ACHIEVEMENT GAP TASK FORCE

DRAFT REPORT

FOR DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK

This Draft Report presents directions for consideration to close the school achievement gap for racialized groups in the TDSB relative to other groups.

This draft Report is for your discussion and feedback.

Please email comments to: equity@tdsb.on.ca, by October 31, 2010

Thank You.

Lloyd McKell, Executive Officer
Student and Community Equity
Chair, Achievement Gap Task Force

May 17, 2010

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TDSB ACHIEVEMENT GAP TASK FORCE

DRAFT May 17, 2010

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The mission of the TDSB is to enable all students to achieve high levels of success. Approximately 75% of TDSB high school students graduate with the expected 30 credits after five successive years of secondary school.

Of the 25% who do not graduate, the largest numbers are students of Aboriginal, Black (African heritage), Hispanic, Portuguese, Middle Eastern background. TDSB data shows that in proportion to their numbers, these students have the lowest test scores (EQAO), the lowest rates of credit accumulation through secondary school, and the highest dropout rates. As well, based on our data, students of these backgrounds are likely to have the lowest rates of school attendance and the highest suspension rates. The achievement gap for these groups has existed since the 1980's.

These students have the lowest family income levels and are more likely to live in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the city.

In this report, the groups named in this section above will be referred to as "racialized groups". A racialized group is a group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of their perceived common racial background, colour and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment in the society and its institutions.

Racialized students represent 70% of the TDSB student population. Reaching the provincial graduation target of 85% can only be achieved through significant progress in improving educational outcomes for racialized groups in our schools.

TASK FORCE MANDATE

In January 2010, the Director established the Achievement Gap Task Force. The Task Force is a staff committee comprised of superintendents of education, principals, vice principals, and central staff. It is chaired by the Executive Officer for Student and Community Equity. The mandate of the Task Force is to:

- Assess the achievement gap based on research and TDSB experience;
- Identify current best practices which address this issue; and
- Recommend actions to address this achievement gap.

Directions For Consideration are contained in Section B.

TASK FORCE PROCESS

The Achievement Gap Task Force reviewed the Board's student demographic data from the Student Census and Parent Survey of 2006 and 2007. This data provided a breakdown of students by race, ethnicity, gender, language, and socio-economic circumstances, family structure and parental education. This data also included the perceptions of students in Grades 7-12 about their lives in school and outside of school, and the perceptions of parents of students from JK- Grade 6, about their schools.

The TDSB research links demographic information about students and how they feel about school, to their actual academic results. For example, the TDSB can track student the test scores (EQAO), report card information, the number of credits they achieve at Grade 9 and Grade 10, and their attendance records, by race, ethnicity, and gender. This data gives the TDSB the ability to determine which groups are most successful, and which groups are least successful. Each school also has access to this research information for their own school. The Task Force reviewed this data for the TDSB.

The Task Force also examined extensive research for the TDSB and beyond the TDSB on achievement gap issues. It looked at past reports by stakeholders including parents, community members, students and staff of the Board. The Task Force reviewed scholarly papers and articles by educational experts.

The Task Force conducted a whole day of hearings in March 2010, and heard presentations by parents, community members, staff and students. These groups presented proposals for addressing the achievement gap. The Task Force also invited groups to submit proposals to a designated e-mail address. The Task Force read and considered these proposals.

ASSERTIONS

The Task Force agreed on the following assertions as a framework for undertaking its work. These assertions are based on the evidence available to the Task Force:

- Inequities persist in our society and in the school system;
- TDSB is obligated by policy to address inequity in schools;
- Closing the achievement gap is critical to student success for all;
- TDSB policies should improve student learning;
- TDSB policies should ensure that all students meet the requirements for academic and social success;
- Addressing the impact of poverty and race on student achievement is essential to closing the achievement gap;
- All students can meet high standards when the appropriate opportunities, resources and support systems are provided; and
- The responsibility for closing the achievement gap is shared with parents and the larger community.

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SECTION B: DIRECTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

THE SYSTEM CHALLENGE

Many TDSB students of our diverse communities face many significant challenges in their lives outside of school. This impacts their learning. Responding to the needs of this diverse urban community is not an easy task for schools in the TDSB, particularly in the context of resources which are shrinking relative to needs.

There are schools across the system which have developed and are using innovative and culturally sensitive approaches to the education of students who are marginalized by differences in racial and cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic circumstances and ability/disability. Appendix A (Key Findings) contains examples of effective practices in TDSB schools.

