

A Vision for Service



September 2019

Our Vision for Service in the Toronto District School Board is to foster a culture that values service excellence and continuous improvement.

Every decision we make supports student well-being and learning. Providing responsive and effective service to the TDSB's primary clients – our students, their families and school communities - plays a significant role in that. While the work of Business and School Operations departments might not directly impact students, their efforts to build a service excellence culture enables those who are directly responsible for student achievement and well-being to remain completely focussed on serving the needs of students.

This work is closely aligned with efforts happening across the Board in every aspect. Our commitment to equity as the foundation for improving Business and School Operations services enables teams in these departments to use a critical equity lens to create equitable working conditions for all staff and full access to services for all clients. For example, our own identity and experience may impact our ability to provide service excellence unless we are able to confront our own bias, remove barriers, and understand the concept of privilege that might impact how we respond to clients. Using a critical equity lens in all that we do enables us to centre the needs of staff, students, and communities we serve, ensuring we provide barrier-free, fair, respectful, and inclusive services that meet individual needs.



Service excellence also helps build leadership capacity, promotes teamwork and celebrates and recognizes staff, all key areas of focus for the TDSB. This Vision emphasizes the importance of collaboration and engagement to enhance the community and ensure there is trust, high expectations and a sense of confidence that staff have the skills and knowledge required to meet the needs of every client.

Our **Service Excellence** commitment (being responsive and effective) is one of the major levers for change in the Board at the department and school level, together with the **Leadership Capacity Plan** (learning for adults) and **School Improvement Process** (setting and achieving meaningful and relevant goals that support students). This work is guided and supported at the system level by the Board's **Multi-Year Strategic Plan** (MYSP), approved in May 2018.

Building productive working relationships and collective efficacy are also departmental priorities based on shared leadership - giving everyone with a stake in the issue a voice so multiple perspectives and marginalized voices are honoured; facilitating open, honest, solution-driven dialogue; and, demonstrating leadership by influence that focuses on building positive and healthy relationships as a fundamental value. When business and school operations departments focus their improvement efforts within the context of system direction, the entire system improves.



Guiding Principles of Service Excellence

The guiding principles present a common vision of service for us all to follow and support equitable and inclusive working environments that encourage employee excellence.

Client-Focused

- Embrace our role as providers of excellent customer service
- Serve each client in a fair, consistent, courteous and respectful manner while aiming to provide accurate and timely information
- Ensure our services, systems, and structures are reviewed and changed when necessary to ensure greater equity for all clients

Responsive

- Approach each client and situation with an open mind, taking ownership of the outcome
- Listen to our clients and co-workers and strive to improve by refining our processes
- Continuously evaluate and measure our performance to build on our success

Efficient

- Collaborate and work in partnership across departments to develop innovative, client-focused solutions
- Review and manage our resources to limit waste
- Continuously invest in technology and training so we have the tools, skills and confidence to provide excellent customer service

Service Excellence Program

The TDSB's Service Excellence program aims to improve the work culture specifically in its central departments, improving how staff members serve schools and one another. Why? Because enhancing how services are delivered will support school staff, who are striving to make a difference in students' lives.

Shifting how a complex organization like the Toronto District School Board operates is complicated and can take time. Our implementation model is a two tiered approach: quick starts and deeper improvements. To fully implement our Service Excellence commitment requires us to realign work processes and delivery strategies. But of course, there are many things we can do now to help make each interaction client-focused, responsive and efficient.

Focused service improvements are planned by all Business and School Operations teams at the beginning of each school year that put clients' needs front and centre. Client focused planning requires setting success criteria and using a structured approach to monitor and assess client outcomes – similar to the school improvement process. Through a model similar to creating an enhanced learning culture,

the service excellence program is based on Business and School Operations teams increasing their capacity to solve very challenging issues together and support each other's learning, so together they improve services and create strong partnerships between departments and schools.

This program gives staff the tools they need to take ownership of their work and be accountable for what they do. By improving communication and work processes, staff can resolve problems faster and more easily.

The TDSB's Service Excellence program is built on five focus areas and includes ten expectations that are aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan:

Establishing Equity as the Foundation – Equity is the foundation of service excellence. Using a critical equity lens in all that we do enables us to review and centre the needs of staff students, and communities we serve, ensuring we provide barrier-free, fair, respectful, and inclusive services that meet individual needs.

- Creating equitable working conditions and full access to services
- Building healthy relationships that improve the client experience

Fostering Leadership and Teamwork – Building a service excellence culture is critical at all levels of an organization. Leaders and Unit teams must demonstrate excellence both in how they work together and how they serve clients.

