

Guest Artists in Schools Update Report, April 2023

The Toronto District School Board is pleased to present this Guest Artists in Schools Update Report in response to the Board Resolution in March 2023. The TDSB believes that all forms of arts education are essential for students and provide numerous benefits, including heightened academic achievement, developing higher-level thinking skills, and teaching transferable skills. The Board remains committed to ensuring Arts opportunities for every student. As stated in The Ontario Curriculum, The Arts, 2009, education in the arts is crucial to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth and well-being. The TDSB partners with artists to expand arts learning opportunities for all students and this report provides an update on the current operation of Partnerships and the various ways the TDSB engages Artists in Schools. This report addresses the various questions raised in the motion, including: I. The Current Operation of the Partnership and Guest Artist Process, II. Streamlining the on-boarding process for guest artists, mentors and education partners, III. The feasibility of including outreach calls for submissions, engaging with universities, colleges, specialized staff, trade unions, the private sector, notable Canadians and musicians; IV. The feasibility of a centrally-supported strategy to activate areas of curriculum through the use of guest artists, and V. Implementing a process to evaluate and grow the breadth of genres and identities represented by artists, mentors and partners.

I. The Current Operation of the Partnership and Guest Artist Process

Partnerships:

All TDSB staff have access to the searchable Educational Partnership list to review, contact, and book partners directly. Information available on this system includes program descriptions, costs, contact information, assessor contacts and Partnership Agreement documents.

The Educational Partnership Office assesses proposed partnerships using Partnership Criteria and General Policies documents, including alignment with TDSB Mission and Values, Human Rights, Equity Foundation/Integrated Equity Framework, and Multi-Year Strategic Plan. The office identifies the academic and operational areas affected by the partnership, such as curriculum content, student population served, and program location. Representatives from affected areas complete academic assessments (e.g., Arts, Urban Indigenous Education Centre). TDSB operational aspects may require additional approvals, such as exclusive space use, media events, or single/sole source forms.

The Partnership Office and Arts Department jointly review arts-based or arts-related proposals, evaluating the material submitted by the artist or organization, including curriculum material and images. Several organizations, such as Prologue, Just B Graphic, MASC, Vibe Arts, Kick Start Arts, and Coco Collective, host rosters of available artists for various arts-based partnerships.

Casual Artist:

The Casual Artist Employee group at TDSB primarily serves a limited number of Central Student Interest Schools (e.g., Arts schools). We are currently working on a process to incorporate this employee group into other categories of service providers (vendors or partnerships).

Local Community Artists hired by schools:

Local schools can hire local community artists to meet their needs for one-time services. After three times the artists need to apply to the Partnership office.

SAP Vendor:

Some artists are vendors and are viewed as service providers rather than being involved in instruction or programming. Some possible examples could be artists who support AV equipment, lights, video production, piano accompanists for choir performances, and live visual arts models.

External Speaker Procedure:

The TDSB's Interim Procedure for vetting external speakers ensures notable speakers meet curriculum and operational expectations and promote equity, anti-racism, and human rights perspectives. This procedure applies to all schools and departments except those with established processes (e.g., Partnerships). The process involves completing an External Speaker Proposal Package and Vetting Assessment Scoresheet & Approval Form (VASAF), which must be reviewed and approved by the Vetting Committee (e.g., school staff and Principal) to ensure alignment with expectations. The Vetting Committee will assess whether the artist is appropriate for the intended audience and aligned with curriculum and operational expectations while promoting equity, anti-racism, and human rights perspectives. After the presentation, feedback may be collected to assess if the artist achieved objectives of the presentation and TDSB's expectations.

II. Streamlining the on-boarding process for guest artists, mentors and education partners.

The Arts Department, Partnerships, Employee Services-Support Staff and Purchasing are meeting as a group to standardize the process and ensure coherency in the criteria, procedures, and proper vetting in order to minimize risk when dealing with the different types of artists and services and ensure equitable access and representation.

Partnerships:

The partnership process has streamlined several aspects, including critical criteria, but balancing any potential volume increase with the system's staff capacity is crucial. The PR667 Educational Programming Partnership Procedure includes a flowchart on receiving proposals, and the Partnership Information Management System is open 24/7 to receive proposals from the community. Additionally, the Partnership office responds to phone and email inquiries and assists community members in completing the online partnership proposal form as smaller independent artists may need help accessing and participating in the TDSB partnership process. Moreover, some artist partnership proposals may only wish to be available to specific schools or communities, which may not meet the system's need to have artists available to schools across the system. Finally, a note about the assessment - the partnership process ensures that partnerships align with the TDSB's goals and may lead to a decision to proceed, decline, or redirect.

