



## **Annual Report on Early Literacy: 2019-20**

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 6 May, 2020

**Report No.:** 05-20-3879

### **Strategic Directions**

- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
- Transform Student Learning
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Annual Report on the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) Early Literacy Action Plan for 2019-20 be received for information.

### **Context**

The early years are periods of profound growth in children's learning and development and that all learning occurs in the context of relationships. The Early Literacy Action Plan contained in Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) commits to ensuring that all students in Grade 1, regardless of their social identity will be able to read with confidence, fluency, understanding and enjoyment. This is a key component of challenging streaming by setting high expectations and providing access and opportunities to programming and supports for all students. For the small number of students with intensive special education needs in congregated and intensive support settings, our goal is to develop confidence and functional literacy skills. This report provides an update on the commitment to early literacy.

The 2019-2020 school year has been an extraordinary for a number of reasons including school closures due to a pandemic and labour sanctions. The focus of this year's report is to:

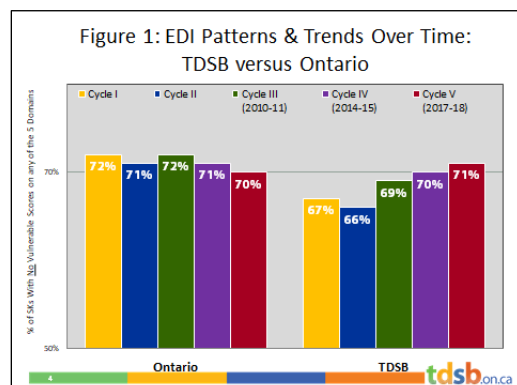
- share results of the provincial administration of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), and
- provide information on the new model of early literacy intervention that services more students than the previous model and is responsive to student and educator learning needs.

It is not possible to provide a year-over-year review of student reading results due to the implementation of labour sanctions and school closures beginning on March 20, 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic school year.

## Results for Early Development Instrument (EDI) – Supporting Reading by the End of Grade 1

Educators begin to engage students in meaningful literacy experiences and instruction when they enter Kindergarten with the goal of developing confident and literate students. The development of early literacy skills/behaviours in kindergarten lay the foundation for students to be reading by the end of Grade 1 and beyond. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a tool that assesses children's developmental well-being in five domains: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development, Communication Skills and General Knowledge. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been collecting EDI data for approximately 20 years. The Ministry of Education collects EDI Data every three years. Vulnerabilities in two or more of the aforementioned domains show a greater risk in later student academic development.

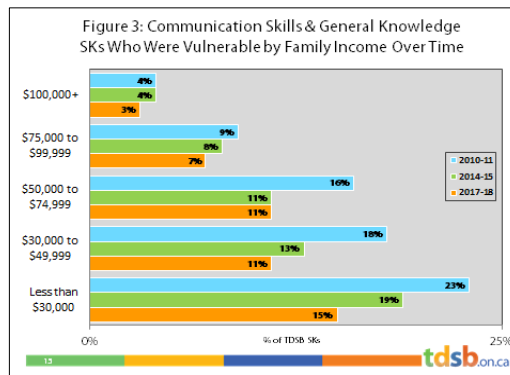
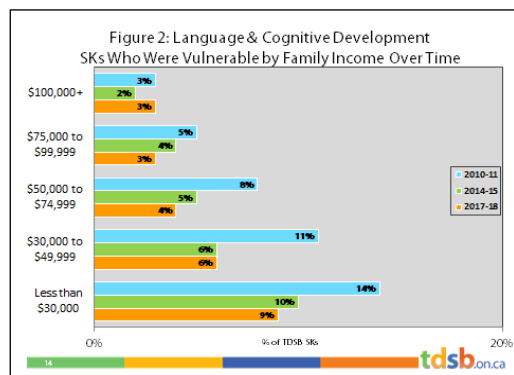
Overall, the EDI provincial trend data show that the proportions of Year Two/Senior Kindergarten (SKs) who were “on track” have dropped gradually, especially in the last three cycles from 72% to 70% (see Figure 1). On the other hand, the proportions of students who were “on track” for the TDSB, which were significantly lower than the Province in the earlier cycles, rose from 66% in Cycle 2 to 69% in Cycle 3, and then continued to grow steadily from 69% in Cycle 3 to 71% in the latest cycle (Cycle 5). In fact, in the last cycle (2017-18), the TDSB results now exceed that of the Province slightly for the first time.



