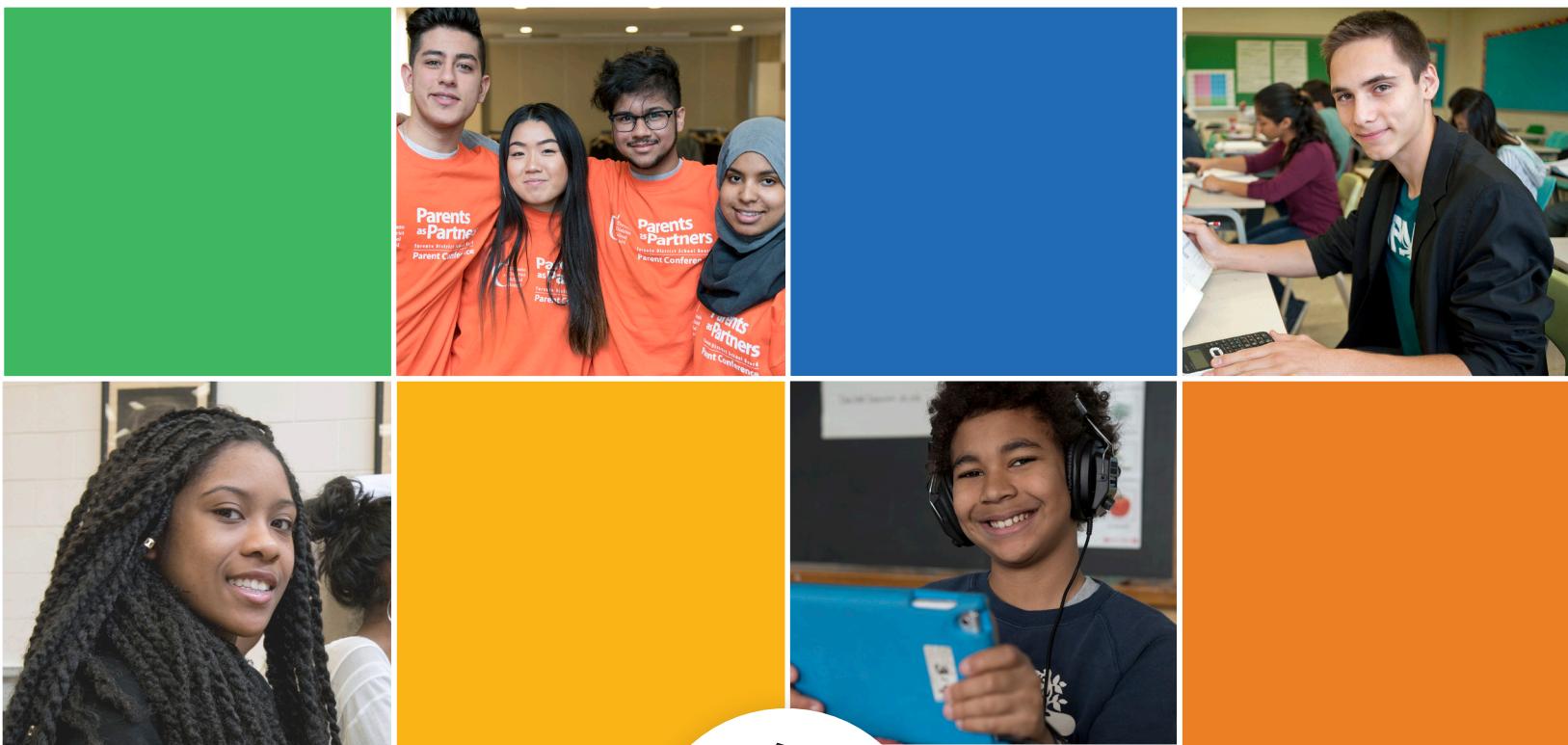


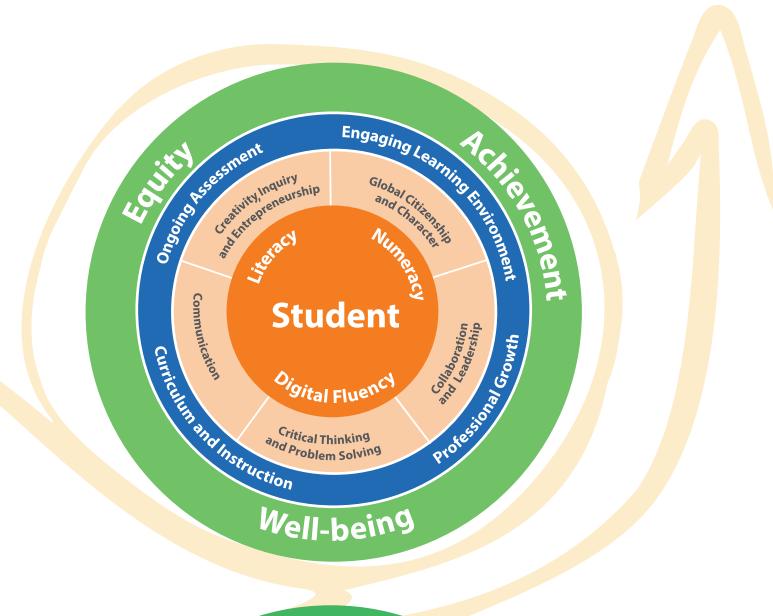
# A Vision for Learning



**Our Educators' Guide to School  
Improvement and School Effectiveness**

April 2019

**Improvement  
for all Students**



**Enhanced  
Learning Culture**



**Shared  
Leadership**



**Leadership that Engages and  
Empowers All**

# **“Equity, well-being and achievement will come from a school culture that prioritizes shared leadership, productive working relationships, trust, high expectations and collective efficacy.”**

Our Vision for Learning in the Toronto District School Board is to enable all students to reach high levels of achievement and to ensure each student develops the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible members of a democratic society.

Every student deserves a great education and student well-being and learning must be at the centre of every decision we make. It is our goal – and responsibility – that every student feels connected and engaged in their learning and has the tools, resources, supports and opportunities they need to thrive.

Knowing who our students are is at the very core of this work. We must understand, about each and every student, what their strengths, interests and lived experiences are; what biases we might have that may affect their learning; and how we must, as the educators, counter these biases to ensure that the ways we are leading and teaching are relevant and engaging for students. The responsibility is then on us, the adults to examine our biases, reflect on the impact of power and privilege in the classroom and school, and shift our attitudes and practice to meet the needs of our students.

To do that, we must first start with our deepened commitment to human rights, equity, anti-oppression and anti-racism. This sets the foundation to support those who have been traditionally underserved, and will raise the bar for all students. It will help close the achievement and well-being gaps our student data has continually identified as being strongly connected to demographic factors such as family income, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, among others. It will help address patterns of academic streaming by setting high expectations and increasing access to programming and support. It will help us create a more 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 feel included, every voice is heard, and every experience is honoured.

Equity then drives student achievement and well-being. When students see themselves reflected in their learning, feel that their voices are heard, have more opportunities, feel that they belong, know they have a caring adult to turn to, students feel good, engaged, connected and are ultimately successful.

At the system level, the Board’s **Multi-Year Strategic Plan** (MYSP), approved in May 2018, guides and supports our work.

At the school and department level, the major levers for change are the **Leadership Capacity Plan** (learning for adults), **School Improvement Process** (setting and achieving meaningful and relevant goals that support students) and **Service Excellence** commitment (being responsive and effective). Together, they will move our system – and our students – forward.

This revised Vision for Learning outlines the ways we serve and honour the diverse voices of our communities. We look forward with renewed focus and this document is a guide to how we continue to create the conditions to support equity, well-being and achievement in the TDSB.

