



INTERNAL AUDIT TEAM

Toronto and Area Region

Leadership and Professional Development – December 2020

Toronto District School Board

Prepared by:

Viraj Trivedi, CPA, CA, Manager, Regional Internal Audit

Issued by:

Paula Hatt, CPA, CA, CIA, Senior Manager, Regional Internal Audit

Distribution:

TDSB Audit Committee

Dr. Kathy Witherow, Interim Director of Education

Andrew Gold, Interim Associate Director of Leadership, Learning and School Improvement

Wasif Hussain, TDSB Internal Audit Manager

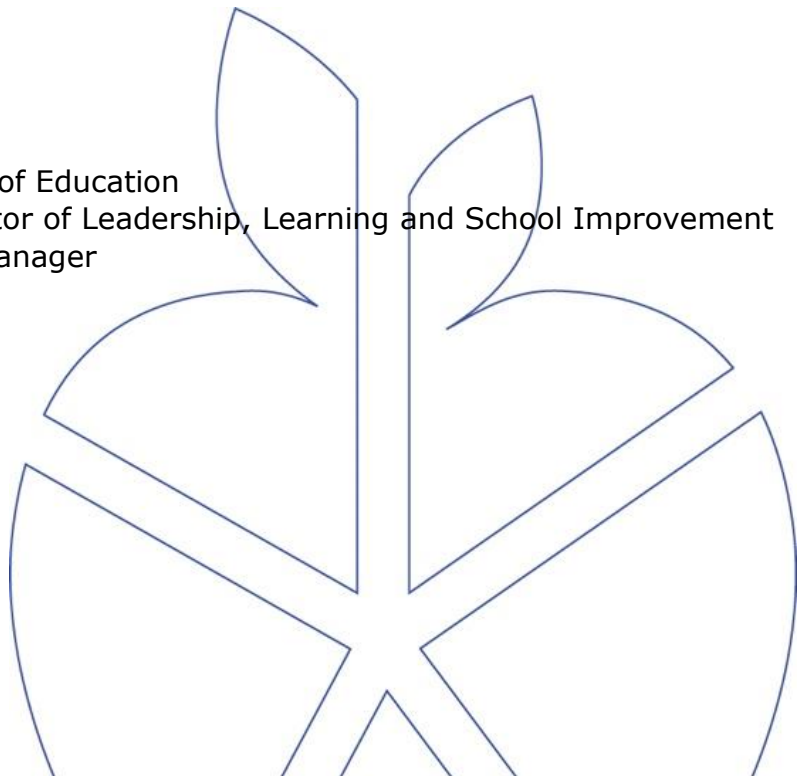


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Introduction

As part of the 2018/19 regional internal audit plan, the Regional Internal Audit Team, Toronto and Area (RIAT) conducted an audit of selected processes related to Leadership and Professional Development at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Our audit testing covered the 2018/19 school year but also included samples from the 2019/20 school year. The engagement fieldwork was conducted in January 2020.

Audit Objectives and Scope

The overall objectives of the audit were as follows:

- Roles and responsibilities for oversight are clearly defined, documented and communicated to meet strategic and operational goals of the leadership development programs.
- There is an appropriate planning process where relevant professional development topics are selected and scheduled for delivery to employees in an effective and equitable manner (as they relate to the leadership development program).
- There is evidence of learning focused on “inspiring, influencing, supporting and transforming leaders” at every level to support student achievement, well-being and equity.
- The Board measures the impact and effectiveness of the professional development being provided.

Given that leadership and professional development is a broad area, the scope of the engagement was mostly limited to the Leadership Capacity Plan developed by the Leadership Learning and School Improvement (LLSI) department in October 2019. The scope included interviews with management (see Appendix A for list of individuals interviewed) and testing of controls in the following areas:

