



# Literacy Strategy 2024 - 2028



**INSPIRING MINDS & SHAPING FUTURES:** Our Multi-Year Commitment to Student Success 2024-2028



# Introduction

TDSB Literacy Strategy 2024-2028  
Appendix A

## ***Literacy is the pathway to equity, excellence and high achievement. It is a fundamental human right.***

Literacy is globally recognized as a fundamental human right. It's the gateway to early and lifelong learning, belonging, equity, and excellence. Literacy is also a social determinant of health and contributes to people's well-being. As stated in the *UNESCO Strategy for Youth and Adult Literacy (2020-2025)*,

“Literacy is an essential component of the right to education and a prerequisite for accessing other human rights...the inability to read and write at a basic level of proficiency and to actively participate in an increasingly literate and digitized world is potentially a source of exclusion and a major barrier to engaging more actively in political, social, cultural and economic activities.” (UNESCO, 2019, Annex I, p. 1).

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has developed the Literacy Strategy (2024-2028), which acknowledges every student's right to literacy proficiency and commits to realizing its Vision of the literate learner. The evolving social and economic contexts within which students learn and live require proficiency across different forms of literacy (multi-literacies). To that end, through this Literacy Strategy, the TDSB aims to cultivate and inspire curious and innovative learners and citizens who use their critical thinking skills as readers, writers and communicators, to engage critically in the world around them and thrive in this evolving, diverse and complex global context.

### **Context**

A student's literacy proficiency develops over time and has many layers of influence, including early exposure to conversations, books, print and access to technology; opportunities for shared reading within families; and in various early years programs. Children and youth are individuals who must be seen and heard. They have the right to have their voices heard in all matters that affect them. Literacy is the language OF learning.



# Introduction

Reflecting on recent data, the TDSB recognizes that realizing the Vision of the Literate Learner described below requires intentional support following the significant learning interruptions posed throughout and following the pandemic. The TDSB Literacy Strategy lays out the framework, context and roadmap for literacy learning, teaching and leading for the next four years and beyond. The Strategy is based on current global research and international, national, provincial and local data. Detailed implementation plans and resources will be developed to support the goals and actions outlined in this Strategy.

## What do we mean by Literacy?

“...literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world. Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing and using numbers throughout life and is part of a larger set of skills, which include digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development and global citizenship as well as job-specific skills. Literacy skills themselves are expanding and evolving as people engage more and more with information and learning through digital technology.” (UNESCO, 2024, para 2.)

Literacy encompasses many skills essential for navigating contemporary society. It includes traditional literacy, structured literacy (Science of Reading), ensuring proficiency in reading, writing, and understanding oral and written language. It also involves valuing different ways of knowing and communicating. For many cultures, literacy also encompasses being in relationship with language and each other. Additionally, literacy incorporates multiliteracies such as:





# Introduction

- **Oral Language** is a foundation for early literacy development. Honouring the wide diversity of oral language skills ensures academic success. Students come into education with oral language skills that are not only complex but provide them with resources to develop relationships, share lived experiences and familial stories, while developing strong vocabulary which is crucial for learning to read, write and communicate effectively.
- **Digital literacy** equips individuals with the skills to effectively utilize technology for communication, accessing information, and critical thinking.
- **Media literacy** fosters the ability to analyze and evaluate diverse media forms and discern between credible information and misinformation.
- **Cultural literacy** promotes an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions, histories, signs and symbols of different groups of people. This fosters respectful interactions and collaboration within and across communities.

Together, these literacies empower individuals to thrive in an interconnected world, navigate complex challenges, and actively participate in shaping their personal and collective futures (TDSB, 2024a).

“Literacy empowers individuals, reduces poverty, increases participation in the labour market, and positively impacts health and sustainable development”. It’s a means to fulfilling one’s human rights. [UNESCO, 2024 Literacy: what you need to know \(unesco.org\)](https://unesco.org)



# Vision of the Literate Learner

***The literate learner doesn't simply navigate a complex and rapidly changing world; they engage with, critically reflect on, and thrive in one.***

This TDSB Literacy Strategy is designed to support all students, regardless of their identity, in creating, communicating, reading, writing and thinking critically with **confidence, fluency, and enjoyment**, regardless of the language of instruction. Their literacy skills allow them to contribute to positive social change, social justice, technological and economic growth. Literate learners will develop the skills to engage in learning that is transferable across various disciplines from the early years to secondary school and beyond. Their literacy skills will allow students to pursue educational and vocational opportunities that are meaningful to them. Multiliterate learners will be able to actively participate as responsible citizens who uphold human rights and who can explore and engage with the world around them.



## The Early Literacy Learner

A solid foundation in literacy in the early years is important for students to be successful in all curriculum areas as they move throughout the primary, junior, intermediate and senior divisions in school. As stated in TDSB's [Early Learning and Care Policy](#) (TDSB, 2022a), "Children are born learners, curious and capable, and important contributors in their learning. By planning responsive, inclusive and engaging programs, educators will capitalize on children's development in the early years" (p.2). The TDSB recognizes that a child's literacy journey starts well before they transition to kindergarten. As children learn to talk, begin to explore with books, print, reading and writing, and engage in other social literacy experiences, the foundation for later literacy development is laid - all beginning before age three (Zero to Three, 2024).

According to the Child Mind Institute, if a child reads one picture book a day with their parents or caregivers they will be exposed to 78,000 different words each year. From birth to kindergarten, this means they will have been exposed to 1.4 million more words than children who are not exposed to books (Zero to Three, 2024). Reading with and engaging infants, toddlers and young children, and exposing



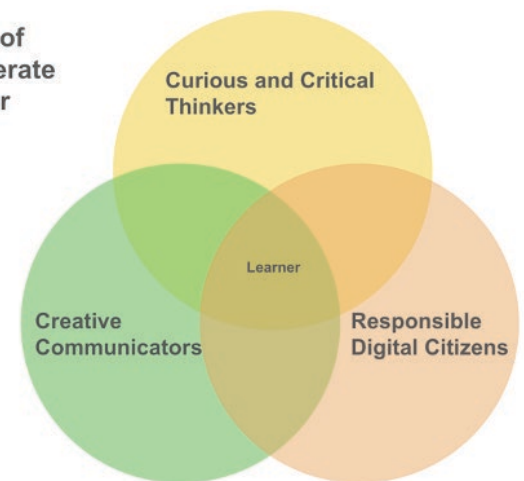
# Vision of the Literate Learner

them to books and other forms of text/print directly impacts their early and ongoing literacy development and academic achievement. Adults who engage in conversations with their children using complex language also increase their children's vocabulary and later literacy development. The TDSB has a long history of supporting children's early literacy development through its EarlyON Child and Family Centres (formerly Parenting and Family Literacy Centres), and continues to do so through its many partnerships with various child care and early years programs in schools. The partnerships are vital to a thriving school community, and support these important early literacy experiences for children and families.

All literacy learners are... Curious and Critical Thinkers. They use their literacy skills:

- to seek knowledge;
- articulate their thoughts;
- ask questions that clarify their understanding and thinking;
- probe more deeply into an issue or topic; and
- make meaningful connections between themselves, the texts they encounter, and the world around them (adapted from Adolescent Literacy Guide, 2016).

Vision of the Literate Learner



Literacy learners are lifelong learners and consumers of information both in, and beyond school. They develop proficiency in the critical consumption and analysis of information. They question the sources of information they encounter, and the often covert biases within. Literacy learners consider different perspectives and positions, and how language may be used to exercise power and/or maintain the status quo (Adolescent Literacy Guide, 2016).

## Creative Communicators

Literacy learners are creative communicators. They:

- look for opportunities for purposeful self-expression to authentic audiences about meaningful topics and issues;
- carefully consider which platforms, tools, styles, and formats to use to achieve their purpose and reach their audience (International Society for Technology and Education (ISTE); and,
- express informed positions in creative ways, thereby contributing to meaningful social and technological change.

