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BUSINESS**

## **Caring and Safe Schools: Annual Report 2022-23**

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 5, June 2024

**Report No.:** 06-24-4691

### Strategic Directions

- Commit to the Implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action
- All Students Belong, are Engaged, and Valued in an Inclusive Environment
- All Students Reach High Levels of Achievement, Success, and Personal Development
- All Students Graduate with the Confidence, Skills, and Knowledge to Thrive
- All Students and Staff Learn and Work in Inclusive, Safe, and Modern Environments

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that this report be received.

### **Context**

The annual Caring and Safe Schools Report presents an overall summary and an analysis of the suspensions and expulsions that occurred in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) during the 2022-23 school year.

Schools should be safe and welcoming places where all students and staff feel respected, included, and valued in their learning and working environments. In TDSB, we are committed to creating these positive environments and recognize their impact on student success. By directly addressing the role that student discipline plays in a school's overall climate as well as the impact it has on student achievement and well-being, we are making positive changes to the lives of students.

When examining the data in this report it is of critical importance to identify patterns which help to better understand student discipline processes. This examination must be undertaken in a critical way which takes into account the Board's commitments to Truth and Reconciliation, human rights, equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression. This means that this data should not be taken up in ways which problematize, stigmatize, and reinforce harmful stereotypes about individual students or groups of students. Rather, the data contained in this report must be used to examine the Board's policies, procedures, and ways of working to interrupt and interrogate systemic and individual biases which exist in student discipline processes and contribute to academic streaming within the TDSB. In short, this means that student discipline processes contribute to differentiated outcomes for students based on factors other than their ability and behaviour.

Addressing this data and the systemic barriers inherent in student discipline processes will enable more students in the TDSB to achieve their greatest potential while keeping our schools safe. To achieve this goal staff are working through a transparent action plan which emphasizes building positive relationships with internal and external stakeholders in support of positive school climates where students and staff feel valued, heard, and cared for irrespective of their identity, social location, or postal code.

It is important to note that when serious incidents occur, students will face appropriate disciplinary actions as required by the Education Act, the Ministry of Education and the TDSB up to and including suspension and/or expulsion.

## **Key Findings**

In the 2022-23 school year:

- There were 4,907 suspensions and 14 expulsions in the school year. When compared with the 2018-19 school year (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic), there were 625 fewer suspensions, or an 11% reduction, in the 2022-23 school year. There were also 16 fewer expulsions (a 53% reduction);
- The overall student suspension rate is 1.54%.
- There were no suspensions to students in Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten and Grade 1; there were only 20 suspensions in the primary grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3);
- Hallways, classrooms, and school yards continued to be the most likely incident locations;
- More than one third (35.9%) of the suspensions were one-day suspensions;
- Fighting (15.0%), physical assault (14.7%), and aid or incite harmful behaviour (14.5%) were the top three infraction types;

- 98% of the suspensions were followed up with interventions. A meeting with parents or guardians was the most used intervention, followed by restorative practices;
- Male students accounted for 71.6% of the suspensions/expulsions;
- Students with special education needs (excluding Gifted) accounted for half (49.5%) of the suspensions/expulsions;
- Students who were born in Canada or spoke English as the primary language at home accounted for the majority of suspensions/expulsions;
- Students who lived with one parent (particularly with mother only) or were from low-income families, had disproportionately high representations in suspensions/expulsions;
- Self-identified Black, Middle Eastern, and Mixed students continued to be disproportionately high in the suspensions/expulsions. When compared with the 2018-19 school year (prior to the pandemic), Black students accounted for 8.2% fewer suspensions/expulsions (from 33.0% in 2018-19 to 24.8% in 2022-23);
- Self-identified Indigenous students accounted for fewer than 15 suspensions.

It is important to note that while the number of suspensions and expulsions in the 2022-23 school year dropped in comparison to the 2018-19 school year, the number of incidents requiring intervention from the Caring and Safe Schools team increased in the 2022-23 school year relative to the three previous school years which were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

Our emphasis continues to be on creating student discipline processes which are equitable and fair for all students while maintaining safe, inclusive and positive learning environments. To be successful, we must be connected to the lived experiences and respond to the needs of those we intend to serve.

In order to address increasing levels of community violence which found its way into TDSB schools in the 2022-23 school year *A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety Report 1* and the Action Plan connected to it were received at the Special Meeting of the Board on December 9, 2022. On February 1, 2023 the Board received *A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety Report 1 – Budget Implications* which specified additional investments associated with the Action Plan presented at the Special Board Meeting on December 9, 2022. On May 24, 2023 the Board received *A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety – Board Update - May 2023*. The latest update on *A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety - May 2024*) is included as Appendix B and provides an update on actions that are already in progress while introducing a number of new initiatives

In light of a number of tragic and violent incidents at TDSB secondary schools, TDSB Legal Services retained King International Advisory Group (KIAG) and Turner Consulting Group (TCG) to simultaneously perform school safety reviews from two distinctive lenses at four secondary schools within the Board which included:

- David and Mary Thomson CI
- Victoria Park CI
- Woburn CI
- Birchmount Park CI

KIAG was retained to conduct an analysis of the school environments. This was not an investigation of the actual critical incidents that occurred at each school. The focus of this work was on assessing potential threats and evaluating the existing security measures in place.