For other schools however, the challenge of creating a significant turnaround in success rates has been more difficult to meet. In these schools, many students of racialized groups continue to be disengaged academically, socially and emotionally from the learning process. For many of these students, school does not motivate them. As one student said, "School does not make sense".

The challenge which our schools face is to embed a school philosophy, school culture and approach to teaching and learning in which schools will "make sense" to each and every student.

All stakeholders have a role to play in that mission. Raising achievement levels for all students, while closing the achievement gap between groups of students, will require extraordinary measures which build on current innovative policies and practices.

CURRENT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INITIATIVES

There are several school improvement initiatives currently underway designed to address student achievement in the TDSB. These system initiatives include but are not limited to: Board Improvement Plans; School Effectiveness Planning; School Effectiveness District Reviews; Schools in the Middle Initiative; Increased Use of Technology to Improve Learning; Focussed Intervention Strategy; Student Success Initiatives; Urban Diversity Strategy (UDS); the Model Schools for Inner Cities Initiative; and Gender-Based Initiatives.

These initiatives provide important approaches to improving student achievement in all schools. They will collectively raise the achievement bar for all students, by building instructional capacity to enhance learning and improve schools.

However, in order for these initiatives to be effective in closing the racial achievement gap, a demographic framework or lens must be embedded into their planning and implementation. For example, if a school determines that a particular demographic group has lower skills in use of technology, the school should consider offering additional programs of supports for that group. The school's plan for raising student achievement

should reflect an attention to the needs of racialized groups in the school who are having the least success.

The monitoring and evaluation of each of these initiatives must also employ a demographic filter to assess their effectiveness. The assessment must address which groups are benefiting most, and which groups are benefiting least by the actions taken by the school. The critical question to follow is: how is the gap being resolved?

Schools cannot resolve the racial achievement gap without specific plans and actions to address that gap. Current student achievement initiatives in schools need to reflect an intentional demographic framework (race, gender, social need, etc.) for planning implementation and review.

Directions for Consideration

1. **Prepare guidelines and methodologies to assist schools to use a demographic framework for planning, implementation, review and reporting on student achievement initiatives.**

2. **All schools report their plans for addressing the achievement gap as they relate to racialized groups, to the Director, through the family of schools superintendents.**

USING STUDENT DATA

The Student Census of 2006 (Grades 7-12) and the Parent Survey of 2007 (JK-Grade 6) had been developed to address the achievement gap as it relates to racialized groups who are not successful in school. This data contains a rich quantity of information which links demographic groups of students with their perceptions, (and parents' perceptions, elementary), and with achievement data.

This data is currently being used primarily for planning to raise system achievement at the school level. Teachers are using student data to assess the current achievement levels of students and to set performance targets for them. The teacher then plans strategies to assist those students to achieve the targets.

This approach is also designed to help teachers assess and change their own classroom practices where necessary, in order to achieve the desired outcomes for each student. The school as a whole uses this data-based approach to build its school improvement plan. Its goal is to raise the achievement levels of all its students, particularly those who are performing below the standard expected of students at each grade level.

The data-driven approach is recognized by experts as a credible approach to student achievement. The challenge is to ensure that it is embedded into our practice in all classrooms in all schools, and that it is used as a measure of school effectiveness and accountability.

Student data should also be used as a catalyst for change within the school. It can be used as a focus for conversations about the challenges that students face, and the opportunities to help them meet those challenges. Used in this way, the data will create the opportunity for new commitments among staff, parents and students to work together to help all students become successful.

Parents, students and community members in our schools have not had adequate opportunities to consider this data in its disaggregated form. Without access to this kind of data, parents, students and staff lose a great opportunity to engage each other in informed discussions about solutions to closing the achievement gap. It is important that schools provide good opportunities for discussion of this data among their stakeholders. .

This dialogue should be organized with parents of the individual demographic groups: Aboriginal, Black, Hispanic, Portuguese, and Middle Eastern, and other marginalized groups in the school where appropriate. Similarly, students in secondary schools should have the opportunity to discuss the demographic data for their school, under controlled and well-facilitated conditions.

Everyone will benefit from these conversations. Such strategic and well-planned discussions with parents, students and staff have enormous potential for building awareness, new insights, and shared commitments to work together to improve student engagement and student success.

