



CONFIDENTIAL

Toronto Catholic District School Board

Monitoring and Reporting of Student Achievement

Audit Report

March 2018

**Serving:
Toronto Catholic District School Board**

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
Objectives and Scope	3
Summary of Key Observations and Recommendations	5
Background	6
OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
Policies, Procedures and Oversight	8
Board Learning Improvement Plan (2014-18)	11
Professional Learning Forms (PLF's)	14
Special Education and Mental-Health and Well-Being	17
Professional Learning and Development	19
APPENDIX A – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	21
APPENDIX B – REPORT DISTRIBUTION	22
APPENDIX C – AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY	23

Introduction

As part of the multi-year regional internal audit plan, the Regional Internal Audit Team (“RIAT”) performed an audit of the key processes and controls related to the monitoring and reporting of student achievement. The Academic Services department, under leadership of the Associate Director of Education, Academic Services, is responsible for establishing, monitoring and reporting of student achievement results supported by other areas within the Board.

Through discussion with management, we agreed to focus the scope of the engagement on key monitoring and reporting mechanisms both at the Board and school level to ensure that the Board is making effective decisions and developing action plans to support students and improve academic outcomes. Although the main focus was on academic outcomes, we also considered other areas such as mental health and well-being strategies as part of our engagement.

Objectives and Scope

The objectives and scope of this engagement, as agreed upon with management, were to assess the controls and processes in the following areas:

- Policies and procedures relating to monitoring and reporting outcomes are developed, adequate, communicated to the relevant parties, and periodically reviewed;
- Data collection is complete, accurate and timely in order to facilitate decision making;
- Appropriate metrics have been developed to support effective management and monitoring of strategic outcomes; and
- Appropriate metrics are monitored and reported to key stakeholders to measure the achievement of board objectives.

The scope of the engagement included interviews with management, as well as an assessment of the controls and monitoring and reporting mechanisms which support student achievement. Some of the key areas in scope were the Board Learning Improvement Plan K-12 - 2014-18 (BLIP), the 2017 Board Learning Improvement Plan Annual Report (2017 BLIP Report), the Data Integration Platform (DIP) and Professional Learning Forms (PLF's), also referred to as School Learning Improvement Plans (SLIPs), at the individual school and area level. The periods covered for this audit were mainly FY2016/17 and FY2017/18.

Items that were out of scope for this audit included other components within the BLIP such as "Staff Engagement", "Nurturing our Catholic Community", "Home, Parish, School and Community Partnerships", and "Pathways Planning and Learning".

Summary of Key Observations and Recommendations

Overall, the Board has a number of well-defined processes, policies and guidelines to ensure that the monitoring and reporting of student achievement is effective. This includes the following:

- Policies, procedures and oversight at the Board and school level through various reports, committees and collection/analysis of data.
- Through the use of the Data Integration Platform (DIP) the Board captures and utilizes data (i.e. EQAO results, surveys, CAT tests) to inform decision making and monitoring of student achievement.
- Other mechanisms such as Accountability Frameworks for Special Education and the Professional Learning Forms are effective and important ways in which the Board demonstrates their commitment towards student achievement.
- There are some opportunities to improve current practices and enhance the monitoring and reporting of data in current reports such as the Board Learning Improvement Plan (BLIP) Annual Report and the Professional Learning Forms. Details observations and recommendations are noted below. These are not considered high risk and should be considered enhancements to current processes or reporting.

No significant issues were noted and the Board is commended for their significant efforts and student focused practices they have implemented.

Background

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is one of the largest school districts in Ontario with approximately 91,000 students enrolled in 194 schools¹. The Board has developed a multi-year Board Learning and Improvement Plan (BLIP) for the 2014-18 periods, and is currently in the process of updating the BLIP for the next four year period. The BLIP represents the Board's plan for improving student and achievement and well-being. Although there are eight focus areas within the BLIP, we focused on the areas developed based on the Ministry's School Effectiveness Framework² (SEF) related to student achievement. The BLIP establishes strategies and action plans, professional learning opportunities and indicators of success (measures) for each area of focus. Most of the indicators of success (measures) for student achievement are from EQAO³ results, student and staff surveys, CAT⁴ results, school visits, and school learning improvement plans/professional learning forms.