This Vision emphasizes the importance of collaboration and engagement to enhance the learning community and ensure there is trust, high expectations and a sense of confidence that staff within the school have the skills and knowledge required to meet the needs of each and every student.

Real change happens when each unique school prioritizes shared leadership, productive working relationships, trust, high expectations and collective efficacy. And, when classrooms and schools focus their improvement efforts within the context of system direction, the entire system improves.

## **Multi-Year Strategic Plan**

The MYSP sets direction and identifies five broad system goals to support our 246,000 students and 582 schools:

### **Transform Student Learning**

We will have high expectations for all students and provide positive, supportive learning environments. On a foundation of literacy and mathematics, 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. We are committed to having the majority of our students successfully completing courses in an academic pathway in secondary school.

### **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.



## Multi-Year Strategic Plan



### Vision for Learning & Service



### Leadership



#### School Improvement

- Transform Student Learning
  - Deep Learning: Global Competencies
  - Deep Learning: Mathematics
  - Deep Learning: Literacy
  - Early Years: Literacy & Numeracy
  - Inclusion/Special Education
  - Suspensions, Expulsions & Restorative Practices
  - Grade 9 & 10 Academic
  - Indigenous Education
  - Toward Excellence in the Education of Black Students

- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
  - Well-Being and Mental Health
  - Staff Well-Being
  - Physical Well-Being
  - Student Voice

- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
  - Long Term Program and Accommodation Strategy
  - Policy and Procedures Related to Access
  - Secondary Program
  - Accessibility
  - Human Rights
  - Employment Equity

- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
  - Budget Resource Allocation
  - Learning Opportunities Index
  - School Budgets and Fundraising
  - Equitable Distribution of Facility Resources
  - Staffing Allocation

- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning & Well-Being
  - Community Engagement Standards
  - Internal Communications
  - External Communications
  - Open Access to TDSB Data
  - Issues Management for School and System Leaders
  - Government Relations and City of Toronto Public Education Advocacy

## **Creating the Conditions for Improvement**

Our Vision for Learning is based on the belief that change happens at the classroom and school level. As Canada's largest school board, we are continually striving to improve our schools and learning environments to meet the needs of today's students and support their continued success. Students are at the centre of this Vision and high expectations for their learning and achievement are paramount.

We will support school leaders and educators in the process of continuous improvement.

Every staff member plays a role in this important work that is guided by four key areas: shared leadership, enhanced learning culture, improvement for all students and through the School Improvement Process.

### **Shared Leadership**

Shared leadership is based on creating the conditions and processes needed to allow for diverse voices to be part of the improvement process. Opportunities for collaboration between staff, students, and parents are essential and support the development of trust, high expectations, and collective efficacy among staff, students, and parents.

Sharing leadership with all staff in coordinated ways is pivotal to our work. To make effective change, we must consider how the leadership is shared throughout the school community to facilitate conditions for change. Collaboration and engagement are emphasized to enhance the learning community and ensure that staff not only have the skills and knowledge to meet the unique needs of their students and communities, but also have the trust, high expectations and a sense of confidence to do so.

Shared leadership is the creation of conditions in every school, department and across the system that:

- Recognizes that not everyone experiences the education system in the same way and honours the experience and expertise of all.
- Creates processes so that everyone has access to influence that is aligned with their expertise.
- Realizes that decisions are not always meaningful when they are made only at the "top" but may also lack important direction if they are only made from the "ground."
- Recognizes that formal leaders, such as principals or superintendents, play a significant role so that optimal conditions for learning exist and that efforts are coordinated.

### **Enhanced Learning Culture**

We will strive to foster a collective commitment to continuous improvement and internal accountability.

