tdsb

Enhancing Equity
Task Force

Report and Recommendations

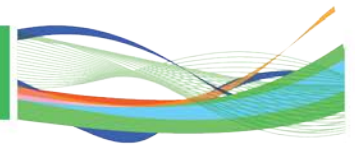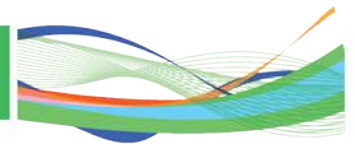December 13, 2017
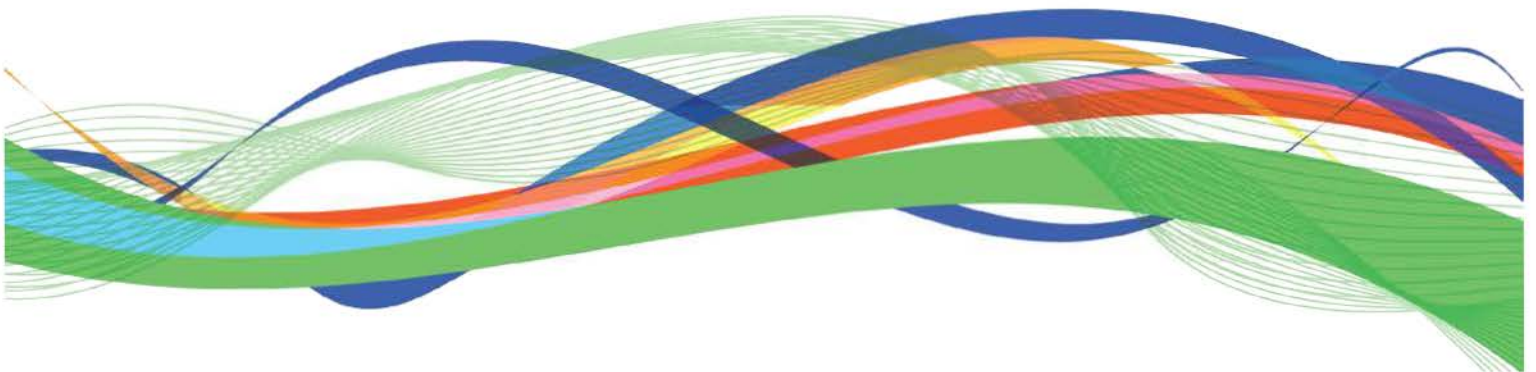
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report and the recommendations are a result of a tremendous amount of work and participation from people throughout the TDSB community. I would like to thank and acknowledge a great number of people whose skills, talents and voices fueled this process and moved it – and ultimately the system – forward.
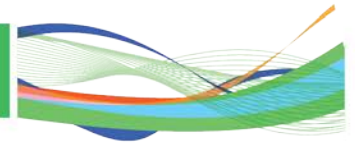
I want to acknowledge:

❖ The many students who shared their stories and provided feedback on the draft report which brought the important issues to life and reminded everyone just how important this work is.

❖ The families who shared their experiences and passionately advocated for their children, making sure the system responds as it should for every student.

❖ The community members who attended the Ward Forums and the Student Summit for sharing your experiences and insights.

❖ Trustees who worked with the Task Force both as members of the Working Groups and the Planning Group as well as hosting the eight Ward Forums. Your leadership and commitment to the process was vital.

❖ The members of the Planning Group and four Working Groups for your participation over many months, your commitment to naming the issues and making things better and your courage to keep speaking up.

❖ The Leadership Team who supported the Task Force with your experience and knowledge of the system provided needed guidance and insight.

❖ The staff who work directly with students and families helping to organize opportunities to participate in the Task Force and provide their insights and experiences.

❖ The team of executive assistants and administrative liaisons who provided support in booking space, ordering food, arranging for audio/visual support and preparing materials so meetings could happen smoothly.

❖ The people who made the food and set up the rooms and provided the childcare and interpretation services so everyone could participate.

❖ The members of the public who took the time to read the report and provide detailed feedback to help us revise the recommendations.

❖ The staff who worked tirelessly on the final version of the report incorporating the many pieces of feedback.

❖ The research team who prepared the briefs and supported our work with evidence.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment and belief in our collective effort to make the school experience better for all students.

Yours Sincerely,

Liz Rykert, Task Force Facilitator

A full list of members of the Planning Group and the four Working Groups can be found in Appendix F.

ENHANCING EQUITY TASK FORCE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is the largest and one of the most diverse school boards in Canada. It covers a vast geographic area with 583 schools and serves more than 246,000 students, each of whom come to school with varying experiences, histories, resources, capabilities and needs.
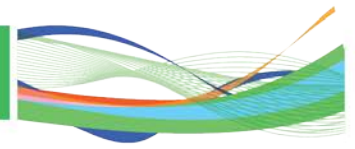
In support of students' diverse needs, the TDSB has demonstrated consistent leadership in supporting equity with innovative programs, inclusive curriculum and professional learning. But we still have a long way to go to make sure that education in Canada's largest school board works for all students.

We still see grave inequities in student achievement, well-being, engagement, experience, and treatment. Equity requires continuous commitment, in partnership with staff, students, families, and all of Toronto's communities. The TDSB's 2016 Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and new draft Equity Policy all testify to the Board's commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance, and inclusion for all.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force's mandate is to support the TDSB as it seeks to ensure that the framework of "equity for all" infuses every aspect of the Board's work, for students and staff alike. Equity is a question of fundamental human rights; it is also the foundation for excellence for all students, and for student achievement, well-being, and belonging.

Over the past year, the Task Force engaged in extensive consultations with community members, students, families, and staff to determine which equity strategies have worked and where challenges remain. It was an opportunity to take a deeper, collective look at what equity means, and to ask what specific actions need to be taken to enhance equity across the board.

The findings and recommendations enclosed in this report will continue to inform the work of the TDSB's staff and Board of Trustees as we make equity a reality for every student.

Principles

The TDSB begins with the understanding that the purpose of working towards equity is to ensure that *all* students receive the right supports to help them reach their greatest potential. Currently, the system works well for some students and not others. When equity works, *all* students are supported to be their very best. Equity takes nothing away from the students who are already thriving in the education system; rather, it creates supports for those the system is currently failing.

An excellent public education system is one in which all children are supported and in which all children can thrive.

Equity is undergirded by the following principles:
- All students should be able to see themselves reflected in their learning, and their experiences in school should help them rise to their highest potential;
- All students should learn in safe and inclusive environments that promote their sense of identity and well-being;
- All students have the right to an education free of discrimination or limiting barriers;
- All students and families should be supported by schools that work in partnership with them to achieve the best results for them;
- Equity requires evidence-informed decision-making and better understanding of local communities;
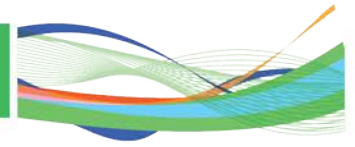- Equity requires accountability and transparency.

Recommendations

One clear vision emerged from the wealth of stories, insights, research, and consultations. Equity requires all TDSB schools to be strong neighbourhood schools that provide:
- Learning environments free of barriers so that *all* students can reach their full potential;
- Programming and staffing that is reflective, relevant, and responsive to the cultures, identities, and needs of the TDSB's diverse students, families, and communities;
- A school culture that is safe, welcoming, caring, and stands actively against discrimination, racism, and hate;
- Active engagement with families and communities as authentic partners.

In keeping with that vision, the Task Force has made recommendations in the following six areas, so as to:
1) Ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in all schools;
2) Make students whole: effectively addressing school incidents and complaints;
3) Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools;
4) Meaningfully engage students, families, and communities in building a culture of equity at school;
5) Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer, and promotion; and,
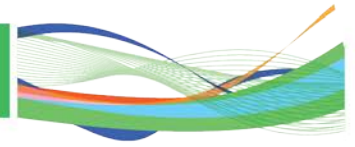6) Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all.

1) **Ensure Equitable Educational Access, Experiences, and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools**

- Remove systemic barriers *between* schools:
  o Examine practices that result in inequitable access to specialized programs;
  o Examine ways to improve access to resources and supports so that schools can offer a variety of specialized programs to all students;
  o Review the impact of the Optional Attendance policy in terms of barriers to accessibility of programs;
  o Ensure that the Optional Attendance policy maintains a fair and transparent process for applications and selection into available programs.

- Remove systemic barriers *within* schools (barriers that are created by the perceptions of educators, administrators, and/or professionals):
  o Phase in a program to allow a majority of Grade 9 and 10 students to work at an Academic level with necessary programming and teacher support. The phase-in should occur over a three-year period, closely monitor and report on student outcomes and achievement levels, and be responsive to parent concerns about curriculum standards and teacher expectations;
  o Review Special Education Learning programs with an emphasis on:
    - Placement and inclusion of students with special education learning needs;
    - Retaining congregated sites while exploring options to include Special Education at a home school;
    - Professional development for staff;
    - Providing a process and clear information for collaborative decision-making about student needs, as well as a process to appeal and revise decisions;
    - Identifying physical and attitudinal barriers;
    - Ensuring that all families, including those new to Canada and those whose first language is not English, can successfully navigate the Special Education system with confidence.

- Review curriculum based on an equity and anti-oppression framework. This means:
  o Incorporating equity and anti-oppression content into the curriculum, reflecting subject matter relevant to the various student demographics; and,
  o Incorporating content about Indigenous peoples and history, as well as being cognizant of Indigenous rights and land recognition.

- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement within the TDSB, with a focus on research and generating solutions and support within the TDSB for Black students and their families;

- Under the leadership of TDSB's new Accessibility Coordinator and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, implement the TDSB's multi-year strategic plan to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, informational, and other barriers[1], and strive to remove physical barriers in existing buildings that prevent staff and students from full participation and high achievement in their respective working and learning environments.
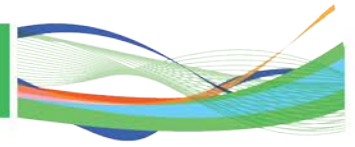
2) Making Students Whole: Effectively Addressing School Incidents and Complaints

- Explore preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation approaches:

  o Review existing complaint protocols and ensure an effective process for complaints and resolution. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission argues, the goal of complaint resolution is to ensure that "the complainant is, to the extent possible, 'made whole,' and the effects of the discrimination remedied";
  o Explore staffing models that support preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation to better respond to school and student needs;
  o Respond to the overwhelming request to end the School Resource Officer program;
  o Review the handling and overseeing of student complaints and identify effective ways to support students when they are unable to resolve disputes at the school level;
  o Develop or acquire a system to gather and track reports of incidents and complaints related to exclusion, discrimination, racism, and hate.

- Review current suspension and expulsion practices, with an emphasis on:
  o Staff bias and the reasons for the over-representation of Black students and Indigenous students in Special Education learning programming;
  o The impact of suspension and expulsion on students and families.

3) Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources Among Schools

- Distribute funding and resources equitably among schools, recognizing that discrepancies among schools occurs in part because of disparities in school fundraising capacity, which leads to inequitable access to and quality of resources. In keeping with this goal, we recommend that:

  o The Board of Trustees confirm its commitment, as currently embodied in the Fundraising and Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) policies, that school resources be targeted equitably;

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[1] As cited in *What An Ontario Education Accessibility Standard Could Include.* www.aoda.ca/spread-the-word-about-the-aoda-alliances-new-discussion-paper-on-what-an-education-accessibility-standard-can-and-should-include
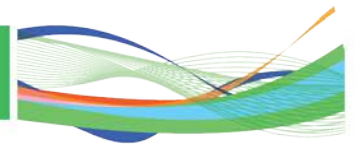
- The Board of Trustees consider requests, raised in Task Force consultations, that measures of inequality within schools (pockets of poverty and fundraising) be included in the calculation of the LOI;

- The Learning Opportunities Grant and school-based/school council fundraising capacities be reviewed to ensure greater equity of resources among schools with different socioeconomic status;
- The allocation of funding distributed for staff resources, classroom materials, and professional development and training also be reviewed.

4) **Meaningfully Engage Students, Families, and Communities in Building a Culture of Equity at School**

- In keeping with the need for strong neighbourhood schools where all students feel that they are cared for, that they belong, and that they are heard through the creation of a more inclusive and representative culture in schools[2], we recommend that the TDSB provide a school environment that:

  - Ensures that students have dedicated, caring adults in school to mentor and advocate with and for them;
  - Fosters student self-advocacy and empowerment, including student and peer leadership;
  - Encourages students to have a voice in school practices and decision-making.

- Families, including those from historically marginalized and currently underserved communities, be fully engaged as authentic partners in the education of their children. To this end:
  - Develop a set of Family Engagement Standards to ensure that all families feel welcomed, feel that they belong, and are encouraged to be contributors to the school community;
  - Work to ensure that school councils are representative and reflective of the school community;
  - Work to actively steward better and more meaningful communication and experiences between families and their schools;
  - Strengthen the capacity of Community Support Workers to bolster families, schools, and community connectivity.

- Further community engagement, schools are to:
  - Develop strategic community partnerships with social agencies, not-for-profit groups, and other levels of government to support the needs of students and families;
  - Function as a resource and gathering space, especially for underserved communities (e.g., for social/emotional, medical- or employment-related purposes, recreation, childcare, adult education).

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[2] Fund LAEN (Latinx, Afro-Latin American, Aba Yala Education Network) programs. Follow through on the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services' Black Youth Action Plan.
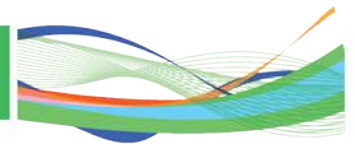
5) Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer, and Promotion

- Staffing models and delivery should reflect equity and the diversity of the communities served by the TDSB;

- Ensure the hiring of diverse staff with demonstrated equity and anti-oppression competency;

- Provide training for staff with hiring responsibilities on diverse hiring practices with an equity lens for all;

- Ensure more flexible staffing structures and processes by engaging local school staff to identify what they need to achieve greater equity;

- Review the hiring panel for school administrators to assess which stakeholder groups need to be included;

- Align transfer and surplus processes in partnership with unions.

6) Provide Professional Learning on Equity and Anti-Oppression for ALL

- Deliver systematic and comprehensive professional learning for *all* stakeholders to examine bias, as well as existing and changing laws, policies, practices, frameworks, strategies, and pedagogues that critically examine and address oppression, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, the challenges faced by students with physical and intellectual disabilities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of historical institutional discrimination;

- Apply an equity framework to all professional development learning activities;

- Deliver training by internal and/or external experts;

- Encourage ongoing professional learning and an environment of continuous learning and improvement;

- Ensure clear accountability for staff in School Improvement Plans and Performance Appraisals;

- Identify and provide systemic tools to support staff to control for bias in decision-making.

Accountability

It is important that the TDSB establish clear accountability structures to ensure follow-through on approved Enhancing Equity Task Force recommendations, monitor their implementation, and report to the Board of Trustees annually on their progress. The work of enhancing equity will be an ongoing responsibility, and accountability mechanisms should reflect this requirement.

The Task Force recommends that the Board of Trustees:

- Develop a tracking and reporting framework to monitor progress on the recommendations;

- Develop a set of progress indicators;

- Use the existing committee structure to identify a lead committee of the Board of Trustees to track and monitor progress;
- Ensure that all advocacy and advisory committees have a role in tracking equity as it relates to their focus.

The Task Force recommends that the TDSB:

- Initiate an annual equity summit;
- Create four Learning Centre-based Enhancing Equity Committees.

The Task Force recommends that each school:

- Set goals and track progress on equity;
- Establish a focus on equity through existing School Improvement Planning processes;
- Provide information for families to deepen their understanding of existing accountability processes and how to advocate for their children.

Introduction

- Scope and Definitions
- Structure and Process

INTRODUCTION

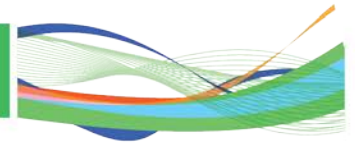The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is acknowledged as a leader in advancing equity in education, but we still have a long way to go to make sure that education in Canada's largest school board works for all students.

We still see grave inequities in student achievement, well-being, engagement, experience, and treatment. Equity requires continuous commitment, in partnership with staff, students, families, and all of Toronto's communities. The TDSB's 2016 Vision for Learning, Integrated Equity Framework, and draft Equity Policy all testify to the Board's commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance, and inclusion for all.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force has been mandated to support the TDSB as it seeks to ensure that the framework of "equity for all" infuses every aspect of the Board's work, for students and staff alike. Equity is a question of fundamental human rights; it is also the foundation for excellence for all students, and for student achievement, well-being, and belonging.

Over the past year, the Task Force engaged in consultations with community members, students, families, and staff to determine which equity strategies have worked and where challenges remain. It was an opportunity to take a deeper, collective look at what equity means, and to ask what specific actions need to be taken to enhance equity across the board.

The findings and recommendations enclosed in this report will continue to inform the work of the TDSB's staff and Board of Trustees as we make equity a reality for every student.[3]
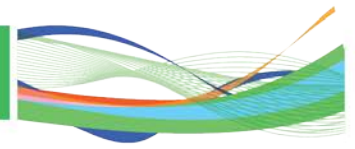
SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

The TDSB recognizes that the demographics of the communities it serves have changed and that it has significant work to do to ensure that all its students are assured of equitable access to excellent public education.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force believes that the TDSB is firmly committed to addressing systemic and structural discrimination[4] and to making the real change that students, educators, administrators, support staff, families, and community partners urgently need.

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[3] It should, however, be noted It was not within the scope of the Enhancing Equity Task Force to provide direction on how to operationalize specific recommendations or to analyze financial implications of the recommendations.

[4] Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan 2017 defines systemic barriers as being caused by embedded biases in policies, practices and processes, and may result in differential treatment. Barriers can be unintentional – for example, learning materials that do not take into account the diversity of our communities – often these are the result of doing things the way they have always been done. Regardless of the reason for them, their impact can be detrimental to many. It is also important for us to recognize and address the additional barriers and unique experiences of discrimination that can

The Enhancing Equity Task Force has focused on the effects of inequity and oppression that students continue to experience in TDSB schools. These include racism, xenophobia,[5] homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of hate and discrimination. Students experience racism and oppression in different ways depending on their multiple identities (or intersections)[6]. The Task Force acknowledges the disproportionate way that these issues affect Black students and staff, as well as the depth of the impact upon First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and staff.

