

High Level Summary Notes

TDSB Expert Reference Panel on School Safety and Student Well-Being

February 15, 2023

The Context for Our Convening: TDSB School Safety and Student Well-Being

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is Canada's largest educational governing body, overseeing 584 schools with around 235,000 enrolled students. Protecting and supporting the safety, security, and well-being of all staff and students within TDSB schools and workplaces is a top priority of the Board. The Board's commitment to the principles of Truth and Reconciliation, Human Rights, Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression frames our work. Schools are central to the larger community they serve; hence, when communities grapple with violence-related problems, schools are similarly affected. Creating safer schools is the joint responsibility of all levels of government, communities, and every school board in the Greater Toronto Area.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the mental health and well-being of youth, and has contributed to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, as well as difficulties with social interaction and stability. The pandemic has also been linked to an increase in violence, particularly among youth, due to the stress, trauma, social isolation, and discrimination that many have experienced. These factors have created a complex and challenging environment for young people, who require support and resources to address the multiple effects of the pandemic and systemic inequities on their mental health and social well-being. As a member of the community, TDSB educators, staff, and the Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that schools are safe places to work and learn.

Addressing school safety and student well-being issues will require long-term investment and a multi-sector approach that involves grassroots community organizations, government agencies, and the Toronto Police Service. Our first success is our joint commitment to supporting school safety and student well-being within our communities. We look forward to taking an integrated, data-driven approach that is responsive to the needs of the students and communities that we serve. We have the power to lead in times of crisis and improve safety and well-being outcomes for students across the TDSB, and for those that have been most disproportionately impacted by violence in their school communities.