with special education needs in the mainstream classroom.

A lack of full digital and information technology accessibility will delay inclusion by decades. It will place mainstreamed students with disabilities in a second-class status. This is contrary to Article 24 (Education) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Canada ratified in 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEAC therefore recommends that:

1. TDSB should ensure that:

a) Educational equipment and technology, including hardware and software, deployed in educational settings, should be designed based on universal design principles, to ensure that as many students with different abilities can use them.

b) TDSB Learning Management Systems (LMS) should be accessible to staff and students who use adaptive technology. They should have all accessibility features invoked and available to ensure that information posted through them will be accessible to students using adaptive technology such as screen readers or voice recognition tools. TDSB should ensure that no teacher is able to turn off any feature of the MS that is accessible in favour of one that is not.

c) TDSB websites and intranet content should be fully accessible, with all new information posted on them fully accessible.

d) Electronic documents created at TDSB should be created in accessible formats unless there is some exceptional and unavoidable reason demanding otherwise. If a PDF document is created, it should conform to ISO 14289 with an alternate version of the content posted in Microsoft Word or HTML format.

e) Software used to produce TDSB documents such as report cards, Individual Education Plans, or other key documents should be designed to ensure that they produce these documents in accessible formats.

f) Only textbooks and learning software should be procured which include full information technology accessibility. Any textbook used in any learning environment must be accessible to teachers and students with disabilities at the time of procurement. For example, if a textbook is available in EPUB or PDF format, the textbooks must meet the international standard for that file format. For PDF it is ISO 14289 and for EPUB it is the W3C Digital Publishing Guidelines currently under review. If a textbook is available in print, the publisher should be required to provide the digital version of the textbook in an accessible format (for example, EPUB or PDF) at the same time the print version is delivered to the school/Board. Both of these formats, if created to be accessible, provide conversion-ready content for students who might need Braille or large print versions.

2. TDSB should establish, implement and publicize information technology procurement accessibility requirements, to ensure that no information technology is purchased unless it

ensures full digital accessibility. Digital and information technology accessibility should be included in all Requests for Proposal (RFP) or other tenders for sale of products and services to TDSB.

3. As recommended in Motion #3, TDSB should establish the position of chief accessibility officer, who should have ultimate responsibility for digital accessibility.

4. TDSB should establish a detailed plan for ensuring digital accessibility. It should include a monitoring/ audit component. TDSB should semi-annually report on progress towards digital and information technology accessibility to TDSB trustees and to SEAC.

5. TDSB should include in its digital accessibility plan a detailed plan for training TDSB staff, including teachers, on ensuring digital/information technology accessibility in the classroom, on the use of access technology (where needed) and on steps how to create accessible documents and web content.

Motion #5 by TDSB SEAC as Approved April 3 2017
The Effective Inclusion of Students with Special Education Needs at TDSB

Recommendations
To supplement the four motions it passed on June 13, 2016, the TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee recommends as follows:
Recommendation 1: Adopt an Effective Definition of "Inclusion"
TDSB should adopt an effective definition of "inclusive education" for students with special education needs. It should define inclusion by regard to the purpose for education in the Education Act, which provides:
"The purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society."
The "inclusion" definition should draw upon either or a combination of these definitions, and draw on Article 24 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
a)   (from the Canadian Association for Community Living) Inclusive education occurs when ALL students attend and are welcomed into their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute to and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. As well, all students are challenged to meet their unique intellectual, social, physical and career development goals.
b)   (from Disability is Natural): Inclusion is children with disabilities being educated in the school they would attend if they didn't have disabilities, in age-appropriate regular education classrooms, where services and supports are provided in those classrooms for both the students and their teachers, and where students with disabilities are fully participating members of their school communities in academic and extracurricular activities.

