

Toronto District School Board

Policy PXX

Title: **SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS**

Adopted: [date of approval of the policy]
Effected: [date when the policy came into effect]
Revised: [date when the policy was amended]
Reviewed: [date when the policy was reviewed]
Authorization: Board of Trustees

1. RATIONALE

This Specialized Schools and Programs Policy (the “Policy”) was developed to support the Board’s ongoing commitment to improve access to Specialized Schools and Programs, and to support its commitment to offer a range of diverse program opportunities for all learners.

2. OBJECTIVE

To affirm the Board’s commitment to providing focused specialized programming in both local schools and in district-wide specialized schools or programs, and to improving access for all students to these programs.

To ensure that the design, criteria and admissions practices of specialized programs do not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any individual or group based on race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic status, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, citizenship, immigration status, family status, and marital status or body type/size or another factor as defined and covered under the TDSB Equity Policy (P037) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

3. DEFINITIONS

Board refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as “TDSB”.

Designated School is the school identified by the parent’s/guardian’s residential address.

Specialized Programs are programs that address the needs of groups of students with a particular curriculum or career interest (e.g., the arts, business studies, the

environment, pure and applied sciences, technological education, etc.). The TDSB will establish two types of Specialized Programs:

a) Local Specialized Program refers to a program within a school with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades) that is available to students registered at that school.

b) District-wide Specialized School/Program refers to a school/program with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades, etc.) that is available to students from across the district.

TDSB is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “Board”.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Education holds the primary responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Policy. Within the Director’s Office, the responsibility for the day-to-day management and coordination of the Policy is assigned to the Associate Director, School Operations and Service Excellence.

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to students, parents/guardians, and staff, including principals, superintendents, and school personnel involved in the establishment, administration, and monitoring of local specialized programs and district-wide specialized schools/programs schools.

This Policy is aligned with the Equity Policy and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

6. POLICY

6.1. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles and policy directives were developed from the recommendations that were made through the Enhancing Equity Task Force consultations. They align with the *Director’s Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report* which informed the Action Plans of the *Multi-Year Strategic Plan*, specifically the pillar of “Providing Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students.” Our commitment to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students requires that we review our policies and procedures related to access:

- The Board is committed to supporting strong local schools that are easily accessible and provide students with a wide variety of programs leading to all post-secondary destinations;

- Local schools will provide focused, specialized programming that responds to student voice, choice and interest;
- Local schools can also provide programs to broaden career choices and encourage innovation by engaging students in specialized learning opportunities;
- The Board will operate district-wide specialized schools/programs, where the delivery of specialized programs cannot be realized in a local school by bringing together system resources and student participants; and
- The Board will continually review and assess our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion, and human rights, and make changes where necessary.

6.2. District-wide Specialized Schools/Programs

- 6.2.1. District-wide specialized schools/programs are schools/programs with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades, etc.) that are available to students from across the district.
- 6.2.2. All district-wide specialized schools/programs will have standard admissions processes and criteria established by the Board.
- 6.2.3. District-wide specialized schools/programs will be available to all students. Admission priority will be given to students who are residents of the City of Toronto.
- 6.2.4. Only after applicants that reside in the City of Toronto have been offered placement into district-wide specialized schools/programs will students from outside of Toronto be considered for placement. If the number of applications from students who reside in the City of Toronto exceeds the number of available spaces, no offers will be made to students who reside outside of the City of Toronto.
- 6.2.5. The admissions criteria and application processes to district-wide specialized schools/programs will be posted online and made publically available on the Board's website. The criteria will promote equity, inclusion and human rights.
- 6.2.6. The Board will determine and review the number, scope and location of district-wide specialized schools/programs.
- 6.2.7. The Board will determine annually the available space in each district-wide specialized school/program based on enrolment projections for the regular program as well as other programs that may exist in the school.

- 6.2.8. The number of students that each school/program can accept will be communicated by central staff to school principals before any offers of admission can be made.
- 6.2.9. All applications will be processed using the Board's centralized online application system.
- 6.2.10. Transportation will not be provided for district-wide specialized schools/programs.
- 6.2.11. Parents/Guardians, on behalf of their children, or students who are 18 years or older, may apply to a maximum of two (2) district-wide specialized schools/programs. In the case where a school may offer more than one district-wide specialized program or multiple streams within a program (e.g., the Arts), each program or stream will require a separate application (to a maximum of two).
- 6.2.12. Where similar district-wide specialized programs are offered at multiple locations, students will be selected based on standardized criteria that promote equity, inclusion and human rights, as determined by the Board. Central staff may work closely with school principals to review district-wide specialized program offerings across the Board on an annual basis to identify similar programs and develop standardized criteria.
- 6.2.13. A student can only be registered in one district-wide specialized program at one time, with the exception of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program where the student can pursue the components of SHSM alongside their other courses of study.

6.3. Local Specialized Programs

- 6.3.1. Local specialized programs are programs within a school with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades) available to students registered at that school.
- 6.3.2. All schools are encouraged to provide programming that responds to the interests of its local communities and student voice.
- 6.3.3. All local specialized programs will have standard admissions process and criteria established by the school principal in consultation with the school superintendent and central staff.
- 6.3.4. The selection process for local specialized programs will coincide with the school's course selection process. For incoming students, including incoming Grade 9 students to a secondary school, the selection process can only commence after the student has accepted a placement at that school.

- 6.3.5. Local school principals, in consultation with the school superintendent and the Board's central staff, will determine and review the number and scope of local specialized programs.
- 6.3.6. Local school principals, in consultation with the school superintendent and the Board's central staff, will develop admissions criteria that promote equity, inclusion and human rights. The criteria will be used when demand for the local specialized program exceeds available space.
- 6.3.7. Admission criteria for local specialized programs will be posted online and made publicly available by schools on their school websites.

7. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this policy.

8. EVALUATION

This Policy will be reviewed at a minimum every four (4) years from the effective date.

9. APPENDICES

N/A

10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation

- *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, s. 171 (1), par. 7.

Policies

- Optional Attendance (P013)
- Equity Policy (P037)

Procedures

- Optional Attendance (PR545)
- Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs (PR612)

Other Documents

- Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report
- Multi-Year Strategic Plan
- Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, Ministry of Education, 2016