Literacy learners use language to interact and connect with individuals and communities, for personal growth and for active participation as global citizens.

# Vision of the Literate Learner

## Digital Citizens

Literacy learners are digital citizens. They:

- recognize the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world (ISTE);
- act and model digital citizenship in ways that are safe, legal and ethical (ISTE);
- use technology to access multiple sources of information to develop and deepen their knowledge, and seek divergent perspectives; and
- use their literacy skills to contribute to social change and justice.

Students who actively seek out multiple ways of knowing within the digital world will support the critical citizenship required to drive ongoing social growth and development within and across communities.

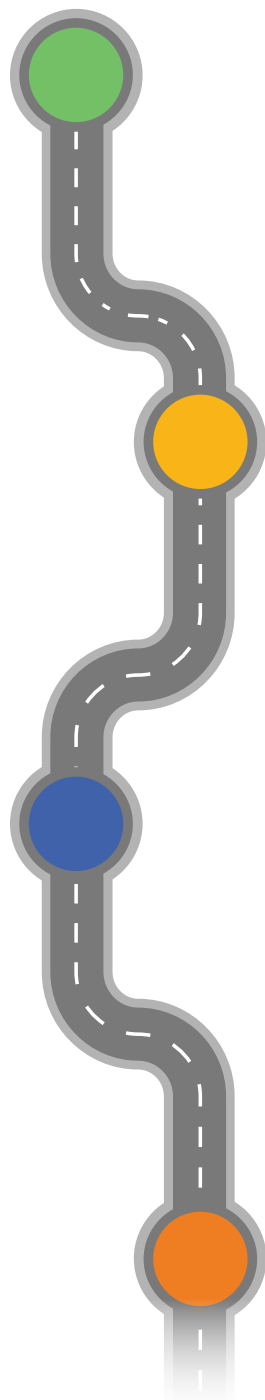




# Background

The timeline below describes the key milestones that have influenced and led to the development of the TDSB Literacy Strategy (2024-2028).

## Key Milestones to date



### September 2019

Literacy Intervention Model Introduced in 50 TDSB Schools

- Where data showed students had the most need for intensive intervention support within Grade 1 classrooms, along with support for kindergarten classes.
- Model happens within the classroom where the Literacy Intervention teacher influences both student and educator learning.
- Note: This Intervention Model was interrupted during the pandemic. Full implementation happened in the 2022-23 school year.

### January 2022

TDSB Released the Early Reading Framework

- Outlines the components of effective reading instruction for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3.

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Released Right to Read Report

- Includes recommendations for the Ministry of Education, school boards and faculties of education, following a public inquiry by the OHRC into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities (October 2019).

### Spring 2022

TDSB Early Reading Instruction Family and Caregiver Guide Released

- Available in English and translated into 22 most common languages in the TDSB.

Instructional Strategies to Support Teaching and Learning in Reading Companion Document Created

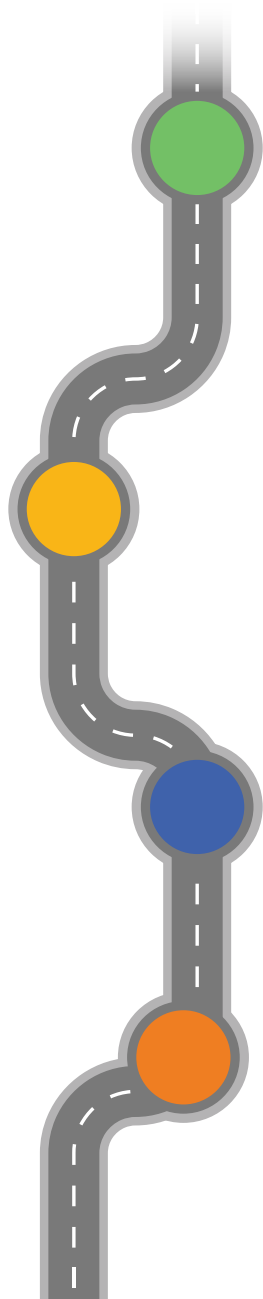
- Supports the implementation of the Ministry of Education's Effective Early Reading Instruction: A Teacher's Guide in response to the OHRC Right to Read Report.

### January 2023

TDSB Passed Motion to Make English: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices NBE3U/C/E Compulsory Grade 11 English Course for TDSB Students (September 2024).



# Background



## June 2023

Ministry of Education Released the Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1 to 8: Language and the De-streamed Grade 9 English Course (September 2023 implementation)

- Appropriate recommendations from the OHRC Right to Read Report are included within the new curriculum. The Four Strands of the Language Curriculum are: *Literacy Connections and Applications, Foundations of Language, Comprehension: Understanding and Responding to Texts, and Composition: Expressing Ideas and Creating Texts.*

## July 2023

Ministry of Education Issued Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 168

- Provides direction to school boards on the requirement to complete annual early reading screenings for all students in Senior Kindergarten to Grade 2.
- Outlines direction to school boards regarding the requirement of protected time for reading instruction in Grades 1 to 3.

## August 2023

Student Achievement Plan Developed and Released by Ministry of Education

- Part of the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023, the plan includes goals and measures that all Ontario school boards must use to track student achievement, engagement, and well-being.

## April 2024

TDSB Released the Later Literacy Framework

- Outlines the components of effective literacy instruction for students from Grades 4-12.

TDSB Launched 2024-28 Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP): Inspiring Minds and Shaping Futures.

# Background

## Multi-Year Strategic Plan 2024-28

The TDSB's renewed Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP; TDSB, 2024b), *Inspiring Minds and Shaping Futures*, sets direction and identifies system goals for the next four years (2024-2028). The MYSP is built on the foundation of Equity and the commitment to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.

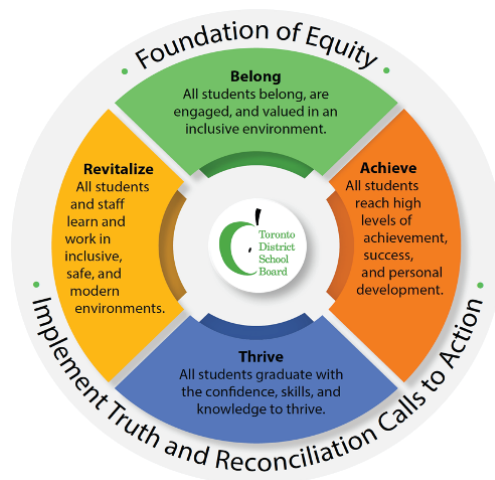
The MYSP has five strategic directions: *Truth and Reconciliation, Belong, Achieve, Thrive* and *Revitalize*.

**This Literacy Strategy is nested in the Achieve pillar where, "All students reach high levels of achievement, success and personal development."**

We will achieve this pillar of the MYSP by:

- Developing a strong foundation of **literacy** and numeracy skills beginning in kindergarten.
- Creating culturally responsive, identity-affirming resources and learning environments that reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of TDSB students.
- Increasing equity of access to programs, extracurricular opportunities and other enrichment opportunities.
- Strengthening instructional practices to reflect evidence-based approaches and more fully include [Universal Design for Learning](#) and differentiated instruction.
- Welcoming, respecting, and valuing parents/caregivers/guardians as partners in their children's learning and development.
- Holding high expectations for students and finding ways to set goals and monitor progress with them, to enable students to master skills that will help them to be successful in their chosen pathways.

Although the TDSB Literacy Strategy is nested mainly within the Achieve pillar there are links to the Belong, Truth and Reconciliation, Thrive and Revitalize pillars. Strong academic success in literacy is directly connected to students' sense of belonging and their ability to thrive within TDSB learning environments and outside of school.



