

TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

OPPORTUNITY GAP ACTION PLAN

TO Programs and School Services Committee 2 November 2011

RECOMMENDATION **IT IS RECOMMENDED that the concepts identified within the Opportunity Gap Action Plan be approved.**

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. Identify disadvantage and intervene effectively.
2. Make every school an effective school.
3. Form strong and effective relationships and partnerships.

RATIONALE

On 23 June 2011 the Board approved a set of five Strategic Directions that will drive the Board's annual planning from 2011 to 2015:

1. Make every school an effective school;
2. Build leadership within a culture of adaptability, openness and resilience;
3. Form strong and effective relationships and partnerships;
4. Build environmentally sustainable schools that inspire teaching and learning; and
5. Identify disadvantage and intervene effectively.

On 5 October 2011 the Board received the Vision of Hope 3.0 Annual Operating Plan for 2011 to 2015. The Annual Operating Plan flows from the five Strategic Directions.

Within the Annual Operating Plan is the mandate to "*increase advocacy, support, societal commitment and action for every student in challenging circumstances*" through development of an Opportunity Gap Strategy to address disparities and gaps in the achievement of different groups of students.

On 11 October 2011 at the Director's Forum with Trustees, the Opportunity Gap Action Plan was introduced and discussed. Feedback was used to inform revisions to the Plan (Appendix A).

CONTEXT **Why is there a need for an Opportunity Gap Action Plan?**
A relentless and intentional focus on student achievement and "Learning for All" has resulted in notable achievement gains in

Grades 3, 6 and 9 provincial assessments and graduation rates.

Despite achievement gains reflecting a board “on the move”, disparities or “gaps” in the achievement levels of different groups of students continues to be alarming. There are clear achievement gaps for JK - Grade 12 sub-groups of students, specifically Aboriginal, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern, Portuguese and male students. A call to action is our collective and moral responsibility.

Poverty is a key socio-economic variable closely linked to educational achievement and lifetime health.

What does poverty look like for children in Toronto?

While there is no universally-agreed definition of poverty (and Canada has no official measure of measuring poverty), the term is normally taken to mean the lack of acceptable (or minimum) resources or income.

Context

- Children living in poverty face hunger, emotional trauma, and homelessness. They often have limited access to regular health and dental care;
- Children living in poverty have less exposure to mainstream cultural, recreational and enrichment programs, less access to technology, and are less likely to achieve recognition in the arts than middle and upper class children;
- Parents living in poverty face many barriers that prevent them from taking part in school activities; another key factor in student success is parent involvement;
- Child poverty in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) declined from 17.4 to 9.5% between 2000 and 2008, but then dramatically increased to 13.6% between 2008 and 2009. The 2009 figure, based on the after-tax Low Income Cutoff was much higher than both the Ontario and the Canadian child poverty rate;
- In 2008, 1.6 million or 12.5% of people in Ontario lived in poverty (Low Income Measure After-Tax);
- The proportion of families living in poverty is much higher in the City of Toronto than the rest of the GTA, Ontario, and Canada; and
- From 1980-2000 in Toronto, the poverty rate for the white or Euro-Canada population fell by 28%, while the poverty rate for racialized families rose by 361%.

TDSB Children and Families

- According to the TDSB 2008 Parent Census, 50% of our school children are coming from low-income families with an annual household income of less than \$50,000;
- Among these children, more than half (27%) are from very low income families earning less than \$30,000 per year. This level is below the low income cut-off of \$34, 572 set by Statistics Canada for a family of four in a large metropolitan area such as Toronto;
- Many kindergarten children from high poverty areas come to school with *multiple* challenges in all five Early Development Instrument domains: (i) physical health and well-being (ii) social knowledge and competence (iii) emotional health and maturity (iv) language and cognitive development, (v) communication skills and general knowledge; and
- Approximately 60% of students in our Inner City schools come from homes with three or more children.

It is evident that a significant number of our students are impacted by the consequences of poverty. The TDSB Opportunity Gap Action Plan sets forth to mitigate these consequences.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Board approval of the recommendation, the following steps are proposed:

1. Establish an Opportunity Gap Action Plan Advisory Group to further review and frame development of the Plan, including measures and costs.
2. Discuss the Plan with system leaders.
3. Share the Plan with appropriate Board Advisory Committees to raise awareness and for input.
4. Discuss the Plan further with Trustees at future Director's Forums and/or Committee meetings.
5. Align identified costs to the 2012/13 budget process.