- Leading with a spirit of service excellence
- Supporting teams in achieving service improvement goals
- Organizing to achieve service improvement goals

Strengthening Service Delivery – Finding better ways to deliver services to clients must be a continuous work activity, with understanding the client needs and soliciting their feedback as the foundation for ongoing service improvements.

- Improving service delivery continuously
- Following the Best Practices for Business Communications and encouraging others to also be responsive

Celebrating Service Excellence – The efforts of individuals and teams underpin the services we provide to staff, students and communities; recognizing and celebrating these efforts confirms that staff and their work are valued.



- Recognizing and celebrating individual and team effort

Developing Leadership Capacity – Providing opportunities for others to build their leadership capabilities promotes shared leadership and team engagement and encourages new ways of working.

- Fostering a climate of shared leadership building staff's capacity to demonstrate leadership in their role

Assessing Outcomes: Annual Certification Process

A primary aim of the Service Excellence program is to help teams grow their skills and commitment to excellent service. Getting recognition for work well done is a key driver of building a service excellence culture. This is why the program includes at its core an annual process for certifying the achievement of teams. Certification assesses the service improvement work that teams have conducted year over year to determine if they have achieved their targets, demonstrated a client focused mindset and achieved the desired impacts on their key clients.

The certification process also provides teams with additional supports, recognizes team achievements and highlights opportunities for development.

Supporting the certification process is an annual cycle of activities, which includes Fall kick-off workshops, mid-year check ins, and year-end certification meetings with service improvement teams (SITs) to review progress and assess the level of existing practices and improvements achieved.

Annual Certification Cycle



Certification Levels

Certification is awarded at four levels:

Level Name	Final Verification Score
Explorer Level	25 to 49
Implementer Level	50 to 74
Specialist Level	75 to 88
Master Level	89 to 100

Assessing Outcomes: Certification Score

The certification score for unit teams is based on the focus areas and expectations outlined in the Unit Team Worksheet. The components that make up a team's final certification score include:

- **Team assessment:** Service improvement teams complete and submit a team assessment using the ten expectation questions in the Unit Team worksheet. The Service Excellence Team uses this as a starting point for the assessment.
- **Service Excellence Portfolio:** The Service Excellence team assess the portfolio evidence for existing and new practices submitted by the service improvement team. This assessment informs the final assessment levels on the worksheet.
- **Certification Visit:** Service improvement teams also meet with a member of the Service Excellence team at the end of each year. This visit is an opportunity for teams to discuss their achievements, clarify questions the Service Excellence team has about the SIT's certification portfolio and discuss opportunities for improvements.

The final certification score for each team is based on the culmination of these components and how they meet with assessment criteria laid out in the Unit Team Certification Rubric

Earning Level 4: Mastering

Level 4 certification is a very significant achievement, requiring a team to:

- Earn at least 89 points
- Have at least two years of certification at Level 3: Specializing
- Demonstrate team mentoring/sharing of best practices with other units
- Present client feedback showing a minimum client satisfaction rating of at least 75%

Certification Targets

- 2018/19: All teams participate Certification Cycle 1
- 2019/20: All teams achieve level 1 or 2
- 2020/21: All teams achieve level 2 or 3

System Reporting

At the end of each annual cycle, the service excellence team will provide a certification report for each Business and School Operations team. This report assigns a certification level based on how the team's practices and processes demonstrate the ten expectations. Team strengths and recommendations on areas to improve are also important elements of the report, so that each team can build both its capabilities and capacity to create a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.

Aggregating report data from the sixty seven teams that are currently engaged in the program provides a system wide view of how Service Excellence is being demonstrated across these departments. System leaders receive an annual overview report that provides both aggregate and detailed scoring data for each of their teams. It also provides highlights and recommendations at a system level so they understand what supports are needed for their teams to successfully engage in the program and deliver service excellence. This deeper view of service excellence enables system leadership to have a better understanding of both the highlights and issues associated with the services their teams deliver.

Conclusion

We are committed to helping each and every student succeed in the Toronto District School Board. Every student deserves a great education and student well-being and learning must be at the centre of every decision we make. When students have equitable access to programs, resources, and opportunities, they have more positive learning outcomes.

Our way forward, will focus on providing responsive and effective service to our clients through every interaction to ensure the continued focus of supporting our students' success. Through our commitment to building a culture that values service excellence and continuous improvement, we can better support and strengthen our system to best focus on and meet the learning and well-being needs of our students.