One way to increase access to artists for schools could be to partner with organizations with existing artist rosters, such as Prologue, and expand the list of available artists. Additionally, the TDSB could collaborate with more arts organizations to create a diverse roster of artist mentors from various communities. Another potential solution is to establish an alternative mentor artist evaluation process, where artists can provide mentorship-style support in classrooms under the guidance of a teacher. This process could involve instrumentalists, dancers, visual artists, actors, or other artists who could work collaboratively with the teacher to support learning. However, implementing new processes would require additional resources and funding to support central staffing. We are in the process of exploring some of these options to streamline the process.

Casual Artist List:

The Casual Artist Employee group at TDSB primarily serves a limited number of Central Student Interest School (Arts schools). We are currently working on incorporating this legacy employee group into current TDSB processes (e.g., partnerships, vendors).

SAP Vendor List:

To streamline the vendor process, one possibility is to create new categories of artist vendors that focus on artists who are service providers rather than involved in curriculum instruction or programming. Some possible examples could be artists who support AV equipment, lights, video production, piano accompanists for choir performances, and live visual arts models. We are currently working clear criteria, processes and vetting for the different types of artists. Incorporating this legacy SAP Vendor group into current TDSB processes ensures equitable access and representation for all vendors and service providers. This provides more clarity and accessibility for both artists and TDSB staff.

III. The feasibility of including outreach called for submissions, engaging with universities, colleges, specialized staff, trade unions, the private sector, notable Canadians and musicians.

Arts Convenor:

The Arts department also has an Arts Convenor, a dedicated position whose responsibilities include sustaining connections with the Toronto arts community (e.g., performing artists, arts institutions in Toronto, notable artists, private sector) to provide opportunities for TDSB students. The Arts Convenor previews, assesses, and liaises with outside agencies, professional artists, Arts organizations, and companies to present programs to TDSB students from JK to grade 12 and ensure they align with Board policies and practices. In addition, the Arts Convenor is a member of the assessment team who reviews all arts-related Educational Partnership proposals along with the Program Coordinator and Centrally Assigned Principal.

Central Student Interest Programs:

The TDSB's Central Student Interest Programs are run by specialized staff who are experts in their respective fields (e.g., Arts Schools, CyberARTS). These staff members bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the programs, ensuring students receive a high-quality Arts education. These schools also collaborate with private sector organizations, artists, and post-secondary institutions to provide students access to current technologies, techniques, and resources. These experiences allow students to gain a unique perspective on their Arts field of interest.

Specialist High Skills Majors:

There are 17 secondary schools with Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) in Arts & Culture and many others in various industry sectors including but not limited to Horticulture & Landscaping, Manufacturing, and Information Communications Technology. Many of these programs engage with post-secondary partnerships, trade unions and the private sector. SHSM program allows students to focus on a specific economic sector and support their transitions to college, apprenticeship, university, and employment while completing their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Each SHSM program offered must have Ministry approval. Each program must include a defined bundle of credits consisting of eight to ten Grade 11 and 12 credits, including cooperative education credits, sector-recognized certifications and training courses, experiential learning and career exploration activities within the sector, learning experiences connected with the student's post-secondary plans, and sector-partnered experiences in which students engage with a sector partner to explore sector-related content, skills, and knowledge involving either ICE (innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship), coding, or mathematical literacy. Detailed frameworks for each area of specialization are developed and approved by the Ministry.

Co-op:

Another way that TDSB students can engage with post-secondary institutions, specialized staff, trade unions, and the private sector is through experiential learning opportunities that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills through hands-on experiences. These opportunities help develop valuable knowledge, essential skills, work habits, technical literacy, and networks in business, industry, and the community. One such opportunity is Cooperative Education (Co-op), a credit course that allows students to use what they learn in the classroom and apply it in the workplace. Co-op provides a chance to try out a career and develop work habits, attitudes, and job skills necessary for a successful transition to post-secondary education, apprenticeship

or employment. Interested students can access school-based and central cooperative education programs through their school. One can take unlimited co-op credits, and up to two cooperative education credits can also count toward compulsory credits required for graduation.

TDSB offers arts-focused co-op programs for students to engage with community and industry professionals. The Arts Department runs a Co-op program, in partnership with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre, that provides Artist mentorship, connections with post-secondary institutions, and leadership development as they share their artistic learning with elementary school students through workshops and performances. Another example is The Stratagem - TDSB Creative Industries Co-op Program is an online co-op experience where high school students investigate creative industries topics with guest speakers including high-profile figures from the creative industries. This program prepares students for careers in the creative industries and provides information on further education pathways. Beginning summer of 2023, it will be available as part of the Summer Co-op Program.