APPENDIX

Appendix A Opportunity Gap Action Plan 2011-2015

FROM

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Program and School Services Committee
November 2, 2011

Page

98

Board Services Agenda
Record

PSSC:021A

Agenda Item 10.

Blank Page



**Our Call to Action: Student Opportunities & Success Realized
Opportunity Gap Action Plan
October 2011**

The Toronto District School Board serves approximately 259,000 elementary and secondary students in the regular day school system. It is the largest school board in Canada and one of the five largest in North America. Approximately two thirds of TDSB students (171, 957 or 66%) are in the elementary panel of Junior Kindergarten (JK) to Grade 8, while approximately a third (87, 360 or 34%) are in the secondary panel of Grades 9-12. There are 591 day schools in 2010-11. The board has been recognized as one of the most diverse school boards in the world, with over 75 languages reflected in the language backgrounds of our students.

The first obligation of our schools is to create and sustain high levels of excellence for “all” students. In this regard, a key priority of schools is to close the achievement and opportunity gaps: the gaps between where students are at any given time, and the highest levels that they can potentially achieve. Within this context, the Vision of Hope “**Opportunity Gap Action Plan**” is concerned about the achievement gap in relation to racialized groups of students and students disadvantaged by poverty. The plan supports the board’s Annual Operating Plan and five strategic directions: 1) Make every school an effective school; 2) Build leadership within a culture of adaptability, openness and resilience; 3) Form strong and effective relationships and partnerships; 4) Build environmentally sustainable schools that inspire teaching and learning; and specifically 5) **Identify disadvantage and intervene effectively.**

Through the Director’s Vision of Hope, a relentless and intentional focus on Student Achievement and “Learning for All” has resulted in notable achievement gains in grades 3, 6 and 9 provincial assessment and graduation rates, as well as improved external rankings by organizations such as the Fraser Institute.

Despite achievement gains reflecting a board “on the move”, disparities or “gaps” in the achievement levels of different groups of students continues to be alarming. **There are clear achievement gaps for JK-Grade 12 sub-groups of students, specifically Aboriginal, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern, Portuguese and male students.** A call to action is our collective and moral responsibility.

These actions must address improved opportunities in levels of resources and support, as well as belief and a will to propose, develop and implement different and bold programs and directions to better serve and educate specific sub groups of students.

Our Call to Action: Student Opportunities and Success Realized draws your attention to specific actions within three areas: 1) Learning for All – **Aboriginal Students**, 2) Learning for All – **Black, Middle Eastern, Latino, Portuguese & Roma Students**, and 3) Learning for All – **Innovation** in Action.



**Call to Action: Student Opportunities & Success Realized
Learning for All - Aboriginal Students**

Goal	Year One 2011-2012	Year Two 2012-2013	Year Three 2013-2014	Year Four 2014-2015
1. Visibly demonstrate Aboriginal Education is a priority in the Toronto District School Board.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Voluntary First Nation, Metis and Inuit Self-Identification Policy. 2. Complete a feasibility study to relocate or significantly improve the physical site of the elementary First Nations School, and examine the needs of Aboriginal students across the district, including Eastview Jr. Public School. 3. Ensure stable staffing for the Aboriginal Education Office, including a Program Coordinator, Student Success Teachers (2), Social Worker and Tutor/Mentorship Program Facilitator. 4. Raise awareness of Aboriginal Education needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an East Region Secondary Native Learning Centre in partnership with the Native Learning Centre. 2. Develop an on line E-Tech High School offering Aboriginal Education course content and all compulsory subjects. 3. Develop Aboriginal Education pathways at specified TDSB secondary schools. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a comprehensive multi year action plan to address Aboriginal Education student needs and the report "Decolonizing Our Schools: Aboriginal Education in the Toronto District School Board." 2. Assess Actions and Activities from Years 1 and 2. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource and implement staff identified recommendations and actions from the "Decolonizing Our Schools: Aboriginal Education in the Toronto District School Board." 2. Adjust Actions and Activities from Years 1 and 2 based on the evidence of impact and needs from Years 1, 2 and 3.