The Board monitors and reports on progress against the BLIP goals on an annual basis through an Annual BLIP report. Based on review of the 2016/17 Annual BLIP report, the Board is on target in most "quantifiable achievement indicators"⁵ except for EQAO math scores (grades 3 and 6), Grad 10 credit accumulation and grade 9 Applied Math, which were all below target. In addition to the BLIP, there are a number of other processes and practices in place focused on student achievement. Refer to Appendix C for details regarding the various areas under each department. A large focus of student achievement is professional development. The Board uses student achievement results to target professional learning activities for staff both at the Board and school level. On an annual basis, each school completes "Professional Learning Forms" that identifies "critical needs" of the school and professional learning to close the gaps in those identified areas.

¹ Source: TCDSB Website – Elementary – 162 schools, Secondary – 29 schools, Combined – 3 schools

² The School Effectiveness Framework provides "indicators of effective instructional practice and pedagogy...used by school communities to determine the critical needs of students in order to address them in an equitable, precise and timely manner".

³ EQAO is a Province wide standardized assessment for Grades 3, 6 and 9.

⁴ Grade 2, 5 and 7 students undergo a test called the Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) and Grade 4 students complete the Otis-Lennon School Abilities Test (OLSAT).

⁵ Graduation rates, credit accumulation, EQAO, OSSLT and Grade 9 math

Observations and Recommendations

Our observations and recommendations have been grouped into the following scope areas:

- Policies, procedures and oversight;
- Board Learning Improvement Plan;
- Professional Learning Forms/School Learning Improvement Plans;
- Special Education and Mental Health and Well-Being Initiatives; and
- Professional Development

Policies, Procedures and Oversight

Internal audit assessed the following:

- Policies and procedures relating to monitoring and reporting outcomes are developed, adequate, communicated to the relevant parties and periodically reviewed.
- Accountability at the school and board level is established through clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Policies and Procedures

We obtained copies of the Board's policies and procedures to ensure that they addressed the following key areas:

- Guidelines for report cards and implementation strategies to ensure consistency with the Ministry guidelines (i.e. Growing Success)
- EQAO
- School Learning Improvement Plan
- Accountability for student achievement and related initiatives

The Board's main document for student achievement is the BLIP 2014-18 (see section below). Other policies include the following:

- Policy 04 – "Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC)" mandate is "to support, encourage and enhance parent engagement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being".
- Policy 13 – "Student and Program Assessment Policy and Operation Procedures" provides assessment, evaluation and reporting practices to schools of the board in the development of their local plans, consistent with TCDSB policies and Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation

and Reporting in Ontario Schools, First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12 (2010)⁶.

We noted that the TCDSB website provides information regarding EQAO testing procedures. Overall, the Board has sufficient policies and procedures related to the measuring and reporting of student achievement, supported mainly by the BLIP.

Roles and Responsibilities

We assessed whether appropriate accountability structures were in place to support the student achievement process. Based on our assessment, the Board has established appropriate roles and responsibilities. The Associate Director of Education, Academic Services, oversees the student achievement process for the Board. There are a number of individuals that oversee various areas related to student achievement, as follows:

- Superintendent of Student Success, Secondary – responsible for Pathways, Catholicity, Community, Culture and Caring, Literacy and Numeracy
- Superintendent, Curriculum Leadership and Innovation – works with elementary and secondary school student achievement and monitoring
- Superintendent, Safe Schools, Alternative Education and International Education – works with secondary schools under the Applied Excellence in Academic Courses (AEAC) which is mandated by the Ministry of Education to support lower achieving schools.
- Senior Coordinator Educational Research, Research Department – provides data that informs the BLIP and other student achievement related queries and decisions
- Superintendent of Special Services – works with improving student achievement with special needs students.

The above individuals meet and collaborate to ensure that there is consistency across the schools. See Appendix C for more details.

⁶ A Ministry of Education document that outlines a comprehensive policy for the assessment, evaluation, and reporting of student achievement in Ontario schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

Furthermore, there are School Improvement teams (elementary and secondary) and also Student Success Teams at the secondary level designed to monitor student achievement results and identify areas of weakness. There are also Area Superintendents who work with school Principals to monitor the Professional Learning Plans. The Superintendents responsible for student achievement meet weekly to discuss professional development and student achievement data and issues.

