

Select Public/Private
If Private select Ed. Act. Section.



REPORT TO

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK SPECIAL SERVICES REPORT BACK 2020-2021

The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Genesis 11.7

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
November 22, 2021	December 2, 2021	Click here to enter a date.

Maria Meehan, Superintendent of Education, Special Services
Dr. Marina Vanayan, Sr. Coordinator, Educational Research

INFORMATION REPORT

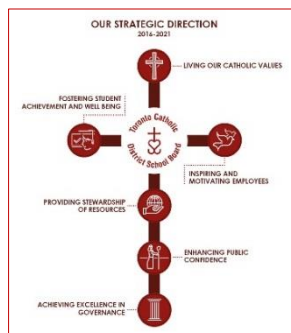
Vision:

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.

We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.



Brendan Browne, PhD
Director of Education

A. Della Mora
Associate Director of Academic Affairs and
Chief Operating Officer

D. Boyce
Associate Director of
Facilities, Business and
Community Development

R. Putnam
Chief Financial Officer and
Treasurer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accountability Framework for Special Services (AFSS) Report Back 2020-2021 guides renewal and improvement in the delivery of programs and services. The AFSS Report Back 2020-2021 reflects the progress towards the achievement of goals outlined in the Accountability Framework for Special Services 2019-2021.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 35 hours.

B. PURPOSE

1. This Information Report is on the Order Paper of the December 2, 2021, Student Achievement and Well-Being, Catholic Education and Human Resources Committee as an Annual Standing Report.
2. The purpose of the AFSS Report Back is to conduct an annual review of Special Education programs through the lens of student achievement and well-being. The report summarizes the work of the various Framework committees during the 2020 - 2021 school year including their goals, actions/strategies, and evidence of achievement.

C. BACKGROUND

1. The Toronto Catholic District School Board Accountability Framework for Special Education (AFSS), first established in 2010, guides renewal and improvement in the delivery of programs and services. Over the years, there was expansion of the Accountability Frameworks to eleven committees addressing the learning needs of students identified with different exceptionalities, students in different placements, and Mental Health and Well-being.
2. Aligned with the TCDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and Board Learning and Improvement Plan (BLIP) and informed by the Ministry of Education's *Learning for All* foundational strategies, the AFSS supports the strategic direction to foster student achievement and well-being through four areas of focus.

A. Home, School and Parish: Nurturing our Catholic Community.

- B. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning: A Focus on Assessment Practices.
- C. Pathways, Planning and Programming: Student Engagement and Well-being.
- D. School and Classroom Leadership: Professional Learning, Collaboration and Engagement.

3. Eleven committees guide the work of the Accountability Framework. Each committee meets at least four times per year. While the goals for improved achievement and well-being for all students with Special Education needs ground our collective commitments, each Accountability Framework focuses on unique and targeted areas of need. There are goals that pertain to the population of students with Special Education needs and those that pertain to specific exceptionalities.
4. The Accountability Framework for Special Services spans three years (2019-2021). It is an operational plan that details targeted evidence-based strategies, professional learning opportunities and resources. The document may be accessed through this link: [AFSS 2019 - 2021](#)
5. In the spring of 2020, the TCDSB Academic Emergency Response Team (AERT) was established and coordinated all efforts related to student learning during the unprecedented time of Distance Learning. The 2020-2021 school year continued to be marked significantly by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and adaptations to the learning environment. There were various learning models to meet the requirements of the Ontario curriculum in support of student achievement and well-being (e.g., online or virtual, adaptive, hybrid, bricks-and-mortar or in-person). In addition, during the school year, there were times when all students were required to learn online (e.g., Ontario government mandated ‘stay at home’ order in January and between April and June 2021; as well as two-week isolation periods for individual students or cohorts, as required).
6. Due to these exceptional circumstances, in 2020-2021, the majority of target-specific data identified in the TCDSB AFSS were not available. This required staff to adapt their methods to create an overall assessment for each category or exceptionality in the framework.
7. Where target-specific data were not available to inform the reporting of evidence from the 2020-2021 academic year, evidence of COVID-19-

priority strategies that were put in place to address student learning needs were included. This evidence was captured in response to emerging needs and priorities that could not have been anticipated when Smart Goals and targets were originally presented in the AFSS 2019-2021.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. The AFSS Report Back 2020-2021 is informed by the work of the committees that set the goals for the academic year. The AFSS Report Back provides the following information:
 - Goals
 - Actions/Strategies
 - Evidence