1. Assess the Professional Development (PD) and Leadership Capacity Plan (LCP) Framework in the areas of Aspiring and Newly Appointed Leaders:
 - Review key documents and discuss with management to assess alignment with overall Board objectives and strategic plans.
 - Review staffing structures in place to understand roles and responsibilities and assess whether the PD/LCP plans are being managed effectively.
 - Review the Board’s planning process for the delivery of PD (Academic staff only), with a focus on the Leadership Capacity Plan.
2. Assess Effectiveness of the PD/LCP Framework Leadership Capacity Plan
 - Validate selected elements of the LCP (Aspiring and Newly Appointed Leaders) through discussions with management and review of supporting evidence (Academic staff only) with a focus on principals/vice principals.
 - Assess the Board’s mechanisms in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on their LCP activities.
 - Conduct surveys or interviews (based on predetermined questions) to assess principal/vice-principal perceptions regarding the equity, effectiveness and relevance of the Board’s PD activities.
 - Assess the Board’s mechanisms in place for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on their LCP activities.

Refer to Appendix B for a list of key documents reviewed.

We did not review the Journey to School Leadership program, as it was piloted in FY2018/19. We also did not review other elements that form part of the Board's professional development activities such as mentoring and capacity building, leadership learning teams and school improvement planning. The scope of our work was also limited due to funding cuts and job action that occurred during the current fiscal year which resulted in limited delivery of the Leadership Capacity Plan. In addition, many elements of the LCP were offered for the first time in FY2018/19 (some on a pilot basis) and therefore there is limited long term data to support the effectiveness of the various program elements. Therefore, although we focused our audit testing on the LCP as suggested by Management, it was at a high level to assess how it supports the Board's overall professional development goals and objectives.

Background

The Leadership, Learning and School Improvement department ("LLSI" or "Department") at the Board is responsible for the Board's leadership development program (the "Leadership Capacity Plan") for both Academic and Non-Academic staff. The department is led by the Associate Director, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement and supported by a Manager (responsible for Non-Academic staff) and Centrally Assigned Principal (responsible for Academic staff). The Leadership Capacity plan was developed over a two-year period, beginning in 2017, in order to centralize the Board's leadership development efforts into a more formalized program and align with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP). It encompasses a variety of components – including "identifying talent, engaging employees, developing leaders, and implementing and aligning strategies and initiatives – that together create a comprehensive strategic approach to mobilize leaders throughout the TDSB".

The LCP includes three main categories of leaders – Aspiring, New and Experienced. Our engagement focused on the Aspiring and New Leader components of the LCP.

The Aspiring Leaders pathway focuses on:

1. Exploring leadership - supported by the "Leadership for All" program.
2. Emerging into formal leadership roles (Vice-principal, principal and manager) – supported by the "Passport to School Leadership" program and "Journey to School Leadership".
3. Capacity building by practicing newly developed skills through job-embedded learning at the school or departmental level.

The New Leaders pathway is for "formal leaders who are new to a position of responsibility". New leaders are provided with formal and informal professional development opportunities, such as:

- The Passport to School Leadership - a learning plan that was developed for aspiring leaders to begin prior to promotion and newly appointed administrators are expected to complete. It includes sessions from multiple areas of the Board such as Business Services, Health and Safety, Special Education, etc. All sessions are meant to be completed within one year and are offered multiple times during the year. During the first year pilot, it was expected that all sessions were completed within one year. A number of participants were promoted while in the program and continued participation while in their new role. Upon assessment of these expectations, it was determined that the one-year timeframe was not realistic and timelines were adjusted to better meet participant's needs. Sessions were offered multiple times throughout the school year and during the summer.

- Mentoring programs - Mentoring and coaching is an integral component of how we support new leaders. Through coaching conversations and regular meetings, Mentor-Coaches and Mentees focus on transitioning to the new role, enhancing leadership practices, building relationships with the school community or department, and implementing key school/department, board, and provincial priorities.
- Capacity building - The Leadership Capacity Plan and Vision for Learning emphasize the importance of capacity building, collaboration and engagement, shared leadership, equity and anti-oppression, and service excellence for leaders as drivers for change and improvement. New leaders have the opportunity to engage in relevant and timely professional learning through the Passport to School Leadership, Orientation and Induction Institute for Leadership Excellence, Leadership Learning Teams and Community of Learning and Practice.

