

# Toronto District School Board

Policy P100

Title: **STUDENT INTEREST PROGRAMS**

Adopted: May 25, 2022

Effectuated: May 25, 2022

Revised: N/A; [insert new date]

Reviewed: N/A

Authorization: Board of Trustees

## 1. RATIONALE

This Student Interest Programs Policy (the “Policy”) was developed to support the Board’s ongoing commitment to improve access to special programs based on student interest, and to support its commitment to offer a range of program opportunities for all learners.

This Policy aligns with Board policies, including the Equity Policy (P037), Human Rights Policy (P031) and is consistent with the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This Policy supports the Board’s commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

- To affirm the Board’s commitment to providing strong programming in local schools and to ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in alignment with the recommendations made in the Enhancing Equity Task Force, the Director’s Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report, the equity priorities of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the vision of the Secondary Program Review.
- To ensure that the admissions practices and program components of Student Interest Programs are inclusive and barrier-free and do not reinforce or increase marginalization 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, marital status, body

type/size and/or any other enumerated ground as defined and covered under the TDSB's Equity Policy (P037), Human Rights Policy (P031) and the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

*Board* refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as "TDSB".

*Central Student Interest Program School* refers to an Elementary School or Secondary School with no Designated Attendance Area. All students at the TDSB are eligible to apply to attend and are required to follow application processes.

*Designated School by address* refers to the school identified by the primary place of residence of the parent/guardian/adult student.

*Facilitated Access to Skilled Trades (F.A.S.T.) Schools* refer to schools with established Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs that are linked to skilled trade-based sectors. F.A.S.T. Schools cannot have an Out-of-Area Admissions status of "Closed".

*Student Interest Programs* refer to 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.). There are two types of Student Interest Programs: Local Student Interest Programs and Central Student Interest Programs.

*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, Student Learning and Equitable Outcomes.

### **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 Student Interest Programs, including F.A.S.T. schools and their associated SHSM programs and Central Student Interest Programs.

This Policy does not apply to:

- Placements into Special Education Intensive Support Programs (ISP). Students access these programs through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process
- Placements into French Immersion/Extended French Programs
- The application process for Alternative Schools
- Indigenous-focussed Schools
- Caring and Safe School Programs
- Edvance Programs and Adult Learning Centres
- Secondary schools without an attendance area that are not Central Student Interest Program Schools
- Secondary Schools without a Boundary
- High Performing Athlete Programs
- International Baccalaureate Programs

## **6. POLICY**

### **6.1 Guiding Principles**

- The Board is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. This includes our ongoing commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation, human rights, equity, anti-racism, and our commitment to combatting anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and all other forms of racism and discrimination;
- The Board is committed to supporting strong local schools that are accessible and provide students with a wide variety of programs leading to all post-secondary destinations;
- Local schools will provide focused programming that responds to student voice, choice and interest;
- Local schools will provide programs to broaden career choices and encourage innovation by engaging students in specialized learning opportunities; and
- The Board will operate district-wide programs/ schools, where the delivery of specialized programs cannot be realized in a local school by bringing together system resources and student participants. The mandate of these programs/schools is to help develop and foster student achievement based on interest.

## **6.2 Student Interest Programs**

6.2.1 The TDSB is committed to supporting strong, accessible and inclusive community schools that provide educational programs, including Student Interest Programs, for the diverse needs of its students. Schools will provide programming that is responsive to the interests and lived experiences of its students.

6.2.2 The TDSB has two (2) types of Student Interest Programs:

1. Local Student Interest Programs refer to interest-based programs within a school with a specific focus (e.g., Math/Science, Specialist High Skills Majors, Advanced Placement) that are available to students registered at that school who either live in the designated attendance area or have applied to attend through Out-of-Area Admissions.
  - i) The Skilled Trades-Based SHSM program refers to the Specialist High Skills Major programs that exist in schools in the TDSB and support a skilled trade-based sector.
2. Central Student Interest Programs refer to district-wide specialized programs with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, etc.) that require specialized infrastructure, facilities, scheduling, staffing and support. These programs/schools are available to students from across the Board. TDSB Central Student Interest Programs are based on programs developed in schools and by the TDSB and align with Ministry directives (e.g., de-streaming) and Board policies.

## **6.3 Local Student Interest Programs**

- 6.3.1 All schools are encouraged to provide programming that responds to the interests of its local communities and student voice.
- 6.3.2 Elementary Local Programs are school-wide (or grade-specific as appropriate).
- 6.3.3 Secondary Local Programs are programs within a school with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades) only available to students registered at that school.
- 6.3.4 The selection process for Secondary Local Programs will coincide with the school's February course selection process for students already registered for September who either live in-area or have been accepted through Out-of-Area Admissions.