Board Learning Improvement Plan (2014-18)

We reviewed the Board's policies and procedures related to the monitoring and reporting of student and school performance. The key document is the Board Learning Improvement Plan (BLIP) 2014-18. The Student Achievement and Accountability Act (Bill 177) requires every board in the province to have a multi-year plan for student achievement. The BLIP sets the strategic goals for TCDSB including key performance indicators for student achievement and well-being. The BLIP was developed based on the Ministry's School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) guidelines. Data from various sources including the DIP, EQAO and survey results are used to develop the DIP. There are 8 components within the BLIP:

- Nurturing the Catholic Community
- Staff Engagement
- Assessment for, as, and of learning
- School and classroom leadership
- Student Engagement
- Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
- Pathways, Planning and Programming
- Home School, Parish and Community Partnerships

Within each of the 8 components, there are "if" and "then" statements, called the "theory of action", the goal (which is descriptive), targeted evidence based strategies and actions, professional learning opportunities to be arranged, and measures of success up which to measure the Boards progress. The BLIP is prepared by the BLIP Committee and uses multiples sources of information to inform the goals and measures. Through discussions with management, we also noted that consultation with other stakeholders also occurs, including teacher and student surveys, EQAO results, and CAT results. We reviewed the supporting data in the BLIP noting that it aligned with the stated goals. We also noted that the BLIP addressed all six components of the SEF from the Ministry. Overall, the BLIP development and monitoring process for student achievement incorporates sufficient data, is complete and issued in a

timely manner. Data collection is complete, accurate and timely in order to facilitate decision making.

BLIP Annual Report

The Annual Report is important to ensure that Board's objectives established in the BLIP are being monitored so that corrective action can be taken as needed. We reviewed the BLIP Annual Report (Nov 2017) and assessed whether data supported the BLIP goals. The Research department obtains extensive data including surveys and academic results (i.e. EQAO and CAT) and provides this to the BLIP Committee and Student Achievement Committee. The Annual report shows the progress of quantifiable achievement indicators tied back to the BLIP measures of success. The Annual report also indicates if the Board is meeting its targets. Based on our review of the Annual Report (Nov 2017), we noted the following areas where additional resources and strategies were implemented in order to reach targets and goals:

- In FY2017/18, student surveys were enhanced to address mental health and well-being and will be included in the 2018 Annual Report.
- Renewed Math Strategy (RMS) initiatives and professional development for elementary and secondary schools was provided, additional staffing for mathematics, and numeracy focused workshops were organized to support improving math scores.
- Further actions for each of the BLIP areas of focus were included in the Annual Report.

Based on the above, results are being monitored appropriately on an annual basis and action plans are developed to address areas of weakness.

Finding

1. BLIP Annual Report

We noted that although the BLIP annual report includes achievement results such as EQAO test scores, additional narrative information would be helpful,

especially in cases where results did not improve or were lower than the prior year or lower than the provincial average targets.

Impact

Key stakeholders may not have complete information to make informed decisions or develop action plans.

Recommendation

- R1. Additional narrative information such as root causes/justifying comments where the BLIP areas of focus are not met should be considered as part of the BLIP annual report to enhance its content and usefulness as well as action plans.

Management Response and Action Plan:

Management agrees that additional information could be provided to better inform stakeholders as to reasons why a BLIP goal is not being met. The Board BLIP report can be used as a method for highlighting this narrative.

Timeline:

To be included in the 2018-2019 BLIP Annual Report.

Professional Learning Forms (PLF's)

Professional Learning Forms are the key student achievement related monitoring and reporting process at the school level. The key objective of the PLF's is to identify critical learning needs at the school level in order to support student achievement (mainly from an academic focus). It is a well-defined and collaborative process involving various individuals and departments. The Research department prepares school level data and provides this information to the Area Superintendent and school Principal. The Area Superintendent meets with the Principal and teachers to identify the critical learning needs for each school at the beginning of the school year. A documented plan is developed, support by (1) action plans to achieve the critical needs, (2) PD requirements of the teachers as per the PD days allocated, and (3) Measures / Evidence of success to be used for the its achievements. Stakeholders gather and interpret evidence about student learning for the purpose of determining where students are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there. The information gathered is used by teachers to provide feedback to focus their learning. "Assessment for learning" is a high-yield instructional strategy that takes place while the student is still learning and serves to promote learning.

The following data points form the basis of PLF preparation:

EQAO Data

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is a Province wide annual assessment of Primary Division (Grade 3) and Junior Division (Grades 6) students in reading, writing, and mathematics; Grade 9 students in mathematics (academic and applied); and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). The EQAO data is forms the basis of the PLF preparation and action plans for the year.