Conclusion

The TDSB is commended for developing a robust Leadership Capacity Plan that aligns with the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Overall, we conclude that the Board has implemented appropriate controls and processes in the areas we reviewed, with some opportunities noted to strengthen current practices:

- The Board ensured that the LCP was appropriately planned and developed based on overall Board strategies and Ministry guidelines related to leadership development. Some opportunities were noted to strengthen the ongoing planning processes and improve accountability to the Board, especially in relation to budget cuts.
- We validated that training is being delivered as per the LCP and that participant feedback is obtained. The Board should consider streamlining current offerings as it was found that in some cases participants were not able to complete the program (i.e. Passport Program). Additionally, there is greater demand for web-based course offerings. The Passport program was revised and many of the sessions were made available online.
- The main goal of developing the Leadership Capacity Plan is to support student achievement and well-being. Although it is difficult to draw direct correlations between leadership development and improvements in student achievement and well-being, the Board should work on developing some metrics (quantitative and qualitative) to support and improve the LCP.

We thank Management and staff for their assistance with the audit.

Limitations on use of Internal Audit Report

This report is intended primarily for the information and use of the individuals on the distribution list on the cover page of this report and should not be provided to any other individual without the consent of the Senior Manager, Regional Internal Audit, Toronto and Area Region.

Audit Observations

A. Leadership Capacity Plan and Professional Development Framework

We performed the following audit procedures:

1. Reviewed key documents to assess alignment with overall Board objectives and strategic plans (Multi- Year Strategic Plan and the Leadership Capacity Plan).
2. Assessed the organizational chart and staffing structures in place to understand roles and responsibilities to administer and manage the process.
3. Ensured policies and procedures have been developed and are accessible and communicated to all employees.
4. Reviewed the planning process for delivery of the LCP.

1. Alignment of the Leadership Capacity Plan to the Multi-Year Strategic Plan

The Leadership Capacity Plan, implemented in the year 2018-19, outlines the Board's strategy and objectives related to Aspiring, Emerging and Experienced Leaders. We reviewed this plan and noted that it supports the goals of the MYSP and aligns with its priorities of:

- transforming student learning;
- creating a culture of student and staff well-being;
- providing equity of access to learning opportunities;
- allocating human resources strategically to support student needs; and
- building strong relationships and partnerships within school communities to support student learning and well-being.

2. Oversight and Roles and Responsibilities

The Associate Director, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement, oversees the LLSI department. There are two individuals responsible for leadership development, a Centrally Assigned Principal, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement, who manages the Academic related programs, and a Manager, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement, responsible for Business and Operations staff. Both individuals work together to develop the various professional development programs for Board leadership. Based on discussions with the Centrally Assigned Principal and Manager, they are also responsible for other areas outside of LLSI. For example, the Manager is responsible for compliance and mandatory training and professional learning and training for school-based and central support staff while the Centrally Assigned Principal assists in various areas¹.

Both leads are responsible for the delivery, monitoring and reporting of leadership development for aspiring and new leaders. The Board also has a learning support centre structure (4 total with 140 schools each), with each led by an Executive Superintendent. These centres also play a role in determining priorities for PD more specifically to the leaders under their umbrellas. Centrally assigned principals are also responsible School Improvement supports and PD, coaching and mentoring.

¹ ESL/ELD/LEAP/Reciprocal Student Exchanges/ Newcomer Reception Sites, Library Learning Resources/Global Education/Interdisciplinary Studies/ Social & World Studies and the Humanities.

3. Policies and Procedures

Although there are no specific policies and procedures developed by the LLSI Department, they focus their efforts based on the MYSP, as well as the Board Leadership Development Strategy, TDSB's Leadership Practices Tool, The Ontario Leadership Framework and TDSB's Equity Leadership Competencies.

4. Planning and Delivery of the Leadership Capacity Plan

Based on discussions with the Centrally Assigned Principal and review of supporting documents, there was appropriate planning in the development of the Leadership Capacity Plan. Some of the planning activities included:

- A focus group meeting on Feb. 20, 2019 that included representatives from various groups including teachers, vice-principals, principals and managers. Feedback and input was gathered to ensure the LCP would meet the needs of staff.
- An LCP Committee was formed and members worked together to develop the framework for the LCP. Consultations were held with various participating departments at the Board to determine how they would be able to support the planned training.
- Monthly informal meetings between the Associate Director, Centrally Assigned Principal, and Manager to discuss the group's activities and any challenges.