The TDSB begins with the understanding that the purpose of working towards equity is to ensure that *all* students receive the right supports to help them reach their greatest potential. Currently, the system works well for some students and not others. When equity works, *all* students are supported to be their very best. Equity takes nothing away from the students who are already thriving in the education system; rather, it creates supports for those the system is currently failing.

An excellent public education system is one in which all children are supported and in which all children can thrive.

The Task Force adopted the definition of equity as it is outlined in the TDSB's draft Equity Policy:

> The TDSB believes that equity of opportunity, and equity of access to our programs, services, and resources, are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for our students, employees, and parent and community partners.

> The TDSB recognizes that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status. Similar biases have also impacted First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations. (TDSB, Draft Equity Policy, p. 2)
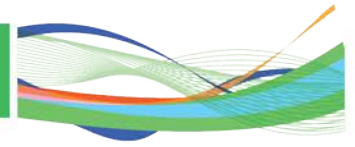
> The provision of opportunities for equality for all by responding to the needs of individuals. Equity of treatment is not the same as equal treatment because it includes acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination. (TDSB, Draft Equity Policy, p. 16)

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arise for some students when factors such as race, class, gender identity, religion and physical or intellectual ability intersect.
Cite: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/education_equity_plan_en.pdf

[5] Xenophobia refers to fear or hatred of foreigners or people from other countries.
[6] Intersectionality refers to the overlap of different social identities, such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and so forth, which means that different individuals may experience multiple forms of discrimination or racism.

The Ministry of Education in Ontario defines equity as the foundation of excellence that meets individual needs. The Ministry's Equity Secretariat's Action Plan holds up the equity goal of building "learning environments in Ontario schools that inspire every child and student to reach their full potential and become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens." Some students have been consistently denied these outcomes for reasons that have nothing to do with their inherent abilities.

STRUCTURE AND PROCESS OF THE ENHANCING EQUITY TASK FORCE

In June 2016 the Board of Trustees passed a motion to reconstitute the Model Schools Inner-Cities Task Force. A consulting firm, Meta Strategies, was commissioned to work with a TDSB planning group to develop an approach to the work. It became clear that the nature of the work went further than that addressed by the Inner Cities Task Force. The term "inner cities" has come to mean a way of primarily addressing the economic issues of families and students living with poverty. The mandate of the new Task Force was broadened to encompass social issues, including race and other aspects of identity, in addition to class and socioeconomic status. Its name was changed to the "Enhancing Equity Task Force" to reflect its expanded mandate.

The Task Force chose a structure that would support the direct involvement of a wide variety of stakeholder groups and members. It adopted a ""Big Tent Approach"[7] to create an open and inclusive process and to accommodate the growing number of people who had expressed an interest in its work.

It included the following components:

The Enhancing Equity Task Force Planning Group: The planning group was composed of TDSB staff, families and caregivers, Trustees, community organizations and representatives, union representatives, and academics. It met monthly to guide and support the Task Force process;

Four Learning Centre Working Groups: Based on the TDSB's four geographic Learning Centres[8], four independent Learning Centre Working Groups were created. Each was a multidisciplinary group of Board staff, Trustees, community advisory committee members, labour representatives, families, community partners, and academics, ranging in size from 18 to 35 members.[9]

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[7] *Discuss. Decide. Do The Value of Engagement as a decision support tool*, Nicole Swerhun and Vanessa Avruskin, 2012 p. 13.

[8] Learning Centres are a new organizational structure adopted by the TDSB in 2016 to group schools and staff in a certain geographic way (see Figure 1). Each Learning Centre is led by an Executive Superintendent and includes seven Superintendents of Education with responsibility for schools within its boundaries.

[9] Members for the Working Groups, as well as the Planning Group, were identified through TDSB Advisory Committees; Superintendents were asked to refer people in the community and from schools; the Federations were requested to submit names; the Toronto School Administrators Association provided names; academics were identified who were working on issues related to Equity; and community organizations were asked to join based on their expertise and
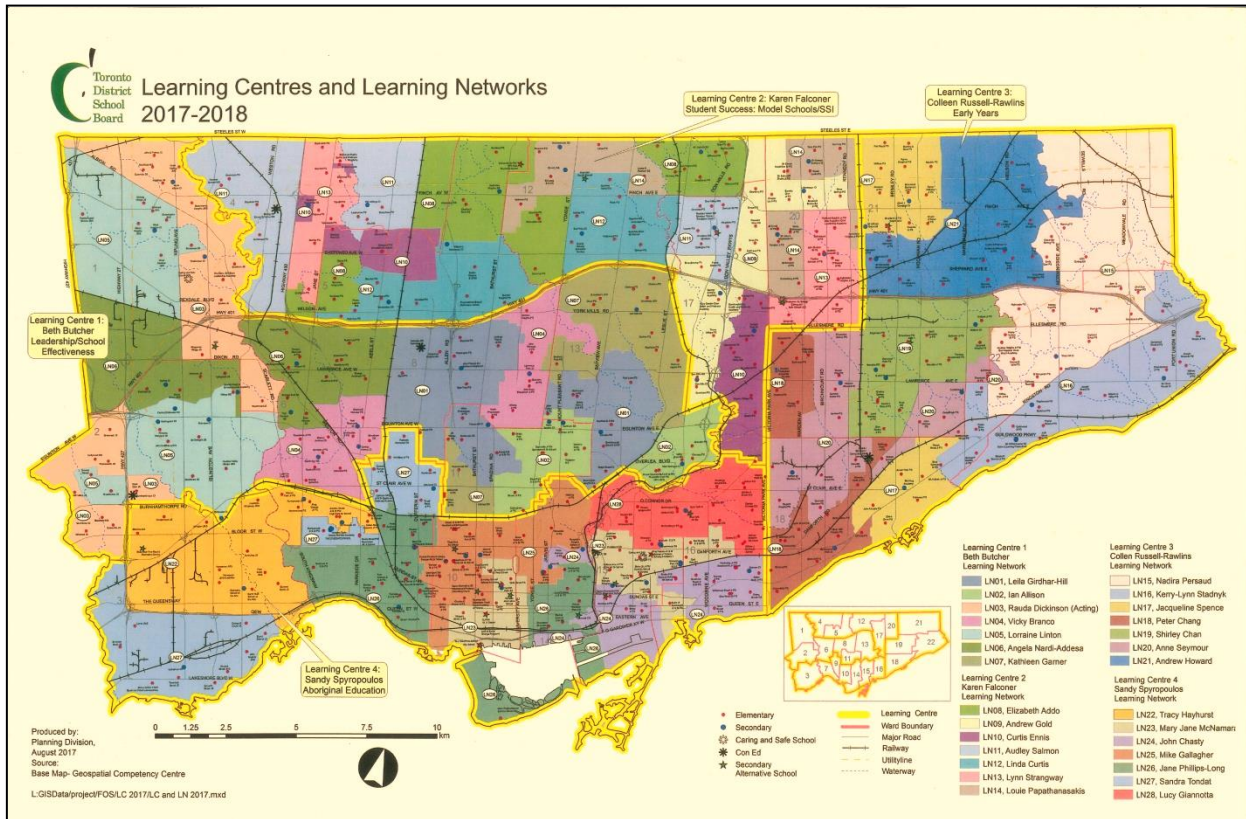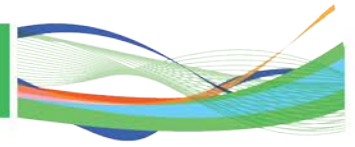
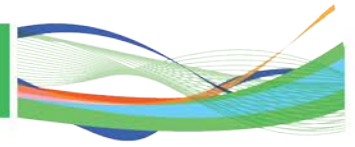**Figure 1: Boundaries of TDSB's Four Learning Centres**

Each group met four times in 2017. First, they considered existing challenges and the conditions that successful equity would require. Second, they reviewed research and data prepared by the TDSB's Research and Information Services, and identified the barriers that may be preventing progress on equity. Third, they drafted recommendations, which were summarized and presented to the Task Force in June 2017. Finally, they reviewed the Task Force's draft report and provided recommendations to it.

Eight Joint-Ward Forums: These were public meetings hosted by two or more Trustees to engage school teams and the broader public. School teams included some combination of a principal, teachers, support staff, students, and families. Each forum drew between 150 and 200 participants, for a total of over 1300 people.

The forums created an opportunity for people to share their views of the challenges, barriers, and biases affecting student well-being and achievement at their school. After they learned how the TDSB operationalizes equity, teams were asked to generate a list of ideas — either current activities or ideas they were considering — to improve student outcomes.

experience or previous involvement in the Inner City Task Force. A list of participants can be found in the Acknowledgements Section.

The teams were also introduced to a 20-item survey to capture baseline data on the culture of equity at their school. This survey — the Enhancing Equity School-based Feedback Form — was then completed by each school-based stakeholder group (students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators) through group members' discussion of each of the 20 items. Schools were invited to determine the best way to make this happen in each location. The data were collected in the summer and fall of 2017. Once the results are available in 2018, the schools will be able to use them to support their individual plans to improve the school culture of equity and to track its progress.[10]

All the ideas generated at the Ward Forums were analyzed and a summary of the themes was compiled and shared with the four working groups. Detailed notes from the forums were emailed to participants and posted on the TDSB website.

The Enhancing Equity Task Force Summit: The summit provided an opportunity for the four working groups to share their draft recommendations and for the 150 summit participants to discuss, refine, and build on those ideas. Participants included planning group members, the four working groups, the TDSB's senior leadership team, Trustees, labour representatives, community advisory committees, and principals with identified experience in removing barriers to equity. In the spirit of a big-tent approach, others who expressed an interested were included.
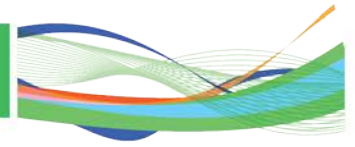
The summit opened with a short video of student stories prepared by Student Equity Program Advisors. The students shared their lived experiences with an understanding of the context in which their stories would be used and that their sharing would be part of a larger TDSB process to engage with students as knowledge keepers to enact change.

Specific Populations: Specific groups within the Board were identified as key to forward momentum, including families from the Model Schools' Parent Academies and the Aboriginal Education Centre. Various community advisory committees — the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee, the Inner City Advisory Committee, the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee, and the Special Education Advisory Committee — submitted specific recommendations to the Task Force, as did students identified through the Student Equity Program Advisors.

Various methods to enhance participation were employed at all public consultations to ensure that all the voices in the room could be heard. This is important because using these methods redistributes power and builds ownership across stakeholder groups for emerging insights, ideas, and recommendations.

Inviting Feedback on the Draft Report and Recommendations: The Enhancing Equity Task Force shared the report in draft form as widely as possible so as to invite feedback and ensure that its recommendations would reflect all the communities served by the TDSB. This is the first time a draft of a report of this nature has been made publicly available.

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[10] The timing of the Enhancing Equity Task Force did not allow for the baseline data to inform this Report.

Feedback was gathered at a student summit and by committees that requested an opportunity to speak or whose feedback was sought by the Task Force. Public feedback was collected online.

o **Public Feedback:** The draft report was made available October 6, 2017 online for feedback from the general public. School administrators and school council chairs were invited by email to share the opportunity for feedback with their school communities. All Task Force members were sent the link, as were all Forum participants who had provided an email address.

The date to provide feedback was extended to November 20, 2017. The Task Force received nearly 5,000 comments.

Individual submissions were also received by email and in person. The public feedback has informed the revised recommendations in this report.
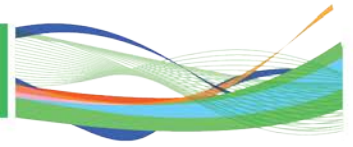
o **Student Feedback:** Over 100 secondary students from 21 schools participated in a student summit on November 2, 2017 to discuss the draft recommendations. The mix of schools provided representation from a range of socioeconomic communities, as well as students from different specialized programs and experiences. Students were invited to share their thoughts, input, and experiences to ensure that a strong student lens was included in the Task Force's work.

o **Additional Feedback:** The Task Force also met with the Equity Policy Advisory Committee and the Student Super Council to gather feedback from their members on the draft.

Research Support: The Task Force's work was supplemented by the TDSB's Research and Information Services Team, which prepared the following research:

o Four research briefs provided consultation participants with key context. These include:
  ▪ A scan of the varying social and economic conditions in the City of Toronto;
  ▪ A bird's-eye view of the multilevel needs of TDSB's diverse student population;
  ▪ A summary of a number of Board-initiated, equity-related programs evaluated by the Research team; and,
  ▪ A research highlight on the 10-year progress of the Model Schools for Inner Cities program.

o Existing data on TDSB students were compiled for each Learning Centre working group. These data included demographics, school community characteristics, achievement, the Safe Schools program, in-school and out-of-school experiences, and well-being.
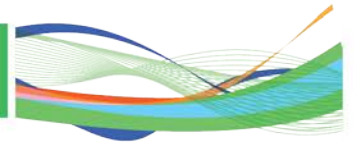
- The Enhancing Equity Task Force feedback forms were based on the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education's *Equity Continuum: Action for Critical Transformation in Schools and Classrooms* (2011). The forms were completed by school administrators, teachers, school support staff, students, and families with the goal of gauging where each of the schools stand in creating equitable experiences and outcomes for their students.

- An inventory of TDSB's equity-related efforts since its 1998 amalgamation was compiled.

- An extensive literature review identified exemplary equity-related practices in other sectors and jurisdictions. It included de-tracking, special education learning, school choice, employment equity, and parent and community engagement.

- Finally, the research team worked closely with Meta Strategies to synthesize and categorize all the consultation notes and recommendations that went into the writing and recommendations in this Task Force report.

Findings

- TDSB Strengths and Challenges
- What We Learned
- Observations and Insights from What We Learned

FINDINGS

TDSB STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

The TDSB has made ongoing, dedicated efforts to address equity since its 1998 amalgamation.

In its first year, the Board established the Community Equity Reference Group (now known as the Equity Policy Advisory Committee) to develop a comprehensive Equity in Foundation Statement and commitments to Equity Policy implementation: anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity; anti-sexism and gender equity; anti-homophobia, sexual orientation, and equity; anti-classism and socioeconomic equity; and equity for persons with disabilities.
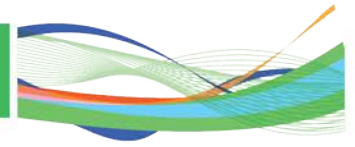
At the same time, a newly formed Equity Department was tasked to develop and implement programs, policies, and procedures on equity education and an inclusive curriculum; to address human rights discrimination and harassment; and to monitor all equity policies. Special task groups were assembled to review practices related to access to programs and optional attendance; anti-racist education; ethno-cultural equity; community use of schools; human rights, discrimination and harassment; and student, family, and community involvement.

In keeping with the Education Act, the Board of Trustees formed its Special Education Advisory Committee, which released a Special Education Plan that acknowledged that "inclusion in the home school is the first option for all students." Aligned with these efforts were the formation of the Parent and Community Network (later called the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee) and Community Liaison Groups, as well as the creation of two student trustee positions as the voice of students across the system.

Over the years, other advisory committees were struck, including, for example, Early Years, French as a Second Language, the Inner City, and most recently Black Student Achievement.

The Board has been holding discussions about school-based fundraising policies since its early years, as well as the importance of having equity drive the budget process with regard to programs and services, as opposed to the opposite.

Once established, the TDSB moved to expand some of the exemplary practices and programs of its legacy boards across the bigger district. These included the Learning Opportunities Index for resource allocation; the expansion of Parenting and Family Literacy Centres to high-needs communities to foster young children's school readiness and parent engagement; the formation of the Toronto Foundation for Student Success as an independent charitable organization to extend student nutrition programs to more inner-city neighbourhoods; the Aboriginal Education Centre; and Pathways to Success for at-risk students.

In 2004, the TDSB explored and adopted more of the groundbreaking work of the former boards. For example, learning from the Every Student Survey of the former Toronto Board of Education, the TDSB mandated the collection of identity-based and experiential data through the Student and Parent Census. This had the goal of helping the system understand the demographic makeup of its diverse student population and identify the issues and gaps experienced by students from different backgrounds, all so as to inform decisions and track progress.
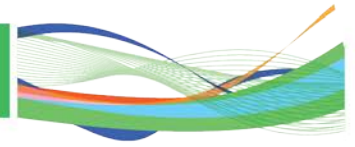
Specific responses were developed to address inequities, many of which have proven to be successful. For example, the Inner City Task Force was formed in 2004 on the strength of the earlier Inner City Project School initiative. As a result of its recommendations, the Model Schools for the Inner Cities initiative was launched as a systemic effort to improve student outcomes in low-socioeconomic communities. The initiative grew from three schools in 2006-07 to 150 schools by 2012-13. Annual evaluations and 10-year research have demonstrated its effectiveness in narrowing achievement and opportunity gaps for students in these schools (see Research Brief 4, Appendix D).

In addition, throughout its nearly 20 years of history, the TDSB has designated 12 heritage months to acknowledge the representation of students from different ethno-cultural groups. The Board has formed at least 10 equity-focused task forces to address various issues related to inner-city students, immigrant and refugee students, Portuguese-speaking students, and students of Somali descent, in addition to student nutrition, safe and compassionate schools, community use of schools, employment equity, and the current Enhancing Equity Task Force. The Board has had in place religious accommodation guidelines since 2001 and accommodations for transgender and gender non-conforming staff and students since 2011.

Other innovative initiatives launched by the Board include the Africentric School, in-school health clinics, and the recent pilot program efforts to encourage students to take academic-level courses in Grades 9 and 10. In addition, the Beyond 3:30 after-school program (see Research Brief 3, Appendix C), funded, programmed, and staffed by the Toronto Foundation for Student Success, was offered in collaboration with the Board to middle/senior schools in high-needs neighbourhoods across the city.

In 2008, the TDSB was awarded the world-renowned Carl Bertelsmann Prize for "its exemplary work in promoting social integration and improving equal learning opportunities at its schools," as well as "its success at integrating children and young people of migrant origin and ensuring that disadvantaged students and schools in high-need areas receive additional support" (TDSB Bulletin, September 2008).

