



## **Annual Report on TDSB International Students, 2019-20**

**To:** Program and School Services Committee

**Date:** 3 June, 2020

**Report No.:** 06-20-3897

### **Strategic Directions**

- Transform Student Learning
- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Provide Equity of Access to Learning Opportunities for All Students
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the 2019-20 annual report on TDSB International Students be received for information.

### **Context**

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been engaged in an internationalization strategy since prior to amalgamation in 1998. In the six former legacy boards of education, international education programs such as short term, long term, exchanges and international heritage language programs have operated in different formats. The Toronto District School Board International Students and Admissions Office formed in the 1998 amalgamation.

### **Enrolment/Headcount**

We currently have a headcount of approximately 2,100 international students in the Board. This headcount includes both elementary and secondary school students. In addition, the Board welcomed 100 international students to short term programs during the 2019-20 academic year. Short term programs are usually four to eight weeks long

and often involve elementary/middle school students. Together, international students generated approximately \$30 million during the same period. There is a steady increase of international students who have selected the Toronto District School Board to pursue their education. Potential international students can apply one year before entering the following academic grade. The Toronto District School Board accepts applications from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

**Table 1: TDSB International Student Enrolment Trend**

School Year	Elementary	Secondary	TOTAL
2008-09	201	724	925
2009-10	173	810.5	1250
2010-11	161	924	1085
2011-12	140	1034	1174
2012-13*	120	1296	1416
2013-14*	170	1364	1534
2014-15*	196	1493	1689
2015-16*	150	1550	1700
2016-17*	272	1643	1915
2017-18*	296	1775	2071
2018-19	566	2016	2582
2019-20 (March 31, 2020)	403	1705	2108

\* = transition years

**Table 2: Student Enrolment by Top Five Countries for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020**

	2018-2019	2019-2020
China	48.5%	46.9%
Vietnam	24.6%	22.4%
Iran	10.1%	8.0%
Korea, South	4.0%	5.4%
Turkey	2.0%	2.0%

## **Location**

Once admitted, elementary students attend their local school as per their home address. Secondary school students are asked to select three potential secondary schools to attend when they apply. Every year, the International Student and Admissions office staff and TDSB Planning staff review the list of secondary schools available for international students. Availability is based on space and enrolment capacity. A list of 29 secondary schools available to international students has been established in collaboration with the Planning department for 2019-20 (see Appendix A).

## **COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic impact on international education is experienced world-wide. Families have requested enrolment deferrals and tuition refunds. Also, all short term programs for the second half of the 2019-20 were cancelled. It is anticipated that further decline in student enrolment will result from multiple factors: travel restrictions, quarantine requirements, anti-Asian discrimination and hybrid/ remote learning programming. Additionally, families will be deterred from sending students to TDSB should they perceive that Toronto is unsafe from COVID-19, socialized stigma and anti-Asian sentiments. This may have a significant decrease in elementary and secondary international students choosing to continue or start schooling at the TDSB. As a result, a huge loss will be felt by our communities in terms of the artistic, athletic, cultural, linguistic and financial contributions international students make to the TDSB. Moving forward we will be exploring different learning models.

The Proposed Balanced 2019-20 Operating Budget identified two goals. One, expanding the international student program by an additional 200 students. Two, improving retention rates by increasing the number of available courses. As a result of the COVID-19 impact on enrolment the expansion goal will be delayed. Staff will continue to focus on providing English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and ESL sensitive courses to improve service excellence and to retain more international students within TDSB.

## **Selection Process**

1. Evaluation of a student's application is based on the submission of the following mandatory documents: application form, copy of passport/birth certificate, recommendation letter from current teacher or principal and most recent two- year transcripts for students applying to Grade 7 or higher. Application can be submitted online, by email, mail or in person.
2. For secondary school students generally, English language proficiency at the intermediate level or higher along with an academic average of 65% is required for admission to the Toronto District School Board as an international student. Successful applicants will then apply for student visa/study permits with the appropriate Canadian Embassies or Consulates.
3. Students are also required to submit custodian documents once they receive a conditional letter of acceptance.
4. All secondary school students are required to complete English Second Language (ESL) and Math assessments before registering at designated schools and selecting courses. These assessments take place at two Reception Centres (Georges Vanier Secondary School and Bickford Centre), typically during the last two weeks of August for September intake and last two weeks of January for February intake.

