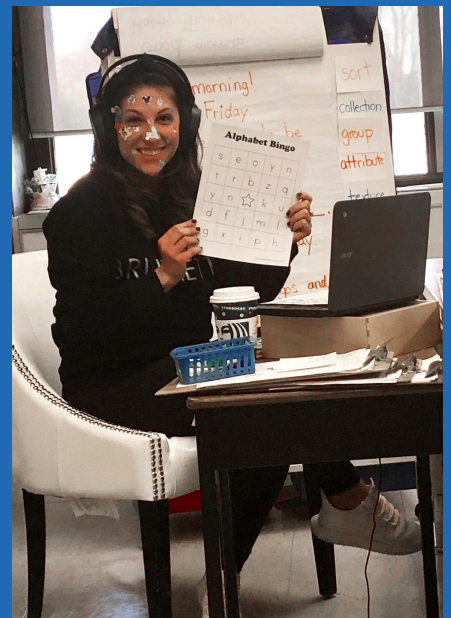




Director's Annual Report 2020





Message from the Director

As Interim Director of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), I am pleased to share the 2020 Director's Annual Report. While this past year was marked by unforeseen challenges, it was characterized by adaptability and resilience—in staff, in students and in the families we serve.

Navigating the public health crisis of COVID-19 required us to pivot to remote learning, to establish and implement new health and safety screening processes and protocols. It required school-based staff, and teams in our administration centres, to collaborate and work together in new ways. I am extremely proud of how we met these ever-evolving obstacles, in partnership with our Board of Trustees, to keep students and staff as safe as possible while ensuring learning continued.

Despite the environmental complexities of the year, we maintained a clear and intentional focus on the strategic priorities outlined in our [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#). Within this report, you will find examples that demonstrate our progress in transforming student learning, creating a culture of well-being, providing access to learning opportunities and allocating resources strategically, and building strong partnerships.

This year, we reaffirmed our commitments to anti-racism and anti-oppression work through formalized processes of identifying, naming and addressing harm. We continue to build relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, students, staff and communities to support sovereignty in Indigenous Education and to advance Reconciliation.

It has also been a time of change in leadership at the TDSB. I want to thank former Director of Education John Malloy for his vision and his impact during his five years of service with us. Director Malloy led from a position of shared leadership. He focused our strategic work on supporting the most underserved students by setting high expectations, challenging streaming and improving access to programs and resources. I also want to share my gratitude for Interim Directors Carlene Jackson and Kathy Witherow. As experienced leaders with a profound understanding of the TDSB, they provided our system with a seamless and stable transition.

As we look forward to 2021, we will continue to adapt. We will take all necessary steps to keep students and staff safe, to ensure learning continues and to make continual progress towards our goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KF', written in a cursive style.

Karen Falconer

Interim Director of Education



TDSB Response to COVID-19

The 2019-20 school year was unlike any other as the Toronto District School Board and school boards across Ontario responded to the provincial government's decision to close all publicly-funded schools due to COVID-19. What started as an initial closure from March 13 to April 5, 2020, ultimately resulted in schools being closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year and a pivot to remote learning for all students and teachers.

During an unprecedented and stressful time, the responsiveness of the system and resilience of staff and students was incredible. While dealing with many unknowns, adapting to a new remote learning structure, and facing numerous obstacles along the way, staff, students and families rose to the occasion. While the transition from in-person learning to remote learning was not without its challenges, the TDSB remained focussed on its goal of ensuring that learning could continue for all.

Preparation for 2020-21 School Year

Over the summer months, staff undertook preparations for the 2020-21 school year. Plans were made for in-person learning at TDSB schools and two new Virtual Schools (one elementary and one secondary) were also established.



In-Person School

A great deal of planning was required to ensure that schools could safely open in September. Preparations included establishing new and comprehensive health and safety practices and protocols related to COVID-19, physical preparations to school buildings, staff training, and much more. There were also significant alterations to programming in order to ensure that curriculum could be delivered in a manner that follows all necessary health & safety requirements related to mask wearing for all staff and students in JK to Grade 12 and physical distancing.

We also acknowledge the Board of Trustees for making decision to spend additional funds to lower class sizes across the TDSB and particularly in schools in areas with higher COVID numbers, as determined by Toronto Public Health.