This will require an enhanced learning environment and culture where:

- Everyone in the organization learns to work in teams which lead to the ability to identify and solve very challenging issues.
- Everyone is willing to make themselves professionally vulnerable and open to new knowledge. This means that they share their wisdom AND they recognize what they must continue to learn.
- Every school and department throughout the TDSB holds high expectations for staff and students.
- All partners and stakeholders can have trust in the focus and direction of each school, department and the entire TDSB.
- Staff has the confidence that they can make a difference for each and every student by understanding the

unique needs, experiences and circumstances of every student.

- Relationships are created and maintained through increased engagement leading to the empowerment of students, staff, parents and communities.
- Schools and departments learn from each other and a strong partnership exists between school, Learning Centre and system leadership.

## **Improvement for All Students**

TDSB has collected student data which indicates high levels of achievement and engagement in many areas and 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. We also acknowledge that our biases may unintentionally create barriers for many of our most underserved students.

Setting high expectations and increasing access to programming and supports is critical to the success of all students. We are committed to challenging the concept of streaming and exclusion to improve achievement and well-being of all students. We will confront and interrupt patterns of academic streaming with the aim of creating more equitable outcomes for all students. The issue of streaming may be addressed by examining the bias and barriers in areas including the Early Years, Special Education, disciplinary processes in suspensions and expulsions and academic programming and the impact of these on students' mental health and well-being.

With these principles as the foundation of our work, we expect the following systemic result:

- Ensuring all students are reading by the end of Grade 1 by providing effective instruction and using interventions where necessary, partnering with families, and monitoring programs continuously.
- Creating inclusive learning opportunities in every school which underscores our commitment to equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, global competencies, universal design and engagement and well-being.
- Analyzing decisions around suspensions and expulsions and strengthening our use of restorative practices to interrupt the automaticity of the suspension and expulsion process.
- Encouraging a majority of students to study at the academic level in secondary school to keep all options to post-secondary pathways open.
- Continuing to support mental health and well-being in each school by ensuring all students feel a sense of belonging and have a caring adult to rely on and who understands their identity and facilitates opportunities and activities that support well-being on an ongoing basis.

## **School Improvement Process**

The School Improvement Process is the catalyst for change within a school. Creating the conditions for collaboration focused on capacity building is an essential leadership practice of Principals. The Superintendent of Education (SOE) also plays a vital role in supporting schools in monitoring and providing feedback throughout the School Improvement Process.

The School Improvement Process is a cyclical process that promotes shared leadership within a school team and community. It helps focus the attention of educator learning, builds coherence and a shared sense of purpose across the school community. It acknowledges the importance of building a common understanding of areas of strength and areas that require more learning and improvement through the use of data. And, it is grounded in evidence-based decision making that informs monitoring and feedback.

All schools must engage in the process to determine three authentic goals to support the students they serve: equity, achievement and well-being. These goals are individual and unique to each local school and should be meaningful and relevant to your specific students. All goals must begin with students and with the intention of improving achievement and well-being for all, but especially for those students who have been underserved. Innovation in action at the school level will ensure that each student is thriving in an accessible, inclusive and engaging environment.

Once you've determined the student learning focus based on your classroom and school level data, the next question is: how do we structure what the adults are doing, and need to learn, to achieve the specific goals?

The School Improvement Process will include identifying barriers and opportunities in these three areas, through the creation of structures and processes to include participation of staff, students and parents. Engaging in professional learning will allow each school to achieve greater student success by determining the evidence/data the school will collect to monitor progress toward their goals and continuously reflecting on what is happening to support next steps in these areas:

### ***Equity***

We are committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. Our commitment to human rights, equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression includes anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, and other forms of racism and discrimination against racialized groups, such as Sikhs, Roma, and people from Latin America as well as homophobia, transphobia, the discrimination faced by those with physical and intellectual disabilities. Only when our school communities are equitable, inclusive and free from oppression, racism and other forms of discrimination, can learning and well-being improve.

To do that, we must identify, confront and eliminate barriers to success; examine our biases; and reflect on the impact that power and privilege has on students and their success. We must hold high expectations for all students to support not only those who have traditionally been underserved, but to raise the bar for all students.