B. Effectiveness of the LCP and PD Plans

Leadership for All

We conducted the following audit procedures:

5. Compared the total number of participants enrolled in the Leadership for All Foundation program to the number that completed the program and received a certificate.
6. Validated the completion figures by reviewing completion letters for a sample of teachers.
7. Assessed the effectiveness of the "exploring" phase by reviewing survey data gathered by the LLSI department.

Based on data obtained, there were 541 individuals enrolled in the Leadership for All Program. Participants begin their learning with the Leadership for All - Foundation session and, based on individual learning needs, can determine what additional modules of learning to focus on.

of Participants per module:

541 – Leadership for All Foundation
236 – Embedding Equity into Leadership and Practice
241 – Exploring My Leadership
206 – Leadership Effectiveness
157 – Read to Lead

We reviewed the Certificates of Completion for a sample of two teachers, noting that they were sent to the teachers as evidence of completion. The LLSI Department prepared an “Aspiring Leaders - Leadership for All Summary Report” which reports on a variety of data related to the program, such as the number of sessions offered, staff participation and attendance data, as well as a summary of feedback based on survey results. The Summary Report is a key document that supports the activities of the LLSI Department. Based on our review, positive feedback was received on an overall basis from respondents. For example, 95% of respondents noted that they would recommend Leadership for All to colleagues, and 68% would consider applying for a leadership role after taking the modules. We noted that some respondents had suggested developing a website for “ease of access to learning tools, resources and opportunities for learning enhancement and sustainment strategies for aspiring, new and experienced leaders”.

Finding B.1 - Reporting of Leadership Development Activities

The Leadership for All Summary Report is a well prepared document that provides a good summary of staff participation and feedback. Based on discussions with LLSI Management, the information gathered is part of the evaluation process in place for leadership programs and initiatives. Information from the Summary Report would be useful to provide to the Board as part of the LLSI Department’s annual reporting.

Impact

The Summary Report is a good monitoring and reporting tool for internal purposes and information tracked may be of value to the Board.

Recommendation

The LLSI Department should consider incorporating some of the elements from the Summary Report (i.e. staff participation rates and feedback) into their annual reporting to the Board.

Management Response and Action Plan:

The Leadership Development Plan is part of the TDSB Multi- Year Strategic Plan. Each Action Plan in the MYSP is on a schedule for an annual report to the Board of Trustees. The Report of the Leadership Development Plan was due to be presented to the Board in May, 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 school closures. The annual reporting cycle to the Board of Trustees will be resumed when school returns post COVID-19.

Also, there are several other annual reports that are presented to the Board of Trustees related to the MYSP which rely on key leadership competencies (Annual Early Literacy, Academic Pathways, Special Education and Inclusion, and Suspensions and Expulsions). All reports are on an annual cycle for reporting. Staff will include information gathered as part of internal reporting processes within the annual reports to the Board of Trustees.

Position Responsible: Associate Director, Manager of Professional Learning, Training, and Leadership Development and the Centrally Assigned Principal for Leadership Development

Finding B.2 – Development of Web Based Resources

Based on feedback received, participants have indicated that a website (i.e. dedicated area for Leadership Development through the TDSB website) would be beneficial for easier access to learning resources. Based on discussions with LLSI management, they have identified this as a priority and will explore options to implement a dedicated website for the Leadership Development program. It is our understanding that a plan is in place and work has commenced with the Communication team.

Impact

Without a dedicated website or learning platform, there is a risk that TDSB staff may not be able to easily navigate and access available resources efficiently and timely.

Recommendation

A departmental plan that considers various delivery methods to staff, including the potential of a dedicated website, should be developed. If the development of a website is a top priority, the LLSI Department should develop a business case to identify whether it is feasible. This would include a cost/benefit analysis and estimate of resources required.