## **Custodianship**

The Toronto District School Board does not oversee the custodianship process. Elementary school international student applicants must be accompanied by one parent or living with the custodian. Secondary school international student applicants do not require parental accompaniment but require custodial arrangements to be made with a Canadian citizen or permanent resident. Toronto District School Board recruiters work with families to make custodial arrangements. The Board does not hold custodianship of any international student.

## **Recruitment Process**

The majority of international students come from families who place great value and importance on academic education. These parents generally feel that by placing their children in a school abroad they are providing them an educational advantage.

Parents often take great care in the selection of the city and school for their child, looking for a place where their child will be safe and supported. More information on the recruitment process can be found in the Toronto International Student Programs brochure (see Appendix B).

## **Target Markets**

The Toronto District School Board has diversified beyond China as a source country for international students and has been building a portfolio of countries where there is an emerging trend to send students abroad for studies. Countries with the fastest growing number of international students as reported by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in 2018 are Vietnam, Iran, Turkey, Brazil, India and Mexico. We have relied on China for growth in the last few years and most Ontario school boards realize that they need to limit risk exposure by their dependence on just a few markets. Risks develop when institutions rely on limited source countries, and as incidents occur (health, financial, geopolitical), the flow of international students will most likely slow down significantly.

Given the current circumstances, the engagement strategies will need to be different when cultivating emerging markets and we will need to employ a variety of practices to ensure growth in new markets. Until now, the TDSB has a diversification strategy to recruit students from markets in South America, Mexico, Europe and other countries in Asia (Bangladesh, Thailand and Iran). For each of these regions, the Toronto District School Board has identified and promoted long term study and short term programs. Our experience has shown that it takes at least three years to cultivate strong recruitment relationships in a new market and to see a return on investment. In this pandemic situation and if international travel bans are not lifted, meaning students will not be able to arrive in Canada and TDSB will develop new recruitment/delivery strategy to continue to have a presence in these emerging markets.

The Toronto District School Board will devise a multifaceted approach and a well-coordinated marketing approach in international student recruitment. Toronto is a very attractive destination for international students and we employ both Direct Marketing Vehicles and Strategic Partnerships to grow its student numbers.

### **Direct Marketing Vehicles**

- Promotional Materials
- Education Fairs - DFAD, ICEF and Agent Sponsored International Visits
- Familiarization Visits by Agents
- Webinars: authorized recruiters, recruiter organized workshops
- Strategic Partnerships (overseas Canadian Embassies/Visa Offices)
- Agent Agreements
- International Contacts (Schools, Alumni, etc.)

### **Supports and Programming for International Student Well-Being**

International students are Toronto District School Board students. They are entitled to the same supports and services available to all TDSB students. In the summer of 2019,

the TDSB launched its first ever Integrated Orientation and Summer School Program for incoming high school students. The program welcomed approximately 300 students to a four week, experiential learning opportunity. Students experienced daily physical activities that introduced new athletic skills and popular sports; they explored the outdoors at TDSB Hillside Education Centre and visited local attractions while enrolled in a high school credit course. Overall, students reported that this program engaged them in learning activities that assisted them in becoming more comfortable and confident with starting school in September. Furthermore, students valued the opportunity to meet new friends and classmates who were attending the same school in September and this bridged their transition to the new school.

TDSB continues to conduct focus groups with international students in order to obtain accurate and honest feedback, to enhance program quality and student retention. The purpose of focus groups is for international students to discuss their perceptions and experiences of attending TDSB schools.

To realize the support required by international students, five guidance counsellors for international students (GCIS) and a Centrally Assigned Principal (CAP) continue to provide support and services to more than 2,100 students in 29 high schools and their feeder schools.