Directions For Consideration

3. **Ensure the comprehensive use of student data in every school for school improvement planning, assessment and modification of practices, monitoring school effectiveness and accountability.**

4. **Share student data disaggregated by demographic categories, with staff, parents and with secondary students in order to promote an understanding of the achievement gap and its implications, and to foster school community support for closing the achievement gap.**

5. **Prepare summaries of TDSB student data concerning the perceptions and achievements of specific racialized groups and make these summaries available to schools and their local community.**

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Most students in our schools list a caring teacher as the single most important factor contributing to success in their schools lives. Racialized and other marginalized students state that access to a supportive relationship with a caring school adult makes the difference between success and failure for them.

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A teacher who makes a personal commitment to the success of each student, and whose instructional approach centres the student, culturally, socially and emotionally within the learning environment, demonstrates the qualities of a culturally responsive teacher.

A culturally responsive teacher:

- Communicates a respectful, kind and compassionate concern for the students and their issues and challenges;
- Consistently communicates high expectations for the students;
- Integrates the teaching of success behaviours into the program while managing the classroom with firm, consistent and loving control;
- Ensures a climate of respect for differences and rejects stereotypes of all kinds;
- Addresses issues of discrimination and social justice within the classroom program;
- Uses the backgrounds and experiences of the students to build, extend and share knowledge among students, to develop critical thinking skills and share positive values;
- Incorporates all the dimensions of the child (whole child) into the learning and relationship building process; and
- Establishes a positive connection with the parent, guardian or other adult caregiver of significance to the student.

For marginalized students, this approach to teaching creates motivation to actively participate in their learning and to take pride in their accomplishments. This promotes enjoyment of learning and leads to improved results for all students.

Many teachers develop these attributes naturally as a reflection of their individual personality and passion for teaching. Others have to work harder at acquiring and demonstrating these attributes. The good news is that these attributes and skills can be mentored, coached, modeled, taught and learned. It is important therefore that the TDSB take measures to build system capacity for culturally responsive teaching to achieve the goal of success for all students.

The relationship of effective teaching to academic excellence is now well documented in the literature. Studies (Tennessee, Boston, Dallas) show that effective teachers produced significantly higher gains in achievement among low achieving students than did less effective teachers. Placing high effective teachers, who demonstrate high competencies in culturally responsive teaching, will have the greatest impact on closing the achievement gap in the TDSB.

The approach to ensuring the widest possible student access to effective teachers lies in strategies to ensure that teachers are sufficiently trained in the required skills and aptitudes. It also lies in our capacity to provide opportunities and possibly incentives to attract the most effective culturally responsive teachers to schools in the most disadvantaged and challenged areas. Discussion should be undertaken with Teacher Federations to ensure that these directions can be supported and implemented within Collective Agreement parameters.

Directions For Consideration

6. **Establish a procedure for creating opportunities and incentives for teachers with particular skills and interests to work in schools where they are most needed.**

7. **Provide training in culturally responsive instruction and leadership for all principals and vice principals.**

8. **Establish an in-house certificate course (additional qualifications) for teachers, graduated over a three-year period.**

9. **Encourage all beginning teachers (0-3 years practice) to take training in culturally responsive instruction through the certificate course, over a three-year period.**

10. **Principals in collaboration with their staff and their school's professional learning committee, establish demonstration classroom programs for culturally responsive instruction.**

11. **Incorporate culturally responsive instruction criteria into the selection and promotion process for teachers and school administrators.**

12. **Use culturally responsive instruction as an indicator in the assessment process in the District Reviews conducted in the TDSB.**

ADDRESSING RACISM

An effective approach to culturally responsive instruction incorporates an antiracist perspective.

For racialized groups, the negative effect of systemic racism continues to erect barriers to the full realization of their potential for success. The lowest achieving demographic groups of students in our schools are students of Aboriginal and African background. Students from these groups arguably experience the effects of racism to a greater degree than any other group.

The literature is extensive on the impact of societal racism on the psyche, self-esteem and social functioning of racialized groups. Suffice it to say that systemic racism affects the readiness to learn of students of colour and ultimately limits their potential to achieve the highest outcomes in many areas of their lives.

These barriers erected by racism not only affect academic outcomes, but their social and emotional outcomes as well. Students of East Asian descent for example, have relatively high rates of academic success. However, these students are subject to racial stereotyping which often takes the form of low expectation about their capacity to be assertive, confident and outspoken. In the Student Census of 2006, East Asian students,

among all groups, are least likely to feel comfortable answering questions in class, least likely to rate their social skills as excellent, and least likely to rate their leadership skills as excellent.