Virtual School

Families were given the option to enrol students in the TDSB Virtual School for the 2020-21 school year and there was overwhelming demand. The Elementary Virtual School initially opened in September with approximately 72,000 students and the Virtual Secondary School with approximately 18,000 students enrolled. It was a huge undertaking to get the virtual schools up and running and while there were bumps along the way, learning continues and staff and students have adapted well to this new learning environment. Thanks to an incredible group of committed and determined staff, the TDSB successfully established two new virtual schools that are larger and serve more students than some other school boards in the province.



Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is guided by its Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and associated Action Plans. During 2019-20, work continued in support of accomplishing the Board's strategic directions:

- Transform student learning
- Create a culture for student and staff well-being
- Provide equity of access to learning opportunities for all students
- Allocate human and financial resources strategically to support student needs
- Build strong relationships and partnerships within school communities to support student learning and well-being

Below are some examples that highlight the important work that began or continued throughout 2020 in a number of areas related to the goals of the MYSP.

Equity, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression

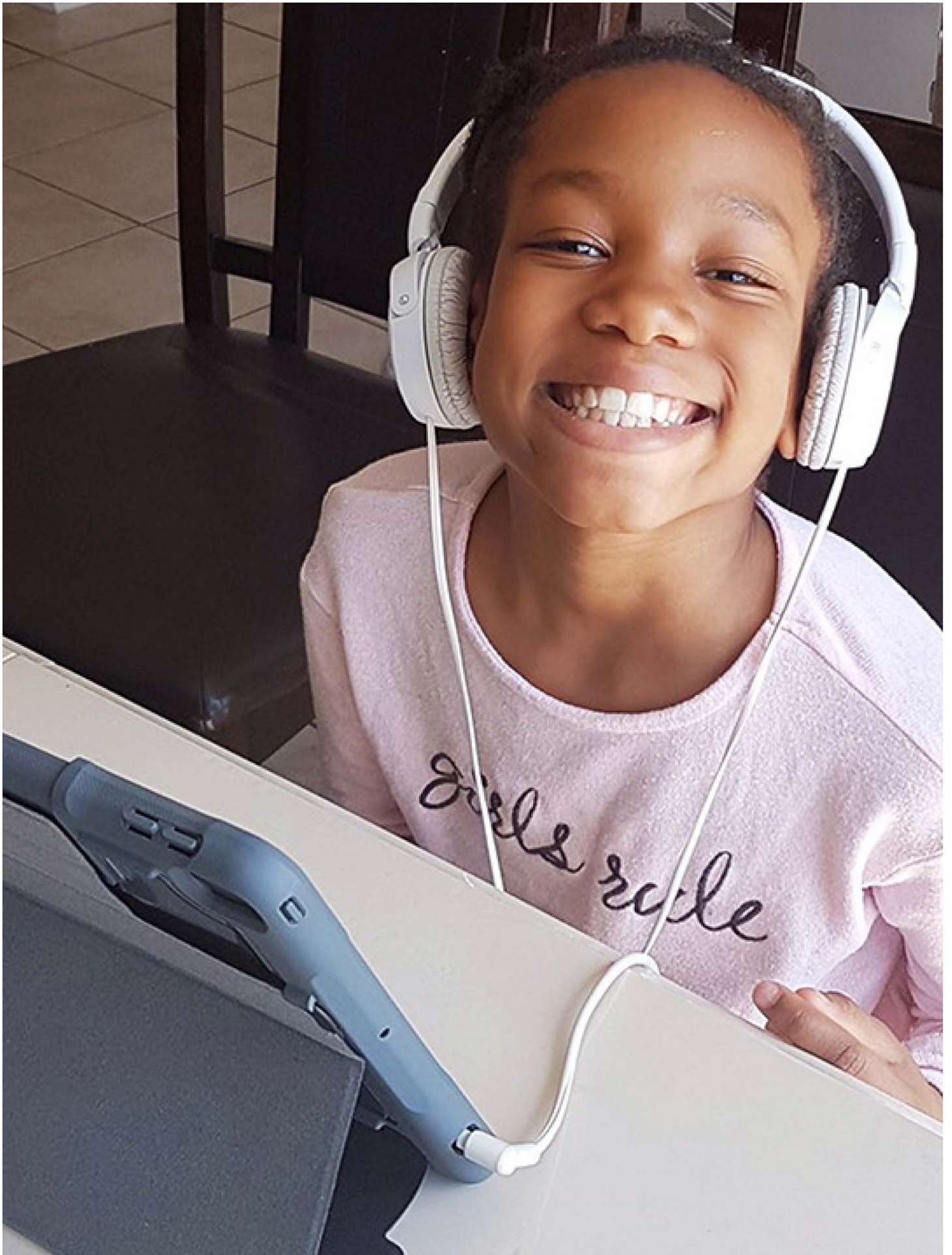
This year, there was significant work done in relation to equity, as well as core areas that changed or shifted as a result of both the pandemic and increased energy and focus on addressing anti-Black racism within the TDSB.