TCG was tasked with conducting an analysis of school safety through the lens of school climate and equity. This supported an understanding of the social conditions that have given rise to the increase in violence incidents in schools and to identify what can be done to foster a more positive school climate and prevent further violence.

The public TCG report is attached as Appendix D. The public KIAG report is attached as Appendix E.

The public recommendations as well as the “status updates” on operationalizing these recommendations are attached as Appendix F.

To support student achievement and well-being, to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions, and to address the over-representation of some groups who are suspended and expelled, we will continue to:

- More effectively address how issues of identity – such as race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, special education needs and gender – connect with each other and influence decisions regarding the student discipline process;
- Review the detailed breakdown of suspension and expulsion data to identify trends, patterns and opportunities for improvement;
- Support the Caring and Safe Schools team and all school administrators to examine bias, power and privilege as they relate to the student discipline process;
- Support school administrators in the application of Truth and Reconciliation, human rights, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles in student discipline;
- Review Caring and Safe Schools practices to ensure consistency with principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression;
- Continue to work closely with Special Education staff in support of students who have special education needs so that as part of discipline processes, all mitigating factors are considered, appropriate accommodations are in place and Individual

Education Plans are taken into account to determine the impact that discipline will have;

- Provide compulsory learning for staff to be trained in restorative practices; threat assessment and emergency preparedness;
- To address issues of community and school violence the Board has committed to an action plan as outlined A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety;
- Continue the implementation of recommendations made through the reports of external consultants;
- Work collaboratively with the Urban Indigenous Education Centre and the Centre of Excellence for Black Students Achievement to challenge unconscious bias, engage in joint problem-solving and ensure that Indigenous students and Black students are treated equitably when it comes to decisions about suspensions and expulsions in each school through collaboration between Principals and Superintendents;
- Consider and act on the intersectionality of the data provided in this report – a cross section of staff must be involved in the analysis of student discipline matters to ensure that any biases in the student discipline process and any subsequent decisions are being acknowledged and eradicated through interrogation and interruption of practices that appear to be automatic responses to student discipline issues; and
- Work with families and community partners to develop relevant approaches and supports for students.

## **Resource Implications**

During 2022-23 school year the Board approved approximately \$2.7M in “human resource” investments to enhance school safety. This included Teachers, Caring and Safe School Advisors, School Based Safety Monitors, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers and Child and Youth Counsellors. These positions continue to have a positive impact on student well-being, positive school climate and student safety.

In May of 2023, the Board approved \$10.9M in additional funding for the purpose of replacing existing security camera systems in schools and sites. New camera installation has started in schools.

Additional funding for Caring and Safe Schools initiatives is provided through collaboration with other TDSB departments including Continuing Education and Virtual Learning and Re-Engagement.

The Ministry of Education provided \$1.8M for expanded engagement with local community agencies and faith-based groups providing programs for students outside of regular school hours. This funding concluded on March 31, 2024. Continuation of this

essential programming which has serviced thousands of TDSB students and families will not be possible without a renewal of the financial commitment from the Ministry of Education. The Board has no other funding source to support this work. Staff is currently exploring opportunities for additional investments through corporate and other partners.

Information related to specific programming achieved through this funding is included in Appendices A, B and C.

## **Communications Considerations**

The Caring and Safe Schools report will be shared with key stakeholders through existing TDSB communication channels.

## **Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)**

P037 Equity

P031 Human Rights

P051 Caring and Safe Schools

P069 Accessibility

PR523 Access to School Board Premises

PR540 Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers

PR585 Board Code of Conduct

PR586 Programs for Students on Long Term Suspension or Expulsion

PR602 Hearing of and Appeal Under Section 265(1)(m) of the Education Act

PR608 Sexual Misconduct by Students

PR694 Video Surveillance

PR695 Threat to school Safety

PR697 Promoting a Positive School Climate Procedure

PR698 Police-School Board Protocol

PR703 Bullying Prevention and Intervention

PR702 Progressive Discipline

PR710 Reporting of Suspected Wrongdoing

PR728 Reporting and Responding to Racism and Hate Incidents Involving or Impacting Students in Schools

PR724 Refusal to Admit

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Caring and Safe Schools: Annual Report 2022-23
- Appendix B: A Collaborative Approach to School and Community Safety – May 2024
- Appendix C: Caring and Safe Schools Programming Report – Power Point
- Appendix D: Turner Consulting Group Public Report
- Appendix E: KING International Advisory Group Public Report
- Appendix F: External Consultant Recommendations – Status Update

## From

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