As the largest school system in Canada, with 246,000 students, nearly 600 schools, and 37,000 employees, the TDSB has faced challenges in scaling successful programs. Transferring promising practices has not always been easy. The benefits of a large city with great diversity are enormous: they come alongside the challenges of fluctuating communities and social and financial realities. These external factors (see Research Brief 1, Appendix A), as well as declining overall enrollment, are ongoing challenges that the Board has to manage with its finite resources. Although achievement and opportunity gaps among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds

have narrowed over time due to its Model Schools for Inner Cities program and other equity efforts, disparities continue to exist, especially among historically marginalized populations (see Research Brief 2, Appendix B).

There remains much work to be done. To address these systemic issues, in 2017, the TDSB developed the Integrated Equity Framework; added the position of Superintendent of Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression; and developed the Leadership Capacity Plan with a focus on equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression learning for all staff.

WHAT WE LEARNED

As much as the TDSB is a recognized leader in advancing equity in education, more needs to be examined and done on an ongoing basis. In fact, the question of what must be done *differently* and *systemically* has become a central theme of the Enhancing Equity Task Force's work.
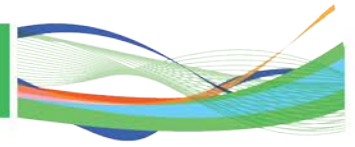
Throughout its consultations with stakeholders, the Task Force was asked for clarity about what the TDSB means by "equity."

Equity is undergirded by the following principles:

- o *All* students should be able to see themselves reflected in their learning, and their experiences in school should help them rise to their highest potential;
- o *All* students should learn in safe and inclusive environments that promote their sense of identity and well-being;
- o *All* students have the right to an education free of discrimination or limiting barriers;
- o *All* students and families should be supported by schools that work in partnership with them to achieve the best results for them;
- o Equity requires evidence-informed decision-making and better understanding of local communities;
- o Equity requires accountability and transparency.

Stakeholder consultations revealed key concerns, challenges, and needs to include the following:

- Discrimination and human rights concerns;
- Systemic discrimination;
- Students with special education learning needs and other disabilities;
- More student voice;
- More authentic family and community relations;
- More professional learning; and,
- Accountability and transparency.

Discrimination and Human Rights Concerns

Racism

The 2011-12 Student and Parent Census shows that the TDSB student population is composed of very diverse, racialized groups (see Figure 2). Although students who self-identify as White are the largest group, they make up less than a third (29%) of the population. The majority (71%) of the TDSB's students come from different racialized backgrounds.
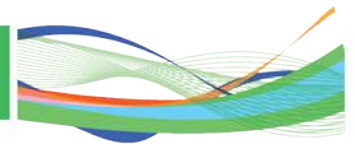
Figure 2: TDSB Students – Racialized Groups
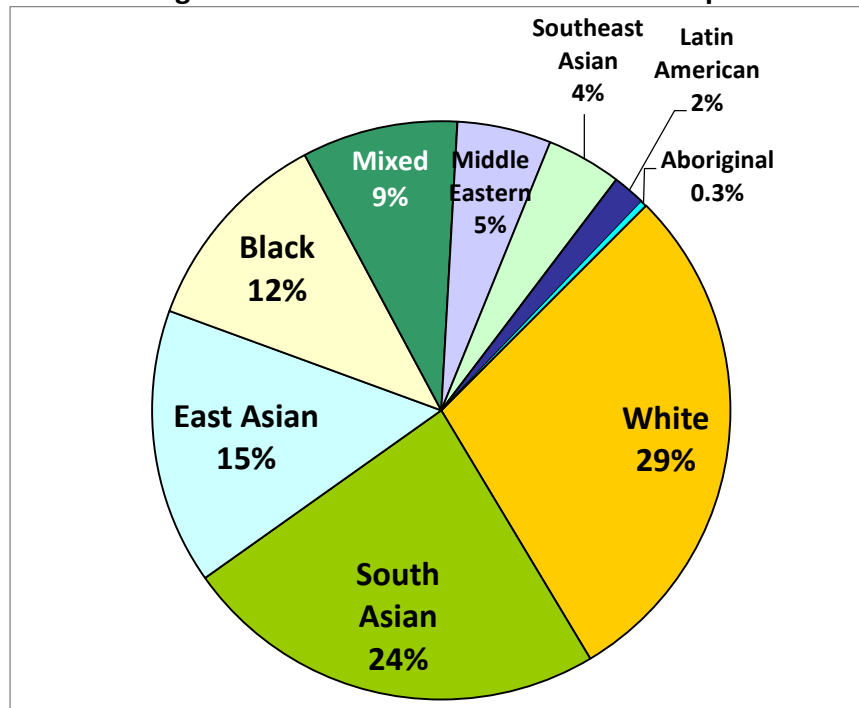
Source: 2011-12 Student & Parent Census

While this great racial diversity is a valuable asset for the school system, discrimination and human rights concerns based on race are an enormous concern. Racism was frequently raised as a concern by a wide array of stakeholders, and most notably by affected families and students. Explicit and implicit forms of racism were reported in both subtle and strong ways. We heard stories that ranged from a teacher making a casual joke about lynching, to a teacher allowing racist comments to be expressed in the classroom and telling the class that everyone is entitled to their opinions, to blatant racist bullying taking place unchecked in classrooms and schools.

When educators do not address unacceptable occurrences in their classrooms appropriately, harmful perspectives and behaviours are legitimized and perpetuated at the expense of racialized students, especially in terms of well-being.

The Task Force's participants spoke further about the way that discrimination affects staff decision-making with regard to students. Rather than believing that all students can succeed, and helping them to do so, some staff harbour presumptions about the capability and potential of students from racialized and historically marginalized communities. "Streaming"[11] was frequently raised as an example of this pattern of discrimination, as harmful assumptions are made about students of certain races and backgrounds. Student participants shared frequently about the ways in which this discrimination negatively affected their morale and chances of future success.
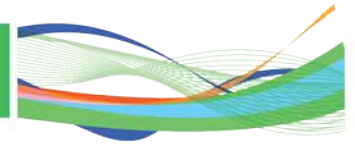
During the whole year of consultation, concerns about the specific types of racism experienced by different racialized groups were raised, including anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-East Asian racism, and the lived experiences of newcomer students and families. It should be noted that these examples are used in this report as they were explicitly named during the consultations, but that they are by no means exhaustive, and that other racialized groups, such as Latinx, South Asians, and Southeast Asians have also experienced various forms of discrimination.

Anti-Black Racism

Our consultations drew specific attention to anti-Black racism — both the stories and lived experiences of Black students and the data and research that support their individual stories, especially with regard to the relationship between race, achievement, and well-being (e.g., Queiser & De Araujo, 2017).

Black students in general are less satisfied with their overall school experiences, more likely to report being bullied physically, and have less positive relationships with adults and peers in school (Yau et al., 2015). School safety data show that they have higher suspension and expulsion rates than other students (Zheng, 2013, Zheng et al., 2017). By the time Black students finish high school, 42% have been suspended at least once, compared with 18% of other students (James and Turner, 2017). Of the 200 students who were expelled between 2011 and 2016, nearly half self-identified as Black. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2017 report, which supports that statistic, notes that "racialized students receive harsher treatment or punishment than their White peers for similar behaviour."

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[11] "Streaming" is the language that participants used to refer to program pathways offered to students entering high school. These pathways include: Academic, Applied, Locally Developed, Apprenticeship and Work. Many marginalized (including but not limited to students coming from low socio-economic situations, students with identified learning needs, and racialized students) populations speak about the ways in which teachers hold lower expectations held for them and "stream" them into an Applied pathway when they are capable of Academic with the right support and would prefer it.

The School Resource Officer (SRO) program was also raised as an example of the perceived criminalization of racialized youth, due to the over-representation of SROs in schools with higher populations of racialized students[12]. Many of these concerns were reflected in the recommendations made to the Task Force by the Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee. In response to these concerns and recommendations, the TDSB Board of Trustees voted in November 2017 to eliminate the SRO program.

Moreover, a greater proportion of Black students are streamed to the "lowest academic level classes," specifically, Applied or Essential programs in secondary school: 48%, versus 19% of White students or 21% of others. A greater percentage of Black students are identified as having non-gifted exceptionalities, unidentified special needs, and/or in need of an Individual Education Plan requiring special education support: 26%, as opposed to 16% of White students or 9% of others. As James and Turner state, "behind [these] numbers are families who have dreams for their children, and Black children who are ambitious, excited about learning, and deserve the education offered to other children…" (2017, p.37).

Some Black students told the Task Force:

"I am asked to sit in front because I am not trusted to sit behind."
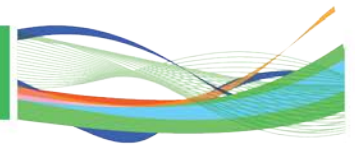
"If I am not doing well that is what they expect."

"My teacher refused to help me and he won't tell me why."

One Black male student described how he and two others were the only Black students in the class and for two years the teacher could not get their names straight.

Another student related the following: "I've been wanting to go to university forever. I started planning my post-secondary from Grade 9. I used to go to Guidance a lot; I would ask, 'can you email this university…?' She deliberately did not email [me the information]. Other kids were getting emails and info. When I asked her she said, 'I just don't think you can do it… I don't think you can get to the Grade point average. She's telling me, why don't you go to college?"

The Task Force heard a great many similar statements and stories directly from adults and students alike.

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[12] On November 22nd, 2017 the Board of Trustees voted to eliminate the SRO program based on recommendations from staff and community.

Anti-Indigenous Racism

In keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls for Action, and to support Indigenous governance and self-determination, issues with regard to Indigenous students do not fall under the purview of equity. Rather, the TDSB's Aboriginal Education Centre will address these more explicitly.

That said, the lived experiences of Indigenous students are often described as being hidden in plain view. The data show that they are more likely to be identified as having special education learning needs, to be streamed to non-academic programs of study in high school, and to be over-represented among expelled students. The OHRC 2017 report also highlights that Indigenous students are often assumed to be the perpetrators of conflict with other students and are disproportionately disciplined.

The TDSB's 2011 Census data further indicate that Indigenous students feel less comfortable than other racialized groups participating in class; are more likely to report experiencing incidents of theft, physical bullying, or threats in school; are less likely to have an adult at school to whom they feel comfortable turning for help, advice, or support; have less positive relationships with peers; and have lower emotional well-being and self-perception.
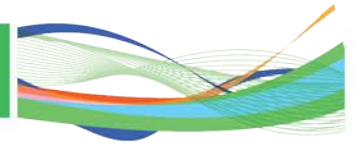
Many participants cited the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students. They see land and treaty recognitions as positive steps, but much more is needed. They are adamant that the TDSB has an urgent responsibility to recognize and uphold those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Actions that are relevant to education. A TRC Task Force for Indigenous Education was proposed as a way of examining what the TRC's Actions mean for the TDSB and Indigenous education and how to implement the relevant Actions.

This is particularly important given that many Indigenous students and families feel that they are "hidden in plain view" and are fearful about self-identifying as Indigenous.

Given Canada's history of Residential Schools, it is especially important to honour and discuss the significance of Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and to accelerate efforts that are already underway to decolonize education. Participants impressed upon the Task Force that the learning events and resources developed by the Aboriginal Education Centre provide valuable and important resources for students and educators. Indigenous peoples see education as a critical piece of Reconciliation.

Islamophobia

Participants were adamant that the TDSB is not doing enough to address the problem of rising Islamophobia and the negative effects it has on Muslim students. Students, families, and staff spoke

of troubling experiences that range from school events being planned without taking into account religious holidays that affect Muslim students; having to explain or advocate for their need for

religious accommodation — even though the Board has been clear that that is their right; and feeling threatened by adults who belittle them for wearing a "veil" or by other students who refer to them as "terrorists." These instances of discrimination underline the need for intentional recommendations that take such injustices into account. Previous TDSB Census data collections did not take religion into account, but as of 2017, the Student Census does.

Among the stories, we heard the following:

A Muslim student who wears a veil described how she was asked to read out loud in class. When she struggled, the teacher said, "It might be easier if you take that shit off your face." The student said that she did not know what to do afterwards because she was shy.

Another Muslim student was forced to show a calendar to her teacher to prove when Eid is.
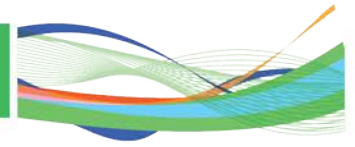
Anti-Semitism

Like other domains, during the consultations and working group meetings, Anti-Semitism was not raised frequently as an issue but this does not mean it is not present. Anti-Semitism is defined as "the latent or overt hostility or hatred directed towards, or discrimination against individual Jewish people or the Jewish people for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity, and their cultural, historical, intellectual and religious heritage".[13] Follow-up conversations revealed multiple students and staff from different schools told stories of seeing anti-Semitic symbols such as swastikas engraved on desks or written on textbooks or public bathrooms.

Anti-East Asian Racism

Very few East Asian participants shared concerns during the public consultation process, but follow-up interviews with students, staff, and families indicate that many East Asian students suffer quietly from more hidden racism. They endured subtle and/or blatant discrimination. Within the current curriculum and what they describe as the "mainstream" culture of power, privilege, or popularity, these students seldom see role models to whom they can relate. Many describe feeling alienated, dismissed, mocked by racial slurs, or excluded. Indeed, the Board's 2011 Student Census data indicate that East Asian students as a group experience the largest proportion of low emotional well-being, especially in terms of self-esteem, self-image, and confidence.

For instance, a student shared that a teacher made fun of her Chinese students by saying "Ching chang chong" regularly in class.

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[13] A Better Way Forward – Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan www.Ontario.ca/antiracism.

Another East Asian student told us that "Racism against students of Chinese descent is really normal and always happens in school…. [Many] have already accepted it as a norm or a reality that they couldn't change."

Newcomer Students and Families

Participants also raised concerns about the well-being of newcomers, including immigrant, refugee, and international students, many of whom experience culture shock and language barriers. For instance, without in-class language support, many newcomer or ESL (English as a Second Language) students felt lost, neglected, or incapable in school despite significant academic abilities. Furthermore, not only did these students feel looked down or frowned upon when they spoke their own language or when they could not express themselves well in English, but they felt helpless or unsafe defending or advocating for themselves or their children when faced with bullying, disputes, or problems.

Many newcomer students and families were appreciative of the ESL teachers or bilingual staff to whom they had access, but both the Student Census and anecdotal data clearly indicate that more comprehensive ESL supports, along with more professional learning for staff in general, are needed to make these students and their families feel welcome and cared for with empathy and cultural understanding.

Classism

Socioeconomic status also contributes to inequities in accessing enriched learning opportunities. There has been a growing body of research on poverty and economic and social inequality in the GTA, and the TDSB's own Student and Parent Census (2011-12) demonstrates that nearly half the population served by the Board falls in the two lowest income bracket groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: TDSB Students' Family Income Distribution (2012 Parent Census, JK-Grade 6)
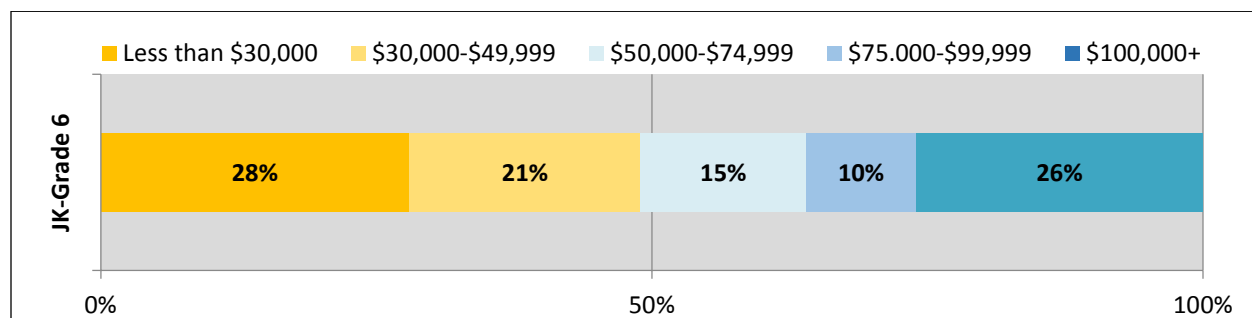
Growing inequality at the neighbourhood level can often mean that children in different schools experience very different learning environments, something that is exacerbated by such issues as relatively lower fundraising capacities or gentrification.

Teachers, students, and families pointed to socioeconomic inequality between and among schools as a major barrier to equity, particularly in terms of the distribution of programs and resources. Even where students from low-income neighbourhoods are enrolled through Optional Attendance

in schools in high-income areas, they don't always find themselves fitting in socially. The way they are perceived and/or treated can negatively affect their well-being and sense of belonging or engagement in school.

Classism also plays out in the differing capacity of schools to fundraise. Stakeholder groups identified disparities in fundraising capacity between schools in affluent and low-income areas that lead to inequitable access to technology or excursions. As one parent noted, "It can mean the difference between having scientists come in and give a series of talks to inspire students in the school, or not." Participants suggested devising strategies to encourage parity in the fundraising capacity of schools across the Board. Others recommended that efforts should be taken to ensure that financial difficulties do not prevent any students from accessing enriched or extracurricular activities.
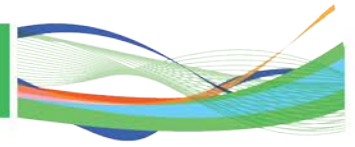
The Task Force also heard concerns about how the TDSB has used its evidence-based measurement tool, the Learning Opportunity Index (LOI), to administer the Model Schools for Inner Cities program. The program ensures that the 150 lowest-income schools receive additional resources. Participants were concerned that 1) the hard cut-off of 150 schools may be failing other needy schools and students; and 2) middle-income schools that include low-income students have seen their resources and programs cut, to the detriment of the low-income students.

The Ministry of Education has provided resources to school boards to address socioeconomic inequities through its Learning Opportunity Grant [14] and has announced its intention to develop criteria to assess the grant's impact. These assessments may well complement the Board's own LOI and provide opportunities for greater socioeconomic equity.

Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexual Orientation

Inequity based on gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation was not raised as frequently as some other issues during the consultation process. This may suggest students' discomfort or fear of coming to consultations or community meetings or not feeling safe in those spaces. The Board's 2011 Student Census reveals that LGBTQ students feel less satisfied than the general student population with their overall school experience; feel less safe in school; are more likely to be bullied socially and physically; have poorer relationships with school adults and peers; and experience other emotional challenges.
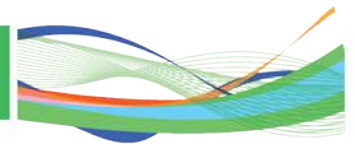
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[14] In the winter of 2017 Social Planning Toronto released a report analyzing the Learning Opportunity Grant (LOG) received by the TDSB from the Ministry of Education. While originally intended to be used to address issues of inequity LOG funds can now be used for a range of purposes. People for Education detailed these changes in their annual report of 2017.

