

## Section A:

# INTRODUCTION TO TDSB SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

Special Education Plan 2020

## Introduction to TDSB Special Education Plan

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## TDSB Vision for Special Education and Inclusion

"We believe that equity of opportunity and equity of access to our programs, services and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all those whom we serve, and for those who serve our school system..."

The Board is therefore committed to ensuring that fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of our school system and are integrated into all our policies, programs, operations and practices."

The Special Education Plan describes the programs and services offered by the Toronto District School Board to support all students that require special education needs and services. This plan is reviewed and updated annually to reflect the ongoing practice within the Toronto District School Board to ensure equity and inclusivity.

The Toronto District School Board is committed in ensuring each student is welcome and that an open and inclusive learning environment fosters success in student achievement, equity and well-being.

The Special Education Plan is designed to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and regulations made under the Act and other relevant legislation. ([Regulation 306](#)).

## Purpose of the Special Education Plan

To provide the Ministry and the public with information on the Board's philosophy and service-delivery model for the provision of Special Education programs, supports and services.

## Consultation Process and Annual Update of the Special Education Plan

It is a Ministry of Education expectation that stakeholders will be consulted as it relates to programs and services offered within the school board and annual updates are made to the Special Education Plan and submitted to the Ministry.

The Toronto District School Board values a strong commitment to working collaboratively with all stakeholders including school personnel, students, parents, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) members, Community Associations and Agencies - provide input to the revision process.

## TDSB Vision of Learning

### Our Commitment is Equity of Access and Outcome for All Students

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

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

Learn more in the [A Vision for Learning in TDSB document](#).

## TDSB Mission

The Toronto District School Board's Mission is to enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and to acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible, contributing members of a democratic and sustainable society.

### We value:

- Each and every student's interests, strengths, passions, identities and needs
- A strong public education system
- A partnership of students, staff, family, and community
- Shared leadership that builds trust, supports effective practices and enhances high expectations
- The diversity of our students, staff and our community
- The commitment and skills of our staff
- Equity, innovation, accountability, and accessibility
- Learning and working spaces that are inclusive, caring, safe, respectful and environmentally sustainable

# Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Student success drives everything we do in the Toronto District School Board. Our [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) sets direction and identifies system goals to support our 246,000 students and 583 schools.

This plan lays the groundwork for how we will transform student learning, create a culture of well-being, provide access to learning opportunities, allocate resources strategically and build strong partnerships. Each student will receive equitable access to programs and resources and increased opportunities to lead to successful learning outcomes.

Measuring our success is critical to know we are making a difference for students. Our expectation – and our goal – is that everyone improves. We expect to:

## Multi-Year Strategic Plan Goals

### Transform Student Learning

We will have high expectations for all students and provide positive, supportive learning environments. On a foundation of literacy and math, students will deal with issues such as environmental sustainability, poverty and social justice to develop compassion, empathy and problem solving. Students will develop an understanding of technology and the ability to build healthy relationships.

### Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being

We will build positive school and workplace cultures that support mental health and well-being — free of bias and full of potential. Educators will be equipped with the tools necessary to teach, assess, support and relate to students. We will create the conditions for every student in every school to experience the support of a caring adult. All staff will have access to professional learning opportunities that build healthy relationships and develop leadership capacity.

### Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

We will ensure that all schools offer a wide range of programming that reflects the voices, choices, abilities, identities and experiences of students. We will continually review policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion and human rights practices and enhance learning opportunities for all students.

### Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

We will allocate resources, renew schools, improve services and remove barriers and biases to support student achievement and accommodate the different needs of students, staff and the community.

### Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

We will strengthen relationships and continue to build

partnerships among students, staff, families and communities that support student needs and improve learning and well-being. We will continue to create an environment where every voice is welcomed and has influence.