2. The status of each goal is assessed using the following scale:
 - On Target (green) – on track
 - Monitor (yellow) – on track but requires additional support
 - Action Required (red) – not on track

3. Framework committees meet on a regular basis for the following Exceptionalities:
 - A. Autism
 - B. Behaviour
 - C. Blind/Low Vision
 - D. Deaf/Hard of Hearing
 - E. Gifted
 - F. Language Impairment
 - G. Learning Disability
 - H. Mild Intellectual Disability
 - I. Multiple Exceptionalities/Developmental Disability
 - J. Physical Disability (to be developed)
 - K. Mental Health and Well-Being

I. ANALYSIS: MULTIPLE SOURCES OF DATA

A. AUTISM
<i>Goals</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvement in self-regulation of students identified with Autism.• Promising practices in the area of self-regulation and resources will be shared with elementary schools.• Deepened professional learning for school administrators focused on supporting students with Autism.
<i>Actions/Strategies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the elementary panel, the focus remained on improvement to self-regulation. A Social Skills kit was created and was planned to be piloted in eight elementary schools. Continued focus on improvement of self-regulation skills in targeted students in these schools was planned.• For the secondary panel, Social Competency Modules was created and was planned to be piloted in two secondary schools. Continued focus on social engagement for targeted students in these schools was planned.• Deepened professional learning for school administrators, <u>Unlocking ABA for Administrators</u> presentation.
<i>Evidence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Skills Kit was implemented in 3 schools.• A Google site of the Social Skills kit was created to respond to the needs of online learning.• Social Competency Modules were delivered at one secondary school.• Resources provided to school administrators via the Autism Portal.• Webinars for parents of students transitioning from elementary to secondary.• Common Feedback Form Results (5 PD sessions, 117 staff respondents): 97% strongly agreed or agreed that they would integrate their learning into their planning and instruction; 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the PD session would contribute to student learning and achievement.

B. BEHAVIOUR
<i>Goals</i>

- Investigate virtual programming through Behaviour Matters for at least two ISP programs as a pilot using digital platform.
- Continue Student Support Response Team (SSRT) support to behaviour programs, including modelling de-escalation and resource support for emotion management and track success during integration periods.

Actions/Strategies

- Parent Engagement.
- Virtual and in-person SSRT support.
- Implementation of group social skills programs.

Evidence

- Every student in the behavior ISPs received individual and group social skills instruction daily which built on skills that require solidification. Programs such as Zones of Regulation, Mind Up, Behavior Matters and SNAP (Stop Now and Plan) were employed to support individual and class self-regulation goals.
- Behavior ISPs provided students with a more intense level of support and attention with the goal always being success in the larger classroom. Most students were at least 30% integrated into the home classroom by the end of the first year in the behavior program.
- The SSRT actively engaged in supporting behaviour identified students and building capacity in the system to ensure all staff are aware of behaviour needs and how to successfully engage these learners. The largest role undertaken by this team has been mentorship of new behaviour program staff which included modelling of teaching strategies, environmental classroom support and social skills program delivery training.
- Two parent engagement seminars hosted by *Behaviour Matters*, a mental health agency that partners with our classes to deliver meaningful social skills programming, were held. These parenting sessions focused on calming spaces and emotional awareness and understanding the mind-body connection. These sessions created space for parents to share their own strategies and provided opportunities to discuss parent self-care and coping.
- The behaviour team and SSRT staff provided extensive support to create positive “virtual classrooms” using a variety of tools and strategies to engage learners as much as possible. A platform of resources was shared with all teachers and consultation was readily available for any student, teacher or parent in need.

C. BLIND AND LOW VISION (BLV)

Goals

- Support student access to assistive technology.
- Support the professional development of staff working with BLV students
- There has been some tangible progress with respect to technology within TCDSB, in locating and setting up Special Equipment Amount (SEA) equipment, connecting with SEA IT, providing access to TCDSB platforms for TDSB staff, connecting TDSB staff with the Help Desk. There will be a focus on the development of quicker turnaround times from the submission of the claim to the delivery of the equipment to the school.