Participants noted that action to address inequity on the basis of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation has been undertaken and/or considered in their schools. Action has included resource hubs/notice boards, gender-neutral washrooms, student-led gender equality conferences, gender-sexuality alliance clubs, and gender-based violence prevention work.

Nonetheless, in light of students' ongoing negative experiences and fear, more intentional work is needed to address the discrimination they face.

As an example, one transgender student described how a teacher who was taking attendance on a field trip said, "We have the boys and the girls and 'student's name'." The student said that "this sparked homophobia and discrimination" as another student shouted out "tranny" in response. "It was a negative experience to have such an important role model put you on the spot like that," the student said.

Systemic Discrimination

The Need for Equitable and Inclusive Practices

The current education system was built to serve a less diverse demographic and has had difficulty shifting to reflect the needs of the diverse communities it now serves. Equity demands that students see themselves reflected in, and well served by, the education system. Participants in consultations were adamant in raising the urgent need for more equitable and inclusive practices. The issues they raised include conscious or unconscious bias in teachers and staff, school curriculum and materials, cultural representation and appreciation, and different learning styles.

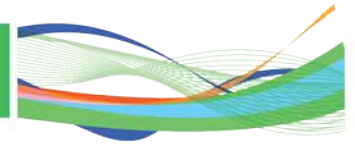- o *Conscious or Unconscious Bias in Teachers and Staff*

  A significant number of students and families spoke out about experiencing racism or prejudice from school staff, particularly on the basis of their socioeconomic or racial background. They stressed that it is the duty of the TDSB to ensure that staff do not perpetuate such prejudices or racism.

  It is obvious that students should never experience racism or prejudice from their teachers or school staff. Racism and/or oppressive behaviour on the part of teachers or staff is inexcusable and, for the safety and well-being of students, must be eliminated from all TDSB schools.

  Participants were clear that challenging conversations about racism, oppression, classism, and other barriers to equity are critical. They also felt that partnering with faculties of education and unions to ensure teacher training is reflective of diversity would help eliminate many conscious or unconscious biases held by educators and other school or central staff. The TDSB has already begun the process of delivering anti-racism and anti-oppression professional learning to their senior leadership. This professional learning has begun for all principals, vice-principals, centrally assigned principals, and coaches in the system. The learning explicitly introduces equity as a leadership competency and stresses that a deep understanding of equity is necessary for all staff so as to support student achievement and well-being.

- o *School Curriculum and Materials*

  Participants noted that students often struggle to see themselves represented in their schoolwork. Participants recommended more training for teachers in culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, as well as the inclusion of global and Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. As a way of addressing these issues, all principals, vice principals, and coaches have been engaged in learning on Inclusive Design.

o *Cultural Representation and Appreciation*

In addition to representative textbooks and the curriculum, students expressed the need to see themselves reflected in their schools. They asked for more positive representation of historically marginalized groups in the curriculum and in the school itself. Participants asked that schools make the effort to honour and celebrate culture and languages; be mindful of prominent holidays; and honour the home languages of students and families. They noted that while some schools do touch on the more significant holidays, they provide few other ways to immerse students in diverse cultural identities, which affects how included and reflected they feel in their learning environments. Participants were clear that racialized students need diverse staff members to relate to culturally and as role models.

A consistent theme was the need for more earnest representation, acknowledgement, and support for Indigenous students, support beyond the necessary land and treaty recognitions. Participants see as critical that the knowledge gap on Indigenous peoples in Canada be filled. They also want acknowledgement plaques of treaties and territories, the inclusion of Indigenous music and art into daily activities, and partnering with First Nations schools. Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the wake of the TRC includes acknowledging that we are all treaty people. Teachers should be familiar with the TRC's 94 recommendations.
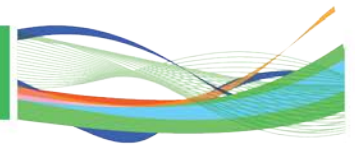
o *Embracing Different Learning Styles and Needs*

Many cited a need for educational strategies that will work for students with different learning styles. These might include more inquiry-based learning in the curriculum; alternative ways of evaluating students; strength-based pedagogical approaches; and more online/hybrid resources for students. Online feedback indicated that all families want the best learning environment for their children and that an embrace of different learning styles is the most effective way to achieve it. Specialized programs and Optional Attendance help to achieve that goal.

Optional Attendance

Participants noted that schools with specialized programs[15] are not equitably distributed or accessible throughout the city. This has a negative impact on specific neighbourhoods and on students who do not live within the catchment areas of those schools. The dynamics of the Optional Attendance application process (used to apply for a specialized program or to attend a school outside the student's catchment or home school area) create a number of problems that then have caused deepening divisions within and between schools competing for student enrolment.

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[15] At the TDSB, specialized programs include Advanced Placement, Africentric Programs, Arts Programs, Cisco/Nortel Systems, Cyber Arts, Elite Athletes/Arts, Integrated Technology, International Baccalaureate, Leadership Pathway, Math, Science and Technology, Pre-Advanced Placement

Students with Special Education Learning Needs and Other Disabilities

Participants voiced concerns that the existing Special Education Learning programming and delivery can be divisive and exclusionary, especially to students' families — a challenge across the education and not only within the TDSB. Families expressed frustration at being shut out of decisions made on behalf of their children. They want to be more involved in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and other choices that affect their children. They also want a clear understanding of how to appeal decisions about IEPs.

The data are clear that Black students are over-represented in Special Education Learning programs while White students are over-represented in Gifted programs (Brown & Parekh, 2010; Parekh 2013a, Parekh 2013b).
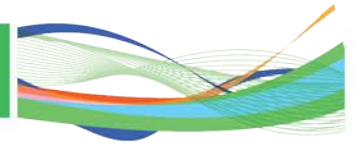
Some families, concerned that congregated[16] Gifted programs might be phased out as a result of the Enhancing Equity Task Force's work, expressed online how important these classrooms have proven for their children, who had previously experienced social isolation and low mental health, and their fears of what might happen if these supports were removed. Online feedback noted that some students in Gifted programming have dual diagnoses and benefit enormously from classrooms tailored to their needs.

This report does not recommend phasing out or closing congregated Special Education sites or Special Education programs, which includes Gifted. It is, however, important to review Special Education to assess the impact of these supports on students' achievement and well-being.

Many other students require more system support to benefit fully from education, including students identified with multiple exceptionalities such as autism, and students with complex medical care needs, intellectual and physical disabilities, or hearing or vision impairment that affects their ability to learn. The TDSB needs to recognize, understand, and support differences according to the needs of all these individual students.

The Task Force heard significant debate around specific issues such as inclusive classrooms and the Home School Program. Some participants asked for the end of the program, arguing that the TDSB's goal should be to include students in its classrooms rather than segregate them, and that more resources, staff, and professional learning are required for the Board to adequately meet the need of these vulnerable students. Many participants did not think that the current model provides sufficient supports for students with special education needs and other disabilities in blended classrooms. Other families, however, noted online that they fear that inclusive classrooms

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[16] Congregated schools are schools that only have special education class to support some students in placements that are special education class full time. These programs support communities of learners whose complex educational needs require alternative curriculum and specialized services, facilities and resources. The goal is to maximize student independence.

may not meet the needs of their children or provide the best learning environment for them, especially if they have dual or multiple diagnoses.

Participants were clear that existing services do not adequately meet the need of students. They asked specifically for professional learning for staff and more support staff with the knowledge and skills to work with students.

One teacher is reported to have said of a student, "Kids with ADHD don't need medication; they just need more love from their parents."

Another student described how a teacher "told a kid she didn't have depression; she just needed to take a nap."

Senior staff at the TDSB recognize that some students require the support of special education classrooms and congregated schools. Effective September 2016, the TDSB introduced a universal screening process for all Grade 3 students across the Board. The purpose of this universal screening test is to:
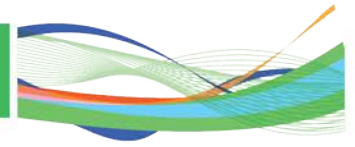
- Provide information to classroom teachers about the strengths and learning needs of each student in order to better support teachers in programming for students
- Help teachers to know when to bring a student forward to In-School Team (IST) or School Support Team (SST) for programming suggestions
- Improve equity of access for all students to differentiated programming including the potential identification of students with a gifted exceptionality

The low percentage of schools that are physically accessible is also a major barrier for students with physical accessibility needs.

More Student Voice

Many participants cited a lack of opportunity for students to speak and be heard. Students stressed their desire to participate in conversations on issues of equity. At some schools, students are taking a leadership role in equity initiatives, through student-led equity councils, student equity clubs and forums, and pushing for student representation on school committees.

Participants also see it as essential for staff to support and advocate for students in opening up opportunities for their participation and leadership. Participants also asked for data such as surveys and interviews to better understand students' experiences and needs with regard to equity, and to hear their opinions and solutions.

More Authentic Parent and Community Relationships[17]

Building better relationships between school staff and families is essential for success in equity. Many educators, community partners, and others suggested that many families feel disenfranchised in various ways. Families from a variety of areas described feeling isolated, wanting better or more meaningful communication, experiencing frustration with the system, and/or feeling unwelcome in their child's school.

Some families were concerned that their voices were minimized in larger community gatherings or in the presence of "expert" voices from community agencies. School councils can become hierarchies that put families with the time, resources, and ability to engage regularly with the school at the top and those without social, cultural, or linguistic capital at the bottom. Those at the top often have higher socioeconomic status and English fluency. These power dynamics need to be addressed by school leaders who must ensure that those who are habitually silenced or excluded are included and listened to.

Community members noted that it can be challenging to establish partnerships with the TDSB. Exploring new partnerships with community organizations and strengthening the capacity of Community Support Workers could bolster schools' connectivity with their neighbourhoods.
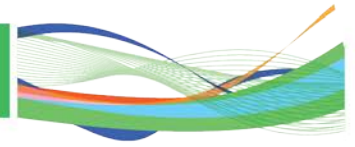
Participants discussed the value of schools as strong community hubs that encourage student and family voice in school and community initiatives, as well as provide spaces and resources for people to collaboratively support and learn from each other. Schools can be strong neighbourhood resources in partnership with other levels of government and local community organizations that can provide connections and resources with regard to language, settlement, health, and mental health and well-being. Participants believe that school buildings can become a welcome and critical resource that contribute to local community development.

More Professional Learning

Participants were adamant that there be robust opportunities for ongoing, intersectional, professional learning and development for TDSB leadership, administrators, educators, support staff, families, and students, particularly with regard to the difficult and uncomfortable work of equity. This professional learning is led by individuals who have demonstrated expertise in equity and anti-oppression.

The importance of this theme was reinforced throughout the consultations.

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[17] Part of the Enhancing Equity Task Force work was started on the creation of a set of Standards for Family Engagement. Timing did not allow this work to be completed within the scope of the Enhancing Equity Task Force but it will continue within the Board.
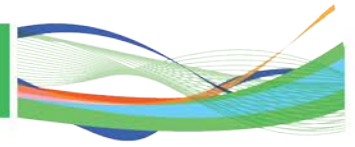
Accountability and Transparency

Participants suggested that families and community members must keep the TDSB accountable for advancing equity for those who have experienced discrimination and racism, and especially for those who have historically and systemically been marginalized.

The system itself needs the tools, policies, and procedures to make the necessary changes, as well as to track and report on its success through ongoing data collection. Participants also recognized that all stakeholders must be involved in necessary, difficult conversations about ongoing barriers to equity.

Data needs to be collected for accountability purposes. School-level equity assessments that detail the strengths and challenges within each school should be undertaken on a periodic basis so that actions can be planned and progress measured. Participants noted that the current Parent Concern Protocol process can vary greatly between schools, depending on the individuals involved. The existing process should be reviewed and expanded to all stakeholders, including students and staff, and it should be strengthened. More work is required to develop a better understanding of the process and to ensure that anyone who wants to use the protocol knows what to expect and what to do next if their efforts at addressing issues remain unresolved.

Participants also raised concerns over what may happen to equity work if there are changes to leadership within the TDSB. The TDSB must secure strong accountability measures for the work that emerges from the Task Force so as to ensure that the TDSB and the Board of Trustees move beyond discussion to sustainable actions.

OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM WHAT WE LEARNED

Four themes emerged from our work:
- The problems of social and economic inequity are greater than the TDSB;
- Divisions between and within schools;
- Developing a mindset of true partnership and mutual respect with students, families, caregivers, and community; and,
- The need for tracking and reporting.

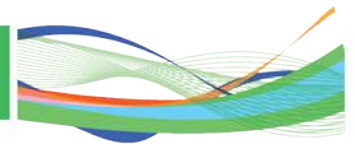### *The Problems of Social and Economic Inequity are Greater than the TDSB:*

The school system exists within a broader societal context of racism, oppression, and socioeconomic disparities. Toronto is the child poverty capital of Canada and more than a quarter of GTA children live in poverty. These children and their families face enormous disadvantages with regard to employment, income, housing, health care, child care, accessibility, and transportation (see Research Brief 1, Appendix A). These disparities have consequences for education that the education system cannot solve on its own.

The TDSB cannot resolve larger issues of income disparity but it can play a strong role in addressing disparity within its systems. The Enhancing Equity Task Force's recommendations aim to advance the TDSB's equity work.

Divisions Between and Within Schools

Participants focused on the structure and delivery of education as they noted how practices like Optional Attendance (the ability to attend a school other than your local school) and specialized programs in schools (such as Arts or International Baccalaureate programs) resulted in divisions between schools. These programs have opened pathways to post-secondary opportunities for some students but not for others. At the same time, some families noted in online feedback that the selection processes and subsequent competition that arises to gain entry into such programs is worthwhile and relevant learning to prepare for life after school.

Equity means building learning environments that inspire *all* children to meet their full potential. Wherever there are divisions between schools, traditionally marginalized students end up under-represented in these specialized programs and without equitable, merit-based access to them. According to an international study by Doug Willms (2006), "When students are segregated into different kinds of programmes as they progress through school, the gap tends to increase and overall levels of performance [of the schooling systems] become worse (Willms, 2006, p.50)."

Our consultations emphasized the overwhelming value of specialized programs and schools and the need to build on and expand access to these types of programs for all students. The recommendations therefore, focus on how to improve access to these specialized programs and to support all schools to be great schools.

Consultation participants voiced concerns about the structural elements within schools that divide students — including programs such as transitional pathways that move Grade 9 students into different programs of study and streams (Academic, Applied, Apprenticeship, Locally Developed, and Work). Research has indeed demonstrated consistently that racialized students are under-represented in Academic streams and that students with identified learning needs do better when they are fully integrated into the classroom with as-needed supports. Participants were concerned that streaming at the start of Grade 9 and at age 13 limits post-secondary choices far too early; some suggested that students would be better equipped to make decisions at the end of Grade 10.
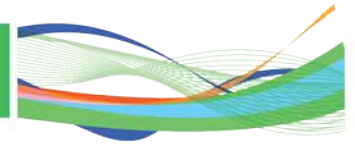
Other parents were concerned that destreaming could "water down" the curriculum if all students were to begin high school in the academic stream and that stronger students would not have access to adequate teacher time.

It is important to note that successful pilot programs within the TDSB have shown that, given the opportunity and the right supports, all students can succeed in the Academic stream. The Peel District School Board has announced that it will soon begin similar destreaming pilot programs. And this fall, Queen's Park has pledged to look at destreaming Grade 9 across Ontario after its own data found that 38% of Ontario's lowest income students study at the Applied level, compared with 26% of students from high income groups.

A recent York University study using TDSB data found that only 53% of Black TDSB students were enrolled in an Academic program, compared with 80% of students of other backgrounds.

These data are compelling and the solution may very well lie in rethinking streaming. While recommendations are provided with regard to Grade 9 and Grade 10 curriculum, concerns of parents on both sides of the issue need to be addressed. The right level of supports for students and teachers must go hand in hand with any changes to ensure that all students in the academic program have access to teachers with high expectations and experience high academic achievement and success so that no student is adversely affected. In fact, Doug Willms (2006) in his international study further points out that "countries that have the highest levels of performance tend to be those that are successful in not only raising the learning bar, but also levelling it. These findings provide strong evidence that strong school performance and equity can go hand in hand (Willms, 2006, p.67)."

Parents also voiced different opinions as to whether structural barriers exist with regard to the delivery of effective Special Education programs and services. Some parents are concerned that students are detrimentally segregated in their home schools based on learning needs and abilities. Others felt that this segregation allowed for a more focused approach to teaching and learning.

Some parents preferred that their children have greater opportunities to receive Special Education at their home schools rather than be sent to a congregated site, while yet others expressed high levels of satisfaction with their children's experiences at congregated sites. In particular, parents of Gifted children felt very strongly that the congregated site model continue.

Developing a Mindset of True Partnership and Mutual Respect with Students, Families, Caregivers, and Community

Relationships matter. Student and family experiences with the TDSB are based on the relationships they develop with the teachers, administrators, and other staff within the school. It is through these interactions that they experience support, encouragement, and the opportunities they seek for learning and advancement. It is often through these relationships that students achieve success. As one of the planning group members said, "for many, education is the path to hope and a better future." However, as noted by many participants, many students do not experience these positive relationships.
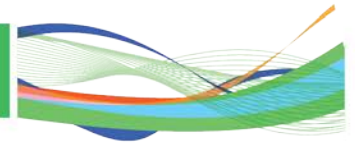
The Task Force heard from participants about inequities based on inconsistent practices and expectations, as well as harmful biases. Racist or oppressive assumptions and biases have no place in education and must be eliminated so that all children can feel that they belong in school and can achieve their potential.

Students need to know that educators will neither make nor tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Asian or any other oppressive language or comments, from other students, staff, teachers, or administrators.

Finally, it is important that schools work more productively with parents and caregivers. True partnership requires that teachers, other staff, students, and parents/caregivers work together to determine what is best for each child in a given situation. This is particularly important for students who receive Special Education Learning supports and who often feel excluded from the assessment process.