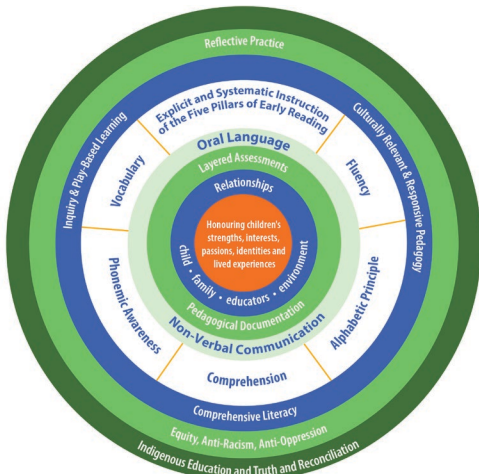


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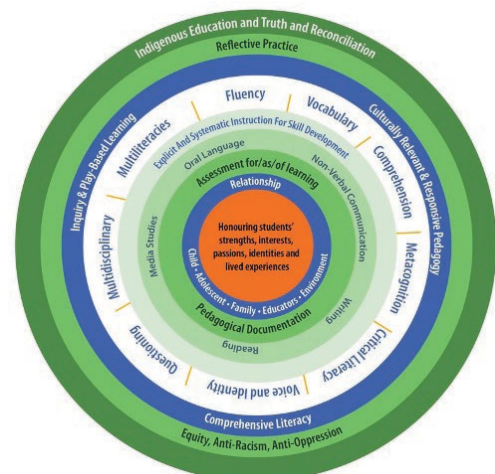
## TDSB Early Reading and Later Literacy Frameworks

The *TDSB Frameworks for Early Reading (2022)* and *Later Literacy (2024)* outline the critical components of effective literacy pedagogy and learning. The purpose of these frameworks is to set pedagogical practices for an equitable and comprehensive literacy program for all students. The frameworks are based on academic and field research and expertise, and have been developed in partnership with educators, Speech-Language Pathologists and researchers. The frameworks connect to the Achieve pillar within the MYSP.

TDSB Early Reading Framework



TDSB Later Literacy Framework



Educators use these frameworks to set high expectations for all students, in both English and French programs, to support a comprehensive approach to literacy so that all essential aspects of literacy learning are addressed. This will provide for consistent practices across schools that will further emphasize the TDSB's commitment to reading enjoyment and fluency, and guide assessment and instruction in reading. See [Appendix B](#) for more information about the TDSB Literacy Frameworks.



# Global Perspectives and Research on Literacy

## Context Matters...

Children learn, grow, develop and thrive in a multitude of environments. Each one influences their growth and development in dynamic ways. It's important to understand how various environments and contexts interact with and influence students, and their learning, throughout life. This is especially true for literacy given the increasingly global and evolving nature of the digital world within which students live and learn. Literacy permeates all other subject areas; it impacts a student's proficiency across every curriculum area. The global and contextual considerations below highlight some of the key contexts and perspectives currently influencing student literacy learning, development and educational practice.

Empirical research in the field of literacy is fully consistent with the implementation of a balanced or contextual approach to literacy (e.g., culturally relevant, identity-affirming, promotes student efficacy) that integrates the teaching of sound/symbol relationships (foundational literacy skills as described in the Ontario Curriculum: Language, 2024) along with a commitment to immerse children into a literacy rich environment (Cummins, 2022).

In countries where students have high performance in literacy, there are commonalities about the purpose of being literate, which include the following:

- Having the necessary skills to contribute to society;
- Advancing human rights, social justice and technological innovation;
- Communicating effectively in all aspects of daily life;
- Enjoying reading and other literacy activities;
- Improving health and well-being (TDSB, 2024a).



In countries like Australia and New Zealand, through their work with Indigenous populations they value multi-generational literacy, communication and knowledge sharing. These countries are working toward moving beyond Western views of literacy that often overlook the link between knowledge, literacies and power (Hetaraka et al., 2023). In Canada, in an article by Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) they state, "If universities are to respect the cultural integrity of First Nations students and communities, they must adopt a posture that goes beyond the usual generation and conveyance of literate knowledge, to include the institutional legitimization of Indigenous knowledge and skills, or as Goody (1982) has put it, to foster 'a re-valuation of forms of knowledge that are not derived from books'" (p. 201).

While the above refers to post-secondary education, the same can be said for K-12 educational institutions and the long-standing approaches to literacy learning and teaching that have been common practice in Ontario schools. An inclusive literacy strategy must consider the harm that traditional educational reforms have had on Black students (Love, 2023) and Indigenous students (OHRC, 2022). It



# Global Perspectives and Research on Literacy

must also include respect for Indigenous knowledge, including languages and culture, “as well as an ability to help students appreciate and build upon their customary forms of consciousness and representation as they expand their understanding of the world in which they live” (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001, p. 11). The *Right to Read Inquiry Report* reiterates long standing recommendations that include improving access to First Nations, Michif and Inuktitut language learning, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultural knowledge, and taking steps to address anti-Indigenous racism (OHRC, 2022). Importantly, such recommendations should be embedded in trauma-informed and culturally safe approaches that include effective and inclusive instruction and intervention practices.

Current global research about literacy pedagogy and learning includes the following (TDSB, 2024a):

- The recognition that high expectations for all students are essential for success;
- Literacy learning happens in the context of relationships. This includes:
  - Educator’s relationships with the student/children, their family/caregivers and community;
  - Peer relationships between students;
  - Relationships amongst educators within the school; and
  - The relationship with the learning materials and environment;
- Foundational literacy skills are explicitly taught with intention based on student assessment data, and contextualized through rich text that affirm students’ identities, passions, and experiences, within a comprehensive literacy program;
- Literacy pedagogy must be student-centred and focused on higher order and critical thinking skills;
- Literacy learning includes the components of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy;
- Address student learning and academic success;
- Develop students’ cultural competence to assist students in developing positive ethnic and social identities; and
- Support students’ critical consciousness or their ability to recognize and critique societal inequalities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, as cited in Keith, H.R., Kinnison, S., Garth-McCullough, R & Hampton, M. (2023) p.2).



# Global Perspectives and Research on Literacy

In addition to the above, in French Immersion, confidence and proficiency in the target language of French are developed through the exclusive use of French instruction. Interactions with and between

students build both receptive and expressive language skills in French, while being immersed in a French learning environment. For English Language Learners, it's important to continue to intentionally support literacy development in their home language, while simultaneously supporting the acquisition of English as a second or additional language.



read, write, listen and speak)" (Munroe & Sylvestre, 2022, p. 8) and value multiple ways of knowing that "include practices such as storytelling, signifying, dancing and singing, to name a few (Price-Dennise et al., 2017; Richardson, 2009) (as cited in Munroe & Sylvestre, 2022, p. 7).

## What does the Literacy Data tell us?

The TDSB Literacy Strategy has been developed using international, provincial and TDSB data.