- 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 Programs.
- 6.3.6 Local school principals, in consultation with the school superintendent and the Board's central staff, will develop interest-based admissions criteria that promote equity, inclusion and human rights to be used when demand for the local program exceeds available space.
- 6.3.7 Admission criteria for Local Programs will be posted online and made publicly available by schools on their school websites.

#### **6.4 Skilled Trade-Based SHSM Programs in F.A.S.T. Schools**

- 6.4.1 F.A.S.T. is designed to provide access and opportunity to students who do not have Skilled Trades-based SHSM programs at their designated school by address. F.A.S.T. schools all have SHSM programs that are strongly related to skilled trades. A list of Skilled-Trades based SHSM Programs that are eligible for F.A.S.T. will be updated annually and posted on the TDSB website.
- 6.4.2 Parents/Guardians/Caregivers, on behalf of their children, or students who are 18 years or older, may apply for admission starting in Grade 10 in either September or February to F.A.S.T. schools using the TDSB F.A.S.T. application.
- 6.4.3 Every attempt will be made to accommodate student applications received by the initial deadline posted on the [TDSB F.A.S.T. website](#). Late applicants will be accommodated as space is available.
- 6.4.4 While attending the F.A.S.T. school, students will be expected to participate in the required F.A.S.T. programming, based on their grade of entry.

#### **6.5 Central Student Interest Programs**

- 6.5.1 Central Student Interest Programs will be offered to all students to support programs with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades, etc.) that require specialized infrastructure, facilities, scheduling, staffing and support.
- 6.5.2 Central Student Interest Programs will develop and deliver programming for students that will foster and affirm students' intersecting identities, creativity, global connections, real-world context for curriculum and will support the success of all interested

students. At the secondary level, students must take a minimum of seven courses during a high school career, directly related to the program focus.

- 6.5.3 Multilingual Learners and students with Special Education needs accepted in Central Student Interest Programs will be accommodated.
- 6.5.4 Each type of Central Student Interest Programs will have standard interest-based admissions processes established by the Board, which include a demonstration of active interest or passion, where applicable. Students demonstrating interest or passion, will be eligible for the random selection process when demand exceeds available space.
- 6.5.5 The admissions criteria and application processes for Central Student Interest Programs will be publicly available on the [Board's website](#). The criteria will promote equity, inclusion and human rights and will focus on student interest.
- 6.5.6 All TDSB Central Student Interest Programs/Schools will deliver educational programming that is aligned with the equity priorities of their School Improvement Plan and the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and be founded in anti-oppressive practices and support the Board's commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.
- 6.5.7 First Nations, Métis and Inuit applicants will be placed in their primary choice program in the random selection process when applying for an entry grade (i.e. most commonly Grade 9). Applicants will be given first priority for primary and alternate choice applications for Central Student Interest Programs in other grades and will be placed if/when space is available.
- 6.5.8 Admission priority will be given to students self-identifying as a currently and historically underserved and under-represented community in TDSB's Central Student Interest Programs. Annually, the percentage of all spaces in Central Student Interest Programs to be allocated, prioritized and first filled by these applicants will be determined, with the goal of attaining a student population that is a better reflection of the broader demographic composition of the TDSB. Should the number of self-identified applicants surpass the number of spaces available, unselected

students will be considered in the larger random selection process.

- 6.5.9 Admission priority will be given to students who are residents of the City of Toronto. Only after applicants that reside in the City of Toronto have been offered placement into Central Student Interest 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.
- 6.5.10 The Board will determine and review the number, scope and location of Central Student Interest Programs based on the recommendations of the Secondary Program Review to create equitable opportunity of access for students from across the city.
- 6.5.11 TDSB Central Staff will establish criteria for the development of any new Central Student Interest Programs. Central Student Interest Programs require central review and approval based on the program criteria and the needs of the Board.
- 6.5.12 The Board will determine annually the available space in each Central Student Interest Program based on enrollment projections for the regular program as well as other programs that may exist in the school.
- 6.5.13 All applications will be processed using the Board's centralized online application system for admissions.
- 6.5.14 Transportation will not be provided for Central Student Interest Programs.
- 6.5.15 Parents/Guardians, on behalf of their children, or students who are 18 years or older (as well as those over 16 years old who have withdrawn from parental control), may apply to one primary program. Applicants may opt to include an alternate program choice in their application.
- 6.5.16 A student can only be registered in one Central Student Interest Program at a time. Students cannot be registered in a Central Student Interest Program while still participating in an Intensive French Language Program or Special Education Intensive Support Programs.

## 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 five (5) 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.
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

### Policies

- Out-of-Area Admissions (P013)
- Equity Policy (P037)
- Human Rights (P031)

### Procedures

- Out-of-Area Admissions (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
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions, 2015.
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007.