

# Toronto District School Board Director's Annual Report 2019



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## Message from the Director

I am pleased to share the 2019 Director's Annual Report, which highlights some of the important work happening across the system and accomplishments from the past year. As we continue forward, I am proud of the Toronto District School Board's ongoing work in support of equity, well-being and achievement for each and every student.

Our Multi-Year Strategic Plan identified the need to support our most underserved students by setting high expectations, challenging streaming and improving access and we are seeing great strides forward in student success. Through our emphasis on shared leadership and academic optimism, we have set the stage for an enhanced learning culture and are changing the trajectory for our most vulnerable students, while ensuring that all students are successful.

All of this important work depends on the quality, knowledge and engagement of staff. By continuing to invest in staff through shared leadership opportunities, professional learning and capacity building, we are improving the learning conditions for all students across the Board and ensuring that we have a workforce that reflects, understands and responds to the diverse population we serve.

Over the past year, we have also emphasized the importance of voice. Hearing directly from students, staff, parents and the community has allowed us to shape our work in meaningful and relevant ways and will continue to do so moving forward.

John Malloy

Director of Education

## Progress and Impact: TDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The TDSB is guided by its [Multi-Year Strategic Plan \(MYSP\)](#) and associated Action Plans, which set out how we will achieve the work and how we will accomplish the Board's five strategic directions:

- [Transform student learning](#)
- [Create a culture for student and staff well-being](#)
- [Provide equity of access to learning opportunities for all students](#)
- [Allocate human and financial resources strategically to support student needs](#)
- [Build strong relationships and partnerships within school communities to support student learning and well-being](#)

A great deal has been accomplished in support of student equity, well-being and achievement, including improving access to literacy resources for parents, reviewing the effectiveness of some Special Education programs, providing training to administrators in anti-oppression and anti-Black racism and establishing expectations for family and student engagement in the school improvement process.

In October, after a full year of work, we reviewed the Action Plans, re-evaluated the work we have accomplished and refocused our efforts to ensure we are continuing to support each and every student.

[Learn more and view a detailed list of completed actions.](#)

### Math Action Plan

The [TDSB Math Action Plan](#) provides specific directions to the system, schools and classrooms. Based on [EQAO data](#) from the past five years, we continue with improvement efforts aimed at increasing the number of students achieving at or above the provincial standard. Strategies and actions include:

- Identification of focus math schools to receive support by coaches, hybrid teachers, and centrally assigned staff.
- Professional learning sessions to assess students' mathematical thinking in numeracy, moving them forward in their number sense development and enhancing instructional capacity of principals to support learning in schools.
- Collaboration with Special Education Coordinators to support teachers in learning more about how to differentiate instruction and assessment for students with learning disabilities.
- Implementation of digital tools, in alignment with the goals of the MYSP related to effective and timely interventions, closing gaps, enhancing instructional practices, and meeting the needs of all learners (Knowledgehook, Math Techbook, Mathology).
- Develop and subsidize a Mathematics Additional Qualification course to build educator capacity in content knowledge and identify effective classroom practices for mathematics.

## Challenging Streaming

The TDSB is committed to setting high expectations and increasing access to programming for all students. These principles must begin in the [early years](#) and include changes to [special education programming](#) and [student discipline](#), transitions to secondary school and [Grades 9 and 10 programming](#). Much of the work to challenge streaming involves professional learning and the focus on staff's attitudes, bias and practice at the system and local level and raise expectations for all students, resulting in improved achievement and well-being.

Establishing a [strong foundation in early literacy and numeracy](#) is an essential component of TDSB's approach to challenging streaming. We are committed to working with our youngest learners to ensure that all students in Grade 1, regardless of their social identity, will be able to read with confidence, fluency, understanding and enjoyment. Similarly, we are working to ensure that all students in Grade 2 will acquire the foundational skills and concepts in mathematics so that they may continue to be successful in later grades.

We are transforming the way we provide [special education programs](#) and services to be more inclusive. Inclusion refers to an educational model in which students' special education needs are met, where appropriate, in the regular classroom comprised of students with and without formally identified special education needs. Our [model of inclusion](#) recognizes diversity within all educational cohorts and embraces the opportunity to meet individual students' needs as locally as possible in neighbourhood schools. Inclusion places each student at the centre by recognizing the importance of embracing our shared responsibility to serve all students. Inclusion also means the continuation of having congregated classrooms to meet the needs of some students with exceptionalities that are beyond the scope and expertise of a regular classroom. We will continue to serve all of our students in the most appropriate learning environments.