The TDSB has a long-standing commitment to equity, which was formalized over the past four years with the naming of equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression as a priority of the Board. Staff worked on a number of key initiatives and actions in support of this work, the most important of which was the creation of the [Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement](#). This Centre will serve as a central hub for promising approaches to addressing anti-Black racism and equity such as:

- Youth Participatory Action Research and emergent school-based policy in addressing school belonging and engagement of Black youth.
- Critical Conscious Practitioner Inquiry- Teacher and student school-based network using forms of practitioner inquiry, team-based collaboration, and pedagogic documentation to build capacity in developing a critical consciousness towards race and racism in society.
- Graduation Coaches for Black student success in secondary schools
- Kindergarten Summer Learning Program
- Equity Competency Development within School Principalship
- Issues of scale and knowledge mobilization across the system-- pulling on initiative evaluations to broaden and deepen reach of the Centre's work across the TDSB

Other significant work this year included:

- Continued to provide rich and relevant professional learning opportunities for educators at all levels and through a variety of channels, including remotely
- Development of an Early Years Mobilization Strategy
- Created a Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten to Grade 2 Summer Online Learning Program focusing on Africentric and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy



- Conducting a critical review of system resources
- Collaborating with the Business Operations Department to support the review of a mini-podcast series for TDSB families experiencing diverse challenges throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Read more about this work and details relating to each initiative in [Update on the Implementation of the MYSP \(Multi-Year Strategic Action Plans\) - Equity, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression 2019-20 including Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement Report](#).



Supporting Indigenous Students, Staff and Families

The Toronto District School Board is committed to supporting and expanding Indigenous Education in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Elders, students, staff, families and communities. We know that Indigenous Education is the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action—to redress the legacy of colonization and the impact of the Residential School System. We are taking sustained actions of reparation to honour and respect the sovereignty and self-determination of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

Trustees continued to prioritize Indigenous Education as part of the Board's annual budget process. Building on our work in 2019, we have a sustainable funding model to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit education initiatives.

Under the guidance and leadership of the Council of Elders and the Steering Committee, the staff team at the Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC) developed and delivered professional learning to staff and developed new curriculum-based learning resources to deepen understanding of Indigenous perspectives. The UIEC team runs an internal network of First Nations, Métis and Inuit staff which builds Indigenous leadership capacities across the TDSB. The Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee (UICAC) continues to meet regularly and is a meaningful forum of discussion and collaboration.

Kapapamahchakwew - Wandering Spirit School is a Kindergarten to Grade 12 Indigenous-focused school in the TDSB. In 2020 enrolment at Kapapamahchakwew continued to increase. Reclaiming and Indigenizing the school space will support the work to centre First Nations, Métis and Inuit ways of knowing and being. The two Native Learning Centres continue to engage Indigenous secondary school students.

The goal of making the TDSB a national leader in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education is progressing. In the year ahead, we will work with intention to align processes, policies and procedures with the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Special Education

Work continued throughout 2020 in support of our core commitments to hold high expectations for students and support their achievement and well-being as we remove systemic barriers that stand in the way of their success and to create more inclusive learning environments for students with Special Education Needs (SEN). Evidence of ongoing work in support of these commitments can be found throughout the system, in alignment with the [Vision for Learning](#) and the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) and its Action Plans.

We continue to build capacity with staff to deepen understanding of how to interrupt perceptions of how students with special education needs learn and where the most appropriate placement is for students to learn. We continue to work towards providing open and inclusive learning environments for students within their community school and intensive support programs for students with more specialized learning needs.

Throughout 2020, we also continued work to strengthen collaboration with families to ensure that they can effectively engage in the decision making process regarding their child's program, placement and well-being. Work and initiatives are also underway that focus on increasing employment opportunities and outcomes for all students with Low Incidence Exceptionalities (Intellectual Disabilities, Physical Disability, Low Vision, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Health/Medical).