Actions/Strategies

- Improve turnaround time from submission of SEA claim to delivery of equipment.

Evidence

- Progress has been made with respect to coordination of services for TCDSB BLV students receiving assistive technology to support access to the curriculum.
- The SEA claim process is being reviewed to improve efficiency.
- Staff is engaged in developing professional learning for teachers of the visually impaired in BLV specific software.

D. DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (D/HH)

Goals

- Educational audiologist will continue to meet with each D/HH teacher to consider each student and determine most appropriate Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) during this period of remote learning. The most appropriate technology will be immediately ordered through Special Equipment Amount (SEA) process.
- To support student engagement and wellness D/HH teachers will continue to check and connect with students as well as with classroom teachers and parents.
- Explore opportunities to virtually teach small groups of students with similar learning needs.
- Offer virtual small group sessions for students of similar grade levels and interests that promote positive self-image (e.g., working with an artist, cooking with a chef).

- Professional learning to provide virtual in-services on needs of D/HH students to teachers of newly identified students.
- Educational audiologist to share best evidence-informed HAT practices.
- Attend D/HH in-services offered through Itinerant Teachers of the D/HH Southern Ontario (i.e., Effective Collaboration On-line).

Actions/Strategies

- Preschool Services to shift online to deliver the parent-guidance program.
- Itinerant teachers to service students virtually, as required, working with educational audiologist to support in transitioning their personal SEA equipment (Frequency Modulation Devices) for home use.
- Provide virtual parent-workshop for incoming preschoolers (parents for all new students attended).

Evidence

- Major overhaul of our equipment database occurred to ensure equipment could be accounted for if students move or change placement.
- Provided headsets for virtual teachers of students having significant difficulties w/virtual for optimal mic placement (near the mouth) vs using a laptop mic.
- Strengthened our protocols for sharing of equipment and correct sanitization for optimal service delivery.
- Worked with students online to develop advocacy skills as online learners (headphones, what to do if the computer is inaudible and working with teachers to create accessible classrooms (e.g., use of closed captioning option).
- Resources were delivered by mail to students' residences.
- Parents received video materials to support learning in American Sign Language (ASL) when students with multiple exceptionalities were unable to attend virtual class.
- Worked with students online to develop advocacy skills as online learners (headphones, what to do if the computer is inaudible and working with teachers to create accessible classrooms (e.g., use of closed captioning option).
- Parent virtual Workshop was held to engage parents.

E. GIFTEDNESS

Goals

- Improvement in Organization and Self-regulation skills (specifically increase the percentage of students with Giftedness rated as ‘Excellent’ on the Provincial Report Card).
- Deepened professional learning of elementary and secondary teachers of Gifted students on relevant topics (e.g., characteristic of Giftedness, supporting various learning needs of students with Giftedness time management and organizational strategies).

Actions/Strategies

- Circulate annual newsletter to school staff and parents on the following topics:
 - Improving time management and organizational skills (2018-2019)
 - Debunking misconceptions about the identification of Giftedness (2019-2020)
 - Describing the importance of Gifted programming and focusing on student and parent voice (2020-2021)
- Gifted teachers (withdrawal, congregated and secondary) to participate in at least one professional development session annually focused on the needs of their students.

Evidence

- Teachers of the Gifted received professional development through monthly virtual meetings. Content focused on continuing support for online learning, and teaching resources for synchronous learning. There was also a focus on facilitation of staff and student mental health, specifically related to recognizing symptoms of distress (anxiety, self-regulation), and the process of accessing school supports.
- Newsletter *Building Resilience with Gifted Students* to be released for teachers and parents in Fall 2021.
- Teacher ratings of student’s overall Organization and Self-Regulation remain at or above baseline levels. Engagement of Gifted students in the virtual format remains high.
- Student Report Card Learning Skills: Organization and Self-Regulation for the 2019-2020 Grade 6 cohort

	June 2019 (Grade 5 baseline)	June 2020 Grade 6	June 2021 Grade 7
Rated as <i>Excellent</i>			
Organization	64.9%	65.0%	69.5%
Self-Regulation	68.0%	66.8%	68.5%

F. LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT (LI)

Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student engagement and wellness support. • Professional learning for staff.
Actions/Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote parent/teacher website with mental health and wellness resources. • Monitor student engagement to inform instruction • Speech and Language Pathologists (SLP) to offer sessions to LI class teachers to meet the virtual and in-person programming needs. • Continue to explore alternative programming to reflect the rapidly changing learning environment and additional demands of students. • Explore opportunities to provide sessions to parents (e.g., oral language and communications strategies). • Offer an "Ask a Speech-Language Pathologist" forum for teachers at St. Anne Catholic Academy – School of Virtual Learning.
Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development (PD) was delivered in two parts to one <i>Early ON</i> site. Over 30 families participated. Parents requested home tips. Parent feedback comment: <i>Felt cut off from support and was so glad to be able to join a session and speak to professionals.</i> • Parent friendly resources/links were shared by the department through both weekly newsletter and monthly calendar of activities to support communication skills across all grade levels. • In-person/Virtual PD offered regularly to SLP Department Staff, Special Services Staff, School Staff, and Parents/Caregivers. • Offered weekly, "Ask a Speech-Language Pathologist", virtual office hours for families and school staff. • Promoted parent/teacher website with mental health and wellness resources. • Developed protocols and ongoing professional development for online assessments.

G. LEARNING DISABILITY (LD)
Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that all students who started during the 2019-2020 academic year have completed the <i>Empower</i> program in 2020-2021. • Planning for strategic placement of <i>Empower</i> programs to address equity of access across the board.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of professional development for Special Education teachers during the 2020-2021 school year. This will include establishing a Google classroom for virtual presentations, archiving of past presentations, and a repository for Learning Disability resources. • Increasing availability of <i>Lexia</i> licenses to all Intensive Support Programs.
<i>Actions/Strategies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resumption of all <i>Empower</i> classrooms in September 2021 following the school closure. The Hospital for Sick Children and <i>Empower</i> mentors supported teachers of the <i>Empower</i> program with online resources, ongoing mentoring, and virtual meetings. • Expanding the availability of <i>Empower</i> programs to schools in underserved regions. • Creation of a Google classroom for all Learning Disability Intensive Support Program Teachers.
<i>Evidence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students completed the <i>Empower</i> program after school closure from the previous school year. • Schools delivering the <i>Empower</i> program expanded to include 2 schools, bringing the total number to 69 board wide. This included the introduction of 4 new <i>Comprehension-Vocabulary</i> programs for students in grades 6-8. • The Google classroom for teachers was created and made available to all teachers in Learning Disability Intensive Support Programs. • All Intensive Support Teachers received asynchronous professional development through the Google Classroom on <i>Psychological Assessment and Intervention for Students with Special Needs</i>. • All students in Learning Disability Intensive Support Programs, not in an <i>Empower</i> program, received a <i>Lexia</i> licenses.

<i>H. MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (MID)</i>
<i>Goals</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of existing <i>Lexia</i> licenses to MID Intensive Support Program (ISP) classes 2020-2021. • Monitoring of student reading improvement gains for students using <i>Lexia</i> reading intervention software in MID ISP classes.
<i>Actions/Strategies</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychology development of resources for Special Services and school staff regarding clarification for identifying students with Mild Intellectual

Disabilities (in addition to the Multiple Exceptionalities (ME), a Developmental Disability (DD) categories).

Evidence

- *Lexia* licenses distributed to all eligible students in MID ISP classrooms
- Preparations for in-service for Psychology and all staff of updated MID, ME, and DD criteria for next academic year.

I. MULTIPLE EXCEPTIONALITIES/DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY (ME/DD)

Goals

- Improvement in secondary school teachers' responses regarding the literacy learning engagement of students in their ME/DD Intensive Support Program (ISP) class
- Improvement in elementary school teachers' responses regarding numeracy learning engagement of students in their ME/DD (ISP) class
- Implementation of Early Literacy Builder resource with students by secondary school teachers of the ME/DD ISP class to address their functional literacy skills
- Implementation of EQUALS resource with students by elementary school teachers of the ME/DD program to address their functional numeracy skills and student engagement

Actions/Strategies

- Implementation of Early Literacy Builder resource with students by secondary school teachers of the ME/DD ISP class to address their functional literacy skills
- Implementation of EQUALS resource with students by elementary school teachers of the ME/DD program to address their functional numeracy skills and student engagement

Evidence

- Resource staff continued to support the implementation of the Early Literacy Builder resource with students at the secondary level.
- Resource staff continued to support the implementation of EQUALS at the elementary level.