[Student discipline](#) also plays a role in success in school and in streaming students towards specific pathways and outcomes. We are committed to reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions and addressing the over-representation of some groups who are suspended and expelled, while maintaining safe, positive and welcoming schools. Research has demonstrated that students who experience less success in school are more likely to be suspended, and students who are suspended or expelled from school are more likely to be enrolled in Applied level classes. Research also shows that Black, Indigenous and LGBTQ students, as well as those with special education needs, are highly overrepresented in suspension and expulsion data, when compared with their representation in the overall school population. We are addressing key issues like systemic racism, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and poverty by putting different processes in place to support change, such as creating a culture of restorative practices, with a focus on cooperative ways of resolving conflict.

[Academic Pathways](#) is a plan to support the majority of Grade 9 and 10 students to study at the academic level. Research shows that students in an academic program of study generally experience more positive outcomes than those in an applied program of study and experience higher achievement in courses beyond Grade 10. Students also have greater success in post-secondary programs and maintain increased pathway options beyond high school (e.g. college, university, apprenticeship, workplace) when they study at the academic level. Overall, an academic program of study provides more opportunities for students, which is why we are committed to this important work.

## **Deep Learning on a Foundation of Math and Literacy**

In the TDSB, [deep learning](#) is illustrated by students taking ownership for their learning supported by the teacher, working with classmates on challenging issues and incorporating their interests and strengths while foundational skills and curriculum expectations are taught. Deep learning experiences engage students in community service, social justice and issues of sustainability, so they can see themselves as people who can make a difference in their classroom, school, community and beyond.

This year, in Deep Learning in Mathematics we formed working groups to gather input from a variety of stakeholders to co-develop a system math plan that supports our school improvement process and is aligned with our commitment to human rights, equity, inclusion and anti-oppression in math. We also gathered information from a variety of sources that identify strengths, concerns and areas in need of improvement that will help inform professional learning.

In Deep Learning in Literacy, we engaged staff in professional learning through a variety of models including collaborative inquiry. We focused on effective assessment and instructional practice supporting enhanced pathways. We also updated the TDSB website to include educator and parent resources to support literacy learning in the classroom and at home.

## **Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students**

We are committed to helping all students succeed and providing learning experiences, opportunities and access that keeps students engaged and excited about school. However, our data makes it clear that we need a system-wide approach to challenge and change outcomes specifically for Black students. This comes to life through the [Strategy for Black Student Achievement and Excellence](#). Our efforts are underscored by our commitment to human rights, equity, anti-oppression and anti-racism and based on the belief that what is necessary for some, benefits all students. We are focused on impacting access, opportunities and changing outcomes for Black students across TDSB. This support begins with the adults and leadership development. We believe when staff have a raised consciousness of anti-racism, and specifically anti-Black racism, achievement and well-being for Black students will increase. We are also focusing on how we approach pathways and transitions, special education, student discipline and how to build a strong foundation in the Early Years in ways that support Black students.

## **Apprenticeship, Technology and Skilled Trades Pathways**

The TDSB supports technology, skilled trade and apprenticeship pathways from K-12 and promotes opportunities across the system. In the elementary panel, through makerspaces, FIRST LEGO Robotics, Skills Ontario elementary competitions and the Young Women in Skilled Trades symposium, students are offered many experiences that can inspire them to learn more about technology and the skilled trades. Secondary students have the option to take technological education in 10 broad-base technology areas, participate in FIRST Robotics and the Skills Ontario competitions. In grades 11 and 12, students have opportunities to explore careers in the skilled trades through

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM), Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), Accelerated OYAP, Specialized OYAP, STEP to Construction, STEP to Transportation, and the Pre-Apprenticeship Construction Exploration (PACE) program.

Read student success stories from the [STEP to Construction](#) program and the [School Within a College Program](#).

## **Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments**

We continually strive to improve our schools and learning environments. Students feel a greater sense of well-being when they are engaged, feel that they belong, and feel safe and included. Knowing who our students are, their identities, abilities and lived experiences allows us to create conditions necessary for dynamic, deep learning experiences and to create environments reflective of, and based on, the assets and gifts they bring in ways that honour them.