Knowing who our students are, their identities, abilities and lived experiences allows us as educators to create the

### ***Our Tenets of Equity & Anti-Oppression:***

- The voices and experience of those who may be marginalized will be brought to the centre of the discussion*
- We must acknowledge that systems and structures drive practice.*
- Majority and minority are not about numbers.*
- There is no such thing as neutral.*
- While the intent may not be to harm we must acknowledge impact.*
- Work is not about blame, shame or guilt, but about our collective responsibility to close achievement and well-being gaps and raise the bar of excellence for ALL.*



conditions necessary for dynamic, deep learning experiences and create environments reflective of, and based on, the assets and gifts they bring in ways that honour them. This has to be done in a partnership between students, families, community, elders and staff.

Schools must respond to an identified gap, need or systemic barrier by identifying the adult learning necessary to transform the system and structures. In order to serve students well, we must understand our own identities as educators and in relation to the students and families we serve. Staff will engage in professional learning that incorporates an understanding of equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression. Through it, they will be able to identify their own power, bias and privilege to better assist them in their support of students who are most underserved and/or not achieving at the provincial level. This learning will allow staff to better identify and understand those students and their experiences to better support them. The ability to centre students' lived experiences, stories, histories, assets, strengths and abilities will go an enormous way to challenging historic power imbalances and to changing the dynamics that have often stood in the way of some students' success. This learning will also help meet the achievement and well-being goal and will, in turn, support the school's Professional Learning Plan.

This transformation in how we approach and understand equity has a systemic, communal and personal perspective. This work and learning is supported by the system in a formal capacity; at the local school community level, learning will continue in more informal environments; and finally, personal professional growth is constantly encouraged and necessary to move forward.

This approach will impact instruction, learning opportunities and the learning environments we provide students and through this commitment we will help close the student achievement and well-being gaps. That is why the equity goal, focused on adult learning, underpins the achievement and well-being goals.



## Well-Being

Student mental health and well-being is an important part of student success and a priority at the TDSB.

In the school environment, so many factors have an impact a student's sense of well-being: a sense of belonging in the school, a feeling of safety, relationships with other students and staff members, school work and scheduling and more. Identity and lived experience also have an impact on how young people experience the world and consequently on their well-being and mental health. For example, students facing discrimination will experience different social emotional impact(s) than their peers who do not.

Students need our collective support to be healthy individuals and, the relationship that students have with each other and adults is an important part of that. Strategies to improve well-being must be grounded in developing an awareness of how our own biases influence decisions such as responses to students' distress and the conditions in the classroom that contribute to wellness.

Students' voices need to be at the centre of the discussion about how to improve their well-being. When students and parents become involved in this process they are more likely to develop a sense of agency, build positive relationships and connection with staff as they become active participants in their own schooling experiences.

As educators, we must work with parents and students to pay attention and respond to the rich census data on students' emotional well-being and insights into students' school experiences. This data must inform the development of well-being goals, and respond directly to student and parent voices to develop learning environments that are engaging, inclusive, opportunity-driven and lead to increased learning outcomes.

## Achievement

Each and every student deserves a quality education that meets their specific needs, honours their voices, and effectively prepares them for a life after high school. We are committed to helping students become deep thinkers, problem solvers, creators, collaborators, leaders, global citizens, entrepreneurs and communicators.

Providing students with a more inclusive learning environment focussed on authentic, real world applications is critical for success, as it will help students develop key global competencies and improve core learning skills such as literacy and numeracy, which remain important foundations for our work.

We will continue to transform instructional practices and provide equitable access to digital tools and resources in the classroom as our world changes our students need to be digitally fluent. We also need to actively working towards removing physical and attitudinal barriers and addressing implicit bias so our learning environments are inclusive and authentic.