Management Response and Action Plan:

There are multiple ways that leaders access professional development beyond the website. All Principals are part of a Learning Network with monthly professional learning sessions. Also, new leaders are provided with a coach/mentor to support their growth. Superintendents are responsible for monitoring the learning needs of their Principals and Vice-Principals. The TDSB also has a robust learning management system, Key to Learn, where all leaders have access to registration of professional learning sessions and provides a summary of all PL sessions a staff member has participated in. The website page design is in the final stages of completion. Next steps will include exploring options to align leadership development initiatives for staff which may be through a dedicated webpage on the existing TDSB website. This webpage will include the addition of content in 3 key areas – Aspiring, New and Experienced. The site is anticipated to be launched in the second half of the 2020-2021 school year to support the continued rollout of virtual leadership initiatives. The Board will continue to explore options to improve accessibility of leadership learning opportunities for staff.

Position Responsible: Associate Director, Leadership, Learning & School Improvement; Centrally Assigned Principal, and Manager of Professional Learning, TDSB web team

Target Implementation Date: To be determined post COVID-19 Closures

Passport Program

The Passport Program was developed for emerging leaders who are on the “promotion list” (i.e. teachers and vice-principals) in order to equip new leaders with the skills required for their roles. The program was implemented in FY2018/19. Based on review of the “At a Glance” Report published by the LLSI Department, there were 168 administrators participating in the Passport program in FY2018/19. However, it was noted that none of the participants were able to complete the full program in the year. This was due in large part to the fact that many

participants were promoted before beginning the program. Based on discussions with management, they are reviewing survey data and feedback to revise the Passport Program. Some of the feedback received included:

- participants want more optional courses and a trimming of essential courses
- 2 years for completion may be more feasible
- more offerings in the summer months

To address the feedback provided, the LLSI Department developed the "Summer Institute" to address participants wanting increased summer offerings. They also developed a revised version of the Passport program with more web-based learning. There have been many challenges for the Board in the current year in delivery of leadership professional development. Some of these challenges include the elimination of a key funding source (BLDS funding from the Ministry of Education), job action in schools, and most recently the impact of COVID-19. As per discussion with management, there have been fewer leadership courses offered to date in FY2019/20 and most have been offered online.

In order to assess whether the Board is equipping an adequate number of new leaders, we obtained a list of projected retirements of VP's and Principals (prepared for the FY2017-2020 period). See the chart below:

Year	Vice Principal	Principal	Total	%VP of total	%P of Total
2017-18	11	69	80		
2018-19	13	35	48		
2019-20	19	42	61		
Total	43	146	189	23%	77%
Average	14	49	63	23%	77%

Based on the above chart, there is an average of 63 retirements per year (based on the average of the prior 3 years). As per the chart below, there was a total of 70 aspiring leaders who are qualified and ready to step into the vacant role. There are also a large number of individuals enrolled in professional development courses.

	Vice Principal	Principal	Total	%VP of total	%P of Total
Aspiring leaders who are qualified and ready to step into the role	49	21	70		
Aspiring leaders not yet ready for the role but taking development courses	185	29	214		
Total	234	50	284	82%	18%

Therefore, it appears that the Board is developing a sufficient number of new leaders in order to meet retirements.

Performance Measures and Outcomes

For the two programs reviewed (Leadership for All and Passport), the following information was being tracked:

1. Leadership for All

The Leadership for All Summary Report includes survey results from May 2019. Out of 527 participants, 127 responses were received. Based on our review of the report, various survey results and participant feedback was gathered and reported.

2. Passport Program

A presentation was prepared by LLSI in early winter 2019 that included participation data and feedback on the Passport program. Based on our review of the survey results and completion data, overall there was positive feedback received. More positive feedback was received from the VP's compared to the Principals. There were also a number of challenges noted. General trends were summarized.

We also tested the integrity of the survey data conducted at the end of the passport program, noting that the results were accurate and complete.

Finding B.3 – Measuring Outcomes and Effectiveness of the Leadership Capacity Plan

Based on review of the LCP and discussions with the Centrally Assigned Principal, the type of information that is tracked by the LLSI department is more focused on survey data and informal feedback.

Impact

Reporting on the effectiveness of the Board's leadership and professional development activities could be enhanced to ensure they are meeting the needs of staff to improve student achievement and well-being. Outcome based metrics may help to inform key stakeholders at the Board to better understand the value provided to the Board by the LLSI department.