The CAP continues to bring culturally relevant experiences and perspectives from both the elementary and secondary panels to coordinate supports, transitions and programs for international students. The CAP worked to lead the GCIS team to collaborate with school staff and community partners to provide enhanced supports for our students. Furthermore, the team provided ongoing support for short term, long term school programs and teacher professional learning. As a result, overall experience was enhanced for students.

Secondary schools with the largest population of international students have shared six English as-a-Second Language (ESL) teachers to support language acquisition. Furthermore, to better support international students and to reduce the need for switching schools, schools that receive international students have been asked to offer all levels of ESL (A, B, C, D and E).

This past year, we have continued a partnership with Across U–Hub, an organization that supports international students through activities such as excursions, weekend trips and outreach activities after school. During the physical distancing advisories Across U–Hub switched its program delivery to an online model, and was able to continue offering the following online activities: general interest workshops (baking, exercise, music, handling anti-Asian discrimination, resume writing, financial literacy), conversations to provide social support and volunteering opportunities.

## **Comparison with other Ontario Boards**

### ***Toronto District School Board***

- Headcount of 2,100 international students
- Guardianship and Homestay: Educational agencies and individuals maintain custody of international students.
- 29 high schools receive international students currently. In 2020-2021 this number will increase to 31 high schools.
- The international education department processes all international students, whether they are fee-paying or non-fee paying.

### ***Toronto Catholic District School Board***

- Enrolment of 1,300 international students
- All elementary and 29 secondary schools are eligible for international students
- Homestay and custodian services are provided through private partners
- Partner schools in China
- The international education department focuses on serving fee paying students. Non-fee paying international students (parents with study/work permits, foreign diplomats) are supported by a different department.

### ***York Region District School Board***

- Enrolment of 2,000 international students
- Financial contributions to schools: YRDSB contributes \$500 per student, per year to schools that enroll international students.
- Guardianship and Homestay: YRDSB maintains custodial rights to a significant percentage of the international students
- School placement: 21 out of 31 secondary schools are eligible for international students
- The international education department focuses on serving fee paying students. Non-fee paying international students (parents with study/work permits, foreign diplomats) are supported by a different department.

### ***Peel Region District School Board***

- Enrolment of 500 international students
- Homestay and custodian services provided through private partners

### ***Ottawa-Carleton District School Board***

- Enrolment of 1,100 international students
- All secondary schools are eligible for international students
- An arms-length division provides all services to international students

only

### ***Upper Canada District School Board***

- Enrolment of 300 international students
- Homestay and custodian services provided through private partners
- Partner schools in China
- All schools eligible for international students
- Arms-length division serving only international students

### ***Thames Valley District School Board***

- Enrolment of 300 students
- Homestay and custodian services provided through private partners
- All schools are eligible for international students

## **Action Plan and Associated Timelines**

During the course of the summer months, staff will investigate and develop online learning models to support current and incoming international students. Staff will also identify financial and revenue considerations based on the current pandemic situation.

## **Resource Implications**

Depending on the impact of the pandemic on international students, staff will work with our colleagues in Finance on how to support current and potential international students.

## **Communications Considerations**

In consultation with the Communications team, staff will advertise and promote our programs on social media, printed brochures, and appropriate websites.

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

PR518, Admission Eligibility Requirements

PR543, Promotion, Transfer and Retention: Grade 8 to Grade 9

P037, Equity Policy

P040, Accountability for Student Achievement



## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: TDSB Secondary Schools Accepting International Students for 2019-2020
- Appendix B: Toronto International Student Programs Brochure

## **From**

Manon Gardner, Associate Director, School Operations and Service Excellence at  
[Manon.Gardner@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:Manon.Gardner@tdsb.on.ca)

Kien Luu, Centrally Assigned Principal, International Students and Admissions at  
[Kien.Luu@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:Kien.Luu@tdsb.on.ca)

Fred Liu, Manager, International Students and Admissions at [Fred.Liu@tdsb.on.ca](mailto:Fred.Liu@tdsb.on.ca)