Schools must use a variety of student learning data as well as observational data of instructional practices to consider how to transform student learning. We need to focus our improvement on understanding what is needed in classroom instruction to ensure the learning environment is focused on improvement in fluency and conceptual understanding in literacy and mathematics. This is not done in the absence of a focus on authentic, real world experiences, but rather through the use of innovative instructional practices that use technology, develops dynamic collaborative partnerships between students and educators, and engages students through experiential learning opportunities in our global competencies. Data that includes authentic classroom assessment, instructional self-assessment, and peer observations, will ensure a continuous improvement cycle is part of the professional learning plan.

## Communicating Progress and Impact

Measuring success is critical to know that we are making a difference for students. We are committed to monitoring and providing feedback on the following systemic results:

- Close the achievement and well-being gap while keeping expectations high for all students because we are providing access to the programs, resources and learning opportunities that students require, while removing systemic barriers that may exist for them.
- Transform student learning. Students will improve in literacy and math and they will strengthen their global competencies (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, citizenship and character) because they are engaged in learning experiences and opportunities that promote service, social justice and sustainability.
- Increase engagement of students, staff, parents and communities because we are honouring voice, experience, identity and expertise, and we are willing to adjust our directions and plans because of this engagement.

Monitoring, feedback, and reflection are essential elements in the School Improvement Process. We will assess progress by collecting various types of evidence including student achievement data, census data, and school climate surveys. Success will also be evident when we see significant changes in our practice as a direct result of our commitment to human rights, equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression. This commitment will guide identification and removal of systemic barriers; challenge our own assumptions, perspectives and bias; and reshape the instruction, learning opportunities and environments we provide for students.



Communicating progress to parents, community, trustees, and Superintendent of Education is an opportunity for reflection and supports the notion of engagement and shared leadership.

## Conclusion

We are committed to helping each and every student succeed. 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 shared leadership, enhanced learning culture, improvement for all students and the School Improvement Process. By enhancing ownership for this process at the school level, supported and coordinated by the TDSB, we will move forward improving equity, well-being and achievement for each and every student.

We are not afraid to challenge those things that are standing in the way of this vision, because we will continue to work together and support each other. Leadership that engages and empowers all will enhance our learning culture and our students will improve. We will provide support through our Leadership Capacity Plan and Equity as a Leadership Competency Tool to support our leaders to meet these expectations.

This work is necessary, ongoing and urgent. Real change happens in the classrooms and schools after each school community examines their data and determines actions that are relevant and meaningful for their specific community. Innovation in action at the school level will also ensure that each student is thriving in an accessible, inclusive and engaging environment.

A Leadership Capacity Plan has been developed to support our leaders to make these transformations. Our model for developing leadership capacity focuses on how we learn as a system and what core skills and knowledge are needed for leaders to create the conditions so our students will be successful. Our Leadership Capacity Plan outlines a framework for the key leadership actions and practices needed to do this work in schools and departments. We offer a range of professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders, school leaders, and system leaders that build on the experiences and knowledge of individuals. To meet the diverse needs of all of our leaders, our Leadership Capacity Plan acknowledges the continuum of learning that is required and the importance of job-embedded, collaborative professional learning. It is complemented by the Equity as a Leadership Competency Tool which describes the skills we need as leaders to provide equal outcomes and opportunities for personal success and academic achievement.

This work is supported by the system and together we are all working with the same vision in mind: helping all students succeed. Together, we can make this vision a reality.

Our core commitments are to hold high standards for our students to support their achievement, provide opportunities to enhance their well-being and remove any barriers that stand in the way of their success.

Our responsibility as educators though does not end here. The purpose of public education is not only to prepare students for their own career, but to help students become compassionate citizens who stand against injustice, challenge oppression and discrimination of all kinds, create solutions to significant problems and make our communities healthier and stronger.

This is no simple task. But we are committed to our students and we know if we provide them the right opportunities, they can change the world. *This is our Vision for Learning in TDSB.*