

# Toronto District School Board

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Policy P067

Title: **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES INDEX**

Adopted: February 11, 2009

Effectuated: February 11, 2009

Revised: June 17, 2015, [upcoming date 2024]

Reviewed: June 2013, [upcoming date 2024]

Authorization: Board of Trustees

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## 1. RATIONALE

Public education is designed to give all children an equitable opportunity to succeed. The TDSB recognizes that students face varying degrees of challenge which can impact their opportunity to achieve high educational outcomes. Educational research has demonstrated that children from lower income families, through no fault of their own, face more significant barriers in achieving high educational outcomes.

The Learning Opportunities Index Policy (P067) (the “Policy”) affirms the TDSB’s commitment to achieve equitable academic opportunities. This Policy will assist with steering additional resources to schools serving students who face greater challenges and make sure all students have access to educational resources.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

- To support student learning experiences through equitable allocation of resources to schools.
- To provide direction to staff regarding the use of the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI).

## 3. DEFINITIONS

*Board* refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “TDSB”.

*Learning Opportunities Index (LOI)* refers to a Board-designed tool that ranks schools based on a range of indicators that measure external challenges affecting student success. Many of the indicators reflect levels of poverty. There are two indices, one for elementary schools (including junior high schools) and one for secondary schools. The index measures external challenges in a way that compares each school to all other schools. It applies exactly the same set of consistent, reliable, and objective measures to each school and removes the

subjectivity that may enter into the perceptions held about individual schools. The index lists schools according to ranking. The highest ranking (number 1) indicates the school with the greatest external challenges to student success. The index also provides a score for each school. A higher score leads to a higher ranking.

*External challenges refers to conditions* that are outside the control or influence of the school or Board and that have an impact on student success.

*Equity refers to* the equality of opportunities and outcomes for all by responding fair and proportionality to the needs of individuals. Equity is not the same as equal treatment because it recognizes a social-cultural power imbalance that unfairly privilege some while oppressing others and therefore focuses on redressing disparity - meeting individual needs to ensure fair access, outcomes and participation that results in equality, acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination and current oppression. Equity practices ensure fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities and Intersectionality of multiple social identities, access to privileges and impacts of oppression. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/ groups. (Equity Policy - P037).

*Resources Funds* refers to staffing, goods, and services allocated to schools in order to help students succeed.

TDSB is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “Board”.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY**

The Director of Education holds the primary responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Policy.

Within the Director’s Office, the responsibility for the day-to-day management and coordination of the Policy is assigned to the Associate Director, Instructional Innovation and Equitable Outcomes.

#### **5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

This Policy applies to staff, including TDSB executives, administrators, principals, superintendents, and school personnel involved in the establishment, administration, resource allocation, and managing of the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI).

This Policy also impacts students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and school community members.

## 6. POLICY

- 6.1. In accordance with the Equity Policy (P037), the Board affirms the principles of equity within this Policy, in providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students.
- 6.2. This Policy supports the Board's commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.
- 6.3. The Board recognizes that the Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) is an effective tool for measuring systemic external challenges to student success and resource allocation. For a breakdown of variables included in the LOI, please see Appendix A.
- 6.4. The Board recognizes that all students can learn and succeed. A ranking on the index will not be used as a negative label for a school or its students.
- 6.5. The Learning Opportunities Index is only one of a variety of tools and processes that support and inform strategic and resource allocation decisions.
- 6.6. The Learning Opportunities Index should be used at the discretion of staff for equity related decisions. While the index is a useful tool to map out systemic external challenges among schools, it is not a mandatory component for all decisions that TDSB staff might make in relation to learning opportunities and resource allocation for schools. School, community, and provincial context as well as staff expertise are important elements for decision making.
- 6.7. To provide distribution of resources based on principles of equity, the Learning Opportunities Index will be used when additional resources are being allocated to schools beyond base allocations to all schools, except where the need for an appropriate exception can be demonstrated. Please see details in Appendix B.
- 6.8. An exception to this direction is permitted where allocations are directed to all students and schools to meet basic needs (such as essential learning resources, heating and lighting) and to meet standards in legislation and collective agreements (e.g., class size requirements).
- 6.9. Another exception to this direction is permitted where allocations are directed to needs that can be more appropriately measured by other means. (Examples of more accurate measurements include resources for English Language Learners based on students' countries of origin, resources for Special Education based on students' identified needs, and resources for major capital repairs in schools based on measures of facilities' condition).