## TDSB Learning Centers

As Canada's largest school board, we are always working to improve so that all students, staff, parents/guardians and members of the community feel connected, involved and supported. In September 2016 we introduced a new strategy to improve the effectiveness of our schools, make us more responsive to the needs of our communities, and increase student achievement and well-being.

### **Learning Centers**

All TDSB schools feed into one of four Learning Centers. The Learning Centers facilitate inclusion and are hubs where staff collaborate, share resources and work collectively to support all students by setting high expectations.

Each Learning Centre is staffed by:

- Special Education & Inclusion Centrally Assigned Principal; 2 Special Education and Inclusion Coordinators; 10 Special Education and Inclusion Consultants
- School Improvement Centrally Assigned Principal
- Learning coaches who will provide extra support for teachers in the classroom
- Six Superintendents of Education, led by an Executive Superintendent
- Staff from the TDSB's professional support services department, including psychologists, social workers and counsellors

Learning Centers are closely connected to the schools they support and serve the needs of school staff, students and parents/guardians.

The Learning Centers:

- Provide classroom teachers with extra support
- Allow staff to better identify and respond to the learning needs of students
- Improve communication with parents/guardians
- Make it easier for students, parents/guardians and the community to navigate the system
- Help resolve any issues or concerns in a more timely manner
- Ensure that all students across the TDSB have equitable access to programs and services

### **Superintendents of Education:**

By [School](#), [Ward](#) and [Learning Centre](#) (effective September 8, 2020)

# TDSB Vision for Special Education & Inclusion

At the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) we believe in equity and inclusion. We welcome and support all students with special education needs within well-resourced neighborhood schools. The TDSB is committed to ensuring that all students learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where all voices are valued and heard.

We are committed to make, where possible, facilities fully accessible to students, families, staff and community members.

Every year, we review and update our [Special Education Plan](#) to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our students. This includes reviewing current practices, planning for professional learning and forming and maintaining important partnerships.

## Inclusion

We believe that inclusive education provides more opportunities for all students.

Our schools allow students to:

- participate and be included as fully as possible in all classrooms and school activities,
- be valued as individuals for their unique contributions to school life,
- be supported to reach their full potential,
- enjoy a safe and secure learning environment.

The TDSB released a research report titled, [A Case for Inclusive Education](#), which highlights the benefits of adopting an inclusive education model, particularly for students with special education needs.

Placement in a regular class with appropriate special education supports is always the first consideration for students. However, we recognize that regular class placement is not for all students and some students may have needs that require more intensive support.

We work with parents to determine the most appropriate supports and enabling environment for their child. In some cases, it may be determined that a student's needs will be best met in a special education class. Our goal is to provide these intensive programs and supports equitably across the TDSB.

The TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan outlines three key goals for Special Education & Inclusion:

1. Each school will welcome all students, providing an open and inclusive learning environment that recognizes that most students can be served

effectively within their community school. We will also continue to provide intensive support programs for students with more specialized learning needs.

2. We will continue to strengthen collaboration with parents and engage effectively in the decision making process regarding their child's program, placement and well-being.
3. We will increase employment opportunities and outcomes for all students with Low Incidence Exceptionalities (Intellectual Disabilities, Physical Disability, Low Vision, Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Health/Medical).

Students are successfully included, supported and empowered when:

- They experience a sense of belonging and social citizenship
- The learning environment is modified to fit the student, not the student to fit the environment
- All identities and cultures are celebrated within the learning environment
- The right to participate and establishing a positive climate that promotes social engagement and friendships is prioritized
- Deficit thinking is rejected and students are not organized within/outside the classroom by perceived ability
- Adopting a more inclusive model can maintain or improve academic outcomes for students with special education needs, with no negative impacts on more typically developing students. Positive benefits from inclusion for all students in the classroom include:

- A more welcoming, positive school environment with increased collaboration and participation and higher academic expectations
- Access to a wider range of school resources and shared learning opportunities
- Increased social network and greater opportunities for friendships with increased safety through reduced isolation and readiness for inclusion beyond school