Recommendation

While participant survey data is an important metric to inform potential changes to the LCP, the LLSI team should consider alternative sources of data. For example, "think tank" sessions with participants to gather additional data could be of value. Discussions with the TDSB Research department could be considered to explore how information it gathers related to student achievement and well-being might be incorporated into measuring LCP efficacy. The Board could also consider surveying parents and/or other stakeholders (i.e. school support staff, teachers etc.) to assess whether leaders are effectively supporting student achievement and well-being. Some metrics (both quantitative and qualitative) should be developed to measure the effectiveness of the leadership development activities and their impact on student achievement and well-being. This information should be incorporated into regular reporting of the LLSI department's activities.

Management Response and Action Plan: The Leadership Development Plan is part of the TDSB Multi- Year Strategic Plan. Each Action Plan in the MYSP is on a schedule for an annual report to the Board of Trustees. The Report of the Leadership Development Plan was due to be presented to the Board in May, 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 school closures. The annual reporting cycle to the Board of Trustees will be resumed when school returns post COVID-19.

Staff would also like to point out the Passport programs focused on equity, indigenous education, early years (K-2), caring and safe schools and Special Education which are curriculum related and align with our system commitments to challenge streaming and transform student learning. This work is supplemented by the work that the Centrally Assigned Principal Coaches do in each Learning Centre with the schools and Principals

LLSI also uses staff census data (quantitative) to measure areas of staff satisfaction, preparedness for their position and well-being. The Board will explore the development of additional measures (both qualitative and quantitative) as per the recommendation above.

Position Responsible: Associate Director, Leadership, Learning & School Improvement

Target Implementation Date: To be determined post COVID-19 Closures

Budgeting and Planning

Per discussion with the Associate Director, since the Ministry's BLDS funding was eliminated, the department has had to look at other potential funding sources. For example, utilizing student success funding could be an option. The Associate Director meets regularly with other Associate Directors and the Director of Education to discuss budgets and professional development spending. They also meet frequently with Finance to determine funding sources and to track budgets.

Finding B.4 – Funding for Leadership Development

The Board is faced with a challenge on delivering the Professional Development and Leadership plan given BLDS funding cuts by the Ministry. The LLSI department communicated these challenges and potential impacts to the Associate Directors, TDSB's Finance Department and the Board.

Impact

There may be risks to the Board if limited resources are being invested in supporting the LCP program. This includes the risk of not meeting objectives within the MYSP.

Recommendation

The LLSI Department should identify the risks to the Board of not being able to support the LCP program, given the BLDS funding cuts. These risks, along with estimated funds to continue delivering the LCP program effectively, should be presented to the Board. It is important that a formal plan be developed to demonstrate the need and benefit to the Board for a stable level of funding to support the work of the Leadership Capacity Plan.

Management Response and Action Plan: Staff created a formal plan based on the identified system outcomes in the MYSP and aligned budget with intended outcomes (as per the Leadership Development Logic Model). As part of upcoming budget discussions, a plan to include sustainable funding for leadership development will be pursued.

Position Responsible: Associate Director, Manager of Professional Learning, Training, and Leadership Development and the Centrally Assigned Principal for Leadership Development

Target Implementation Date: December, 2020.

Appendix A: Individuals Interviewed

- Dr. Kathy Witherow, Interim Director of Education (formerly Associate Director, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement)
- Andrew Gold, Interim Associate Director, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement
- Rita Gallippi, Centrally Assigned Principal, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement
- Rita Simmons, Manager, Leadership, Learning and School Improvement

Appendix B: List of Key Document Reviewed

1. LD Budget Chart
2. Leadership Capacity Plan
3. Passport to School Leadership Document -TDSB-NewAdministratorsPassportProgram2020
4. At a Glance 2019.
5. Ontario Leadership Framework (Sept. 2013) - 2013 OLF Placemat
6. App B - Leadership Practices Tool and Principals Reference Notes
7. Equity Leadership Competencies
8. Leadership Development Logic Model
9. Summer Institutes 2020-21 for Administrators
10. TDSB Leadership for All - Evaluation Results 2019