Canadian Assessment Test (CAT)

The CAT is a testing system that assesses the essential learning outcomes of the basic skill areas: reading, language, spelling, and mathematics. As well as

being a tracker of learning abilities, the CAT also evaluates how well students perform in comparison to other students across the district, region, or in Canada as a whole.

Perceptual Data

Custom made surveys for each school are conducted to assess the learning environments, learning trends, demographic information, student engagements, cognitive strategies etc. Actual results of the surveys are compared to the board and province level data to determine the schools standing.

Demographic Data

Reflected the stratified data of students based on age, language, community and ethnic groups. The demographic data helps the stakeholders to emphasise the need of the different language programs.

From the above data, schools are required to document learning challenges and professional learning focus for the year in the PLF. As part of our audit testing, we attended a PLF meeting held on November 28, 2017 at an elementary school. We noted that the Principal highlighted the prior year EQAO results and that the school surpassed the provincial benchmark of 75% on primary reading, writing and math and junior reading and writing. However, the school has not been able to achieve the junior math benchmark which was an area of concern and urgent critical need documented in the current year PLF. We noted that Grade 3 and 6 School Improvement team teachers discussed the strategies they used in the classroom to tackle numeracy and math problem solving.

Once the PLF is reviewed by the Area Superintendent, Principal and School Improvement Team, it is uploaded to the school website.

We also selected a sample of 10 schools to review their PLF's and ensure they were uploaded and completed. We noted that all schools selected had a comprehensive plan based on the BLIP goals established by the Board, EQAO results, CAT4, School Report Card results are discussed by the stakeholders (i.e. Superintendent, Principal and Teachers) during the initial

Superintendent's visit. We further noted that an "Urgent Critical Need" is identified and documented in the PLF based on the data analysed and collaborative inquires among the stakeholders.

Finding

2. Professional Learning Forms

We noted that the "urgent critical needs" included in the PLF's are not always specific and measurable. For example, an urgent critical need was identified to close the gap in percentage of students at the applied versus academic level achieving Level 3 or 4 (for various subjects). The measure of evidence was to only note the percentage of applied students at Level 3 or 4 compared to the prior year. A more specific target (i.e. reduce the gap by a certain percentage) would be more appropriate in order to assess progress.

Impact

The Professional Learning Forms are an important tool to measure school progress and implement appropriate strategies. Without specific and measurable targets, schools may not be tracking progress or success of new strategies appropriately.

Recommendation

- R2. Urgent critical needs and measures or evidence should be based on specific and measurable goals.

Management Response and Action Plan:

As we create a new BLIP for the 2018-2021 school years, we will be revising our PLFs to ensure that SMART goals are included within these plans.

Timeline:

To be initiated in the 2018-2019 school year.

Special Education and Mental-Health and Well-Being

The Special Education department has established “Accountability Frameworks for Special Education” (AFSE). The main objectives of the AFSE’s are as follows:

- To annually review special education programs and services in order that student achievement and well-being is reported and that programs and services are continually renewed and improved.
- To provide SEAC and the Board with timely evidentiary advice to make effective decisions related to program planning and services in special education.
- The establishment of SMART goals that align with the TCDSB Board Learning Improvement Plan.
- To support the Board’s budgetary cycle

A standing Program Review Committee (PRC) has been established for each exceptionality and meets regularly to collect and analyze student achievement and well-being data. It is an important mechanism for reaching student achievement and well-being goals set by the Ministry, including *Learning for All: K-12, Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario, Growing Success and Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas (A4)* as well as Board goals set by the Committee.

We selected the 2016/17 AFSE to assess whether appropriate metrics are in place to analyze and report on special education student achievement. There are three main exceptionalities for the AFSE – autism, learning disabilities (LD), and language impairment. The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) sets the goals and data points to collect. We noted that goals are established and communicated to key stakeholders (i.e. Principals, teachers and special education staff at the school level). The SEAC Committee meets quarterly to review the results and monitor progress. These goals are also included in the PLF’s for each school.

Based on our review of SMART goal setting, measuring and reporting of set goals for 2016/17, and discussions with management, the AFSE appears to be working effectively towards achieving its objectives of enhancing special education student achievement.