IV. The feasibility of a centrally-supported strategy to activate areas of curriculum through the use of guest artists.

Local Schools:

The Toronto District School Board recognizes the importance of arts in teaching and learning, embedding it throughout the elementary and secondary education system. Every year, all students in TDSB elementary schools receive instruction in Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual Arts from Grades 1-8, while secondary school students must complete one arts credit to graduate. The 2021/2022 school year saw 46,669 course registrations in Arts curriculum subjects at the secondary level. By engaging with the arts, students can explore new ideas, express themselves, understand various cultures, communicate with others, and develop creative and innovative thinking strategies. Both core classroom teachers and specialist teachers in TDSB schools teach the Arts Curriculum and have access to professional learning through the Central Arts department from both teachers and artists. Schools can access artists through various processes (e.g., Partnerships, speakers) who can share their expertise and experiences with students. In addition, TDSB schools can also access artists and art institutions through excursions (e.g., Harbourfront Centre). These excursions allow students to experience the arts in a new and immersive way, helping to foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of various art forms.

TDSB Arts Department Artist Programs:

The TDSB Arts Department offers ongoing opportunities for teacher professional learning and student enrichment in the arts. These include artists-in-the-classroom programs, festivals, exhibitions, and centrally organized events. One such program is tdsbCREATES, a year-long project in collaboration with the Toronto Arts Council and Prologue Performing Arts that provides professional artists mentorships and residencies in Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Spoken Word, Film, Music, and Visual Arts for Grades 1-12. This year, over 100 Grade 7-12 classes and 110 Grade 1-8 classrooms participated in the tdsbCREATES program, showcasing student

work in a performance festival at Meridian Hall and an art and film exhibition at Artscape Youngplace. The Arts Department also provides the Community Music artist program, which matches Partnership Artists with 63 schools annually to give the Artist workshops in percussion instruments from diverse musical traditions (e.g., Gamelan).

Itinerant Music Instructor Program:

The Arts Department's Itinerant Music Instructor Program (IMI) assigns artist instructors to 329 elementary schools in the TDSB to provide instrumental and vocal music instruction to students in grades K-8. The IMIs work collaboratively with OCT-certified classroom teachers to enrich the music curriculum and support teachers' professional learning. Direct instruction on instruments such as Band, Strings, Steel Pan, Orff and Recorder Enrichment is offered to students in grades 5 to 8. IMIs also provide staff development to help teachers develop the skills necessary to deliver music programs using Vocal, Orff, and Recorder pedagogies.

Arts Opportunities Program:

The Arts Department's Arts Opportunities Program offers fully funded opportunities for students from mainly priority schools to access arts performances, exhibitions, and workshops both in-school or on-location at arts spaces. The Arts Department also facilitates access to hundreds of thousands of dollars of free or low-cost tickets to performances from local arts organizations and institutions such as Share the Magic, National Ballet, TO Live, Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre and others.

V. Implementing a process to evaluate and grow the breadth of genres and identities represented by artists, mentors and partners.

The TDSB is committed to Truth and Reconciliation, and equity when working with artists in schools. The TDSB recognizes and values the contributions of all members of their diverse community and believes that equitable access to programs, services, and resources is crucial for achieving successful outcomes. The TDSB's commitment to anti-oppression, non-discrimination, and equitable and inclusive education is the foundation of its policies, programs, structures, and practices. To evaluate and expand the representation of genres and identities among artists, mentors, and partners, the TDSB already integrates this goal into its existing processes. For instance, when selecting artist workshop facilitators for the TDSB Creating Space Conference, artists for the Arts Co-op, or curriculum resources, the TDSB already considers diversity and inclusivity in its selection criteria. In addition, other procedures, such as vetting external speakers, include criteria that promote equity and inclusion.

The Educational Partnership Office is responsible for completing the Initial/Partner Assessment of the Proposed Partnership and assessing the proposed partnership using the Partnership Criteria and General Policies documents. These documents include alignment with TDSB's Mission and Values, Human Rights, Equity Foundation/Integrated Equity Framework, Multi-Year Strategic Plan, and other relevant policies. When external agencies/artists apply for partnerships, the Partnership Office consults with several departments. This consultation can include input from the Arts Department. However, if the applicant indicates Indigenous content,

the Partnership office consults with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC). Similarly, the Partnership office consults with the Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement (CEBSA) for Black-identity content. Our existing processes and policies reflect the TDSB's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We continue to expand opportunities for students to work with artists from different genres representing various communities and identities.