### **International Context**

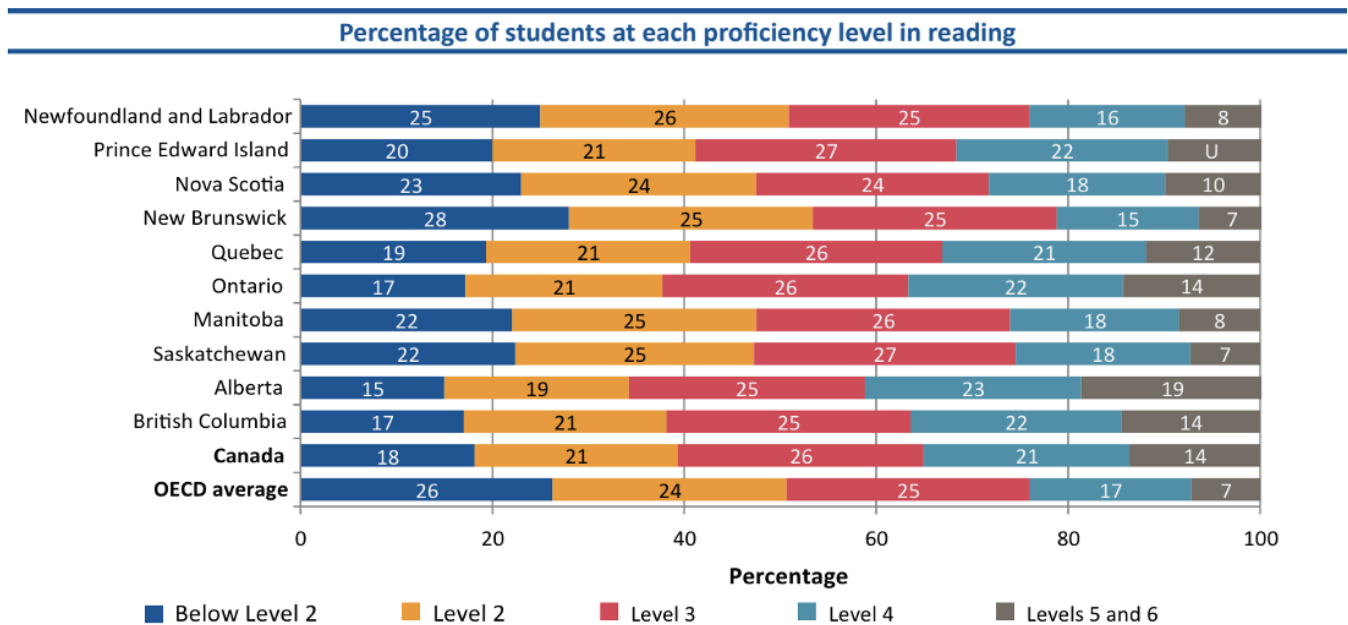
It is important to frame the TDSB literacy data within the larger international context in order to understand the strengths and areas for growth that this literacy strategy will support for TDSB students. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) was launched by the Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) in 1997 and first administered in 2000. "Every 3 years the PISA survey provides comparative data on 15-year-olds' performance in reading, mathematics, and science. In addition, each cycle explores a distinct "innovative domain" such as Creative Thinking (PISA 2022) and Learning in the Digital World (PISA 2025). The PISA results have informed education policy discussions at the national and global level since its inception" (PISA, n.d. online).

In 2022, PISA International assessments of 15-year-old students showed that 82% of Canadian students performed at or above the baseline level of reading proficiency required for full participation in modern society (referred to as a level 2) (Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), 2023, pg. 61). In Ontario, 83% of students performed at or above this same benchmark (see Figure 1). Canada ranks among the countries with a mean performance of top performers above the OECD average.



# Literacy Data

Figure 1: Percentage of Students in each Province at Proficiency Level (2) in Reading on the 2022 PISA



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Results for Canada and most provinces (except Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan) should be treated with caution because one or more PISA technical standards were not met (see Appendix A for further details).

(Council of Ministers of Education, 2023, pg. 61)

Ontario students are consistently among the top performers in Canadian and International assessments/comparisons of reading performance (e.g., OECD, 2023; see Figure 1). As reported by the Ontario Ministry of Education on December 5, 2023, of 81 international jurisdictions, Ontario ranked second overall in reading internationally and nationally on the 2022 PISA reading assessment (Council of Ministers of Education, 2023, pg. 61). It is important to note, that because TDSB students account for 14% of all Ontario students, literacy practices within TDSB schools have a positive impact on Ontario’s scores in international assessments.

## Provincial Context

Over the past two decades, the TDSB has either been on par with, or above, the provincial averages in Education Quality and Accountability (EQAO) Grade 3 and 6 assessments of Reading and Writing and the Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). TDSB students represent 14% of Ontario students. The size of the TDSB creates a significant impact in provincial averages across all assessments. TDSB is also unique to the province as it supports more than 100 working languages, representing the most diversity across all 72 school boards. Scores that are on par with a much more homogenous student population across Ontario represents significant achievement in addressing diversity and cultural responsiveness within EQAO performance.

# Literacy Data

On the Grades 3 and 6 EQAO assessments, the provincial average is level 3, which is equivalent to a B- and above on Provincial Report Cards. The passing score on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) for Grade 10 students is 75%. These are high benchmarks for achievement. The EQAO assessments measure students' achievement on grade-band specific curriculum expectations that can be assessed independently in a digital written format.

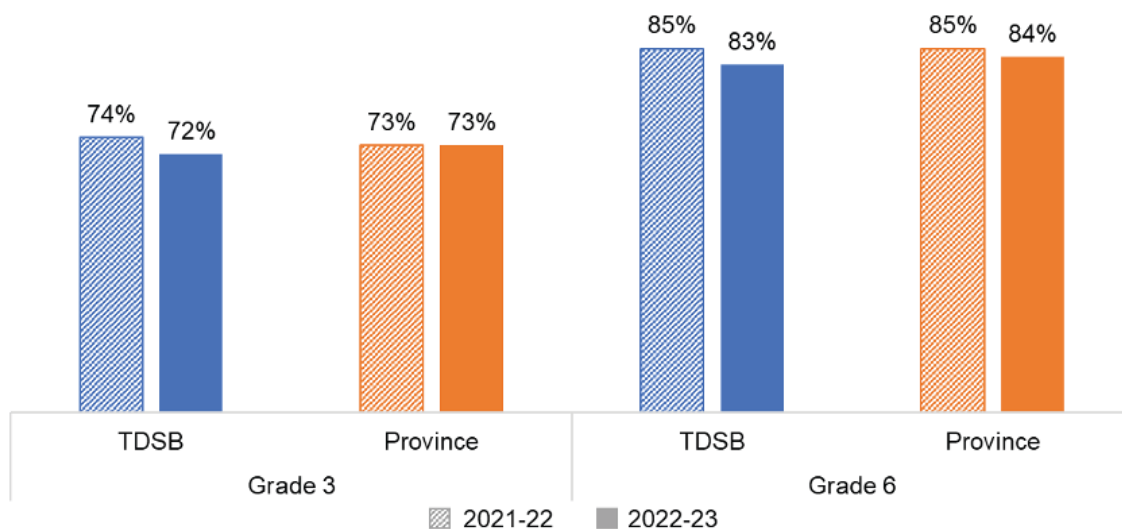


During the 2020-21 school year, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) transitioned from a paper version of the assessment to a new digital online format. EQAO field tested the digital version in the 2020-2021 school year and full implementation began in the 2021-22 school year.

*\*Note: Given the change in the assessment format, comparisons to previous EQAO assessments (prior to 2020-2021) cannot be made.*

The graphs below show the EQAO data for TDSB for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years (Figures 2-4).

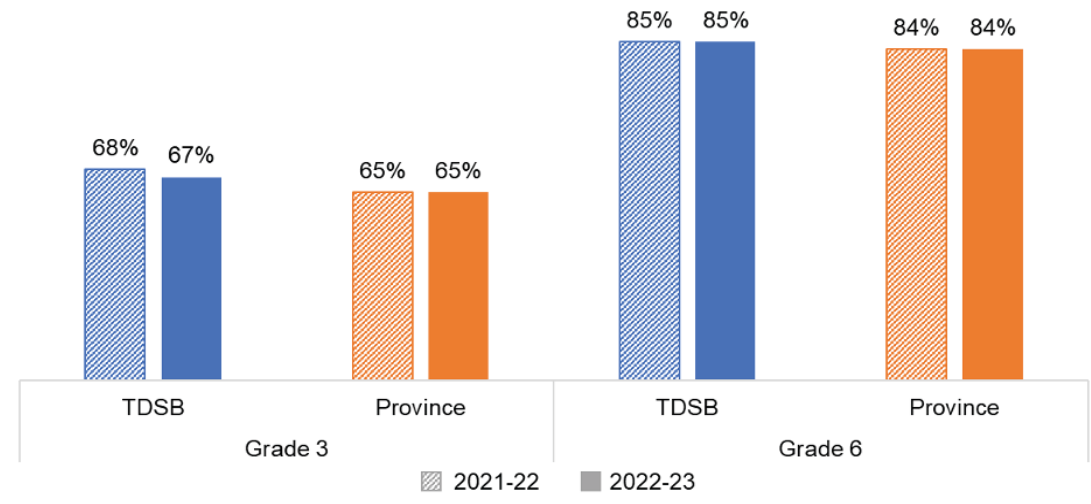
**Figure 2: Percentage of Grade 3 and Grade 6 Students Achieving Level 3 and Above on the EQAO Assessment for Reading at TDSB and in Ontario**





