



Caring and Safe Schools: Annual Report 2018-2019

To: Program and School Services Committee

Date: 19 February, 2020

Report No.: 02-20-3841

Strategic Directions

- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Caring and Safe Schools: Annual Report 2018-2019, as described, be approved.

Context

Over the past three years in the Toronto District School Board, significant attention has been placed on challenging streaming through a number of key areas including early years, special education, academic programming and disciplinary processes in suspensions and expulsions.

Research shows that streaming contributes to inequitable outcomes for students, and particularly disadvantages specific groups of students – including those who are racialized and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The 2018-19 suspension and expulsion data reflects the significant changes we have been making as a system and demonstrate the momentum gained over the past several years. Suspensions and expulsions declined in the Toronto District School Board for the third straight year. The number of suspensions in 2018-19 dropped 24% -- 1,774 fewer suspensions than in the 2016-17 school year. Expulsions, between 2016-17 and 2018-19, also declined by 53%.

We have seen substantial positive change through our improved understanding of systemic racism, resolving conflict through more cooperative ways and removing barriers for students. Specifically, there has been an overall decrease in student discipline measures as well as a narrowing of the gap of the overrepresentation of certain groups of students who are suspended and expelled.

The foundation of this work is through a commitment to professional learning and supporting staff to examine bias, power and privilege as they relate to the student discipline process and encouraging the application of human rights, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles.

This data is a valuable tool for helping schools foster a positive learning culture and support evidence-based decision making and accountability. Schools should be safe and welcoming spaces where all students feel respected, included and valued in their learning environments. In the Toronto District School Board, 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 potential in streaming students towards specific pathways and outcomes, we are making positive change on the lives of students.

This work, guided by our Multi-Year Strategic Plan, has focused on a number of key actions:

- Identifying trends, patterns and opportunities in past suspension data for improvement;
- Supporting the Caring and Safe Schools team to examine bias, power and privilege as they relate to student discipline process;
- Supporting school administrators in the application of human rights, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles to student discipline;
- Reviewing Caring and Safe Schools practices to ensure consistency with principles of anti-racism and anti-oppression; and
- Providing learning opportunities for more staff to be trained in restorative practices.

School administrators continue to participate in professional learning that examines bias, power and privilege and their connection to student discipline. This learning has encouraged Principals to better understand the lived experiences of each of their students, which has not only led to Principals better exercising their discretion when they have an option to not suspend, but also has helped them identify, confront and remove barriers proactively to create more inclusive and equitable learning cultures.

A positive school environment is the foundation of a culture of trust, high expectations and a sense of belonging. We will continue to emphasize programming that encourages and supports positive behaviour and allows us to intervene early to better engage and support our students.

Key Findings

- The number of suspensions in 2018-19 dropped 24% – 1,774 fewer suspensions – than in the 2016-17 school year.
- The number of expulsions in 2018-19 dropped 53% -- 34 fewer expulsions – than in the 2016-17 school year.
- 5,532 suspensions were given to 3,906 students – about 1.58% of all TDSB students in 2018-19.
- The majority of suspensions (75.5%) were given to male students in 2018-19, and 60.1% were given to students who had special education needs.
- Students that come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (represented by parent education, parent presence at home, family income / parent occupation) were more likely to be suspended than students from higher socio-economic background (61.4% vs. 13.7% in 2018-19).

- The percentage of all suspensions/expulsions given to Black students in 2018-19 was down 3.2% compared to 2016-17.
- Fighting (20.1%) and physical assault (15.6%) were the top two reasons for suspensions in 2018-19. Bullying accounted for 3.8% of suspensions.
- The most used interventions by schools were contacting the parent/guardian, guidance support, social work support and restorative practices.
- Students suspended in 2018-19 had lower levels of achievement on the EQAO assessments, report cards and credit accumulation than students who were not suspended.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Our emphasis continues to be providing safe, caring and welcoming schools. Building relationships with students is a key part of that work because knowing who our students are allows us to create learning environments that connect directly with their experiences and needs. This work is underscored by our commitment to human rights, equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression.

To support students' 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 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;
- Provide learning opportunities for more staff to be trained in Restorative Practices;
- Develop alternatives to suspension programs;
- Challenge unconscious bias, engage in joint problem-solving and ensure that Black students are treated equitably when it comes to decisions about suspensions and expulsions in each school through collaboration between

Principals and Superintendents, and

- Work with families and community partners to develop relevant approaches and supports for students.

Resource Implications

Funding will be provided through current existing budget allocations.

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)

- Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P.051)
- Programs for Students on Long Term Suspension or Expulsion (PR586)
- Police-School Board Protocol (PR698)
- Promoting a Positive School Climate Procedure (PR697)
- Non-Discretionary and Discretionary Student Transfers (PR 540)

Appendices

- Appendix A: Caring and Safe Schools: Annual Report 2017-2018

From

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