- Tip sheets (High 5) for staff in ME/DD ISP classes and primary classes continued monthly.
- ME/DD Promising Practices Handbook draft form was created.
- Resources were added to the Special Education Google site for teachers to support students in ME/DD ISP classes.

J. PHYSICAL DISABILITY

The Framework for Physical Disability is to be developed.

K. MENTAL HEALTH

Goals

- An increase in positive responses regarding students' social-emotional competency.
- Increase staff's mental health competency to better support students' mental health.
- An increase in Stop the Stigma Mental Health and Well-being initiatives from 70 elementary schools.
- An increase in positive responses regarding staff well-being.

Actions/Strategies

- Mental health professionals will improve students' social-emotional literacy by delivering mental health workshops to students and staff.
- Stop the Stigma Campaign will increase to expand to all Grade 6-12 St. Anne students.
- Mental health Professional Development (PD) will be offered to various teams remotely including St. Anne educators, 100 team members will follow Suicide awareness webinars, a total of 12 clinicians will be trained in Suicide intervention skills.
- Continue to deliver PD on Staff Well-Being to secondary educators through LOYOL and through live sessions as well as pre-recorded webinars to be shared through system.

Evidence

Student Voice Survey 2020-2021 results: - Student Well-being focused question: Felt stressed or very stressed during this school year: Elementary 46%; Secondary 61%

- Mental health professionals collectively delivered 40 school-wide mental health literacy workshops to 23 secondary schools, reaching over 4000 students and 600 staff members on topics such as Tips for Stress Management, Gratitude, Strength and Hope, etc.
- Stop the Stigma Campaign continued to be implemented in all 32 secondary schools as well as 73 elementary schools in 2020-2021. In addition, 19 additional St. Anne classrooms with teacher mentors participated in the campaign.
- Multiple mental health PD sessions were offered to various stakeholders, including system-wide PD on Fostering a Mentally Healthy Return to School, PD to 200 St. Anne educators, to 200 new teachers in the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) on different topic areas. Suicide awareness PD was offered to 96 support staff and 50 Chaplains. A total of 7 staff members were trained in Suicide Intervention Skills.
- Multiple Staff Well-Being workshops offered to various groups including 100 members of the Teaching Learning Collaborative (TLC), 30 Speech and Language Pathologists, 30 Business leaders, 40 secondary vice-principals as well as all 4000 secondary educators through Leaders of Your Own Learning (LOYOL) in collaboration with the Nurturing Our Catholic Community (NCC) team.

II. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Staff reviewed the actions planned for the 2020-2021 school year and for each framework, made an overall determination of the status of achievement of those actions (*On Track; Monitor; Action Required*).

The table below shows the status of each of the frameworks. The status for 2020-2021 is based on the analysis from various sources described above and is based on a summary of the three years of the plan.

Category/Exceptionality	Goal Status
Autism	On Target
Behaviour	On Target
Blind/Low Vision	Monitor

Deaf/Hard of Hearing	On Target
Giftedness	On Target
Language Impairment	On Target
Learning Disability	On Target
Mild Intellectual Disability	Monitor
Multiple Exceptionalities/Developmental Disability	On Target
Physical Disability (to be developed)	Action Required
Mental Health	On Target

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Annual reporting on the work of the Accountability Frameworks for Special Services is undertaken in compliance with policy S.P. 01 Special Education Programs and Services.
2. The data, goals and next steps will be continuously monitored by Special Services staff in collaboration with the Research Department members who serve on the various Framework committees.
3. The Accountability Framework for Special Services (AFSS) spanned 3 school years, 2019-2021. Currently, plans for renewal are underway.
4. In the fall of 2021, the new Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP) was launched by the Ministry of Education. This document will impact the direction for the 2021-2022 school year and beyond.
5. Considerations from research on school effectiveness, feedback from the Ministry of Education and the TCDSB community will inform the new framework for Special Services. This operational plan will be aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan which is to be launched in 2022.
6. The next AFSS Report Back will take place in the fall of 2022.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the information of the Board.