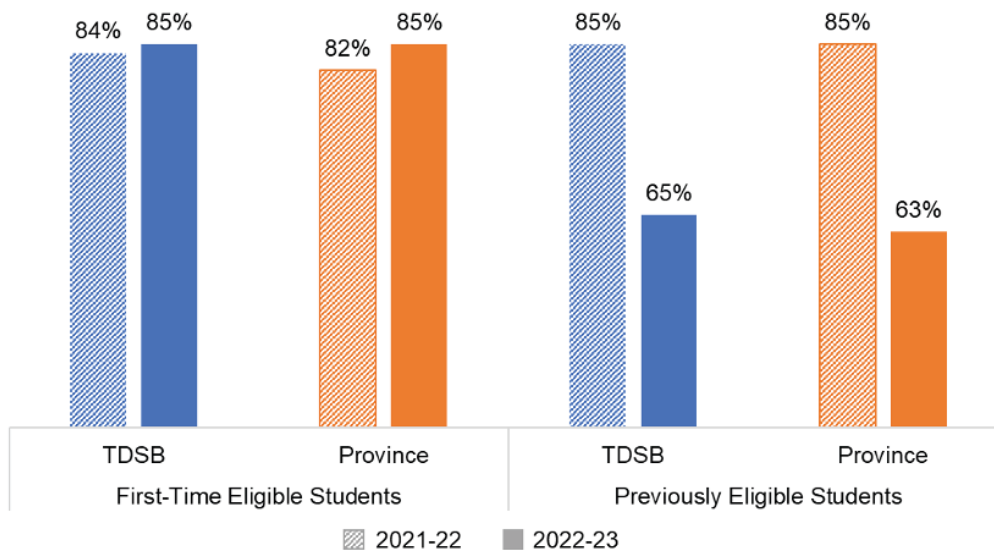
# Literacy Data

**Figure 3: Percentage of Grade 3 and Grade 6 Students Achieving Level 3 and Above on the EQAO Assessment for Writing at TDSB and in Ontario**



As students become more fluent readers and writers, the number of students achieving at or above the provincial standard increases from Grade 3 to Grade 6.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Fully Participating First-Time Eligible and Previously Eligible Students Who Were Successful on the OSSLT at TDSB and in Ontario**



*\*Note: There is a 20 percent decline from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 for Previously Eligible Students as the 2021-2022 data included first time eligible students who could not take the OSSLT in 2020-2021 due to the pandemic.*

# Literacy Data

## TDSB Context

*The data and information shared below and in [Appendix C](#) provides a context check of where TDSB students are as of the 2022-2023 school year in terms of literacy achievement as measured by large scale Grade 1 system reading assessment data, EQAO data, and report card reading and writing data.*

The COVID-19 pandemic caused prolonged school closures and multiple shifts to and from remote learning, impacting every student and family. While educational experiences varied for students, concerns persist regarding the lasting consequences on students' literacy development across all grades, as well as on their mental health and well-being. TDSB Grade 1 reading data gathered during and just after the pandemic showed a decline in the number of students meeting reading benchmarks as compared to pre-pandemic reading benchmarks. Student data from Grade 8 to Grade 9 also indicates gaps in students' literacy achievement. This impacts their success in secondary school subject areas, as literacy becomes increasingly necessary to access subject-specific and cross-disciplinary content, as students progress through the grades.

The system reading assessment in TDSB measures student reading engagement, oral reading fluency and comprehension. It is important to acknowledge that the development of skills and knowledge in language is often enhanced by learning in other subject areas. The system data assessment tool is one source, within a suite of layered assessments, to assist educators with making decisions about the teaching and reading supports required by students.

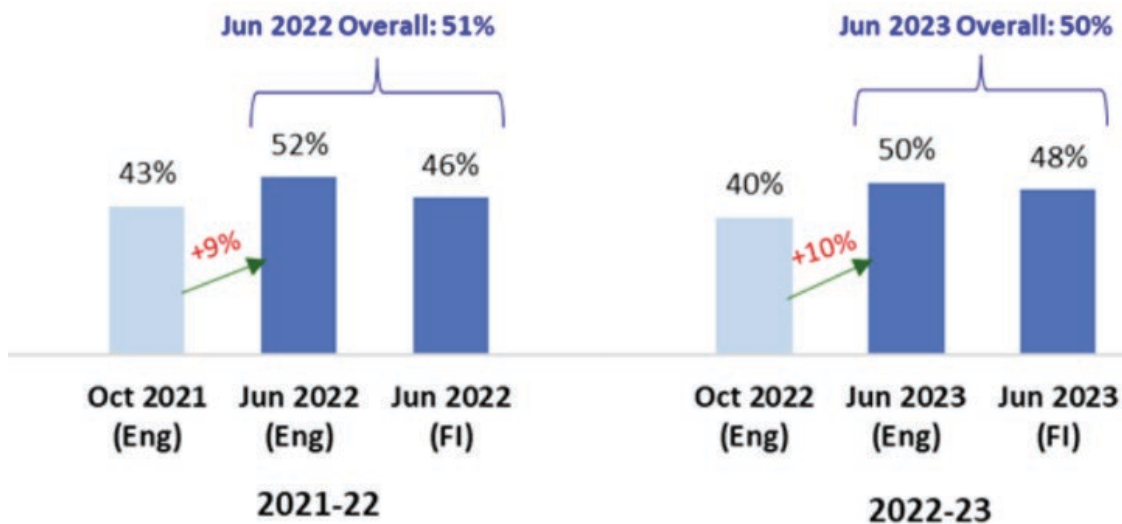
It is without a doubt that the pandemic negatively impacted the expected learning gains for students over the course of their elementary and secondary 'pandemic' years. The impacts of the pandemic on the foundations of early learning are demonstrated in Figure 5 by the decreasing proportion of Grade 1 English students who met targeted reading behaviour expectations between 2021 and 2023. However, data from current Grade 1 English students reveals an initial positive upward trend, with slightly more students achieving reading benchmark expectations than the previous school year.





# Literacy Data

Figure 5: Percentage of Grade 1 English and French Immersion students who met Grade 1 Benchmark Reading Level Expectations



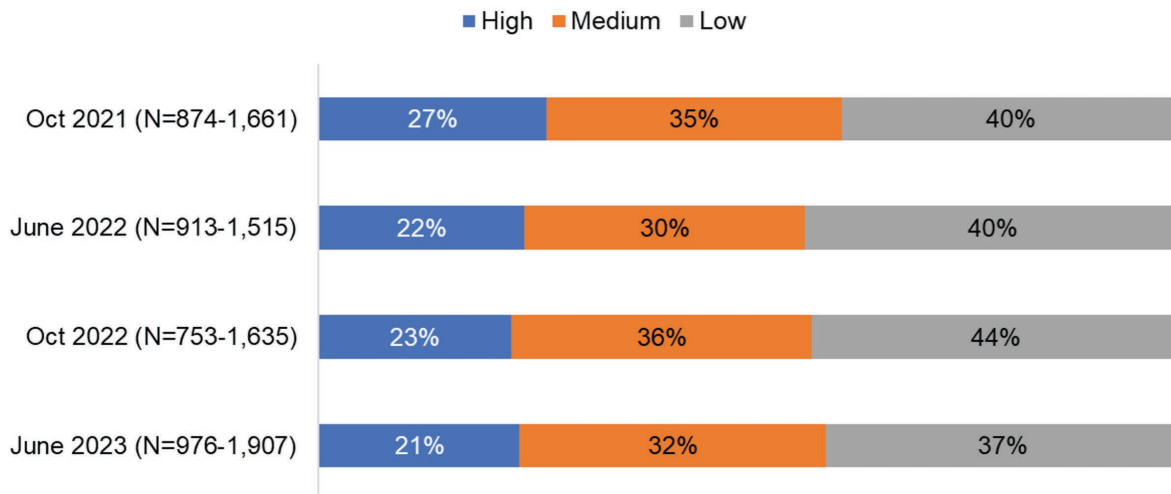
## At a Glance: What has happened since the pandemic?

