

## DRAFT POLICY PROVISIONS: SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

### RATIONALE

This Specialized Schools and Programs Policy (the “Policy”) was developed to support the Board’s ongoing commitment to offering a range of diverse program opportunities, and to support its commitment to improve access to Specialized Schools and Programs for all learners.

#### Guiding Principles:

- The Board is committed to supporting strong neighbourhood schools that are easily accessible and provide students with a wide variety of programs leading to all post-secondary destinations;
- Designated schools will provide focused, specialized programming that responds to student voice, choice and interest;
- Designated schools can also provide programming to broaden career choices and encourage innovation by engaging students in specialized learning opportunities;
- The Board will operate regional specialized schools/programs, where the delivery of specialized programs cannot be realized in a local school by bringing together system resources and student participants;
- The Board will continually review and assess our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they promote equity, inclusion, and human rights, and make changes where necessary.

These guiding principles and policy directives were developed from the recommendations that were made through the Enhancing Equity Task Force consultations. They align with the *Director’s Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report* which informed the Action Plans of the *Multi-Year Strategic Plan*, specifically the pillar of “Providing Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students.” Our commitment to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students requires that we review our policies and procedures related to access.

This Policy is aligned with the Equity Policy and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

**OBJECTIVE**

To affirm the Board's commitment to providing focused specialized programming in both local schools and in regional specialized schools or programs, and to improving access for all students to these programs.

To ensure that the design, criteria and admissions practices of specialized programs do not reinforce or increase marginalization or oppression of any individual or group based on race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic status, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, sex, gender Identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, citizenship, immigration status, family status, and marital status or body type/size or another factor as defined and covered under the TDSB Equity Policy (P037) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

**DEFINITIONS**

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

*Designated school* is the school identified by the parent's/guardian's residential address.

*Local Specialized Program* refers to a program within a school with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades) that is available to students registered or pre-registered at that school. The admissions process and criteria are established by the school, in consultation with Board staff.

*Regional Specialized Program/School* refers to a program/school with a specific focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, skilled trades, etc.) that is available to students from across the district and that has an admissions process and criteria established by the Board.

*TDSB* is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "Board".

**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, School Operations and Service Excellence.

## **APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

This Policy applies to students, parents/guardians, and staff, including principals, superintendents and school personnel involved in the establishment, administration, and monitoring of local specialized programs and regional specialized programs and schools.

## **POLICY**

All schools are encouraged to provide programming that responds to the interests of its local communities and student voice. Schools may offer local specialized programs to students who are registered or pre-registered at their school. Where demand for the local specialized program exceeds available space, the school will develop admissions criteria that promote equity, inclusion and human rights, in consultation with Board staff.

Admission priority to regional specialized programs/schools will be given to students who are residents of the City of Toronto. These programs/schools are available to students within and beyond their designated attendance area. Only after all applicants that reside in the City of Toronto have been offered placement into regional specialized programs/schools will students from outside of Toronto be considered for placement.

The admissions criteria and application process to regional specialized programs/schools will be advertised by the Board on its website. Admission criteria by local specialized program will be advertised by schools on their school landing pages. Students will be selected for admission subject to the students meeting the required admission criteria for the specialized program(s)/school(s) as determined by the Board.

The Board will determine annually the available space in each regional specialized program/school based on enrolment projections for the regular program as well as other programs that may exist in the school. The number of students that each program/school can accept will be communicated to schools before any offers of admission can be made. The Board will be developing a central process for all applications.

Transportation will not be provided for regional specialized schools and programs.

Parents/guardians, on behalf of their children, or students who are 18 years or older, may apply to a maximum of two (2) regional specialized programs. In the case where a school may offer more than one regional specialized program or multiple streams within a program (e.g., the Arts), each program or stream requires a separate application (to a maximum of two).

Where identical regional specialized programs are offered at multiple locations, students will be selected based on standardized criteria, as determined by the Board.

A student can only be registered in one regional specialized program at one time, with the exception of the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program where the student can pursue the components of SHSM alongside their other courses of study.

## **SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

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

## **EVALUATION**

This Policy will be reviewed at a minimum every four (4) years from the effective date.

## **APPENDICES**

N/A

## **REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

### Legislation

- *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, s. 171 (1), par. 7.

### Policies

- Optional Attendance (P013)
- Equity Policy (P037)

### Procedures

- Optional Attendance (PR545)
- Admission to Specialized Schools and Programs (PR612)

### Other Documents

- Director's Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report
- Multi-Year Strategic Plan