Recommendation 2: Comprehensive Inclusion Strategy Should Not Exclude any Students with Any Kind of Disabilities

TDSB should adopt a comprehensive new Inclusion Strategy for all students with special education needs. In so far as that includes students with disabilities, it should apply to all students with any kind of disability, as protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code, whether or not that disability is identified as an "exceptionality" under Ontario's special education laws. For example, it should include students with any mental health condition, whether or not that condition constitutes a behaviour exceptionality under Ontario's special education law.

Recommendation 3: Comprehensive Inclusion Strategy Should Make Placement of Students with Disabilities in a Special Education Class a Last Resort, Consistent with Voluntary Parental Choice
The new Inclusion Strategy should include:
a)   (Consideration of Paragraph (a) was deferred to May 1, 2017 SEAC meeting.
b)   Where TDSB proposes to refuse to provide a student with a disability in a regular class setting with needed accommodations, supports or services, over the objections of the student or their family, on the grounds that TDSB cannot serve that student in a regular classroom setting, the principal should be required to give written notice of this to the family, with reasons addressing the test in paragraph (a), and to tell the family that it has the right to promptly receive the principal's reasons in writing. But this should not be reason to stop or withdraw services or support until a meeting has been held to discuss progress of have a review meeting of some kind.
c)   Parental choice should prevail in such placement decisions. However, parental choice should be truly voluntary, free of actual or perceived pressure. For example, a parental decision to agree to placement in a special education class may not be truly voluntary, if parents have been told that their child will receive more support or disability accommodations in a special education class than in a regular class.
d)   There should never be a one-size-fits-all approach to meeting the needs of students with special education needs. The approach should always be tailored to an individual student's learning needs.

e)   Where a special education class placement is proposed, TDSB should provide a multi-year plan aiming, consistent with the student's needs and parental choice, at progressing to eventual placement in a regular class.

f)   The foregoing paragraphs in this Recommendation 3 pertain to students with disabilities. TDSB should also develop policies and practices regarding inclusion of gifted students tailored to their specific needs, in consultation with those who advocate for gifted students. This should include a spectrum of options, e.g. an acceleration policy contemplating all forms of acceleration and specialized classes that provide for the needs of gifted students.

Recommendation 4: TDSB Should Create a Major Organizational Change Transition Plan
To transition away from the current TDSB rate of segregating students with special education needs that is more than triple the provincial average, TDSB needs to put in place a major transition plan, to create major organizational change from top to bottom, including:
a)   Time lines for action.

b)   Effective monitoring of progress and public accountability measures, including periodic reporting to TDSB trustees and to SEAC (at least semi-annually).

c)   Strong, monitored transition safeguards to ensure that no students with special education needs are put in a worse position as a result of the new Inclusion Strategy. This should include, among other things, TDSB officials who are independent of the student's school, checking with the family during the transition period to monitor that the transition is working effectively.

d)   Regularly monitoring and measuring individual student placement and program for success, including regularly checking to see the extent to which students with special education needs feel that they are effectively included in the regular educational setting.

e)   As part of this transition plan, TDSB should first choose a small number of schools to roll out key changes, monitor what works, and build a record of success. The teachers and other staff at that school, as well as students and their families, can become key players in then helping build support for spreading these successes to other schools across TDSB.

Recommendation 5: Identify TDSB Accessibility Barriers and Develop Comprehensive Action Plan and Timelines for Barrier Removal and Prevention
TDSB should systematically review its educational programming, services, facilities and equipment to identify recurring accessibility barriers within TDSB that can impede the effective inclusion of students with disabilities. A comprehensive plan for removing and preventing these accessibility barriers should be developed with clear time lines, clear assignment of responsibilities for action, monitoring for progress, and reporting to TDSB trustees and to SEAC. To fulfill its barrier removal/prevention obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, TDSB should look for accessibility barriers far beyond the built environment accessibility barriers and digital accessibility barriers addressed in SEAC's June 13, 2016 motions, and beyond those accessibility barriers addressed in accessibility standards enacted to date under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This plan should aim at all accessibility barriers that can impede students with disabilities from full inclusion at TDSB, many of which are identified in this Motion.