### 2022-2023

- The percentage of all TDSB students 'at or above' reading level benchmarks in Grade 1 increased by 10% from October to June.
- The percentage of students in low-income households 'at or above' reading level benchmarks by the end of the year increased by 10% throughout the year.
  - This represents a 7% increase in growth rate for students in this income category compared to the previous year.
- The percentage of students in low-income households who were 'at risk' of not reaching reading level benchmarks decreased by 7% over the 2022-23 school year, dropping 3 percentage points below comparable reading level proportions in 2021-22 (see Figure 6).

# Literacy Data

**Figure 6: High, Medium, and Low Estimated Family Income Breakdowns for Students 'At Risk' of Not Reaching Grade 1 Reading Benchmarks**



Despite these gains, student early literacy development, as measured by the system reading assessment (focused on reading engagement, oral reading fluency and comprehension), is still an area of concern as pre-pandemic benchmark levels have not recovered or reached pre-pandemic levels, regardless of demographics. The positive gains and related trajectories outlined above look promising, but not for everyone, particularly for those from low-income households who were 'at risk' of not reaching benchmarks prior to the pandemic.

Tier 1 reading supports are available in every classroom in the TDSB, and a Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 reading intervention has been made available to all schools across the TDSB for students struggling to achieve required literacy benchmarks for their grade. Moving forward, and as part of this Literacy Strategy, strong



culturally relevant, differentiated teaching informed by a variety of layered assessments will support young learners with reaching literacy benchmarks while maintaining a joy for all aspects of literacy. A strategic focus on those learners who have faced disproportionate outcomes is necessary to close the gaps in literacy achievement that persist.

For more information about the Grade 1 reading system data by household income and TDSB Provincial Report Card data please see [Appendix C](#).

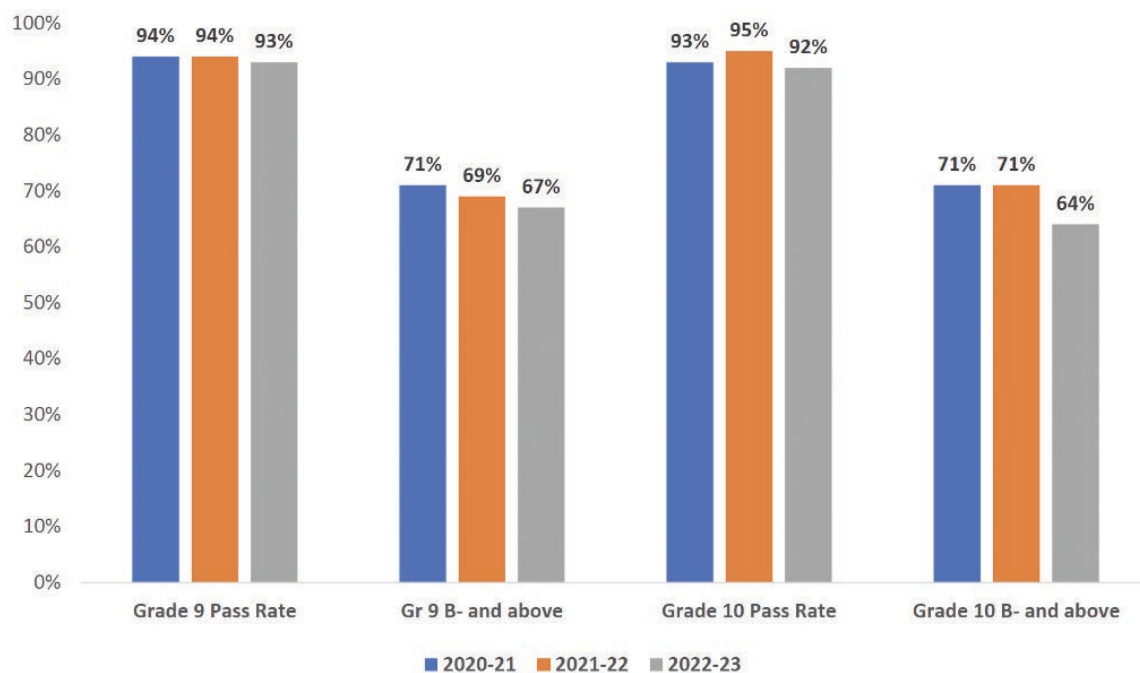


# Literacy Data

## Literacy Outcome Data across the Secondary Panel

The data shows us that the pass rate in Grade 9 and 10 English is very high. Similar to the findings in the primary division (Grades 1-3), there has been a decrease in the proportion of Grade 9 and 10 students in Academic English courses who have achieved at or above the provincial standard (B-) on their Term 2 report card since the 2020-21 school year (see Figure 7). These data may partially be related to the impact of the pandemic on students transitioning from elementary to secondary school and a return to pre-pandemic grading patterns.

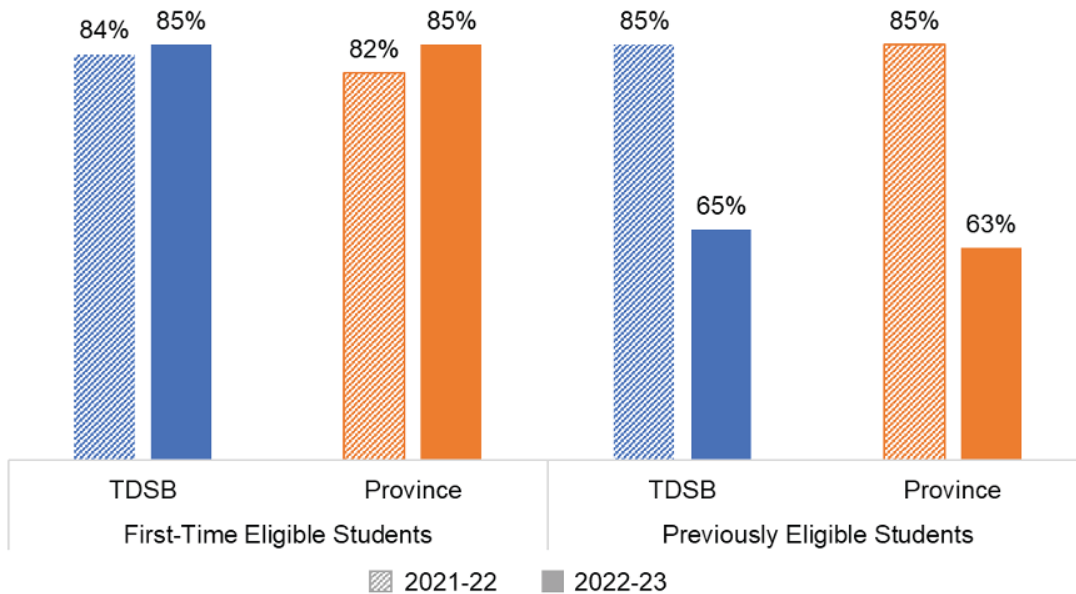
**Figure 7: Percentage of Students Successful in Grade 9 and 10 Reading- Passing and achieving a B-Grade and Above on Report Cards**



With respect to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), slightly more Fully Participating First-Time Eligible (FTE) students were successful in 2022-23 than 2021-22; this pattern is similar at the provincial-level (see Figure 8). Figure 8 also depicts a noticeable reduction in success rates for Previously Eligible (PE) students between 2021-22 and 2022-23 for both TDSB and the province. It's important to recognize that the 2021-22 PE cohort includes all Grade 11 students who did not have a prior opportunity to write the test during the pandemic. These students had an additional year of learning, and their success rates are higher than those for the first-time eligible (FTE) (Grade 10) students. These success rates are much higher than this year's cohort when the PE cohort included only students who had a prior unsuccessful attempt on the OSSLT.

