



TDSB Readiness to Welcome International Students

To: Planning and Priorities Committee

Date: 24 November, 2020

Report No.: 11-20-3997

Strategic Directions

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

Recommendation

It is recommended that the report outlining TDSB procedures in preparation to welcome international students be approved.

Context

The Toronto District School Board is seeking to maintain its long-standing commitment to International Education Programs by continuing to welcome and support international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, in compliance with the guidelines outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Federal Government of Canada.

The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been engaged in an internationalization strategy since prior to amalgamation in 1998. Over the years, TDSB has been widely recognized as a leader of international educational initiatives across Canada and has welcomed thousands of international students from around the world to both elementary and secondary programs. In the 2019-2020 school year, TDSB enrolled over 2100 fee-paying international students and generated approximately \$32M in revenue. In addition, international students and their families continue to contribute to the cultural, linguistic and innovative diversities to our school communities.

This report will update the Board of the current federal and provincial requirements under COVID-19 that directly affecting international students, school districts and private schools that welcome international students to Ontario. The Memorandum also seeks Board support and endorsement of our long-standing participation in, involvement with, and strong commitment to international education and our international students,

especially during challenging times as the one we are currently facing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The report will also demonstrate the Board's readiness to continue to welcome international students safely into our schools and local communities. Requirements of Federal Public Health and the Ontario Ministry of Education will be outlined and clarified. The plan and protocol created to support the safe arrival of our international students will be explained in detail.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted all levels of international education around the world. The economic and psychological impact on families has reduced the level of student mobility, thus affecting engagement in international education globally.

In Canada, travel restrictions related to border closures and reduced flight availability have limited the ability for international students to enter this country with International borders closed to non-essential travel on March 18, 2020. International students with Study Permits approved prior to March 18, 2020 were provided an exemption; however, students with permits issued after that date are currently not eligible to enter the country, as per the Government of Canada. An update to the travel exemption was released on November 7, 2020 can be found by visiting the Government of Canada COVID-19 Travel Restrictions, Exemptions and Advice webpage at the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>

The developments above have resulted in a significant decline in international student enrolment for the current school year, as most new students apply for their Study Permit in the months of March or April for the September school start. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to evolve globally over the last eight months and travel uncertainty remains, a vast majority of new international students who were planning to join the TDSB chose to cancel their study plans. While most existing students chose to remain in Canada, a significant number of students withdrew from the program and returned to their home countries. Some of the TDSB existing students who did go back home have been able to continue their studies through TDSB Virtual School as they await the lifting of the federal restriction to return to TDSB for in-person learning.

The Ontario Ministry of Education (EDU) has outlined a set of requirements to determine the readiness of school boards to safely welcome international students as the pandemic continues (see Appendix A). These requirements must be met by all Ontario School Districts and Private Schools before districts approved to be on the Federal Government list of Designated Learning Institutions (DLI). The requirements govern publicly funded schools and private schools across Canada.

The requirements encompass the readiness of the school system to manage and respond to an outbreak in addition to the management of the international student population. At a system level, the approved Returning to School – A Guide to the Safe Reopening of the TDSB (as approved in August 2020) fully meets the provincial government guidelines. Staff at the International Students and Admissions office has developed the TDSB International Student Pre-Departure, Arrival and Support Plan (see Appendix B), which addresses the specific areas outlined by the Ministry.

Federal and Provincial Requirements

- School Districts must have a plan in place with details on how they will meet provincial and federal criteria and demonstrate readiness to welcome international students
- 14-Day self-Isolation strategy for international students and any co-arriving family members
- Communication protocols to inform the public of outbreaks
- A board resolution/motion approving the international student program and its readiness plan that meets current federal and provincial requirements for the 2020-21 school year
- A negative COVID-19 test result obtained during or immediately following the quarantine for international students who have entered Canada within two weeks prior to the start of studies
- A signed “Attestation for School Boards – Public Health Institutional Readiness Requirements for International Students in Ontario”

In compliance with the federal and provincial requirements outlined above, the TDSB International Student Pre-Departure, Arrival and Support Plan and the TDSB International Student Travel and Arrival Protocol Form (contained in Appendix B) specifically outline the key areas, as indicated below:

1. Pre-Arrival Requirements

All pre-arrival requirements are communicated and sent to international students, including:

- A copy of the international student support plan
- Checklists for Pre-Departure, Travel and Self-Isolation
- Documentation outlining a clear quarantine strategy, including the Self-Isolation Plan
- [ArriveCan App](#)

2. Requirements for 14-Day Self-Isolation

- Direct transportation by student custodian/home-stay provider from the point of entry to the quarantine location
- Quarantine arrangements are in place for arriving international students and co-arriving family members
- Daily monitoring of symptoms and compliance
- Communication protocols in place in the event of symptomatic cases or compliance issue
- Ensure quarantine location provides suitable isolation, does not put vulnerable individuals at risk
- COVID-19 infection control information and training
- COVID-19 test during or immediately following self-isolation

3. Post Quarantine Requirements

- Support students in their schools after quarantine to ensure successful transition and integration
- Support students and immediate family members with both mental and physical health, anti-racism and COVID-19 related stigma supports in schools

- and the community
- Mitigation of social barriers to support student compliance with individual COVID-19 infection control practices

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

The Board resolution, once approved, will serve as an Attestation of Readiness for the TDSB to continue providing educational programs for international students. The approved Board resolution and supporting documentation as contained in Appendix B will be submitted to the Ministry of Education for review, jointly with Federal and provincial health authorities, to determine our eligibility to be on the list of approved school districts (Designated Learning Institutions) of Immigrations, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). This approval will pave the way for existing international students who returned to home but are enrolled in Virtual School programs to return to the TDSB, and for new international students applying to the TDSB International Students Programs for February 2021 and beyond.

Resource Implications

To date, TDSB has incurred significant loss of revenue due to COVID-19. Approval of the International Student Pre-Departure, Arrival and Support Plan will allow the Board to move to the next step in the process of being added to the Federal Government list of Designated Learning Institutions (DLI) that are approved to welcome international students.

Communications Considerations

Once approved, the International Student Pre-Departure, Arrival and Support Plan will be posted on the TDSB website. It will also be emailed to students, families and partners. Online information sessions will be offered for students, families and recruiters.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

Not Applicable.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Ministry of Education Memorandum to Directors of Education Re School Boards' Readiness to Welcome International Students
- Appendix B: TDSB International Student Pre-Departure, Arrival and Support Plan

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