Staff across the system have participated extensively in equity training. However, antiracist education, as an aspect of equity in education, has not been given adequate focus as part of the professional development activities. This may mean that the ongoing affects of racism on school climate, student well-being and student achievement may go unrecognized and unaddressed in schools and communities.

School leaders, teachers and support staff need opportunities to learn how racism acts to reinforce student disengagement from learning and limit their potential for success in school and in community life.

Schools must play an important role in challenging racism in all its forms and in building the foundation for a society free of racism and injustice of all kinds. Antiracist educational practices must become a fundamental feature of a culturally responsive school system in our racially diverse school board.

Antiracist education is defined as:

> "An approach that integrates the perspectives of Aboriginal and racialized communities into an educational system and its practices. Antiracist education seeks to identify and change educational policies, procedures and practices that may foster racism, as well as the racist attitudes and behaviours that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. It provides teachers and students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to critically examine issues related to racism, power and privilege. Antiracist education promotes the removal of discriminatory biases and systemic barriers" *(Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, Ministry of Education, 2009)*

The approach to inclusive schools must be given a greater focus in our professional training and learning for all staff in order to promote antiracist environments in all schools and workplaces.

Directions For Consideration

13. **Provide training in antiracist education training for TDSB staff at all levels.**

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In addition to academic engagement, students need to be engaged emotionally and socially with their learning and with all of their activities within the school environment. Emotional engagement comes from the quality of trusting relationships between adults and students, where the student experiences supportive relationship with caring adults in the school, on whom that student can count for guidance and encouragement.

For marginalized students, the school provides the best opportunities for developing healthy social relationships with peers and for participating in cultural and recreational activities. It is also the only place available to them where they can develop their leadership skills, their capacity to think critically about their lives and to express their opinions about school and their lives outside of school. Many do not feel that they have a meaningful voice in the classroom and school and do not feel comfortable in participating in school activities.

It is important to ensure that schools have safe spaces for students to provide honest feedback and suggestions on issues they are concerned about. When these students are encouraged to speak out and present their opinions freely, they are more likely to develop trust with adults. They are more likely to feel a sense of belonging in the school. They are better engaged and enjoy school more.

Student engagement also depends upon the extent to which students believe that they can make choices that can positively affect their future lives. Students need to learn and practice making positive choices in their study routines and habits, their behaviours, the values they adopt, their relationships with peers and adults, and in their goals and aspirations.

The school has the capacity to engage the student in ways which allow the student to feel that he or she has the power to make life changing choices. This is achievable if the student feels centred in the environment. Schools which use what the students know, experience and feel as opportunities for building self-esteem, self confidence will help students to understand how taking personal responsibility benefits them

When students are in environments which fully encourage and support their learning, they will be more receptive to guidance and words of advice, such as those offered to them by the Director of Education, Dr Chris Spence at a recent conference of high school students,

> "Education is the most powerful tool which we can use to change the world....Be prepared to fail and rise again, acknowledge the people that are contributing to your development, take responsibility for the things that you do, eat well, live right, and make good decisions. Embrace literacy for life, choose your friends wisely, set goals and believe in yourselves."

Words to be heeded.

Directions For Consideration

14. **Require schools to adopt strategies for encouraging and supporting the full engagement of all racialized and marginalized students in the activities of the school.**

SCHOOLS OF OPPORTUNITY

Addressing the impact of poverty and socio-economic need on student achievement continues to be a major priority for the TDSB. Students and families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods struggle with survival issues: poor nutrition, family unemployment, low family income, health issues, youth conflict, limited opportunities for recreation. In these circumstances, school is going to be a challenge for many of these students.

Using the Learning Opportunities Index, the TDSB has identified the schools with the greatest need for support. These schools need support in areas such as: additional instructional support for teachers, early years support, after-school programs for recreation, tutoring and homework; nutrition programs; mental and physical health needs, mentoring programs, newcomer settlement support, parent outreach and education, and community partnerships.

Through the Model School for Inner Cities (MSIC) Program (elementary) and the UDS, the TDSB has provided models for addressing these needs, which can be replicated in other schools communities with similar needs.

The MSIC Program is an initiative to address the impact of socio-economic disadvantage in about 110 elementary and middle schools. Large numbers of racialized students attend these schools. Additional funding is provided to support these school communities.