# Literacy Data

**Figure 8: Percentage of Fully Participating First-Time Eligible and Previously Eligible Students Who Were Successful on the OSSLT at TDSB and in Ontario**



Overall, the above data shows that the majority of TDSB students are doing well, and in fact, have made progress since the pandemic. The data also tells us, however, that students from groups that have been historically and currently marginalized are still not being served well enough to meet the required provincial literacy benchmarks, and some of the data is lower than pre-pandemic levels. This is also in line with much of the student outcome data and the student perception data gathered in the TDSB during and since the pandemic. The data shows us students did well given the challenging circumstances within the pandemic. This is a tribute to student and educator effort and skills. While there has been progress and positive pandemic recovery for many students, the literacy-related achievement gaps and disproportionate outcomes that persist need to continue to be addressed.





# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## Literacy Strategy: Framework

The below outlines the Framework for the TDSB Literacy Strategy. Specifically, it identifies the Goals, Key Actions and Key Monitoring Indicators related to the Learner, Educator, and Learning Environment. The Goals identified below are *grounded in the following*:

- *The Achieve Pillar of the MYSP;*
- *Key big ideas from the Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum and Ontario Language Curricula (Grades 1 to 9); and,*
- *Vision of the Literate Learner.*

The Goals are broad in nature, foundational, not exhaustive, and identify specific outcomes for students. The Key Actions describe the approaches, pedagogies/practices, professional development commitments, resources and interventions that will be implemented to support the Goals. Finally, the Key Monitoring Indicators are the metrics that will be used to monitor strategy, goals and actions.

*Note: The term “Educators” used below is inclusive of school-based educators, leaders, and system-level staff.*

***All students, regardless of their identity, are able to create, communicate, read, write and think critically with confidence, fluency, and enjoyment.***

## Early Years

### Goals (Learner Focused)

All students, by the end of Grade 3, will develop and apply foundational literacy knowledge and skills (e.g., phonics, morphology, word reading, etc.) to read, write and communicate effectively, with confidence in purposeful, meaningful, and culturally relevant contexts.

### Key Actions (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Educators will implement explicit and systematic teaching of foundational knowledge and skills within meaningful and culturally relevant contexts (CRRP) following a carefully planned scope and sequence.
- Educators will co-create purposeful and meaningful literacy experiences grounded in CRRP for students that cultivate joy and allow them to apply their knowledge and skills.
- Leaders will facilitate intentional professional learning for educators grounded in the commitments outlined above.
- Leaders and educators will acquire and use resources to support the commitments outlined above.

# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## Key Monitoring Indicators (School and System Focused)

- Improvements in:
  - Student achievement data, including Report Cards and EQAO
  - Grade 1 system level reading data
  - Qualitative data, including classroom assessments, student voice and pedagogical documentation

## All Learners K to 21

### Goals (Learner Focused)

All students will increase oral language, reading and writing/communication skills, confidence and enjoyment of reading in school, at home and in life.

### Key Actions (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Educators will create learning opportunities and resources to support the development of a strong foundation of literacy skills beginning in the preschool years through TDSB EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Kindergarten through to the end of secondary school.
- Educators will use student-centred strategies (e.g., student voice, play- and inquiry-based learning) to motivate students to read and write a variety of texts (e.g., by using mentor texts that incorporate media, oral, prose, infographics, and levelled nonfiction texts).
- Schools will partner with the Toronto Public Library and other relevant programs in each community to extend opportunities for students to find books and other resources they want to read every day at home and during the summer.

### Key Monitoring Indicators (School and System Focused)

- Improvements in:
  - Student achievement data, including report cards, system assessments, EQAO
  - Qualitative data including classroom assessments, student voice and pedagogical documentation
- Student feedback surveys
- Parent, Caregiver, Guardian surveys



# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students will use digital tools, where appropriate, to build foundational skills, develop their critical thinking, and express their thinking, ideas and perspectives.

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Leaders and system staff will focus on the Kindergarten and Middle Years iPad rollout strategy, providing access to technology and developing digital literacy skills.
- Educators will engage in professional learning to enhance expertise in Literacy Connections and Applications from the Language Curriculum.
- Educators will engage in professional learning to enhance confidence and efficacy in teaching and learning about literacy with digital tools.

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Improvements in:
  - Student achievement data, including report cards and EQAO
  - Qualitative data, including classroom reading and writing/communication assessments, student voice and pedagogical documentation
- Improvement in school- and system-level reading comprehension assessment data
- Increased number of educators indicating confidence and efficacy in teaching and learning with digital tools through professional learning feedback surveys

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students will develop and apply comprehension skills, critical thinking and reasoning within a comprehensive literacy program and across all subject areas.

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Leaders will provide professional learning and mentoring about embedding the teaching of transferable skills across all subject areas and disciplines.
- Leaders and Educators will collaborate with TDSB central departments to develop cross-curricular and integrated literacy learning experiences and assessments.

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Improvements in:
  - Student achievement data, including report cards and EQAO
  - Qualitative data, including classroom assessments, student voice and pedagogical documentation

# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students will be provided with ongoing multi-tiered literacy supports and interventions, in every school, with particular attention being paid to key divisional transition points (e.g., Grades K-1, 3-4, 6-7, 8-9).

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Every school will be provided with the TDSB Early Reading Intervention Toolkit for primary classes, focusing on distribution to one grade each year.
- Early Reading Intervention Specialist Team (ERIS) members will be assigned to particular schools to support reading intervention in early years classrooms showing the most need, as indicated by comprehensive data sets.
- Early reading screening will be administered to all Senior Kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2 students, providing diagnostic baseline data and allowing for early intervention strategies to be implemented for students where data shows it is necessary.
- Principals/Vice Principals will meet with educators at regular intervals (at least four times per year) to determine which students will need additional tiered interventions in literacy with particular attention being paid to key divisional transition points (e.g., grade K-1 3-4, 6-7, 8-9).

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Every school has been provided access to a tier 2 or 3 intervention such as Wilson Reading, including Foundations® Kindergarten, Foundations® Level 1 (Grades 1-3), Just Words®, and/or the Wilson Reading System® Introductory, Lexia, and Empower.
- Increasing the number of schools that have access to Empower Reading
- Reading intervention system data tracking with a focus on eliminating the gaps in students' reaching achievement benchmarks, particularly those students who have faced disproportionate outcomes

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students will be provided with Assessment and Evaluation opportunities that are differentiated, culturally relevant and responsive; and formative assessment will be layered and ongoing.

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Educators will engage in ongoing culturally relevant and responsive, layered assessment practices and progress monitoring to ensure students receive differentiated instruction and appropriate and timely intervention.



# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

- Leaders will set expectations for ongoing assessment and monitor student learning to ensure student-focused differentiated instruction and regular and timely communication of progress with families.
- Educators and leaders will align assessment 'for' and 'as' learning practices using the fundamental principles within *Growing Success: assessment, evaluation and reporting in Ontario's Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12* in all literacy assessment practices.