Professional Learning and Development

We assessed whether the Board's professional learning and development activities were sufficiently aligned with student achievement results and overall goals and objectives (i.e. as set in the BLIP and PLFs). There are three main delivery models for professional development at the Board:

- Centralized professional learning at the Board level. There are "code" days given by the Board to support specific learning initiatives. We noted specific code days were allocated for Renewed Math Strategy and PLF monitoring.
- School level professional learning. There is local identification of professional learning needs. A key focus for FY2017-18 is numeracy across the curriculum.
- Student Success Learning Networks (SSLN). The Superintendent of Student Success oversees this process and groups schools together so that targeted professional learning can be provided. The focus is also on numeracy.

The Board's Professional Development Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being for 2017-18 (2017-18 PD Plan or Plan) was selected. We noted that development of the PD Plan is a collaborative process informed by input from students, teachers, principals, superintendents, trustees etc. Progress of the Plan is monitored and results are presented to Education Council and the Student Achievement Committee. The report outlines key professional learning initiatives to support achievement of goals established in the BLIP. The Plan used a variety of data sources such as EQAO results, surveys, cohort data etc. Based on our review, we noted that the Plan aligned with the BLIP. In addition, the Plan update is included in the BLIP Annual Report. Based on discussions with management, we understand that Trustees have requested more direct linkage between the PD activities and their impact on student achievement, including measuring the value of dollars spent. Given the manual nature of PD tracking and delivery, management has noted that it is difficult to provide direct linkage's at this time. Implementation of a new professional learning software system would help with this.

Finding

3. Professional Development Tracking

The tracking of professional development activities, delivery and attendance is currently a manual process. Therefore, it is difficult to track and analyze delivery and effectiveness of professional development activities. We understand that the Board is exploring the implementation of professional development software tool.

Impact

Better tracking of professional development activities will help the Board to better track professional development delivery, attendance and spending in order to assess their effectiveness as it relates to student achievement and well-being.

Recommendation

R3. The Board should prepare a business case, implementation plan and target date for a new professional development software tool.

Management Response and Action Plan:

The Board is exploring options for a PD tracking tool and will develop a business case and implementation plan as part of the project planning process. Approval has been received for this project as part of the new student information software purchase. The potential vendor the Board has been working with was recently acquired by another company and this may impact the timing and implementation of a PD tracking tool.

Timeline:

Timing for project implementation is to be determined. Management will provide an update on this project to Directors council in the fall of 2018.

Appendix A – Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the management and staff of the TCDSB for their assistance during this engagement.

Issued by:

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

Appendix B – Report Distribution

This report is intended primarily for the information and use of the individuals on the distribution list and should not be provided to any other individuals without the consent of the Manager, Regional Internal Audit Team, Toronto and Area

- Toronto Catholic District School Board Audit Committee
- Rory McGuckin, Director of Education
- Dan Koenig, Associate Director, Academic Services
- Lloyd Noronha, Chief Financial Officer and Executive Superintendent Business Services
- Paul DeCock, Comptroller (Business Services)

Appendix C – AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

V. BURZOTTA	L. DIMARCO	G. IULIANO MARRELLO	C. FERNANDES
AEAC / SAFE SCHOOLS/ INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION	CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION	STUDENT SUCCESS	SPECIAL SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieving Excellence in Applied Courses (AEAC) Fraser Network Supervised Alternative Learning (SAL) Safe Schools/ Police Liaison Continuing Education International Education (Visa Students) Toronto Secondary Unit (TSU) Joint Safe Schools Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers (TECT) Joint Safe Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE – Curriculum Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading Student Achievement (LSA) School Effectiveness Framework Leadership Development / Succession Planning International Languages Community Advisory Groups Code - Primary School, Summer Program Catholic Curriculum Consortium Toronto Elementary Catholic Teachers (TECT) Joint Professional Development Multi Year Strategic Planning (MYSP) System Calendar Board Learning & Improvement Plan (BLIP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Success Pathways High Skill Major Secondary Schools Staff Development Joint Toronto Secondary Unit (TSU) Professional Development Multi Year Strategic Planning (MYSP) Community Advisory Groups Catholic Curriculum Consortium Board Learning & Improvement Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Social Work Services Psychological Services Speech and Language Autism Educational Assistants (EAs) / Child Youth Workers (CYWs) Special Education Early Years Support Response Team TSU Sp. Ed. Committee TECT Sp. Ed. Committee Employee Mental Health & Well-Being Board Learning & Improvement Plan (BLIP)