The Need for Tracking and Reporting

There is currently no central system to document or track incidents based in discrimination, racism, or hate. When such incidents do occur, they are dealt with in a wide variety of ways. In one school, for instance, swastikas were carved into the wooden stage at the gym. The school immediately reported the incident; closed the gym until the swastikas were removed; alerted all staff and students to what had happened; and put out a clear statement condemning the actions and indicating that those responsible would be held accountable. In another school, a teacher discovered a bathroom with hateful racial slurs on almost every surface from walls to toilets to towel dispensers. The bathroom was quietly repainted but no discussion took place between the administrator and the teacher who reported the incident and no alert or statement was made. In
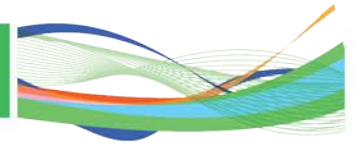
the first instance, the school signaled a clear expectation that this type of behaviour was not going to be tolerated and that immediate action would be taken. In the second instance, there was no clear signal that the school would not tolerate hate or what steps would be taken to re-establish a safe and caring environment.

Every school needs to be free from discrimination, racism, and hate. There need to be clear expectations that these behaviours will not be tolerated. Should an incident occur, it needs to be recorded and a response needs to be generated that addresses the concern and seeks to protect the students who have been targeted.
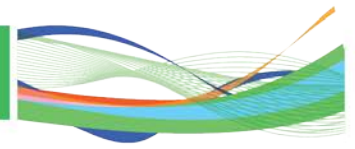
Summary:

Equity is about responding to the needs of *all* students so as to ensure they reach their full potential and that they thrive in the education system from the day they enter it in pre-kindergarten until the day they graduate from secondary school.

The recommendations that follow seek to ensure that the TDSB creates an equitable environment for all its students, one that fosters excellence, clear accountability, authentic engagement, and trusting relationships within the context of an anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogy and framework.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

One clear vision emerged from the wealth of stories, insights, research, and consultations. Equity requires all TDSB schools to be strong neighbourhood schools that provide:
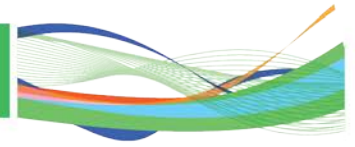
- Learning environments free of barriers so that *all* students can reach their full potential;
- Programming and staffing that is reflective, relevant, and responsive to the cultures, identities, and needs of the TDSB's diverse students, families, and communities;
- A school culture that is safe, welcoming, caring, and stands actively against discrimination, racism, and hate;
- Active engagement with families and communities as authentic partners.

In keeping with that vision, the Task Force has made recommendations in the following six areas, so as to:

1) **Ensure equitable educational access, experiences, and opportunities for all students in all schools;**
2) **Make students whole: effectively addressing school incidents and complaints;**
3) **Ensure equitable access to funding and resources among schools;**
4) **Meaningfully engage students, families, and communities in building a culture of equity at school;**
5) **Ensure equity in staff employment, transfer, and promotion; and,**
6) **Provide professional learning on equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all.**

1) **Ensure Equitable Educational Access, Experiences, and Opportunities for All Students in All Schools**
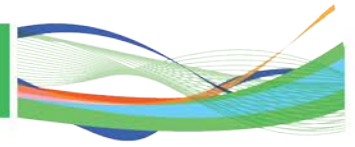
- Remove systemic barriers *between* schools:

  o Examine practices that result in inequitable access to specialized programs;

  o Examine ways to improve access to resources and supports so that schools can offer a variety of specialized programs to all students;

  o Review the impact of the Optional Attendance policy in terms of barriers to accessibility of programs;

  o Ensure that the Optional Attendance policy maintains a fair and transparent process for applications and selection into available programs.

- Remove systemic barriers *within* schools (barriers that are created by the perceptions of educators, administrators, and/or professionals):

  o Phase in a program to allow a majority of Grade 9 and 10 students to work at an Academic level with necessary programming and teacher support.[18] The phase-in should occur over a three-year period, closely monitor and report on student outcomes and achievement levels, and be responsive to parent concerns about curriculum standards and teacher expectations;

  o Review Special Education Learning programs with an emphasis on:
    - Placement and inclusion of students with special education learning needs;
    - Retaining congregated sites while exploring options to include Special Education at a home school;
    - Professional development for staff;
    - Providing a process and clear information for collaborative decision-making about student needs, as well as a process to appeal and revise decisions;
    - Identifying physical and attitudinal barriers;
    - Ensuring that all families, including those new to Canada and those whose first language is not English, can successfully navigate the Special Education system with confidence.

- Review curriculum based on an equity and anti-oppression framework. This means:

  o Incorporating equity and anti-oppression content into the curriculum, reflecting subject matter relevant to the various student demographics; and,

  o Incorporating content about Indigenous peoples and history, as well as being cognizant of Indigenous rights and land recognition.

- Establish a Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement within the TDSB, with a focus on research and generating solutions and support within the TDSB for Black students and their families;

- Under the leadership of TDSB's new Accessibility Coordinator and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, implement the TDSB's multi-year strategic plan to identify and remove physical, attitudinal, informational, and other barriers[19], and strive to remove physical barriers in existing buildings that prevent staff and students from full participation and high achievement in their respective working and learning environments.

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[18] San Vicente, R., Sultana, F., & Seck, N. (2015). Sifting, sorting & selecting: A collaborative inquiry on alternatives to streaming in the TDSB. Final Report. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Toronto District School Board.

[19] as cited in *What An Ontario Education Accessibility Standard Could Include.* http://www.aoda.ca/spread-the-word-about-the-aoda-alliances-new-discussion-paper-on-what-an-education-accessibility-standard-can-and-should-include
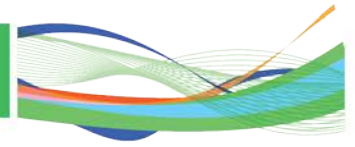
2) **Making Students Whole: Effectively Addressing School Incidents and Complaints**

- Explore preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation approaches:

   o Review existing complaint protocols and ensure an effective process for complaints and resolution. As the Ontario Human Rights Commission argues, the goal of complaint resolution is to ensure that "the complainant is, to the extent possible, 'made whole,' and the effects of the discrimination remedied";

   o Explore staffing models that support preventative and alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, and mediation to better respond to school and student needs;

   o Respond to the overwhelming request to end the School Resource Officer program;

   o Review the handling and overseeing of student complaints and identify effective ways to support students when they are unable to resolve disputes at the school level;

   o Develop or acquire a system to gather and track reports of incidents and complaints related to exclusion, discrimination, racism, and hate.

- Review current suspension and expulsion practices, with an emphasis on:

   o Staff bias and the reasons for the over-representation of Black and Indigenous students in Special Education Learning programming;

   o The impact of suspension and expulsion on students and families.

3) **Ensure Equitable Access to Funding and Resources Among Schools**

- Distribute funding and resources equitably among schools, recognizing that discrepancies among schools occurs in part because of disparities in school fundraising capacity, which leads to inequitable access to and quality of resources. In keeping with this goal, we recommend that:

   o The Board of Trustees confirm its commitment, as currently embodied in the Fundraising and Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) policies, that school resources be targeted equitably;
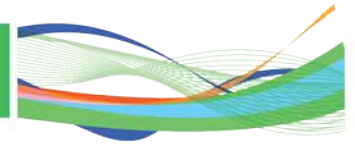
- The Board of Trustees consider requests, raised in Task Force consultations, that measures of inequality within schools (pockets of poverty and fundraising) be included in the calculation of the LOI;

- The Learning Opportunities Grant and school-based/school council fundraising capacities be reviewed to ensure greater equity of resources among schools with different socioeconomic status;

- The allocation of funding distributed for staff resources, classroom materials, and professional development and training also be reviewed.

4) Meaningfully Engage Students, Families, and Communities in Building a Culture of Equity at School

- In keeping with the need for strong neighbourhood schools where all students feel that they are cared for, that they belong, and that they are heard through the creation of a more inclusive and representative culture in schools[20], we recommend that the TDSB provide a school environment that:

  - Ensures that students have dedicated, caring adults in school to mentor and advocate with and for them;

  - Fosters student self-advocacy and empowerment, including student and peer leadership;

  - Encourages students to have a voice in school practices and decision-making.

- Families, including those from historically marginalized and currently underserved communities, be fully engaged as authentic partners in the education of their children. To this end:

  - Develop a set of Family Engagement Standards to ensure that all families feel welcomed, feel that they belong, and are encouraged to be contributors to the school community;

  - Work to ensure that school councils are representative and reflective of the school community;

  - Work to actively steward better and more meaningful communication and experiences between families and their schools;

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[20] Fund LAEN (Latinx, Afro-Latin American, Aba Yala Education Network) programs. Follow through on the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services' Black Youth Action Plan.

o Strengthen the capacity of Community Support Workers to bolster families, schools, and community connectivity.

- Further community engagement, schools are to:

  o Develop strategic community partnerships with social agencies, not-for-profit groups, and other levels of government to support the needs of students and families;

  o Function as a resource and gathering space, especially for underserved communities (e.g., for social/emotional, medical- or employment-related purposes, recreation, childcare, adult education).[21]
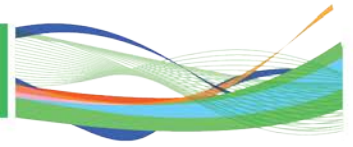
5) **Ensure Equity in Staff Employment, Transfer, and Promotion**

- Staffing models and delivery should reflect equity and the diversity of the communities served by the TDSB;

- Ensure the hiring of diverse staff with demonstrated equity and anti-oppression competency;

- Provide training for staff with hiring responsibilities on diverse hiring practices with an equity lens for all;

- Ensure more flexible staffing structures and processes by engaging local school staff to identify what they need to achieve greater equity;

- Review the hiring panel for school administrators to assess which stakeholder groups need to be included;

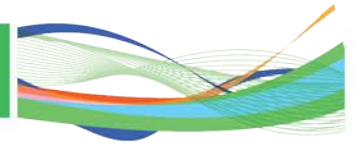- Align transfer and surplus processes in partnership with unions.

6) **Provide Professional Learning on Equity and Anti-Oppression for ALL**

- Deliver systematic and comprehensive professional learning for *all* stakeholders to examine bias, as well as existing and changing laws, policies, practices, frameworks, strategies, and pedagogues that critically examine and address oppression, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, the challenges faced by students with physical and intellectual disabilities, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of historical institutional discrimination;

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[21] Existing examples to model on include Northview Hub and Nelson Mandela Park Public School's Open School Project.
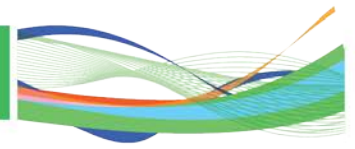
- Apply an equity framework to all professional development learning activities;

- Deliver training by internal and/or external experts;

- Encourage ongoing professional learning and an environment of continuous learning and improvement;

- Ensure clear accountability for staff in School Improvement Plans and Performance Appraisals;

- Identify and provide systemic tools to support staff to control for bias in decision-making.

Accountability

ACCOUNTABILITY

It is important that the TDSB establish clear accountability structures to ensure follow-through on approved Enhancing Equity Task Force recommendations, monitor their implementation, and report to the Board of Trustees annually on their progress. The work of enhancing equity will be an ongoing responsibility, and accountability mechanisms should reflect this requirement.

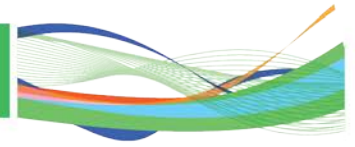The Task Force recommends that the Board of Trustees:

- Develop a tracking and reporting framework to monitor progress on the recommendations;

- Develop a set of progress indicators;

- Use the existing committee structure to identify a lead committee of the Board of Trustees to track and monitor progress;

- Ensure that all advocacy and advisory committees have a role in tracking equity as it relates to their focus.

The Task Force recommends that the TDSB:

- Initiate an annual equity summit;

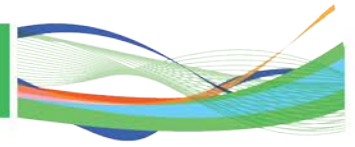- Create four Learning Centre-based Enhancing Equity Committees.

The Task Force recommends that each school:

- Set goals and track progress on equity;

- Establish a focus on equity through existing School Improvement Planning processes;

- Provide information for families to deepen their understanding of existing accountability processes and how to advocate for their children.
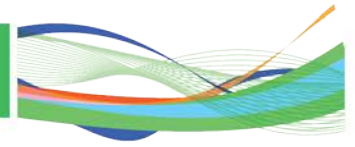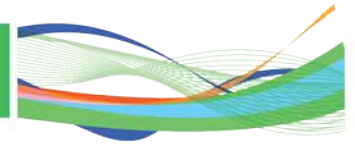
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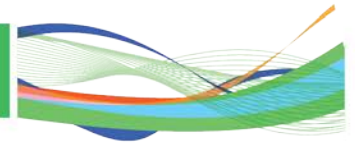STOPit Education Solutions . (n.d.). Retrieved 2017, from http://stopitsolutions.com/stopit-solutions-education

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 1
A Scan of Current Conditions in Toronto Impacting Equity
Prepared by Stefanie De Jesus & Maria Yau
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(February 2017)

While Toronto is home to some of the most affluent neighbourhoods in the country, recent statistics reveal that this metropolis is at the same time the child poverty capital of Canada (Polanyi et al., 2016). Overall, 27% of children live in poverty, with this figure reaching over 40% in some of Toronto's inner city or most diverse neighbourhoods (Polanyi et al., 2016). Considering that individuals under 18 years of age are the most likely age group to live in poverty in Toronto, it is imperative to examine factors that sustain this inequity, which often places children on a disadvantageous trajectory. These factors include:
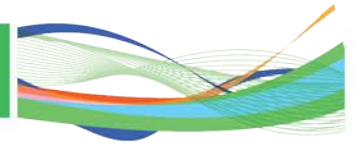
- Employment and income
- Food security
- Housing
- Transportation
- Access to health care
- Childcare
- Accessibility

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Recent generations have observed a marked change in the workforce landscape. Between 1984 and 2014, the proportion of part-time jobs in Toronto has more than doubled, from 11% to 23% (City of Toronto, 2014). Qualifying for Employment Insurance and Ontario Works is increasingly difficult as stricter restrictions were enforced (Granofsy et al., 2015). To further aggravate this social crisis, precarious employment (i.e., jobs lacking security or benefits) has become ubiquitous; precarity has increased by approximately 50% in the last 20 years, with at least 20% of the workforce currently holding such forms of employment (PEPSO, 2013).

These trends disproportionately affect youth, racialized individuals, recent immigrants, and Indigenous families, who already face barriers to employment, such as limited Canadian experience or credentials, language difficulties, few networking opportunities, and ineligibility for particular employment services or income supports (City of Toronto, 2013). According to The Scorecard on Prosperity 2013, over 55% of newcomers have a university degree, yet most are underemployed with jobs which offer low pay and fewer opportunities to advance (Toronto Region Board of Trade, 2013). This inability to capitalize on newcomers' abilities is estimated to cost the Toronto economy between $1.5 billion to $2.25 billion annually (Toronto Region Board of Trade, 2010).

Poverty intensification can also be attributed to inequities in income. Not surprisingly, when compared to other cities across the country, Toronto has experienced the highest level of income inequality (United Way, 2015). Between 1980 and 2005, income inequity among Torontonians rose by 23%, in contrast to the national rate of 6% (United Way, 2015). Income inequity is further exacerbated by race, gender, newcomer, and Indigenous status, among other factors. For example, racialized individuals endure reduced earnings (i.e., 81.4 cents to a dollar) compared to non-racialized workers (Block & Galabuzi, 2011), women face a 31.5% gender pay gap (Cornish, 2014), and newcomers earn 48.5% of the incomes of non-immigrants in Toronto (Walks, 2013). This disparity in income is also manifested geographically; "high-income neighbourhoods have become more affluent, and low-income neighbourhoods have become poorer, in relative terms" (United Way, 2015). To be specific, between 1970 and 2005, the number of low-income

neighbourhoods rose from 19% to 53%, middle income neighbourhoods dwindled from 66% to 29%, and high income neighbourhoods rose from 15% to 19% (Hulchanski, 2010).

FOOD SECURITY

Inequities in employment and income propel inequities in food security. Owing to financial circumstances, 13% of families in Toronto experienced food insecurity in 2013-14 (Tarasuk et al., 2016). By the same token, there has been a 13% rise in the overall usage of food banks across Toronto, with a 48% rise in ethno-racial diverse areas (e.g., Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough; Daily Bread Food Bank, 2016). Even so, racialized, low-income communities are less likely to have a food bank in their neighbourhood compared to non-racialized, low-income communities (Tehara, 2010).

Although children constitute one fifth of the total population of Toronto, they are an overrepresented fragment of food bank users at 29% (Tarasuk et al., 2016). Reports have also revealed an increase in the proportion of children in households using food banks who had not eaten for a whole day in the past two years due to finances (from 28% in 2014 to 37% in 2016; Toronto Child and Family Network). Moreover, 17% of Torontonian children who used food banks recounted going hungry at least once per week (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2016).

To exacerbate income inequities in Toronto, many individuals face financial and geographic barriers to regularly accessing healthy and culturally appropriate foods (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2012). Namely, quality and lower-priced food retail outlets are rarely within walking distance or easily accessible by public transit in low-income neighbourhoods (Toronto Public Health, 2013).
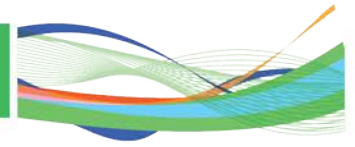
HOUSING

Currently, an unprecedented housing crisis exists in Toronto and the surrounding region, where rental and ownership prices are among the highest in Canada and have increased well above the rate of inflation. The rapid rise in housing costs is aggravating existing inequities. To illustrate, 34% of families with children aged 17 and under are forfeiting over 30% of their income on rent (the cutpoint of "affordability"; Polanyi et al., 2016) and half of all families in low-income neighbourhoods are living in housing that is either overcrowded, unaffordable, or in deficient condition (e.g., pests, poor repair, broken door locks, etc.; Paradis et al., 2014). As such, lower-income families are driven to wait lists for subsidized housing or into unsafe housing situations as they are without options (Polanyi et al., 2016).