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Qualitative - differentiated assessment tools are used in the classroom as noted in Vice Principal/Principal and Superintendent documentation from classroom visits
- Local school tracking of students who require intervention, and that they are receiving it in a timely manner
- Improved outcomes on TDSB Reading assessment and inventory data
- Increased opportunities for student voice in learning and assessment

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students will learn in culturally relevant, inclusive learning environments/spaces to explore and cultivate their identities as readers, writers and communicators.

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Educators will co-create learning experiences for and with students to explore their identities as readers, writers and communicators, develop their voice, and exercise agency (beginning in EarlyON Centres and in K-12 learning environments).
- Educators and leaders will use student evidence of learning to highlight promising practices and engage in meaningful research/inquiry on topics to eliminate disproportionate outcomes for students who have been historically and are currently marginalized.
- Educators will use resources and strategies to develop students' sense of their own social-cultural identity in relation to the diverse student body they learn with, enhance student critical thinking and communication skills.

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Leader and educator qualitative data (e.g., pedagogical documentation, student work samples, photographs, videos, etc.) about student learning spaces being culturally responsive, and linked to curriculum expectations, within the School Improvement Process data collection

# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

- Collection of student qualitative and quantitative data
- Improvement in student report card and EQAO data
- Tracking of Student Census and Climate Survey data
- An increased number of school and system-level affinity spaces for students
- Increased student input and voice in co-developing learning environments/spaces

## **Goals** (Learner Focused)

All students' families will be respected and valued as the child's first literacy teacher.

## **Key Actions** (Educator/Leader Focused)

- EarlyON Centre staff will continue to engage in community outreach to encourage more families to attend EarlyON Centres, in partnership with school leaders.
- Educators and leaders will engage parents, caregivers, guardians as partners in shaping and informing priorities and instruction, as part of the School Improvement Process.
- Educators and leaders will engage parents, caregivers, guardians as partners in understanding and identifying student strengths, needs, and next steps for learning.

## **Key Monitoring Indicators** (School and System Focused)

- Continue to monitor the numbers of family visits at TDSB EarlyON Centres and monitor for increased participation
- Track the authentic inclusion of parents in the School Improvement Process
- Parent Feedback Surveys
- Documentation of learning from Principal/Vice Principal and Superintendent Classroom visits
- Tracking of parent/caregiver engagement in learning initiatives at schools and system-wide parenting conferences and initiatives



# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## Later Literacy

### Goals (Learner Focused)

All students will use literacy across subject areas and graduate with effective literacy skills required to navigate their increasingly complex world.

### Key Actions (Educator/Leader Focused)

- Leaders and educators will provide professional learning and mentoring about embedding the teaching of transferable skills across all subject areas and disciplines.
- Educators will provide supports for OSSLT proficiency and engagement.
- Leaders and educators will provide Credit Rescue and Credit Recovery options for all secondary students.
- All Grade 11 secondary students will have access to *English: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices* (NBE3U/3C/E) as the Grade 11 compulsory English course.
- The Urban Indigenous Education Centre (UIEC) will continue to support the implementation and continuous learning for educators teaching the NBE3 course by providing the following:
  - Four professional learning days for teachers of *English: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices* NBE3U/3C/E
  - Access to Indigenous Education funding specific to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies courses (funds are for Indigenous Educational Partners, excursions and resources/supplies for the course).

### Key Monitoring Indicators (School and System Focused)

- Improvements in:
  - Percentage of fully participating first-time eligible students who are successful on the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)
  - Graduation rates of Grade 12 students
  - Report card data
  - Credit Rescue and Credit Recovery data
  - Student achievement data, including Report Cards and EQAO,
  - Qualitative data, including classroom assessments and pedagogical documentation
- Tracking of report card data from the *English: Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices* (NBE3U/3C/E) as the Grade 11 compulsory English course

# Goals, Key Actions and Monitoring Indicators

## ***Educator and Leader Development***

### **How will the Goals outlined in the framework above be achieved?**

The TDSB will invest in educator and leader development to support the implementation of evidence-based, research-informed and culturally relevant instructional practices that align with current research, the TDSB MYSP, recommendations from the OHRC Right to Read Report, Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum and the four strands in the Grade 1 to 8 and Grade 9 Language Curriculum:

- A. Literacy Connections and Applications
- B. Foundations of Language
- C. Comprehension: Understanding and Responding to Texts
- D. Composition: Expressing Ideas and Creating Texts

Implementation of the Literacy Strategy Framework Goals will be embedded within the school improvement process (SIP) action plans.

*Note: A detailed Implementation Plan will be developed to support implementation of the TDSB Literacy Strategy*



# Literacy Strategy Summary

Literacy is the gateway to equity, excellence and high achievement. It's a critical life skill that permeates every subject and aspect of a student's educational journey, throughout life. While the data shows TDSB students have made progress (recovery) since the pandemic, there are still too many students, particularly those underserved, including racialized students and those from low income families, not meeting the required provincial literacy benchmarks. Thus, intentional and system-wide approaches are needed to close current achievement gaps and address the disproportionate outcomes some of our students are experiencing. This 2024-2028 Literacy Strategy aims to achieve TDSB's Vision of the Literate Learner and to meet the expectations set out in the Achieve Pillar of the TDSB MYSP. It is both aspirational and practical, and is grounded firmly in current global research as well as international, provincial and TDSB data.

If not consistently addressed in every elementary school grade, the effects of reading development in the early years, as shown in the post-pandemic Grade 1 TDSB reading data, as well in other jurisdictions globally, could have a significant detrimental effect across the system in relation to student academic success as these students continue through their elementary and secondary education. In other words, if the current literacy deficits aren't addressed across the system now, they will continue to impact students' literacy development, and broader academic achievement over the course of their school career, and beyond. Unfortunately, those groups of students who were not performing well pre-pandemic have been disproportionately impacted post-pandemic.

The Literacy Strategy Framework (chart) outlines the specific Goals and Actions that will be implemented across the system, in both elementary and secondary schools. The Goals are broad in nature and will help ensure the Strategy remains focused. The Key Measurement Indicators demonstrate the approaches to not only measuring the actions in relation to the goals, but also serve as a means to support system accountability. The TDSB is committed to monitoring literacy achievement and ensuring educators are better equipped to meet the literacy needs of all students. Layered assessments and pedagogical documentation that highlights student thinking and wondering, and honours family perspectives, will be used to inform subsequent learning opportunities, teaching and tiered intervention.

*"...Acquiring literacy is an empowering process, enabling millions to enjoy access to knowledge and information which broadens horizons, increases opportunities and creates alternatives for building a better life."*

*Kofi Annan*

# Next Steps

The TDSB Literacy Team will develop specific implementation plans for each Grade band from Kindergarten to Grade 12 that align with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the framework in this Literacy Strategy. Specific resources, supports and professional learning will be included in the implementation plans, with a focus on the Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum and Grade 1 to 9 Language curriculum implementation (which includes recommendations from the OHRC “Right to Read” report), comprehensive literacy, addressing pandemic-related learning deficits and subject-specific literacy for transferable skills application. These plans will include:

- All students having access to a child-centred, culturally relevant and responsive comprehensive literacy program that addresses all the Language expectations within the Kindergarten curriculum, all four strands of the Ontario Language Curriculum, and functional literacy skills for students in congregated special education programs;
- A focus on research-informed culturally relevant literacy pedagogical expertise prior to and during transitional years;
- A focus on middle childhood years to provide literacy intervention supports to those students who developed or sustained literacy gaps during the pandemic;
- A focus on identifying students leaving Grade 8 who need support with literacy skills to transition into Grade 9, so that all secondary students can utilize the transferable skills to be successful across subject areas; and;
- Content-specific literacy so that educators are aware of the literacy demands for each subject in order to tailor instruction.

With the support of all education partners, including families, community, educators, leaders and students this literacy strategy will support the outcome that **all students, regardless of their identity, are able to create, communicate, read, write and think critically with confidence, fluency, and enjoyment.**



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