- 6.10. Applications of the Learning Opportunities Index in determining allocations to schools will result in a greater concentration of resources in schools that have greater need.
- 6.11. Whenever feasible, the scores of schools on the index will be used in preference to the rankings of schools when determining the amount of an allocation.
- 6.12. The index may be used in a variety of ways, including the use of cut-offs, stepped cut-offs, scaling, or a combination of these approaches. Information will be made available to Board employees on how to use the Learning Opportunities Index appropriately. As well, information will be made available to the public outlining how the Learning Opportunities Index is used. Please see details Appendix B.
- 6.13. As the LOI is recalculated every 3 years, the most recent LOI will be used when determining the allocation of resources.
- 6.14. The most recent index and explanatory information, including individual school level variables, will be easily accessible in the Board's communications vehicles that provide information to staff and the public.
- 6.15. The factors and methodology used to calculate the index will be reviewed after the policy review (a minimum every five years). In between review cycles, ongoing research will continue to ensure the LOI reflects current research concerning external challenges to student success and take account of changing availability of valid, reliable, and consistent data.
- 6.16. The index will be recalculated and republished every three years. Technical documentation of the variables and calculation will be made available to the public after each cycle. An inventory of how the Learning Opportunities Index was used will be conducted after the year of recalculation.

## **7. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

## **8. EVALUATION**

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every five (5) years

## **9. APPENDICES**

Appendix A: What are the components of the LOI?

Appendix B: Learning Opportunities Index, Allocation Information

## 10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation:

- *Education Act*

Policies:

- Equity Policy (P037)

Procedures:

- Learning Opportunities Index Procedure (PR526)

Other Documents:

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Actions
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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## Appendix A

### What are the components of the LOI?

The LOI is composed of variables which are combined into a single index. The variables used are:

1. Median Family Income – A measurement of income levels, at which half the families earn more and half of them earn less. This is measured at the level of the students' postal codes aggregated to the school level.
2. Percentage of Families Whose Income is Below the Low-Income Measure (Before Tax) – Also known as the Low-Income Measure, this is the percentage of families in a student's postal code aggregated to the school level whose income is at or less than half the median income in the city.
3. Percentage of Families Receiving Social Assistance – The proportion of families in the students' postal codes aggregated to the school level whose income comes from government sources.
4. Adults with Low Education – The percentage of adults (25-64 years of age) in the students' postal codes aggregated to the school level without a high school diploma.
5. Adults with University Degrees – The percentage of adults (25-64 years of age) in the students' postal codes aggregated to the school level with at least one university degree.
6. Non Two-Parent Families – The proportion of families aggregated to the school level where the parent/guardian does not live with either a spouse or common law partner.

Please note the variables described above in item numbers 1, 2, and 3 are based on data about families with school-aged children and number 6 is based on data from the TDSB Student Information System (SIS).

## Appendix B

### Learning Opportunities Index, Allocation Information

This content below is from the [Learning Opportunity Index, Operational Procedure PR526 information on allocations \(4.0\)](#). *This content may be adjusted based on the Policy Review process*

#### 4.2 Allocations

When staff is allocating resources to schools, the Learning Opportunities Index should be used (exceptions can be found in the Policy P067, Learning Opportunities Index).

Resources can be allocated using different methods such as the use of cut-offs, stepped cut-offs, scaling, or a combination of these approaches.

Whenever possible, scores should be used in preference to rankings when determining the amount of allocation. Schools' scores on the index are a more accurate indication of relative external challenges than schools' ranking on the index. Schools that are several rankings away from one another may have similar levels of need.

#### 4.3. Allocations of Resources Directly to Schools

The index may be utilized for the direct allocation of resources to schools.

##### (a) Cut-Offs

When cut-offs are used, all schools above the cut-off value receive the resource and all those below the cut-off point do not receive it.

##### (b) Stepped Cut-Offs

When stepped cut-offs are used, all schools above a specified cut-off value receive a specified level of resource, all schools above a lower specified value receive a lower specified level of resource, and all schools below the final cut-off point do not receive any additional resource. There may be few, or many steps (specified cut-off value) used in this allocation method where cut-offs are used, stepped cut-offs are preferable to one cut-off, in order to minimize arbitrary differences in allocations to schools with similar external challenges.

##### (c) Scaling

When scaling is used, allocation of the resources is tapered so that more resources are given to schools high on the index than schools low on the index proportionate to each school's score in the index. Each school receives a slightly different allocation, scaled accurately to its score on the index.

A scaled allocation is most appropriate when resources are readily divided into small units (such as dollars). In most instances, scaling is inappropriate in allocations of staff because staffing full-time equivalents are not appropriately divided into small fractions.

Scaling should not be used when it attenuates the resource so much that it is not beneficial. It is more appropriate to use cut-offs when the resource to be allocated is scarce, and as a result, should be focused on students and schools with the greatest need. It may be appropriate to combine scaling with a cut-off so that allocations are scaled but only for schools above a specified level of external challenge.

#### **4.4. Allocations of Resources to Learning Networks**

The index may be utilized for central allocations to Superintendents of Education for use in their Learning Networks to achieve an equitable allocation of resources for different areas of the City. The amount received will be based on the score or ranking of individual schools on the Learning Opportunities Index in each Learning Networks.

- (i) Where central allocations using the index are made to Learning Networks, the superintendent has full discretion to allocate the resource among schools and students within their Learning Networks, based on criteria the superintendent deems appropriate.
- (ii) Superintendents are encouraged to collaborate with principals in determining appropriate criteria for allocation within the Learning Networks.