One way we continue to support student engagement is by increasing the influence of students' individual and collective insights on decision-making. This year, we developed approaches to authentically engage and learn from students at different stages of the School Improvement Process in every school, ultimately creating a more meaningful and relevant plan to support student success. We also continue to explore ways to further engage parents and families in the same process.

[Read more about how Student Voice Boosts Confidence at Amesbury.](#)

## **Supporting Indigenous Students**

[Indigenous Education](#) is a priority at the Toronto District School Board and significant work has been done to demonstrate our ongoing commitment. An Elder's council has been created to guide the work of the Board in all matters dealing with Indigenous Education. Trustees have also prioritized Indigenous education as part of the Board's annual budget process and a source of sustainable funding has been created to support Indigenous education initiatives. Enrolment at the TDSB's Indigenous focused school – Kapapamahchakwew - Wandering Spirit School – has doubled. The school has also been relocated, the name has been reclaimed and the building is undergoing extensive renovations to Indigenize the space. This will better equip the building to fulfill the important purpose of centering Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Each year, staff from the Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC) plan and implement professional learning which is delivered to thousands of teachers. The UIEC team also runs an internal network of First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff which builds Indigenous leadership capacities across the TDSB system. The Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee is thriving, two Native Learning Centres re-engage Indigenous secondary school students and educational outcomes are improving for Indigenous students. The goal of making the TDSB a national leader in Indigenous Education is in progress.

Five new action plans specifically related to Indigenous Education were added to the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan this year to provide focused support for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples. The plans focus on leadership development, pathways and transitions, special education, suspension and expulsion and the early years.

Read more in [The Road to Reconciliation: Indigenous Education in the TDSB.](#)

## **Building Capacity through Professional Learning & Leadership**

Our greatest asset in the TDSB is the quality of our staff. We are committed to supporting educators and leaders to have the knowledge, skills and resources to ensure anti-oppressive and equitable practices are in place to support student learning and well-being. We have shifted our focus to the adults – our attitudes, bias and practice – to drive this equity work and impact students. Through improved understanding of systemic racism through professional learning, our efforts to focus on cooperative ways of resolving conflict and removing barriers has led to positive changes for students.

The TDSB [Equity Leadership Competencies](#) help all leaders gain and demonstrate the skills to lead from an understanding of equity and anti-oppression to meet the diverse needs of our students. These competencies clearly explain the TDSB's expectations from an equity perspective for everyone in a leadership role or anyone who aspires to be a leader in our organization.

In addition, a guide – [Expected Practices for Understanding and Dealing with Discrimination](#) – was developed to help staff more effectively respond to racism and discrimination in the TDSB. It sets out clear expectations for staff to fulfill their organizational and legal obligations to protect human rights under the Board's Human Rights Policy, the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

### **Supporting Diversity in Staffing**

Our goal is that our employment and promotion policies, procedures and practices result in a TDSB workforce that, at all levels, reflects, understands and responds to our diverse population. We continue work in a number of key areas, including:

- Reviewing and enhancing recruitment practices to enable the hiring of Indigenous staff and staff representative of our diverse communities.
- Reviewing all hiring and promotion processes so that our commitment to equity is embedded in all processes with an emphasis on hiring processes for Positions of Responsibility.
- Providing professional learning to those who hire staff so that our learning processes are fair, equitable and inclusive.

### **Data Collection**

The TDSB is a [leader in student data collection](#), which indicates high levels of achievement and engagement for many students. However, this data also reveals persistent gaps in achievement and well-being for some students despite dedicated efforts to address them. These gaps are strongly connected to demographic factors, such as family income, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, among others. It is because of the Board's robust data collection that we are able to continually monitor progress on Board goals. Most recently, in 2018 we released TDSB [Student and Parent Census](#) data. In 2020, we will conduct School Climate Surveys across the system, including students, staff and parents/guardians.

## **Balanced Budget 2019-20**

In June 2019, the TDSB approved a budget reduction plan for the 2019-20 school year that required \$67.8 million in staff reductions and changes to program/service delivery. The operating budget of approximately

\$3.4 billion will continue to support the TDSB's commitment to equity, and the achievement and well-being of all students.

- 77% Instruction
- 16% Pupil Administration
- 2% Transportation
- 3% Administration
- 2% Other



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