Recommendation 6: Rename and Re-define Misnamed Intensive Support Programs
TDSB should promptly rename and update its descriptions of its "Developmental Disabilities" and "Mild Intellectual Disabilities" Intensive Programs. It should assign to them and publicize new names and descriptions of eligibility for them that are accurate and current.

Recommendation 7: Phase Out Schools that Are Entirely Segregated
TDSB should develop and implement a long-term plan to ensure that none of its schools is entirely segregated exclusively for students with disabilities. This should be done over a reasonable time. It should be done without displacing any students now situated in one of those schools absent the consent of the student or their family. In the interim, TDSB should create as many opportunities as it can for students in those special education schools to learn and interact with students without disabilities during the school day, with an emphasis on working towards those students' future employment opportunities.

Recommendation 8: Implement Strategies to Substantially Reduce the Shuffling of Students with Special Education Needs From School to School over Their TDSB Years
TDSB should implement a strategy to substantially reduce the shuffling of students with special education needs from one school to another over their TDSB years. For example:
a)   If a student, attending a school other than their home school, for an Intensive Support Program, is prepared to shift to inclusion in a fulltime regular classroom, then consistent with

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parental agreement, the student should have the option of remaining at the same school as the ISP, and treating it as their home school.

b)   Where possible, TDSB should locate in the same school a combination of two Intensive Support Program classes that involve different levels of support. This would enable a student to progress towards a regular class setting in that school, without having to switch schools in order to switch to a different level of Intensive Support Program. It would also enable a student, where appropriate, to spend part of a school day in one program and another part of the school day in another program, to best meet the student's needs. For example, TDSB should aim to locate one of the more intensive special education programs (such as the one now called a Developmental disability class) at the same school as one involving less intense support (such as the program now called a Mild Intellectual Disabilities class).

c)   Where feasible, if a student with special education needs is required to attend a different school than his or her home school, in order to take part in special education programming, the family should have the option of having that students' siblings also attend that school, especially where this will help the student with special education needs. Whenever possible, siblings, including those with special education needs, should be able to attend the same school.

Recommendation 9. Ensure Universal Design in Learning Is Used in Classrooms across TDSB

TDSB should develop, implement and monitor a plan to ensure that all teachers and teaching staff understand, and effectively and consistently use, principles of Universal Design in Learning (UDL), and differentiated instruction, when preparing and implementing lesson plans and other educational programming. For example:

a)   TDSB should survey its front-line teachers to find out how much they now know about or were trained in UDL and differentiated instruction, how much they incorporate UDL and differentiated instruction into their lesson plans, and what supports would assist them to practice UDL and differentiated instruction in their teaching.
b)   TDSB should develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive plan to train its teachers, other teaching staff, teaching coaches and principals on using UDL and differentiated instruction principles when preparing lesson plans and teaching. Training on UDL and differentiated instruction should be mandatory, not optional.
c)   TDSB should include knowledge of UDL and differentiated instruction principles as an important criterion when recruiting or promoting teachers, other teaching staff and principals.
d)   TDSB should ensure teachers are provided with appropriate resources and support to successfully implement the UDL training. This could include appropriate adaptive technology and sufficient planning time for teachers who are sharing a team-teaching role. TDSB should also develop strategies for monitoring and assessing how effectively UDL and differentiated instruction are incorporated into lesson plans and other teaching activities on the front lines.
e)   TDSB should develop a specific strategy for monitoring and reinforcing the use of UDL and differentiated instruction in situations where a teacher in a regular classroom has very limited exposure to their students with special education needs, e.g. where a student, placed in a special education class, only spends an hour per day in a regular class.
f)   TDSB should review any curriculum, text books and other instructional materials and learning resources used in its schools to ensure that they incorporate principles of UDL.

g)   TDSB should ensure that teachers in the areas of science, technology, engineer and math (STEM) have resources and expertise to ensure the accessibility of STEM courses and learning resources. This should include ensuring that any math coaches hired under the new Ontario Government math strategy have the expertise in UDL and differentiated instruction, to effectively assist teachers in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

h)   TDSB should provide teaching coaches with expertise in UDL to support teachers and other teaching staff across TDSB.

i)   An annual UDL/differentiated instruction training report should be presented to SEAC and TDSB trustees. It should include the training done in the past year and planned for the following year; including summary of the training content, audiences and learning outcomes.