The EDI's Language and Cognitive Development domain as well as the Communication Skills and General Knowledge domains are closely related to expectations aligned with reading in Grade 1. An effective Kindergarten Program will positively influence development in the Language and Cognitive domains and the exposure to literacy experiences and opportunities at home and

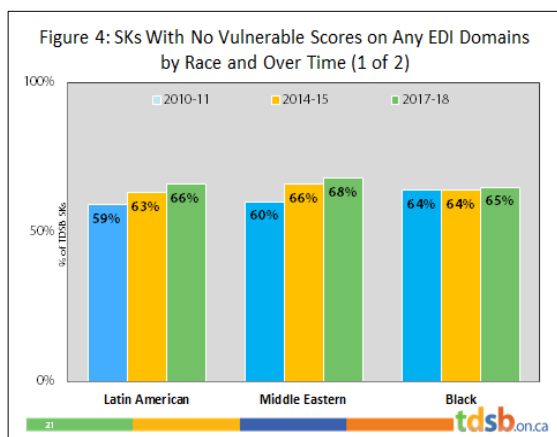
school will impact the Communication and General Knowledge domain.

Historically the Language and Cognitive as well as the Communication Skills & General Knowledge domains have had the greatest disparity among students from different income groups. However, TDSB's recent EDI results indicate that Senior Kindergarten from families in lower income brackets have made significant progress in these two



domains (see Figures 2 and 3). These results reflect the work that has been happening in early literacy in relation to Full Day Kindergarten along with the intentional focus on culturally relevant and responsive practices and those students who are most underserved as described in the MYSP's Transforming Student Learning.

In the absence of 2018-2019 Report Card data, the EDI data provides indications in our projections of sustainable growth in reading by the end of Grade 1. Although there have been gains in reading, specific groups of students continue to be underserved and



struggle to become literate at the same time as most of their peers. The historical underserved groups of students in TDSB identify as Black, Middle Eastern and Latin American students. The recent EDI data shows a gradual improvement over time (progress of 7% - 8%) in the population of Latin American and Middle Eastern students but not equally so for Black students (see Figure 4).

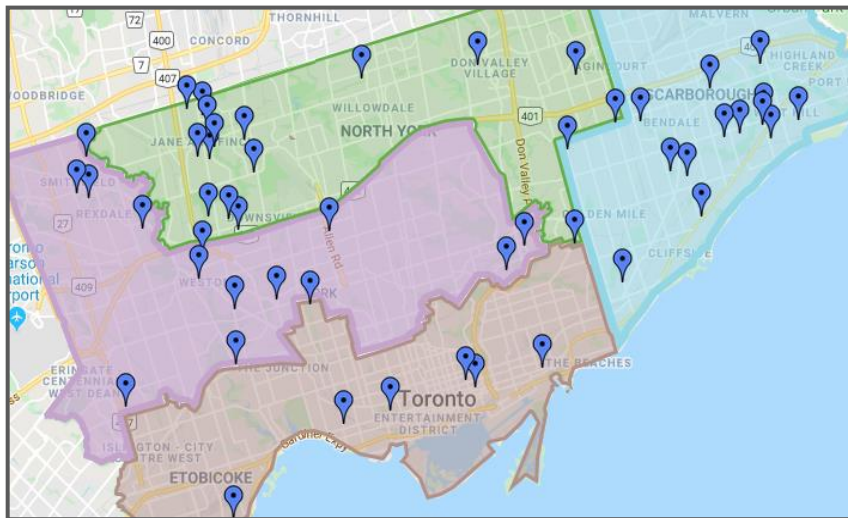
These results identify need to intervene urgently in with a more strategic and sustained focus on identifying the manifestations of anti-Black racism in early years classrooms and the importance of implementing culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy beginning in Kindergarten. Eliminating disproportional outcomes for students must begin in the early years and include dismantling systemic barriers such as suspensions and over-representation in special education programs and services. The MYSP clearly outlines these areas as priorities.