The MSIC approach to student achievement focuses on supporting teachers in developing effective classroom practices; regular teacher access to learning coaches and increased PD opportunities; providing extra support for the social and emotional needs of students disadvantaged by poverty, e.g. vision and hearing screening, nutrition programs for children (breakfast and snack); and an active parent engagement program which includes parent education workshops organized by Community Support Workers.

The UDS focuses support in 39 secondary schools with the largest number of racialized students who are performing below standard. These schools are located primarily in inner city neighbourhoods. Many of these students achieve fewer than 16 credits at age16, the standard below which they are deemed to be at risk of dropping out. Additional support is provided to these schools through Ministry of Education funding as well as funds from Board sources.

The additional support to UDS secondary schools enables the schools to improve teaching capacity through more professional development opportunities and collaboration among teachers. Funding also allows these schools to provide support for the basic needs of the students such as nutrition programs, TTC tickets, after-school tutoring programs.

Current evaluation data shows that the MSIC and UDS approach which provides a higher level of support for the highest need schools, is producing positive results for students. This approach enables more opportunities for success to be made available to more students. As a result, students are improving their school attendance, improving their test scores, and earning more secondary school credits.

The current approach which designates specific school communities for extra support based on socio-economic need however, has a significant limitation. This approach has no built-in mechanism to extend the benefits of the support to schools and communities who may lie outside of the designated areas, which may have pockets of similar need.

Students and families in these schools may also have pressing needs for additional support arising from their own socio-economic circumstances. They are however not able to access the same level and quality of support as in school communities designated as MSIC and UDS.

It is therefore important for the TDSB to develop a strategy which reflects a more equitable system-wide approach to supporting students who live in high need areas, where ever they are.

Directions For Consideration

15. **Continue to provide enhanced support for secondary schools with the largest number of racialized students who are achieving below standard, in order to address the achievement gap.**

16. **Continue to provide enhanced support for elementary schools (JK-Grade 8) in communities which are most disadvantaged by poverty and socio-economic need in order to address the achievement gap.**

17. **Establish a strategy to enable all students who live in areas of high socio-economic need, to have equitable access to programs and supports for their needs.**

SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

Aboriginal and Black students have the highest rates of school failure in the TDSB in terms of EQAO scores, credit accumulation at Grades 9 and 10, and the highest dropout rates. In the 2006 Student Census, Aboriginal and Black students are least likely to enjoy school, least likely to find school a welcoming place, least likely to feel that school rules are fair to them, and are most likely to feel that learning about their race or culture will make learning more interesting for them. Within this framework of failure and negative perceptions about school, Aboriginal and Black male students have the most dismal experience in their school careers.

In January 2008, the Board approved the establishment of the Africentric Alternative School JK- Grade 5, in September 2009. The school has been established and currently has a growing waiting list.

At that time, the Board also made a decision that an “Africentric continuum to Grade 12 be established at a secondary school by September 2010, and that staff present a

feasibility report in October 2008". An Africentric secondary concept is based on the same rationale as the elementary school: it is intended to provide a culturally supportive African-centred learning environment for secondary students who choose such an environment. Staff will establish a feasibility report process for this secondary school.

Recently, members of the Aboriginal community have discussed with staff their interest in establishing options for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal students including an Aboriginal school of choice.

The objective of an Aboriginal school of choice is to help students to complete their secondary education through a differentiated learning strategy, experiential learning in a culturally supportive community-based environment. The proposal is still at the stage of discussion within the Aboriginal community.

Directions For Consideration

18. **Undertake a feasibility study for an Africentric secondary school of choice to complement the Africentric elementary school model already in place.**

19. **Develop proposals in consultation with members of the Aboriginal community for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal students, including proposals for appropriate programs or schools of choice.**

CONCLUSION

Closing the achievement gap is a major and challenging mission for any school district, and an extremely complex one for the diverse urban environment of the TDSB.

But our schools do have a moral responsibility to ensure the very best environments for learning for all students. That entails an enormous commitment to do everything possible to help the most vulnerable, the least engaged, and the least successful.
The directions proposed in this report are by no means comprehensive and can only serve as signposts along the way. They reflect however some of the more critical areas for action to break the cycle of under-achievement of our most marginalized groups, as seen by stakeholders who participated in this Task Force process.