**Call to Action: Student Opportunities & Success Realized
Learning for All - Black, Middle Eastern, Latino, Portuguese & Roma Students**

Goal	Year One 2011-2012	Year Two 2012-2013	Year Three 2013-2014	Year Four 2014-2015
<p>2. Increase student achievement for students of Black, Middle Eastern, Latino, Portuguese and Roma background.</p>	<p>1. Establish a Task Force to address the educational success of students of Portuguese descent.</p> <p>2. Implement the Student and Parent Census to further acquire current sub group achievement information.</p> <p>3. Review the needs of Roma students.</p>	<p>1. Establish system mentoring, coaching, outreach, monitoring and leadership programs specifically designed for students of Black, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Portuguese backgrounds.</p> <p>2. Establish year round extended day outreach, engagement and enrichment programs in partnership with community agencies, for specifically Caribbean background students.</p> <p>3. Strengthen supports for Roma students.</p> <p>4. Utilize the results of the Student and Parent Census for policy development and decision-making (shared data protocol between institutions).</p>	<p>1. Design a “Student Performance Incentive” strategy and programs for students in challenging circumstances, including a marketing plan and strategy to attract sponsorships.</p> <p>2. Develop a plan to establish a Cultural Education Centre in partnership with community agencies and educational institutions (where culture specific curriculum resources, programs and tools are developed, guidance and outreach services are coordinated, teaching and learning and extracurricular programming for students are available and staff and leadership development sessions are offered).</p>	<p>1. Pilot a “Student Performance Incentive” program for students in challenging circumstances.</p> <p>2. Implement the “Student Performance Incentive” marketing plan and strategy to attract sponsorships.</p> <p>3. Assess and adjust actions and activities from years 1 and 2.</p> <p>4. Implement design plans for the Cultural Education Centre.</p> <p>5. Adjust Actions and Activities from Years 1 and 2 based on the evidence of impact and needs from Years 1, 2 and 3.</p>



Call to Action: Student Opportunities & Success Realized
Learning for All - Innovation in Action

Goal	Year One 2011-2012	Year Two 2012-2013	Year Three 2013-2014	Year Four 2014-2015
3. Strengthen innovative and progressive programs that enable higher levels of student engagement, achievement and well-being.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement the “Adolescent Years Learning and Leading” strategy for students in grades 7-8 achieving below standard. Partner with stakeholders to create an identification, transition, delivery and service model to address the academic and social reintegration needs of incarcerated students. Design an Equity and Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy training series in all Families of Schools, based on identified needs. Strengthen implementation of Gender-Based Violence Prevention initiatives, including initiatives to address homophobic bullying. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the impact of the “Adolescent Years Learning and Leading” strategy, and pending results, enhance and expand the initiative to more schools. Strengthen initiatives that support Boys and Girls Education. Review the progress and impact of Pediatric Clinics. Review and assess the impact and direction of the TDSB Leadership Academy. Explore the feasibility of implementing elementary and secondary Professional Learning Community Days across the District. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand Pediatric Clinics by 50%. Review and assess the impact and direction of Parent Academies. Explore the feasibility of establishing 8 year round schools (elementary/ secondary) Explore the feasibility of establishing Achievement Zone Schools where locally determined school week, day, resource models, staff structures and support service options and incentive programs are considered. Implement elementary and secondary Professional Learning Community Days across the District. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pending recommendations from the review expand Parent Academies across the District. Pending the feasibility study to establish year round schools, establish 4 secondary and 4 elementary year round schools. Establish Achievement Zone Schools where locally determined school week, day, resource models, staff structures and support service options and incentive programs are considered. Implement elementary and secondary Professional Learning Community Days across the District.



Call to Action: Student Opportunities & Success Realized Opportunity Gap Action Plan

The following reference documents are available to support the rationale for the Opportunity Gap Action Plan:

1. Environmental Scan 2011-12
2. Census Portraits: Understanding Our Students' Ethno-racial Backgrounds
3. 2006-07 Student Census & 2007-08 Parent Census Results
4. Achievement Gap Task Force Report – Draft (May 2010)
5. Toronto District School Board Urban Diversity Strategy Report (June 2008)
6. Decolonizing Our Schools – Aboriginal Education, Toronto District School Board, Dr. S. Dion (September 2010)
7. Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force Report (2006)

Program and School Services Committee
November 2, 2011

Page

104

Board Services Agenda
Record

PSSC:021A

Agenda Item 10.

Blank Page