## Overview of Early Reading Intervention Models

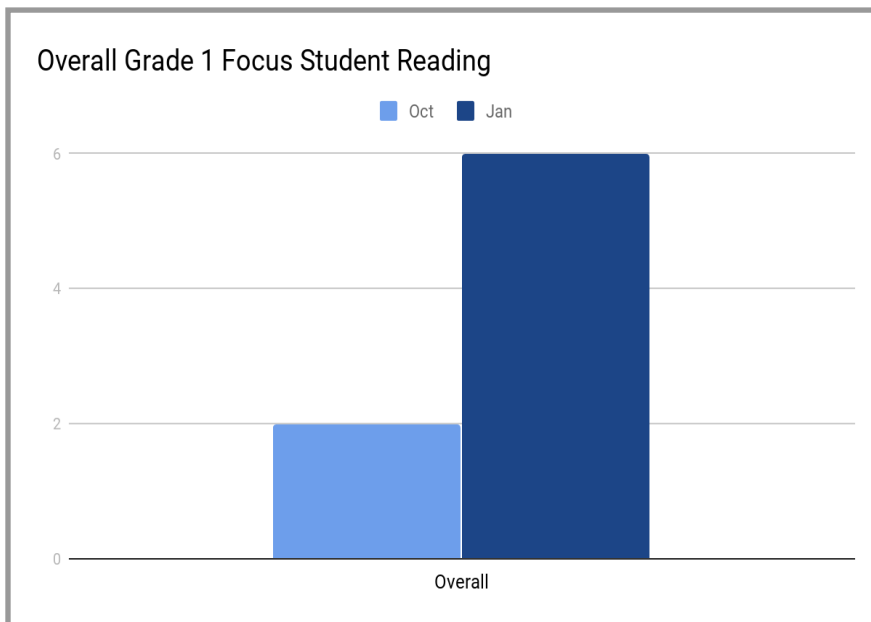
For many years TDSB offered Reading Recovery™ to approximately 600 students annually in Grade 1. This year, a new early intervention model was created to increase access to daily regular literacy support for students and in-school teacher capacity building. This model of intervention is implemented in the classroom with a shared ownership for student learning between the classroom teacher and intervention teacher. Students receive daily reading/literacy instruction in schools where there has been an identified need to improve literacy achievement by the end of grade 1 and for those students struggling to read by the end of Grade 3.

The new TDSB literacy support model includes the following support professionals:

- 4 Literacy Intervention Coaches (one per Learning Centre)
- 11 In-School Early Reading Teacher Leaders that will support 22 schools
- 27 Reading Intervention Teachers that will support up to 51 schools



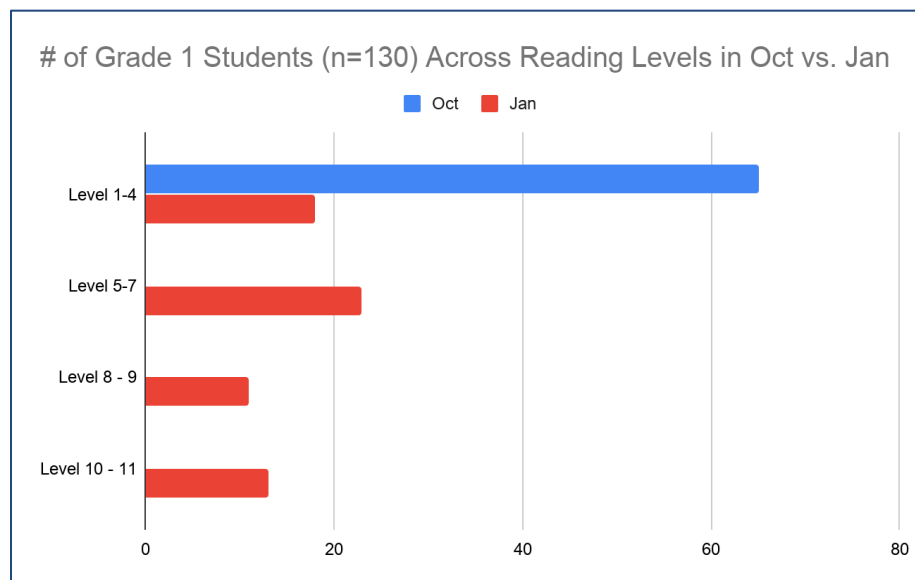
The Early Literacy Intervention Team supports students and educators in 51 schools across the system. There is at least one program in each ward. As of March 2020, 1,047 students were being served in Kindergarten to Grade 3. This is approximately 40% more students that were receiving this form of literacy support this year.