Recommendation 10: Tearing Down Counterproductive TDSB Senior Management Silos

TDSB should subsume its Special Education Department in the Teaching and Learning department. This would help special education become a more integral part of oversight of teaching and learning, not as at present, as a separate department. This should be done in a way that ensures that accumulated expertise in all exceptionalities and disabilities is retained, including expertise in mental health issues.

Recommendation 11: Tearing Down Attitudinal Barriers against Students with Disabilities

To eliminate attitudinal barriers among students, TDSB employees and some families of TDSB students, TDSB should:

a)   Develop and implement a multi-year program/curriculum for teaching students, TDSB staff and families of TDSB students, about inclusion and full participation of students with disabilities, tailored to age levels. Because online courses are inadequate for this, where possible, this should include hearing from, meeting and interacting with people with disabilities e.g. at assemblies and/or via guest presentations.

b)   Post in all schools and send information to all families of TDSB students, on TDSB's commitment to inclusion of students with disabilities, and the benefits this brings to all students.

c)   Provide specific training to all TDSB staff that deal with parents or students, on the importance of inclusion.

Recommendation 12: Removing Barriers to Participation in Experiential Learning

To ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in TDSB's experiential learning programs, TDSB should:

a)   Review its experiential learning programs to identify and remove any accessibility barriers.

b)   Ensure that its partners who accept TDSB students for experiential learning placements are effectively informed of their duty to accommodate the learning needs of students with disabilities.

c)   Create and share supports and advice for placement organizations who need assistance to ensure that students with disabilities can fully participate in their experiential learning opportunities.

d)   Monitor placement organizations to ensure they have someone in place to ensure that students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, and to ensure that effective accommodation was provided during each placement of a student with a disability who needed accommodation.

e)   Survey students with disabilities and experiential learning placement organizations at the end of any experiential learning placements to see if disability-related needs were effectively accommodated.

Recommendation 13: Ensuring French Immersion and Other Specialized Programs Are Barrier-Free for Students with Disabilities

TDSB should develop, implement and monitor a strategy to ensure that French Immersion and other specialized programs are accessible to and barrier-free for students with disabilities, including:

a)   Identifying what percentage of the students in these programs are students with disabilities, to document any under-participation.

b)   Review the admission process for gaining entry to these programs, for accessibility barriers.

c)   Review the choice of the buildings where these programs are to be delivered to ensure that students with disabilities will be able to physically attend these programs.

d)   Identify what efforts TDSB now makes to ensure that students with disabilities are accommodated in these programs, and the extent to which UDL and differentiated instruction principles are used in the teaching in these programs.

e)   Develop an action plan to address any accessibility and inclusion shortfalls.

f)   Actively publicize to students with disabilities and their families about the opportunities to take part in these programs, and TDSB's willingness to ensure that their accommodation needs will be met.

g)   Monitor the effectiveness of efforts to ensure inclusion and accessibility of these programs for TDSB students with disabilities, and report publicly on this, including to TDSB trustees and to SEAC, on an annual basis.

Recommendation 14: Ensuring Student Testing/Assessment is Free of Disability Barriers

To ensure that TDSB fairly and accurately assesses the performance of students with disabilities, TDSB should:

a)   Give its teachers and principals training resources on how to ensure a test is a fair, accurate and barrier-free assessment for students with disabilities in their class, and where needed, how to provide an alternative evaluation method.

b)   Set guidelines for proper approaches to ensuring tests provide a fair, accurate and barrier-free assessment of students with disabilities, and on when and how to provide an alternative evaluation method.

c)   Monitor implementation of these guidelines.