Moreover, particular groups face a disparate challenge in accessing adequate housing. Studies have found that newcomers, women escaping violence, single parent households, individuals with mental illness, as well as racialized, Indigenous and LGBTQ people experience discrimination and barriers to renting (Campaign 2000, 2015; CERA, 2009). Consequently, thousands of Toronto families have experienced homelessness and turned to shelters, thereby affecting the health and well-being of their children (Shapcott, 2014).

TRANSPORTATION

Though Toronto has one of the least affordable public transit passes among Canadian cities (Toronto Public Health, 2013), efforts have been made to improve affordability for youth by making transit free for children aged 12 and under. This policy not only benefits approximately 90,000 children from low-income families in order to partake in educational, health and recreational opportunities but also daycares, schools, and community groups who provide services (e.g., field trips) to children (Polanyi et al., 2016).

Despite these positive gains, inequities exist in transportation. The cost of fares has been acknowledged as a barrier to public transit use for Torontonians living on a low income (Shapiro, 2012; Toronto Public Health,

2011; Wilson et al., 2011). Again, consider low-income families, who are more likely to live in the inner suburbs, which are more affordable yet designed for cars, as opposed to the downtown core. Transit in downtown Toronto is reported to be three times better than in the inner suburbs (e.g., higher frequency of nearby subway, bus and streetcar services), areas where individuals are most likely to depend on transit but experience a substantial service gap (Toronto Prosperity, 2015). As a result, low-income earners are required to spend a notable portion of their wages on public transit, which is often unreliable or infrequent in their communities or inaccessible due to irregular work schedules. This forces individuals to spend additional time commuting and triage necessary errands, such as picking up a child from daycare, doctor's appointments, and grocery shopping, if they cannot afford public transit.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
While there is publicly funded and universal health care coverage in the province of Ontario, inequities and accessibility barriers related to health care exist, particularly among many newcomer and disadvantaged families. These barriers can be tangible (e.g., financial, geographical, and uninsured or unattached health care provision) and intangible (e.g., language, cultural, familiarity, etc.) in nature.

Research (Yau & De Jesus, 2014; Yau et al., 2015) has found that financial inflexibility often prevents families in high priority neighbourhoods from seeking medical attention due to associated costs, such as transportation to reach health care professionals farther away, out-of-pocket medical services, prescriptions, and specialized assessments. Another leading obstacle to health care access for children of newcomer families is the ineligibility for provincial health care coverage - Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). In some cases, families on a refugee claim admit to not seeking health care services for the sole reason of not wanting to cause trouble or jeopardize their refugee claim. Even for students who do have OHIP coverage, some may be unattached. In other words, they do not have family doctors, and hence consistent primary health care for them is uncommon. These barriers significantly decrease families' accessibility to health care.
Sources of intangible barriers that Toronto children and their families face to accessing health care include language and cultural differences (e.g., trust in "Western" medicine, dismissal of taboo health concerns such as mental and sexual health). Many immigrant or low-income families feel intimidated by and fearful of visiting hospitals, specialists, or walk-in clinics due to their limited familiarity and understanding of the Ontario health care system and how to navigate through it (Yau & De Jesus, 2014; Yau et al., 2015). Their unfamiliarity leads to the fear of using and accessing the health care system.

These findings are corroborated by literature which demonstrates that racialized communities are non-existent when it comes to health promotion campaigns, encounter differential treatment when receiving health care, and are deprived access to culturally appropriate health promotion information (Patychuk, 2011). In addition, refugee claimants, migrant workers, and non-status/undocumented individuals encounter further obstacles and threats to health. These patterns have also been observed for Indigenous people living in Toronto (McCaskill et al., 2011; NCCAB, 2013; Olding et al., 2014).
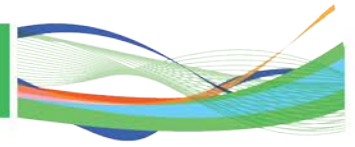
CHILDCARE
Recently, the affordability of childcare in Toronto has received a lot of exposure as the cost of childcare has soared by 30% from 2009 to 2015 (Toronto Prosperity, 2015). The City of Toronto has reported that 75% of families would have to pay over 10% of their household income (after tax and benefits) to access licensed child care (Cleveland et al., 2016). Although 10% is an affordability threshold commonly used in other jurisdictions, it represents a significant financial strain for lower-income families in Toronto, thereby further exacerbating inequities. For this reason, parents/caregivers are forced to decide between unregulated childcare arrangements (which may be less reliable, lower quality, and lack public oversight), incurring

greater financial strain and possible debt to afford licensed childcare, or not work full-time or at all (Polanyi et al., 2016).

ACCESSIBILITY

One in seven Canadians has a disability (Statistics Canada, 2006). Research has found that individuals living with disabilities are more likely to face poverty, un- or under-employment, poor health and exclusion from their communities (OHRC, 2012; Wellesley Institute, 2016). Recent legislation has sought to change this. According to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), accessibility refers to "measures, policies, practices or other requirements for the identification and removal of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises or such other things [i.e., information and communication] as may be prescribed, and for the prevention of the erection of such barriers." According to this provincial act, the public sector, non-profits and private sector organizations in Ontario that employ one or more individuals will be required to meet the accessibility standards by January 1, 2025. While there is a commitment to improve the accessibility of Ontario, this has not yet equated to compliance. For instance, the Toronto Transit Commission has equipped all buses with low-floors and ramps, but not all bus stops are fully accessible (Wellesley Institute, 2016). Furthermore, low-income individuals with accessibility needs often face inequitable access to transit services (Wellesley Institute, 2016).

APPENDIX B: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 2
Evidence of Need Among TDSB's Diverse Student Population
Prepared by Maria Yau & Ryan Romard
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(February 2017)

In 1999, the newly amalgamated Toronto District School Board (TDSB) released its *Equity Foundation Statement* to ensure "fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of [the] school system, and are integrated into all [its] policies, programs, operations, and practices." In accordance with this equity mandate, the TDSB passed in 2004 a motion:
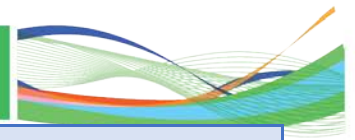
> That staff in consultation with the OHRC and educational experts develop research proposals that identify the factors within the school system which may inhibit student achievement. Such factors should include, but not be limited to, differences in gender, race, ethnicity, mother tongue, income and place of residence.

This motion resulted in the creation of TDSB's *Student and Parent Census* in 2006, which has since then been implemented approximately every five years. The intent is to help the school system and local schools understand their students' demographic makeup as well as to identify the multiple factors (including conditions, experiences, needs and gaps) that affect both the educational and well-being outcomes of their diverse student population.

Based on the latest (2011-12) *Student and Parent Census* findings, this Research Brief offers an overview of potential areas of inequity among five different self-identified groupings including socio-economic status (SES), racialized background, special education needs (SEN), gender, and sexual orientation. To illustrate the intersections of students' needs, a matrix (pp. 2-4) is used to highlight their experiences in five main areas - life in school, life outside of school, well-being, self-perceived abilities, and achievement – cross-sectioned by the five self-identified groupings. Within each of the five areas of need, several themes are highlighted in the first column of the matrix. Under each theme, a number of items are listed along with the percentage of TDSB's Grade 7-12 students who responded favourably to each of the stated items. The five columns to the right represent the reported findings for each of the five self-identified groupings, respectively. A filled cell for each intersection in the matrix indicates a significant gap[22] experienced by a specific self-identified group(s) (column) for a particular theme (row). For example, under the theme of 'overall school experience' (which includes items such as school enjoyment, and feelings of belonging in school), the matrix shows evidence of need for students in four of the groupings – students from lower socio-economic status background, those who identified themselves as Black or Latin American, students with special education needs, and LGBTQ students. Further, by examining a specific self-identified grouping (column), such as gender, one can also determine if gender gaps exist in certain areas at a glance.

For more detailed findings, refer to the *2011-12 Student and Parent Census:* Fact Sheets and Census Portraits at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research/Research/Publications.aspx.

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[22] A significant gap is based on a difference of more than 5 percentage points lower than that of the general population.

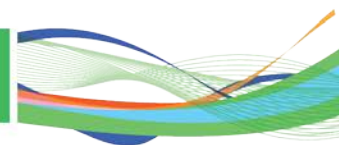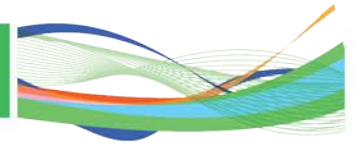| Life in School					
Evidence of need	**Group with Higher Needs**				
	Socio-economic status (SES)	**Racialized groups**	Special education needs (SEN)	**Gender**	**LGBTQ**
Overall school experience (all the time/often) • Enjoyment of school (64%) • Feelings of belonging in school (69%) • Seeing school as a friendly place (71%)	• Lowest SES	• Black • Latin American	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Class participation (all the time/often) • Participating in class discussions (62%) • Answering questions in class (60%) • Speaking up in class (52%)	• Lowest SES	• East Asian • Southeast Asian • Aboriginal	• SEN	• Female	
School extracurricular activities (weekly/monthly) • Sports (42%) • Music (31%) • Arts (31%)	• Lower SES				
Sense of safety at school (all the time/often) • In school building (82%) • Outside on school grounds (75%)	• Lower SES	• Southeast Asian	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Relationships with school adults (all the time/often) • School staff respecting my background (92%) • Feeling accepted by school adults (79%)		• Black • Latin American			• LGBTQ
Perceptions of teachers (all or most teachers) • Feeling supported by teachers (74%) • Feeling satisfied with the ways teachers teach (70%)					• LGBTQ
Support from school adults • Having one or more school adults to turn to for personal support, advice or help (54% Gr. 9-12)		• East Asian • Aboriginal			
Relationships with peers (all the time/often) • Getting along well with other students (84%) • Feeling accepted by other students (79%) • Feeling comfortable discussing problems with friends (70%)		• Aboriginal • Black • Latin American	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Number of close friends at school • Three or more close friends (77% Gr. 9-12)		• Aboriginal • Latin American			• LGBTQ
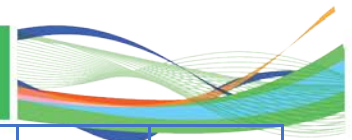
| **Student suspension rates** (2011-12)[23]
• Suspension rates for Grades 7-8: 3.3%
• Suspension rates for Grades 9-12: 3.8% | • Lower SES | •Black
•Mixed
•Latin American
•Middle Eastern | • SEN | •Male | • LGBTQ |

Life Outside of School

Evidence of need	**Group with Higher Needs**				
	Socio-economic status (SES)	**Racialized groups**	Special education needs (SEN)	**Gender**	**LGBTQ**
Relationships with parents (all the time/often) • Parents giving praise (71%) • Parents showing interest in what their child has to say (63%) • Parents helping set goals/make plans (68%) • Talking to parents about school work (54%)	• Lower SES	•East Asian •Southeast Asian			• LGBTQ
Parent involvement in school (all the time/often) • Communicating with teachers (24%) • Attending parent-teacher interviews (53%) • Attending meetings and school events (24%)	• Lower SES	•East Asian •Southeast Asian			
Parent post-secondary expectations • To attend university (71%) • To attend college (12%)	• Lower SES	•Black •Latin American •Aboriginal	• SEN	•Male	• LGBTQ
Extracurricular activities outside of school • Arts (weekly/monthly) (28%) • Music (weekly/monthly) (31%) • Sports/recreation (weekly/monthly) (40%)	• Lower SES	•Aboriginal			
Screen activities (less than 2 hours/day) • TV or videos (70%) • Computer or video games (76%)	• Lower SES	•Aboriginal •Black •Southeast Asian	• SEN	•Male	• LGBTQ
Homework habits • No help with homework (28% Gr. 9-12) • Difficulty of homework barrier to completion (23% Gr. 9-12) • Frequent distractions at home barrier to completion (23% Gr. 9-12)	• Lower SES	•Aboriginal •Black •Latin American •Southeast Asian			• LGBTQ

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[23] Source: *TDSB Facts: Caring and Safe Schools*. Issue 3, June 2013

Well-being					
Evidence of need	**Group with Higher Needs**				
	Socio-economic status (SES)	**Racialized groups**	**Special education needs (SEN)**	**Gender**	**LGBTQ**
Physical health and activity • Overall physical health (good/excellent) (60%) • Physical activity 5+ days/week (47%)	• Lower SES	•East Asian •Southeast Asian		•Female	• LGBTQ
Eating habits • Having breakfast daily (55%) • Having lunch daily (73%)	• Lower SES	•Black •Aboriginal •Southeast Asian		•Female	• LGBTQ
Emotional well-being • Feeling good about oneself (often) (73%) • Liking one's look (often) (61%) • Being hopeful about future (often) (65%) • Nervousness or anxiety (rarely/never) (31%) • Loneliness (rarely/never) (61%) • Feeling down (rarely/never) **(57%)**		•East Asian •Aboriginal •Southeast Asian	• Gifted	•Female	• LGBTQ
Self-perceived Abilities					
Self-rated academic skills (excellent/good) • Reading(70%)/Writing (60%) • Mathematics (53%) • Creativity (73%)	• Lower SES	•East Asian •Southeast Asian •Aboriginal	• SEN	•Male	
Self-rated social skills (excellent/good) • Oral communication (65%) • Leadership (61%) • Conflict mediation (63%)	• Lower SES	•East Asian •Southeast Asian •Aboriginal	• SEN		• LGBTQ
Self-rated life skills (excellent/good) • Hands-on skills (67%) • Money management (58%) • Time management (44%)		•East Asian •Southeast Asian •Aboriginal			• LGBTQ
Academic Achievement					
Grade 6 EQAO (Level 3 / 4) • Reading • Writing • Mathematics	• Lower SES	•Aboriginal •Black •Latin American	• SEN	•Male	(N/A)
Grade 10 • OSSLT • Grade 10 credit accumulation	• Lower SES	•Aboriginal •Black •Latin American	• SEN	•Male	• LGBTQ

APPENDIX C: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 3
Evaluation of TDSB's School-Based Equity Programs
Prepared by Maria Yau & Vanessa Bonsu
Research & Information Services, TDSB
(April 2017)

One of the main functions of the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) Research Department is to conduct evaluations of programs and initiatives offered by the TDSB. For the last 10 years or so, the department has been commissioned to study a number of school-based equity programs. The objectives of these evaluations are to: 1) monitor the progress of each program in order to provide formative data to improve the program; and 2) assess the program's effectiveness and impacts over time. Most of these research evaluations involved the use of multiple measures, and covered multiple outcome areas over multiple years.

This Research Brief highlights eight system-initiated or supported school-based programs that were specifically designed to address the issue of equity among students mainly from historically marginalized communities. The eight programs or initiatives that have been evaluated by the TDSB's Research Department include (alphabetically):

- Africentric Alternative School
- Beyond 3:30 – An extended after-school program
- Feeding our Future – Nutrition program
- Licensed to Learn – Peer tutoring program
- Model Schools for Inner Cities
- Model Schools Paediatrics Health Initiative
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Pre-kindergarten Summer Learning Program - Inspire to Excel

Each of these programs/initiatives is presented in a matrix (see following page) including a brief description according to the key areas of focus, objectives, target groups, history and scope of the program years of evaluation, as well as highlighted findings relating to program impacts and effectiveness.

It should be noted that the eight programs/initiatives included in this Brief do not represent all the equity-based programs implemented at the school board. Rather, they are the equity-specific programs that have been studied by the Board's Research Department in the last ten years, and are also the ones that were locally developed (by or with the school board) and, thus, required formative data to help inform program refinement, enhancement, continuation or, if warranted, discontinuation. The Board's Research Department also undertakes evaluations of curriculum-based programs – such as Entrepreneurship Education; Innovative Intelligence (I2Q); Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI); Reading Recovery; and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education - some of which have been applied or piloted in inner-city schools.[24]
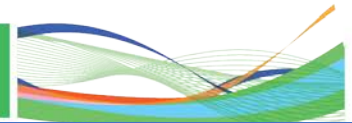

[24] For more details, see TDSB's Research publications
http://www.tdsb.on.ca/research/Research/Publications.aspx

PROGRAM	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM
Africentric Alternative School (Aas) Research Project **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2011-14	**Nature of the Program** Curriculum strategy under TDSB's alternative school model centered on an Africentric education **Target Group(s)** Black elementary school students **Objective(s)** Support the schooling and achievement of Black students **History** Established in 2009 **Total Students Served** As of September 2012, 208 students were enrolled at the AAS.	***Impact on Students*** • When compared to TDSB and Ontario EQAO achievement results, AAS students were reported to have an overall higher rate of improvement • AAS students performed at higher levels compared to schools with similar demographic backgrounds • Students reported they experienced a more positive school climate and a sense of community compared to their former public schools. • Positive impacts on students' sense of identity, confidence, social development, awareness of African culture and critical thinking skills were also found ***Other Benefits*** Higher levels of parent and community engagement
Beyond 3:30 **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2012-15	**Nature of the Program** Comprehensive in-school after-school program with four key components: Homework Club, Junior Chef's Club, Sports and Recreation, and Specialty Programs (for creative expression and life development) **Target Group(s)** Inner-city middle school students (Grades 6-8) **Objective(s)** Close opportunity gaps to foster equity, well-being and achievement for inner-city middle school students **History** Piloted in 2009-10 with seven middle schools **Total Students Served** By 2013-14, over 400 middle-school students from 18 inner-city schools were served each year.	***Impact on Students*** • Enhanced homework habits, improved academic performance, and increased school engagement • Improved physical health – nutrition, healthy eating and food preparation skills, physical fitness and activity • Development and improvement in life skills, social and emotional well-being • Long-term impacts in terms of preparedness for high school transition, school performance and engagement in high school, and post-secondary aspirations ***Other Benefits*** • Multiple positive ripple effects on family dynamics, school environment, as well as local community
Feeding Our Future **Year(S) Of Evaluation:** 2009-10	**Nature of the Program** Student nutrition program that offers a healthy morning meal to all students in participating schools, regardless of their ability to pay. **Target Group(s)** Inner-city middle and secondary school students (Grades 6-12) **Objective(s)** • Improve health, student behaviour, attention in school, attendance and students' academic achievement and graduation rates • Encourage positive nutrition habits for entire families and reduce violence in the school community **History** Initiated in 2008 as a two year pilot program that has continued beyond the planned years **Total Students Served** Approximately 6,000 students in four middle schools (Grades 6-8) and three secondary schools as of 2009	***Impact on Students*** • Higher academic achievement in reading and science for middle school students • Higher levels of academic achievement in Grade 9 EQAO Math and Grade 10 OSSLT success for secondary school students • Higher proportion of students on track for graduation by accumulating sufficient credits • Improved student behaviour and attitude • Reduced tardiness • Lower suspension rates • Improved sense of well-being and better health

PROGRAM	PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM
Licensed to Learn (L2l) **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2012 and ongoing**	**Nature of the Program** After-school dual peer tutoring program which trains older and higher achieving students to become certified tutors, and in the training process they offer after-school tutoring support to younger and more at-risk students. **Target Group(s)** • Higher achieving junior to secondary students (Grades 4-12) • At-risk students (Grades 1-12) **Objective(s)** • Help foster peer helping skills and a caring character in the older, more successful students • Raise the success level of the younger, more at-risk students **History** Offered since 2002 **Students Served** • First piloted in two schools and now offered in over 40 TDSB elementary and secondary schools • 262 L2L tutors and 404 peers as of 2009-10	*Impact on Students* *Tutors* Gained skills and characteristics geared towards supporting, guiding/instructing others such as: • Communicating and engaging with young peers • Fostering an empathetic understanding of the different learning styles and emotional needs of their peers *Peers* • Grades improved significantly with a majority of the peers moving up one Grade level. • Increased confidence • More positive learning attitudes • Increased sense of responsibility for their education and future

Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC)
 	
Year(s) of Evaluation: 2006 – ongoing
	Nature of the Program
	A board-wide initiative that addresses the impacts of poverty on students' achievement and well-being. The MSIC has 5 essential components:
	  1. Innovative teaching and learning practices
	  2. Support services to meet the social, emotional and physical well-being of students
	  3. School as the heart of the community
	  4. Research, review and evaluation
	  5. Commitment to share successful practices
	Target Group(s)
	Inner-city students in the TDSB (JK-Grade 8)
	Objective(s)
	• Increase access and opportunities for inner-city students in order to level their playing field
	• Improve student achievement, well-being and engagement
	History
	Piloted at 3 inner-city schools in 2006, and 4 schools in 2007
	Total Students Served
	By 2013-14, the number of MSIC schools expanded to 150, serving over 56,000 inner-city students.
		Impact on Students
		• Opportunity gaps for inner-city students have been reduced over time
		• Achievement gaps have been narrowed as measured by the Early Development Instrument (EDI), CAT4 (a Canadian standardized test), EQAO outcomes, and Grade 10 credit accumulation*
		
		*See more details in *Enhancing Equity Task Force Research Brief 4*.