Results in 51 intervention schools indicate overall reading growth for students. This graph indicates the student average independent reading level before the intervention and the average independent reading level after three months. The targeted reading level of 3+ is what is required to

continue accelerated early literacy acquisition as students then become introduced to story elements and begin to master behaviours required for continued success and confidence in reading.

A total of 130 students were tracked continuously from October until January. The chart below indicates their comparative independent reading levels based on their entry into intervention up to January. Over time, students made continuous gains.



## Formal Early Literacy Interventions for Students

There is significant research that indicates that the delivery of evidence-based interventions has been found to be effective (National Educational Psychological Service, 2012). There are three formal interventions in TDSB schools:

- Early Reading Intervention (ERI)
- Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI)
- Empower™ Reading

Through intentional efforts each year, there is an increase in the number of schools that have access to a literacy intervention in order to assist more students to become literate.

- Since 2017, there have been 1,345 individuals trained in ERI and a total of 198 schools have had educators trained just this school year.
- Since 2017 –there are 314 educators trained in LLI in 208 schools.
- Since 2017, there have been 82 schools with 108 teachers who have received training in Empower™ Reading.

### **Action Plan and Associated Timeline**

1. Implement a capacity building for kindergarten teams based on the tenets of evidence-based research on the success of Black students in the early years. Ensure professional learning includes examining the ways in which implicit bias influences outcomes e.g., assessment and evaluation.
2. Increased monitoring of results by all professionals including a focus on tracking outcomes for underserved groups of students, such as Black students and those with special education needs.
3. Develop and implement research frameworks to monitor the effectiveness of the newly Reading Intervention Model.
4. Monitor the impact of effective implementation of ERI, LLI and Empower™ Reading on eliminating the gaps in students' reaching achievement.
5. Develop resources and approaches to support gap closing at the beginning of the school year in light of the closure of schools due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Consider the placement of all early literacy supports in light of the possible impacts of the school closure.
6. Collaborate with superintendents and principals to expand the number of schools using reading intervention resources and to create the conditions for these programs to be effective in accelerating literacy development.

### **Resource Implications**

- Staffing of early literacy programs and resources are based on the approval of the budget annually by the Board of Trustees.
- Intervention Resources cost approximately \$3000-\$5000 per grade in addition to occasional teacher costs for training. These costs are generally incurred by schools, Learning Network and/or central budgets.

## **Communications Considerations**

Not applicable

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

P022: Early Learning and Care

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Early Years-Literacy & Numeracy Action Plans (TDSB MYSP Action Plans)

## **From**

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## Early Years – Literacy & Numeracy

### What is our goal?

All students in Grade 1, regardless of their social identity, will be able to read with confidence, fluency, understanding and enjoyment.

All students in Grade 2 will have the required foundational skills and concepts in mathematics through an engaging classroom program.

Develop confidence and functional literacy skills among the small number of students with intensive special education needs and for whom the goal of reading by the end of grade 1 is not applicable.

### How will we achieve it?

- Create a strategy to support expansion and/or viability of Extended Day Programs (EDP) (ongoing)
- Provide training for 50% of DECEs on mandatory PA Days focused on early years pedagogy aligned with equity, early literacy, numeracy and well-being
- Increase the number of schools (annually) that access a literacy intervention to help more students become literate (ongoing - Year 1 completed)
- Strategically allocate Early Reading Coaches and other interventions to support those schools with students in greatest need of additional literacy development and work with educators in each school to monitor progress (Year 1 completed)
- Integrate equity into all aspects of professional learning (ongoing)
- Study the factors which contribute to accelerated learning in math/literacy (June 2021)
- Develop a comprehensive, innovative and equitable strategy for offering Additional Qualification Courses in TDSB aligned with the priorities in the MYSP e.g., Reading Part 1 Additional Qualifications course to primary teachers (K-2) (January 2021)

### How will we know we are successful?

- Report card data and classroom assessments will demonstrate improved fluency and comprehension and a decrease in gaps of literacy and numeracy.
- Evidence of fewer gaps in student literacy in K-3 as measured by report card and EQAO data.
- Evidence of impact of Early Reading Coaches on teacher practice and student learning.
- Gaps in achievement and well-being will decrease while the expectations remain high for all students because we are providing access to the programs, resources and opportunities that all students require.
- Research tools will demonstrate the implementation of strategies learned in the professional learning into classroom practice.