Recommendation 15: Ensuring Students with Disabilities Can Bring Service Animals to School

Because students on the autism spectrum have reported difficulties at some school boards with being allowed to bring a service animal to school, and have even had to take action before the Human Rights Tribunal against a school board, TDSB should ensure it has a fair protocol to ensure that students with disabilities who need a trained service animal are able to bring them to school, and respects the student's rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code. TDSB should also ensure that principals, teachers, school office staff and families of students with disabilities know about this policy.

Recommendation 16: Ensuring Accessibility of Instructional Materials that Students with Disabilities Use

To ensure that instructional materials used at TDSB are fully accessible on a timely basis to students with disabilities such as vision loss and those with learning disabilities that affect reading, TDSB should:

a)   Survey students with disabilities who need accessible instructional materials, and their teachers and families, to get their front-line experiences on whether they get timely access to accessible instructional materials.

b)   Establish a dedicated resource to convert instructional materials to an accessible format, where needed, on a timely basis. It is insufficient to place this workload on TDSB's staff who work with students with vision loss.

c)   Review its procurement practices to ensure that any new instructional material that is acquired is fully accessible or conversion-ready, and monitor to ensure that this is always done in practice.

Recommendation 17: Ensuring Accessibility of Gym, Playground and Like Equipment

To ensure that gym equipment, playground equipment and other like equipment and facilities are accessible for students with disabilities, TDSB should:

a)   Take an inventory of the accessibility of its existing gym and playground equipment.

b)   Adopt a policy on specific requirements to ensure accessibility for new gym or playground equipment, in consultation with SEAC, and widely with families of students with disabilities.

c)   Implement effective measures to ensure this procurement policy is followed and enforced.

Recommendation 18: Implement Human Resources Policies and Practices to Expand TDSB Staff Knowledge and Skills Regarding Inclusion

TDSB should develop and implement human resources policies targeted at inclusion, such as:

a)   Making knowledge and experience on implementing inclusion an important hiring and promotions criterion especially for principals, vice-principals and teaching staff.

b)   Emphasizing inclusion knowledge and performance in any performance management and performance reviews at TDSB.

Recommendation 19: Finding Out What Has Worked on Inclusion at TDSB and Elsewhere

TDSB should extensively investigate effective practices in all the areas addressed in this motion, within TDSB as well as at other school boards in Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere. This should include investigating school boards that have successfully made major transitions in the direction of more inclusion and less segregation of students with disabilities. TDSB should make its research public, and available to trustees and SEAC.

Recommendation 20: Establishing a TDSB Chief Accessibility/Inclusion Officer

TDSB should establish the position of Chief Accessibility/Inclusion Officer, reporting to the Director of Education, with a mandate and responsibility to ensure proper leadership on the matters in this motion, as well as the four motions which SEAC passed on June 13, 2016, and to help TDSB ensure that it provides a fully accessible workplace for employees with disabilities.

Recommendation 21: TDSB Regularly Reporting to the TDSB Board, to SEAC and to the Public on Plans and Progress

TDSB should establish a time line for action, including key interim milestones, on these motions. It should establish a schedule for regularly reporting to the TDSB Board, to SEAC, to any other related governance bodies and to the public, on its plans to implement this motion, and for periodically reporting on progress, with this reporting to begin no later than six months after the date of this motion.

APPENDIX E: STUDENT RECCOMENDATIONS

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **In each subject, designating an alternative teacher who can mark student work to compare with current teachers marking, if the student feels their grades are being impacted by teacher bias.** Rationale: Students identified teacher marking practices that were based on how much they "like" the student instead of merit of work, often related to student social identities or previous behaviours or past experiences with a sibling..

2. **That ALL TDSB staff (including safety monitors, OA's, caretaking, etc.) in every school receives mandatory equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism & anti-black racism and cultural competency training annually**. Rationale: Students identified staff misunderstandings and mistreatment of students based on lack of cultural competency and misinformation related to the communities they serve.