Model Schools: Paediatric Health Initiative (MSPHI) **Year(s) of Evaluation:**	**Nature of the Program** An innovative, integrated, education-health partnership between the MSIC and local health agencies. **Target Group(s)** Inner-city students (JK-Grade 12)	*Impact on Students* Positive impacts in terms of: • Physical health • Mental health and well-being related to develop-mental, behavioural, and psychological health • Reduced absenteeism • Greater attentiveness to learning • Overall improvement in academic performance

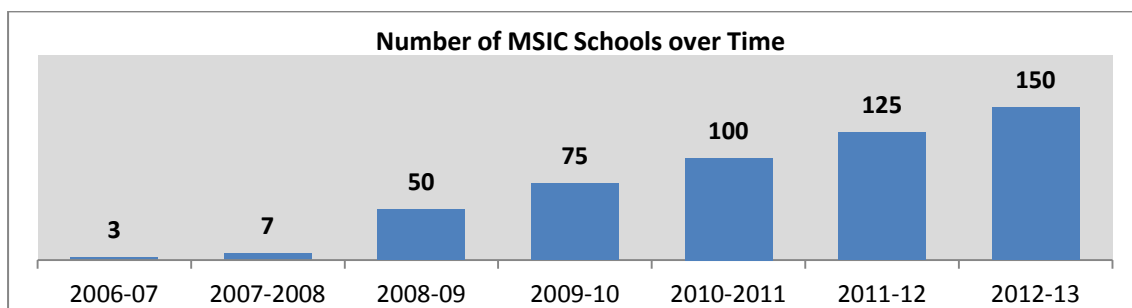| 2012-15		
PROGRAM	**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**	**IMPACT /EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM**
Model Schools: Pediatric Health Initiative (MSPHI) *(Cont.)*	**Objective(s)** Eliminate health gaps and accessibility barriers to health care in low-income communities to meet the holistic health needs of inner-city students and improve their educational trajectories **History** Piloted in 2010 with two in-school health clinics **Students Served** Expanded to eight school sites by 2015-16, serving students from both the host and feeder schools (with the exception of one secondary-school MSPHI clinic which served students from the host school only).	*Other Benefits* *Schools* • Augment school staff understanding and build their capacity to support students' health issues • Supplement the roles of TDSB Professional Support Services *Families* • Raise parents' awareness and understanding of their children's health concerns • Increase parents' ability to leverage support services in the community • Foster improved family dynamics/relationships
Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLC) **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2005, 2009, 2012, 2017**	**Nature of the Program** An in-school pre-school and parent engagement program **Target Group(s)** Pre-school children and their parents/caregivers from high-needs neighbourhoods **Objective(s)** Lay the foundation for young children, especially those from high needs neighbourhoods, for formal schooling and future success **History** First created and implemented in the former Toronto Board of Education at 5 school sites in 1981 **Students Served** A total of 78 PFLC sites across the TDSB	*Impact on Students* PFLC children scored higher in all 5 EDI domains (physical health/well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge) compared to their peers in their schools (mostly located in underserved schools) as well as the overall SK population *Other Benefits* • Parents –*m*ore effective parenting, improved well-being, and increased parent engagement in their child's education and school • PFLC host schools – easing kindergarten transition for JK teachers/students in host schools, supporting special education needs identification and early intervention, offering expertise and knowledge base to enhance the schools' Early Years and Primary Division
Pre-Kindergarten Summer Learning Program - Inspire to Excel **Year(s) of Evaluation: 2014-16**	**Nature of the Program** Pre-kindergarten summer learning program (half days for four weeks) to support young children's transition into Kindergarten that builds learning skills (problem solving, communication and self-regulation) and develop students' proficiency in literacy, numeracy, science, and tech by infusing Africentric perspective. **Target Group(s)** Inner-city pre-school and JK children **Objective(s)** • Investigate the short and long term impacts of early interventions on pre-kindergarten children, especially those from lower socio-economic background and/or African descent in big urban cities such as Toronto Provide children and their parents/caregivers with an inclusive, supportive and safe learning space **History** Started in July 2014 at four sites with 81 children. **Total Students Served** 131 children participated in the program at six sites during the summer of 2016.	*Impact on Students* • Children were more prepared for the start of school in September • Children gained numeracy and literacy skills, and language acquisition • Children benefited in terms of personal well-being, sense of belonging, engagement in play and inquiry experiences, and expression and communication • Children became more self-regulated (e.g., following rules and routines) as well as more independent, confident and assertive *Other Benefits* • Parents - developed a sense of belonging in the school setting with educators and other parents/caregivers • Educators - positively impacted by the program as it challenged educators' teaching philosophy, perceptions and assumptions
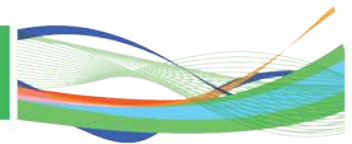
APPENDIX D: Enhancing Equity Task Force: Research Brief 4
An Overview of TDSB's Model Schools for Inner Cities Program, 2006-2016
Prepared by Maria Yau, Bryce Archer & Ryan Romard
(March 2017)

History and Background
In 2006, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) launched the Model Schools for Inner Cities (MSIC) program, in response to the release of the TDSB Inner City Task Force Report in 2005.   The Task Force called for a systemic approach to address the impact of poverty on student outcomes and the issue of achievement gaps experienced by historically marginalized groups. According to its recommendations, extra funding based on the Ministry's Learning Opportunity Grant (LOG) would be allocated to schools in high priority neighbourhoods. The intent was to provide these schools with additional resources and intentional supports in order to "level the playing field for all students regardless of their socio-economic circumstance or cultural background", to enable "students to achieve academically, socially and emotionally to their highest potential", and to allow students to "leave school with the skills and confidence that position them to compete equally in the broader world" (2005 TDSB Task Force Report, pp.4-5).

In 2006, under a rigorous review and selection process, three inner-city schools in different high needs communities were identified as the first MSIC pilot sites. In the second year, another four inner-city schools were added. The third year (2008-09) witnessed sharing of MSIC resources and funds initially granted to the seven MSIC schools with their neighbouring schools, resulting in the formation of seven clusters of 50 MSIC schools. Since then, each subsequent school year, until 2012-13, saw an addition of 25 more MSIC schools based on the Board's Learning Opportunity Index (LOI). By 2012-13, the number of MSIC schools reached 150, serving over 56,000 students from the 150 lowest LOI elementary schools (see chart below).

Number of MSIC Schools over Time

Year	Number
2006-07	3
2007-2008	7
2008-09	50
2009-10	75
2010-2011	100
2011-12	125
2012-13	150

Structure and Governance
A central MSIC Office, headed by a superintendent of education with a central co-ordinating principal and a support team, was created to manage, lead and co-ordinate resource allocations, programming, community liaisons and accountability for the 150 MSIC schools in the seven clusters. Each cluster also formed a committee with members comprised of school superintendents and principals, along with one lead teacher, two MSIC teaching and learning coaches and three community support workers, who offered direct support to their respective MSIC schools and school communities.

In addition, an Inner City Advisory Committee (ICAC) was established as an overseeing body with representatives from different stakeholder groups - including trustees, school superintendents, principals, unions, parents, faculties of education, as well as community and government agencies. The ICAC also monitored the progress of the MSIC program, dealt with ongoing inner-city issues such as LOG and LOI
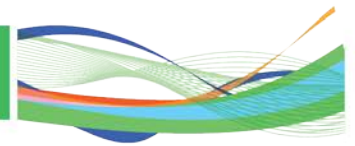
funding, and liaised with other levels of government to address related social policy and broader funding issues.

Essential Components and Philosophy

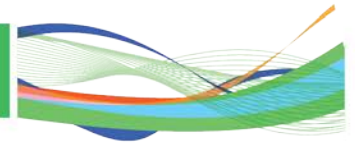Based on the Task Force recommendations, all MSIC schools were guided by five essential components:

1. *Innovation in teaching and learning practice and school structure* – to support improved academic performance through enriched experiential learning opportunities, creativity and critical thinking emphasis, social justice curriculum, and culturally responsive pedagogies
2. *Support services to meet students' physical, social and emotional needs* – with the use of multidisciplinary approaches such as nutrition programs, hearing and vision assessment, in-school health clinics, and extended after-school programs
3. *School as the heart of the community* – through establishing active partnerships with parents, community members, and community organizations
4. *Research, review and evaluation of students and programs* – through annual data collections and reporting to drive continuous school improvement, and summative evaluation to ensure accountability
5. *Commitment to share successful practices* – including innovative strategies, initiatives, and structures with other schools and outside of the board

These essential components embodied the MSIC philosophy of applying an integrated approach through the lens of equity with an emphasis on:

- Adopting a strength-based approach to teaching and learning
- Fostering student well-being including relationship building
- Creating opportunities for student, parent and community engagement

Under these premises and required components, along with the provision of additional resources and direct support from MSIC central staff, MSIC schools offered a variety of innovative and equity-based programs and services to meet the specific needs of their students and local communities. While individual schools had their unique school programming plans, all MSIC schools had undergone a common annual research and review process, which helped inform them of their ongoing needs and progress, and reinforce their MSIC commitment and accountability.
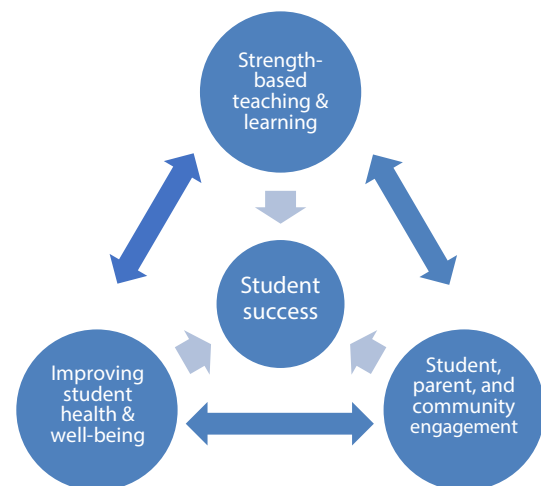
Performance Outcomes

Using multiple outcome indicators, measures and data sources, as well as multi-year longitudinal tracking, TDSB's research has demonstrated a narrowing of achievement gaps among MSIC students over time. For instance:

- Early Development Instrument (EDI)

  A comparison of the 2008 system-wide EDI assessment results to those of 2011 shows a notable reduction in the school readiness gap between MSIC Senior Kindergarten (SK) children and their non-MSIC counterparts over time. A more recent (2015) EDI assessment further indicates significant improvements among MSIC children in terms of Language and Cognitive Development (see chart at right.)

EDI Language & Cognitive Development Subdomains: % of SKs below expectations (2010-11, 2014-15)
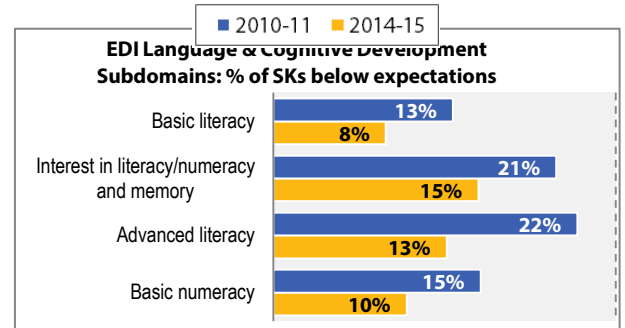
- EQAO Grade 3 and Grade 6 Reading

  While there was a large gap between MSIC students and the overall population in achieving the provincial standard (Level 3/4) in Grade 3 EQAO reading test (54% versus 65% in 2011), the discrepancy had reduced when these students reached Grade 6 (78% versus 71%). (See chart at right.) A cohort tracking analysis further reveals that whereas 18% of the TDSB population rose from below standard in Grade 3 EQAO to Level 3/4 in Grade 6, the corresponding percentage for MSIC students was 21%.

EQAO Reading: Cohort Tracking Gr. 3 to Gr. 6: % of Students at Level 3/4 (Gr. 3 (2011), Gr. 6 (2014))
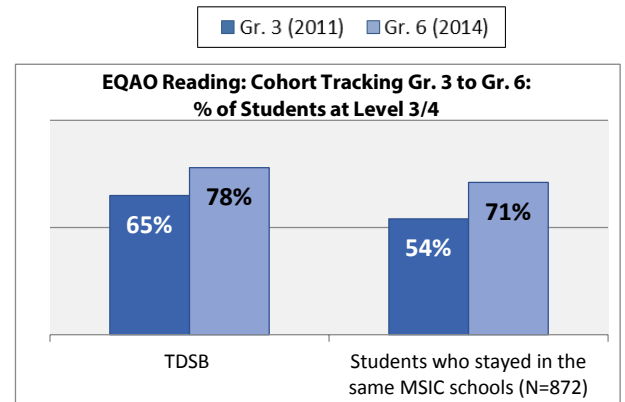
- Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT4)

  Every fall, all MSIC schools administered CAT4, which measures the foundational skills of Grade 2-8 students. Tracking these students' CAT4 results between 2010 and 2014 shows their yearly progress from well below the Canadian norm in Grade 4 to reaching or surpassing the norm by Grade 8 before transitioning to secondary school.

CAT4 5-year MSIC Cohort: % of Students at Stanine 4-9
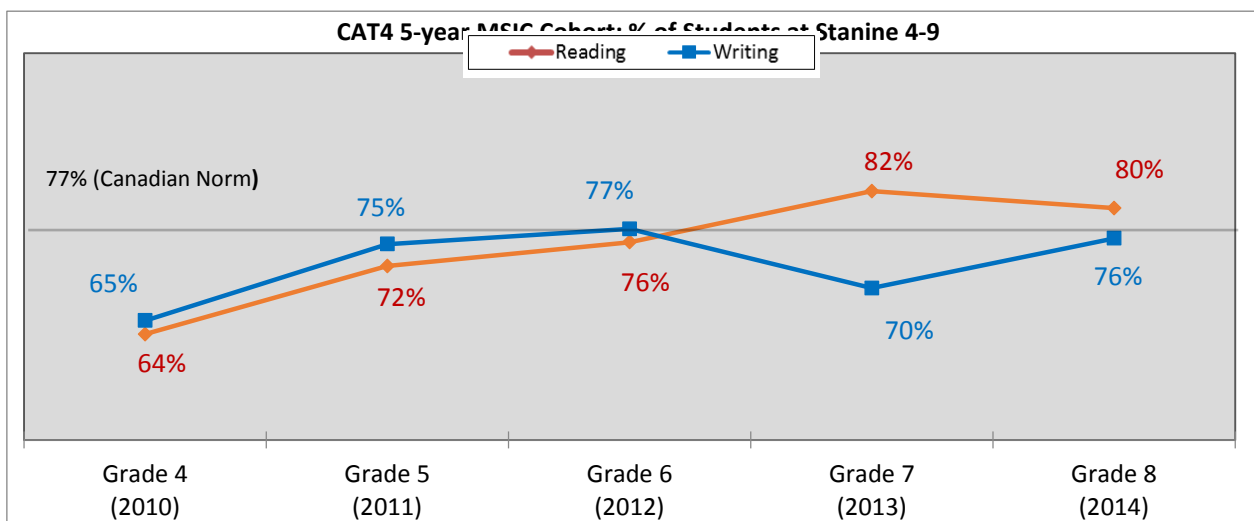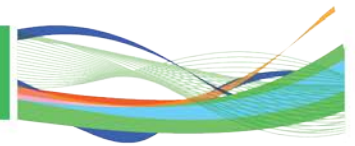
- Grade 10 Credit Accumulation
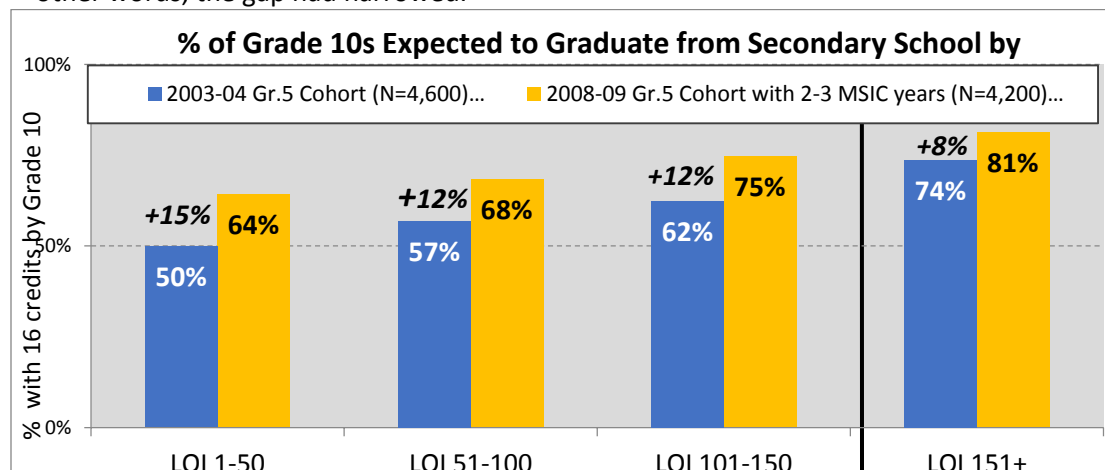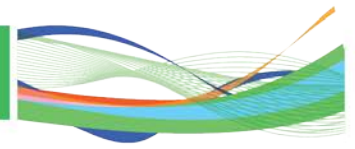Although MSIC was not offered in the secondary school panel (except for a few years), tracking MSIC students beyond their elementary years sheds light on the long-term impacts of the program. As illustrated in the chart below, students from lower LOI schools were much *less* likely to have accumulated 16 credits by Grade 10 (an indicator of students being on track to graduate from secondary school) than their counterparts from higher LOI schools. This was especially the case for inner-city students *prior to* the existence of the MSIC program. For instance, only 50% of these (pre-MSIC) students from the lowest 50 LOI schools, compared to 74% of those from the higher (151 or above) LOI schools, were on track. However, among the MSIC students (the first MSIC cohort), the proportion on track rose to about two-thirds (64%) compared to 50% among their predecessors. In fact, as shown in the graph, the percentage point increase made by the MSIC students was noticeably greater than that of the higher LOI schools. In other words, the gap had narrowed.