More information and details about this important work can be found in the [Mid-Year Update on the Implementation of the Multi-Year Strategic Action Plans: Inclusion](#).

Throughout 2020, Psychological Services staff have continued to offer assessment services for students, despite logistical, safety and equity challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through creative problem-solving, psychological assessments have been successfully provided in a variety of settings using a combination of remote and in-person methods.

Aligned with TDSB's Multi-year Strategic Plan and with a focus on anti-oppression, Psychological Services staff have provided a variety of supports to meet the needs of students, families and staff members. These supports include mental health and well-being assistance to students through individual counselling and groups, professional development for staff and parents/guardians, academic guidance and interventions for students - both in person and in virtual classrooms, and the provision of relevant resources. Psychological Services staff have worked collaboratively with Special Education staff by participating on IPRC committees and engaging in initiatives to develop new and inclusive models that ensure success for all students.

Mental Health and Well-Being

We know that when students are happy and healthy, they are more engaged and better able to learn. That is why the TDSB is focused on improving the mental health and well-being of all students.

We also recognize the tremendous emotional, social and physical strain the pandemic has had on students and must continue to provide additional resources and supports to help during this time. Addressing depression, stress and anxiety through strengthening coping and resilience skills have been critical this year.

Our focus in 2020 was to build mental health literacy for staff, students and families which strengthen resilience and coping skills to support positive mental health and well being for students. Our approaches of support continue to evolve to meet the mental health and well-being diverse needs of students by incorporating their lived experiences, voices, identities and special educational needs to support inclusion, belonging and engagement in learning.



Some highlights this year, included:

- Producing, enhancing and providing mental health and well-being strategies to support inclusion of students with special educational needs, Indigenous students and Black students through individual counseling to strengthen resilience, coping and stress management skills.
- Organizing and facilitating student virtual group meetings that support peer socialization, self esteem, positive and healthy relationships and emotion management as a result of the pandemic and school closures.
- Providing counseling support/consultations to caregivers and staff during pandemic associated school transitions by providing individual and group training on coping, stress management and resilience building.
- Building anti-oppressive and culturally responsive and relevant mental health and well-being resources in resources libraries available for staff/parents/students.
- Participating, facilitating and organizing monthly parent and student mental health and well-being groups allowing for their voices, thoughts and ideas to help direct our mental health and well-being goals.
- Providing resource support by working collaboratively with community partners to assist families with food security, housing, advocacy, crisis management and socio-emotional support especially during the pandemic.

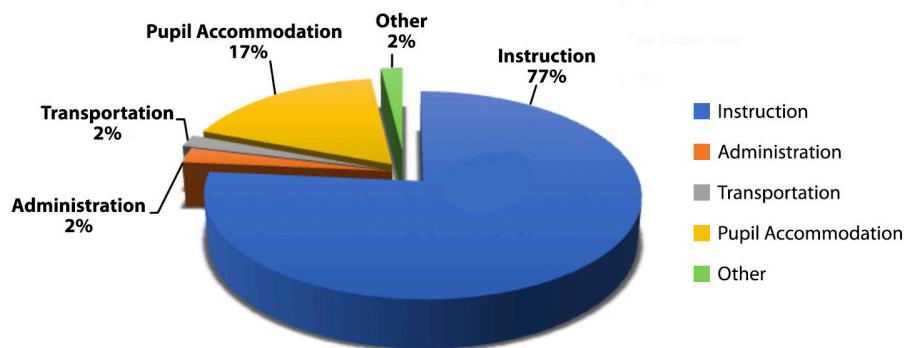
Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy

In November, Trustees approved the Board's [Long-Term Program and Accommodation Strategy](#) (LTPAS) for 2020-2029. The strategy is aligned with the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and outlines program and student accommodation studies to be conducted over the next ten years. It also allows the TDSB to develop plans to balance enrolment and increase access to programs and opportunities for all students.

Trustees also approved the final report of the [Secondary Program Review](#), which helps to ensure that all students have equitable access to programs and schools. This process is closely aligned with the LTPAS and has laid the groundwork for creating a system of strong neighbourhood secondary schools that provide rich programming and increased access to courses that support all pathways.

Financial Update

In July 2020, the TDSB approved a balanced budget of \$3.45B and subsequently, with additional support of \$58.4M from the provincial and federal grant, TDSB increased its budget to \$3.53B to further support our commitment to equity and the achievement and well-being of all students during the pandemic.





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