The way forward lies in the resolve of those who work in the front lines with our students. For many of these students who are disengaged from learning, teachers and support staff are important members of their school family whom they look to for on-going guidance and support. The TDSB must provide these staff the tools and internal supports necessary for effective teaching in the context of diversity.

The way forward also lies in the responsibility that adult caregivers play in the personal and school lives of students. Parents and guardians must take responsibility for providing the structures and guidance necessary for students to be ready to learn and engage with their teachers and schools. Community members, community organizations and the

public sector all have a role to play in working with parents, guardians and schools to support students who are experiencing challenges in their school and personal lives.

Finally, school and system leaders - principals, superintendents of education, other supervisory officers and managers - are expected to play a critical role in leading the way forward. The changes required to ensure successful experiences for racialized communities and other marginalized students require proactive leadership. These changes require leadership which inspires others to evaluate and change current practices where needed.

These changes require leadership commitment to build capacity among staff for re-examining assumptions about their own practice, and for changing these practices where needed to benefit the most vulnerable students. Principals and superintendents of education must see their role as transformative: i.e. to motivate all stakeholders to higher levels of personal commitment to the success of all students, and in so doing, to transform ineffective environments into ones that work for all students.

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Appendix A

TASK FORCE FINDINGS

This section summarises the key findings which reflect the experience and insights of students, staff, parents, community, professionals and experts:

KEY BARRIERS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

These major barriers experienced by racialized groups who experience marginalization in society and in the school system are summarized as follows:

- Limited access to a caring adult in the school who can establish a relationship of trust and empathy with students; who can make them feel positive about their backgrounds, heritages and personal identities; and who take the time to guide and encourage them through their experiences in school and out of school;

- Different expectations for different groups of students: high for some, low for others. Teachers teach to the level of expectations they hold for students; students perform to the level of expectations held for them by teachers;

- Limited access to help and support for the difficulties and challenges the students are having in school and outside of school;

- Instructional activities, materials, opportunities, and human interactions and relationships which do not positively reflect and value the racial and cultural backgrounds, identities and social experiences of the students;

- Unequal access to information and advice about relevant program choices, career planning, leadership opportunities, resources and support; and

- Unfair application of school rules and consequences in ways that make them feel devalued and discriminated against.

WHAT OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVE DONE

The Task Force looked at the work of several school districts in the United States to address the achievement gap as it relates to racialized groups. The most common approaches taken by school districts which they believe to be effective approaches to closing the achievement gap are:

- Implement comprehensive data collection and data management programs to promote maximum use of student data for student improvement, school effectiveness, decision-making and accountability at all levels and in every school;

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- Initiate early childhood education strategies aimed at creating school readiness for pre-schoolers and kindergarten students, with early assessment and early intervention aimed at children and the whole family;

- Provide tutoring support programs in literacy and math for every student who is performing below standard;

- Increase the amount of instruction time for students who are below standard including after-school, weekend reading, and summer opportunities;

- Establish a culture of high expectations for all students by defining high expectations standards and behaviours, and holding all stakeholders accountable for meeting those standards;

- Mandate cultural competency courses for all teachers, support staff and school administrators in order to ensure that staff are sensitized to the backgrounds, needs and experiences of the students and the community;

- Establish a procedure for placing effective teachers in schools where their skills and experience are most needed;

- Embed a culture of sharing best practices through a professional learning community approach, demonstration classes and peer mentoring programs in each school;

- Allocate resources equitably to ensure that schools with the largest proportions of underachieving students have access to adequate human resources, expertise and materials to support student achievement;

- An aggressive parent engagement strategy aimed at racial and cultural minorities, which includes culturally-sensitive parenting skills and family literacy programs, effective school engagement and advocacy strategies, and opportunities for parents to learn life skills to enhance their own capacity and empowerment;

- Increase access to adult mentors and positive role models, and negotiate agreements with them to work with students who need adult mentorship in their lives;

- Recruit and retain staff and selectively place staff reflective of and knowledgeable about the diversity of the student population; and

- Create alternative learning environments to ensure appropriate choices to meet diverse needs.

TDSB BEST PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS

The Achievement Gap Task Force asked schools to describe current exemplary programs and practices in place in their schools which they believed to be successful in meeting the

needs of racialized and marginalized students. Schools were also asked to indicate why they thought that these initiatives were successful for these students.

The reason for requesting this data is to extract from current TDSB experience, examples of model programs which could be replicated in other schools. The purpose is also to identify program characteristics which can inform planning for programs and practices of benefit to racialized students. Forty-five schools listed a total of 110 programs which they felt were exemplary.