% of Grade 10s Expected to Graduate from Secondary School by

Legend: 2003-04 Gr.5 Cohort (N=4,600)… 2008-09 Gr.5 Cohort with 2-3 MSIC years (N=4,200)…

% with 16 credits by Grade 10

LOI	2003-04	2008-09	Increase
LOI 1-50	50%	64%	+15%
LOI 51-100	57%	68%	+12%
LOI 101-150	62%	75%	+12%
LOI 151+	74%	81%	+8%

Conditions for Success

While longitudinal tracking shows overall improvement among MSIC students over time, it should be noted that the degree of progress made by individual MSIC schools varied according to the level of and the unique set of external challenges (e.g., socioeconomic circumstances) faced by each school community, the initial academic standing (baseline) of the students in different schools, and the school's internal organizational structure (e.g., leadership and staff turnover). Nonetheless, the multi-year research on MSIC has clearly proven that high needs schools - no matter how challenging – can help bring about positive change for students, and can narrow, if not completely close, the opportunity and subsequently the achievement gaps *so long as* the school has, or is provided with, the following six conditions:

- ✓ Sustainable additional supports and resources to close opportunity gaps and level the playing field
- ✓ Extra efforts and innovative pedagogies to narrow wide achievement gaps
- ✓ Ongoing research and review to help schools monitor ongoing needs and progress, and adjust planning and practices
- ✓ Sufficient time for schools and students to demonstrate growth – the higher the level of challenge, the more time is needed
- ✓ Visionary leadership and committed staff at both the school and system levels
- ✓ Continuous efforts and resources to address recurring or changing external challenges

APPENDIX E: Equity Policy (DRAFT) Definitions Glossary

This glossary is provided to assist in understanding various terms used in this document, as well as terms they may encounter in the context of discussions of equity and inclusive education. Terminology in the area of equity and inclusive education is constantly evolving. The Board recognizes that terms and usages favoured by various groups and individuals, in various contexts, and at different points in time may differ and that this glossary is not meant to be a comprehensive, nor definitive list.

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: "In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada". These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their Indigenous ancestry.

Acceptance: An affirmation and recognition of people whose race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, abilities, or other, similar characteristics or attributes are different from one's own. Acceptance goes beyond tolerance, in that it implies a positive and welcoming attitude.
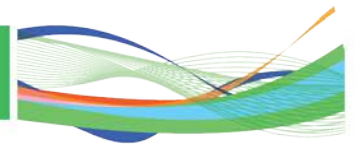
Accommodation: An adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code or other factors. (Refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Guidelines on Accessible Education* and *Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate*, at **www.ohrc.on.ca**.)

Age: How old a person is. Age discrimination involves treating persons in an unequal fashion due to age in a way that is contrary to human rights law.

Ancestry: Lineage, or whom you are descended from and how you trace family and heritage.

Barrier: An obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to and individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

Bias: An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.
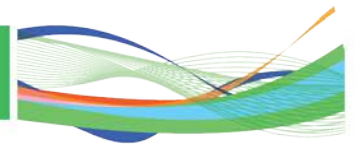
Creed (Religion) : Creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. A creed is sincerely, freely and deeply held; is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfillment; is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices; addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence; and has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief.

Culture: Broadly described, culture can include economic systems, political ideologies and processes, ways of life and social mores, educational institutions, social programs, the environment, technological systems, recreational practices, customs and traditions, artistic and heritage activities, transportation and communication industries, and religious and spiritual activities.

Cyber-bullying: Under the Education Act (s.1.0.0.2), bullying by electronic means, including by "(a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals." Cyber-bullying can involve the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and/or social media sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships. It may include put-downs or insults and can also involve spreading rumours; sharing private information, photos, or videos; or threatening to harm someone. Cyber-bullying is always aggressive and hurtful. (Refer to *Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students,* at **www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ multi/english/BullyingEN.pdf**.)

Disability: A term that covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others not (e.g., physical, mental, and learning disabilities, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, environmental sensitivities). A disability may be present from birth, may be caused by an accident, or may develop over time.

Discrimination: Any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which has a negative effect on an individual or group because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability or socio-economic status. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Diversity: The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Duty to accommodate: The legal obligation that school boards, employers, unions, and service providers have under the Ontario Human Rights Code to take measures that enable people to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. (Refer to **www.ohrc.on.ca**.)

Employment equity: A program designated to remove systemic barriers to equality of out-comes in all aspects of employment and which leads to equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of employment.

Equality : The achievement of equal status in society in terms of access to opportunities, support, rewards and economic and social power for all without regard to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.
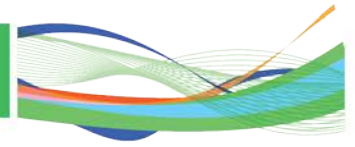
Equity: The provision of opportunities for equality for all by responding to the needs of individuals. Equity of treatment is not the same as equal treatment because it includes acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination.

Equity Seeking Groups and other Historically Disadvantaged Communities:
Persons and communities who have experienced, and or, are more likely to experience, and or, are experiencing bias, oppression, disadvantage or discrimination based on one or more of these factors: colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Ethnicity: Refers to a group of people having a heritage and a common ancestry or shared historical past, as well as identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

Family Status: The status of being in a parent/caregiver/guardian and child relationship.

First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word Indian, which many found offensive. The term *First Nation* has been adopted to replace the word "band" in the names of communities.

Gender Identity: How a person identifies themselves based on an individual's intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their biological sex.
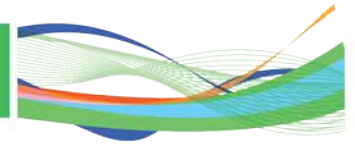
Gender Expression: Refers to the way an individual expresses their gender identity (e.g. in the way they dress, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the volume of their voice, and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up) Understandings of gender expression are culturally specific and will change over time.

Harassment: A form of discrimination that is often but not always, persistent, ongoing conduct or communication, in any form, of attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group which are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, inappropriate, intimidating or offensive. A single act or expression can constitute harassment, for example, if it is a serious violation or it is from a person in authority. Harassment may be either subtle or blunt.

Hate: expressions of bias, prejudice and bigotry that are carried out by individuals, groups, organizations and states, directed against stigmatized and marginalized persons and groups in communities, and intended to affirm and secure existing structures of domination and subordination. Hate activities and incidents represent some of the most destructive forms of human rights-based discrimination by promoting hatred against identifiable groups of people. Some hate incidents are also considered criminal offences committed against a person or property and motivated, in whole or in part, by bias or prejudice based on real or perceived race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability or any other similar factor.

Human Rights: Rights that recognize the dignity and worth of every person, and provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or other similar factors.

Inclusive Education: Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, school staff teams, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

Intersectionality: The condition in which a person simultaneously belongs to two or more social identities and the unique consequences that result from that combination.

Inuit: Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act.

Language: The first language we learn or the language spoken by our parents/caregivers/ guardians and others who take care of us as children. This may also include dialects. There is almost inevitably a link between the language we speak or the accent with which we speak a particular language on the one hand, and our ancestry, ethnic origin or place of origin on the other. A person's accent is also often associated with her or his "mother tongue" or place of origin.

Marital Status: The status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes the status of living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage, including both same-sex and opposite sex relationships.
Métis: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe, and Cree.

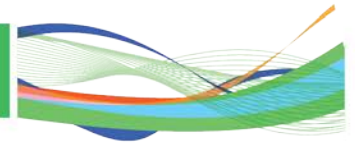**Nationality:** The status of belonging to a particular nation.

Place of Origin: Where one is originally from, generally meaning country of birth, or if born in Canada it could include an area, province or region of the country, (ie Quebec, Newfoundland, The West Coast, Toronto, etc.)

Positive School Climate: The school climate may be defined as the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

Power dynamics: The process by which one group defines and subordinates other groups and subjects them to differential and unequal treatment.

Power imbalance: A situation in which an individual or group is able to influence others and impose its beliefs, subjecting other individuals and/or groups to differential and unequal treatment.

Prejudice: The pre-judgement (usually negative) of groups or individuals, or preconceived notions about them, based on misinformation, bias, or stereotypes.

Privilege: The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities on the basis of group membership or social context, which is denied or not extended to members of all groups.

Race (Colour): Race is a socially constructed way of judging, categorizing and creating difference among people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye, lips and nose shape, hair texture and body shape. The process of social construction of race is termed "racialization." This is the "process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life. Despite the fact that there are no biological "races", the social construction of race is a powerful force with real consequences for individuals. Someone's "race" can also extend to specific traits which are deemed to be "abnormal" and of less worth. Individuals may have prejudices related to various racialized characteristics. In addition to physical features, these characteristics could include accent, dialect or manner of speech, name, clothing and grooming, diet, beliefs and practices, leisure preferences, and places of origin.

Sex/ Biological Sex: Generally refers to the sex assigned at birth based on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution.

Sexual orientation: A term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction, desire or affection for another person. Examples include asexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality. Sexual orientation is much more accurately viewed as an attraction continuum that includes a range of gender identities, expressions and biological sexes.
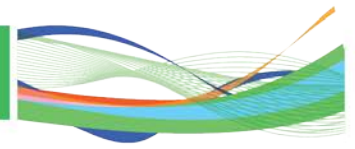
Socio-Economic Status: The economic, social and political relationships in which people operate in a given social order. These relationships reflect the areas of income level, education, access to goods and services, type of occupation, sense of ownership or entitlement and other indicators of social rank or class.

Social Identity: Those aspects of a person that are defined in terms their group membership, or their perceived group membership in broad social categories (i.e. race, disability, gender identity, etc.) Social identities are most accurate when individuals self-identify or chose of how they want to be identified, as opposed to being labelled by society or others.

Stereotype: A false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other factors.
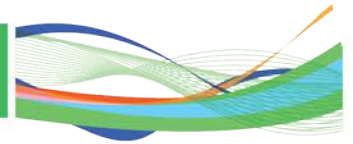
Systemic discrimination: A pattern of discrimination that arises out of apparently neutral institutional policies or practices, that is reinforced by institutional structures and power dynamics, and that results in the differential and unequal treatment of members of certain groups.

APPENDIX F: Enhancing Equity Task Force Membership 2017
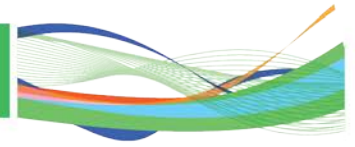
Learning Centre 1 Working Group

Vicky Branco, Superintendent of Education (SOE)
Laura Lloyd, Executive Assistant to SOE
Trustee Jennifer Arp
Trustee Gerri Gershon
Faz Khan, Principal, North Albion CI
Karen Murray, Vice-Principal, Amesbury MS
John Duwyn, Central Coordinating Principal
Chelsea Takalo, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Amita Handa, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Ian MacPherson, Community Support Worker (CSW)

Prafulla Prabhu, ASAC
Dennis Keshinro, CUSAC
Silvia Argentina Arauz, EPAC
Ingrid Palmer, ICAC
Chris Trussel, SNAC
Yolanda McClean, Equity Vice-President, CUPE 4400
Vidya Shah, York University
Ibrahim Murkeshi
Mario del Castillo, Student
Helen Elliot, North Toronto CI, OSSTF
Sinead Whelehan, Northern SS, OSSTF
Roxanne Chee, OSSTF

Learning Centre 2 Working Group

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Trustee Tiffany Ford
Trustee Alexandra Lulka
Trustee Manna Wong
Cherilyn Scobie, Principal, Westview Centennial SS
Maria Palermo, Principal, Emery CI
Susan Yun, Principal, Finch Avenue PS
Helen Fisher, Central Coordinating Principal
Amita Handa, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)
Bernard (Patrick) Lee, Adult Education Representative
Rodrigo Fuentes, Caring & Safe Schools Representative

Lawrence Smith, BSAAC
Heather Mitchell, CUSAC
Abdul Hai Patel, EPAC
Alice Cheng, ESAC
Sharma Queiser, ICAC
David Lepofsky, SEAC
Heather Martinez, SNAC
Anna Hutchison, Vice-President, Unit C, CUPE 4400
Colleen Huggins - CSW
Lisa Kness - Autism Ontario
Rick Kusturica, ASAC
Derik Chica, Northview Heights SS, OSSTF
Gregory Birkett, teacher
Joy Martyr-Andre, teacher
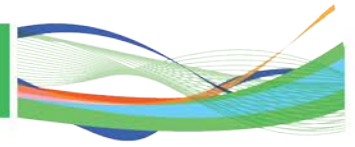
Learning Centre 3 Working Group

Andrew Howard, Superintendent of Education

Melissa Shimmerman, Executive Assistant to SOE

Trustee Jerry Chadwick

Trustee Parthi Kandavel

Harpreet Ghuman, Principal, Crescent Town PS

Colin Dye, Principal, Bendale BTI

Diane DeiAmoah, Central Coordinating Principal

Koryn Marshall, Student Equity Program Advisor (SEPA)

Michelle Cho, Gender Based Violence Prevention SEPA

Nicole Seck, Community Support Worker (CSW)

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Paul Junor, Sir Wilfrid Laurier CI, OSSTF

Jolly Abrakasa, Cedarbrae CI, OSSTF

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Katie German, SNAC

Colleen Costa, Unit C Vice-President, TEW Local 4400

Steve Salfarlie School Council at HA Halbert

Darrell Bowden Chartland School Council

Seema Mitchell - SNAC

Jean-Paul Ngana - SEAC

Mark Varvas, TDSB Staff representing Aboriginal Learning and Perspectives

Claudette White, Principal, Brimwood Boulevard PS

Veni Rajkumar, Vice-Principal, Macklin PS

Abhi Arulanantham, Teacher, Brimwood Boulevard PS

Stephanie Howe, TAIBU - Community Health Org.

Keisha Watson, TAIBU - Community Health Org.

Sharon Grant, Student Engagement and Experiential Learning, OSSTF

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Vince McCormack, SNAC

Terri Preston, CUPE

Karen Sappleton

Michelle Murdock CSW

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Duane Spencer CSW

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Planning Group Members

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Sarah Blackstock, Poverty Reduction Strategy Office City of Toronto
Yvette Blackburn, BSAAC
Vicky Branco, Superintendent of Education LC1
Sheila Cary-Meagher, TDSB Trustee
Jeewan Chanicka, Superintendent of Education, Equity, Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression
Chris Chandler, Executive Officer, Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF)
Jenny Chen, OSSTF
Mike Creek, Director of Strategic Initiatives at Working for Change
Diane DeiAmoah, TDSB CCP Learning Centre 3
Margaret Douglin, TDSB Research
Enakshi (Ena)Dua, York University
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Diane Dyson, WoodGreen Community Services, Director, Research and Public Policy
Sonia Ellis-Seguin, Elementary Teachers of Toronto
Helen Fisher, TDSB Central Coordinating Principal - Learning Centre 2
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Karima Hashmani, Toronto Community Housing
Areej Hasso, Manager Community Investment - United Way
Lindsay Holley, TDSB Communications
Rob Howarth, Executive Director, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Carl James, Professor, York University
Sophie Kroesen, ETFO – Elementary Teachers of Ontario – Toronto Occasional Teachers
David Lepofsky, Special Education Advisory Committee – Co-Chair
Jabari Lindsay, Toronto Youth Cabinet
Mary Linton, Toronto School Administrators' Association (TSAA)
John Malloy, TDSB Director of Education
Shams Mehdi, TDSB Student Trustee
Ralph Nigro, Toronto School Administrators' Association (TSAA)
Elder Dr. Duke Redbird, Aboriginal Education Centre
Tanya Senk, Central Coordinating Principal, Aboriginal Education
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Jim Spyropoulos, Executive Superintendent, Equity, Engagement and Well-being
Ian Turner, Principal Glamorgan Public School
Christopher Usih, TDSB Associate Director, Equity and Achievement
Saad Wazir, TDSB Student Trustee
John Weatherup, CUPE President
Maria Yau, Research Co-ordinator, Research & Information Services, TDSB
Marjolein Winterink, Equity Community Advisory Committee - Co-Chair