3 **That all teachers receive ongoing training on non-violent communication and restorative practice when communicating with and responding to student questions, concerns and experiences. This should include training around understanding the need for individual accommodations for students who have life circumstances and barriers that impact their ability to hand in work when it is due.** Rationale: Student's identified feeling silenced when expressing issues and needs with teachers, especially in response to conflict. They discussed concerns related to teachers yelling, mocking them publicly, making fun of them publicly, calling them out publicly, disregarding them when they asked questions,and not allowing them to explain their side of the story during conflict.

4. **That all schools in need have nutritional programs, such as warm healthy breakfast programs and snacks for students who do not have access or time to eat before they arrive at school. This should also include subsidized lunches for $2 options.** Rationale: Many students do not have access or time for nutritious meals before and/or during school and often times the lunch options at school are too expensive for low-income students to purchase..

5. **That ALL TDSB students receive Equity, Human Rights, Student Success & Guidance information workshops annually at their schools in Sept/Oct which would be facilitated by central staff.** Rationale: Students expressed lack of knowledge on their rights and how to access appropriate channels when experiencing challenges within the school environment.

6. **TTC tickets should be provided to all students from low income households, if the school is too far to walk.** Rationale: $100 a month for a metropass is prohibitive for a lot of students and families, and some students don't come to school because of tickets (Consideration should be given also to Co-op students who often cannot attend their placements due to transportation costs for the semester).

7. **That schools refrain from implementing the common practice of withholding timetables from students who have not paid their student activity fee.** Rationale: Secondary students continue to identify this as common practice in schools.

8. **That all schools gather student voice and experience annually from students who are marginalized within the school.** Rationale: Students expressed that only students who are "liked" by the teachers are asked to provide input on school initiatives, which further marginalizes particular students and does not allow the school to gather a holistic picture of what barriers students are facing.

9. **That the TDSB increase the number of Student Equity Program Advisors available to schools.** Rationale: Students and staff voice concerns regarding the disproportionate number of SEPAs compared to the number of schools with high needs around equity, student engagement and leadership.

10. **Each school has an annual student/teacher forum, that allows the student body to express concerns they have within the school environment with teachers and administrators.** Rationale: Students expressed needing a forum to provide shared experiences so that issues can be resolved to promote a healthier and more inclusive school environment.

11. **That the TDSB hires 4 student ombudspersons, one for each learning centre, attached to the human rights department.** Rationale: Students identified needing access to an external advocate when they need support to address issues of concern, bias and discrimination within their schools, who can advocate for the student and support a collaborative response with their schools.

12. **Educators and administrators should move away from a punitive style of communication and discipline and use a restorative model.** Rationale: When a teacher complains about a student, parties MUST hear the students side and not jump to conclusions. There should also be a mediated conversation between the student being accused and the staff or other student so they can resolve their issue together in a way that hears and values all sides equally.

13. **That every Superintendent and Trustee, hold an annual student focus group for middle school and secondary students, facilitated by SEPA's and other non-school based caring adults.** Rationale: Student's identified needing to express their concerns and experiences with those in a position of power to make changes, without their teachers and administrator being present. There should be a general call out for this meeting so that any student interested can attend.

14. **To develop programs in each school through which youth can educate other youth and staff**. Rationale: Train the trainer models (such as those that SEPA's facilitate) help build pride, engagement, and relationships in the youth, educating other youth and staff while also building bridges focused on ENGAGEMENT, RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION.

15. **School trips and events like prom and dances need to be accessible to all students.** Rationale: For expensive trips and events, there has to be a deeper conversation about how disadvantaged students will access funds, and parents are aware of the support that exists.

16. **Students should provide a quantitative evaluation to teachers at the end of the year that is created by research department.** Rationale: Allowing student voice to support strengthened teacher practice from those impacted by pedagogy.