The types of programs fall into the following categories:

- Academic support activities, e.g. *literacy and numeracy tutoring, homework clubs, reading clubs, lunchtime booster clinics*;

- Cultural heritage support activities, e.g. *Roma Music and Dance, African Heritage Program, Hispanic Club;*

- Guidance and mentorship activities, e.g. *Pathways Program, Grade 9 "Success Starts with Me" retreat, Grade 9 Moving On Up Transition Day, Change Your Future program;*

- Gender-specific clubs and activities, e.g. *Aboriginal Girls Club, Ladies For Life Club, Boys 2 Men, Girls/Mothers Mentoring Program;*

- Before and after-school arts and recreation activities, e.g. *Early morning FIT club, Film and Video clubs, Beyond 3:30 Cooking, Arts, Games;*

- Leadership training for students, e.g. *Anti-homophobia workshops, student ambassadors program, African Canadian Leadership Committee;*

- Peer Support Activities, e.g. *Buddy program, Mentoring Leadership Crew for Grade 9 students;*

- Parent Education Programs, e.g. *Parenting and Family Literacy, Orientation program for Iranian newcomer parents;* and

- Community partnerships, e.g. *Caring Village Program, Promoting Education and Community Health (PEACH), partnerships with post secondary institutions.*

The responding schools believe that the programs they offer for racialized students are effective because of the following reasons:

- Students experience a caring and compassionate approach which builds trust between adult and student;

- The program provides a comfortable, welcoming and safe space for students to talk about sensitive and personal issues and challenges;

- Program builds student self-esteem and self-confidence;
- Adults communicate high expectations to the students;
- Students feel that their cultural background and identity is understood and valued;
- The program is organized around the individual needs and interests of the students;
- Students feel that they are experiencing success through feedback and encouragement;
- Students have an opportunity to discuss issues relevant to them including issues of equity and social justice;
- Teachers are willing to try different methods to help struggling students;
- Students have opportunities to work together and learn from each other and problem-solve together;
- Teachers share professional learning with each other; and
- Students feel that they have a voice and can give opinions without fear.

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Appendix B

SUMMARY OF DIRECTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Prepare guidelines and methodologies to assist schools to use a demographic framework for planning, implementation, review and reporting on student achievement initiatives.

2. All schools report their plans for addressing the achievement gap as they relate to racialized groups, to the Director, through the family of schools superintendents.

3. Ensure the comprehensive use of student data in every school for school improvement planning, assessment and modification of practices, monitoring school effectiveness and accountability.

4. Share student data disaggregated by demographic categories, with staff, parents and with secondary students in order to promote an understanding of the achievement gap and its implications, and to foster school community support for closing the achievement gap.

5. Prepare summaries of TDSB student data concerning the perceptions and achievements of specific racialized groups and make these summaries available to schools and their local community.

6. Establish a procedure for creating opportunities and incentives for teachers with particular skills and interests to work in schools where they are most needed.

7. Provide training in culturally responsive instruction and leadership for all principals and vice principals.

8. Establish an in-house certificate course (additional qualifications) for teachers, graduated over a three-year period.

9. Encourage all beginning teachers (0-3 years practice) to take training in culturally responsive instruction through the certificate course, over a three-year period.

10. Principals in collaboration with their staff and their school's professional learning committee, establish demonstration classroom programs for culturally responsive instruction.

11. Incorporate culturally responsive instruction criteria into the selection and promotion process for teachers and school administrators.

12. Use culturally responsive instruction as an indicator in the assessment process in the District Reviews conducted in the TDSB.

13. Provide training in antiracist education training for TDSB staff at all levels.

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14. Require schools to adopt strategies for encouraging and supporting the full engagement of all racialized and marginalized students into the activities of the school.

15. Continue to provide enhanced support for secondary schools with the largest number of racialized students who are achieving below standard, in order to address the achievement gap.

16. Continue to provide enhanced support for elementary schools (JK-Grade 8) in communities which are most disadvantaged by poverty and socio-economic need in order to address the achievement gap.

17. Establish a strategy to enable all students who live in areas of high socio-economic need, to have equitable access to programs and supports for their needs.

18. Undertake a feasibility study for an Africentric secondary school of choice to complement the Africentric elementary school model already in place.

19. Develop proposals in consultation with members of the Aboriginal community for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal students, including proposals for appropriate programs or schools of choice.

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