17. **That all secondary schools allow students in February to identify interest in new courses that can be implemented in the following September.** Rationale: Ensuring that course **creation and and selection** are inclusive and are culturally relevant.This should be an annual practice that allows student voice and choice each year, as themes, interests and trends change.

18. **That the TDSB acknowledge the disproportionate lack of cultural diversity/representation in its hiring practices of teaching and senior administration as compared to the cultural diversity of the TDSB student body and create structures to address this.** Rationale: Students identified a shift in the learning environment and experience when their identities were represented in the staff at the school (not just the hall monitors, CYW's, or cafeteria staff).

19. **That each school supports the building of healthy, interpersonal relationships between students and teachers through extracurricular programming. If there are enough students interested in creating a club, the school MUST provide a staff advisor.** Rationale: Many marginalized students are told no one is interested in supporting the clubs that they are interested in.

20. **Every school develops an in-school team made up of students, parents, support staff and teachers to review the entire IEP process with an accompanying communication process for parents and students on an annual basis.** Rationale: All students should meet with their teachers at the beginning of each term to inform them of what accommodations are required throughout the year as students indicated accommodations are not being followed.

21. **Each teacher be provided with one personal PD day each year to specifically explore less traditional styles of teaching that marginalized students can benefit from**. Rationale: Many students feel disengaged and would benefit from experiential learning through teachers using "hands-on", experiential, media infused, technology infused, life skills focused learning strategies.

22. **Each school has additional homework support and mentorship programs for youth that can occur both at lunch and after school - including Elementary students who can be tutored by high-school students**. Rationale: Each one teach one models have been proven to be successful. High school students can be mentored by recent high-school grads/current university/college students or senior students; Provide incentives for students to do this (i.e. honorariums, volunteer hours, focus on youth employment etc.)

23. **All schools should deliver workshops annually to parents to understand students stress and anxiety and how they can support students through their school experience.** Rationale: Parents are unaware of student needs as it relates to educational pressures and expectations.

24. **Create programs that have mentors from grade 6 grade 9 to guide younger students in understanding expectations similar to the pathways to education program. Also, provide opportunities for marginalized high school students to visit and participate in a post-secondary learning environment, so they will be more likely to attend.** Rationale: Providing leadership opportunities for students to support one another and feel connected to the broader community of students.

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APPENDIX G: RESEARCH BRIEF 3 - EVALUATION OF TDSB'S SCHOOL-BASED EQUITY PROGRAMS

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APPENDIX H: RESEARCH BRIEF 1 - A SCAN OF CURRENT CONDITIONS IN TORONTO IMPACTING EQUITY

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, 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 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 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).

Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 2
Evidence of Need among TDSB's Diverse Student Population

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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 every few 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 different identified groupings. To provide a bird's eye view of 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 five identified groupings: socio-economic status (SES), racialized background, special education needs (SEN), gender, and sexual orientation.

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 five identified groupings. With this setup, a filled cell for each intersection indicates a significant gap[7] experienced by a specific group(s) of a certain grouping (column) for a particular theme (row) concerned. 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 socioeconomic status background, those who identified themselves as Black or Latin American, students with special education needs, and LGBTQ students. At the same time, by examining a specific identified grouping column, such as gender, one can also determine at a glance if gender gaps exist in certain areas.

For more detailed findings, refer to the *2011-12 Student and Parent Census:* <u>Fact Sheets</u> and <u>Census Portraits</u> at <u>census publications</u>.

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

Life in School					
	Group with Higher Needs				
Evidence of need	**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
Student suspension (2011-12)[8] • **Suspension rates for Grade 7-8: 3.3%** • **Suspension rates for Grade 9-12: 3.8%**	• Lower SES	• Black • Mixed • Latin American • Middle Eastern	• SEN	Male	• LGBTQ

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

Life Outside of School					
	Group with Higher Needs				
Evidence of need	**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

Well-being					
	Group with Higher Needs				
Evidence of need	**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