TCDSB RESPONSE TO ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION RIGHT TO READ REPORT

And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading – Nehemiah 8:8

Cristina Fernandes, Executive Superintendent Student Achievement, Innovation and Well Being

INFORMATION REPORT

**Vision:** IN GOD’S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope.

**Mission:** Nurturing the faith development and academic excellence of our Catholic learning community through the love of God, neighbour, and self.

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Director of Education

**Adrian Della Mora**
Associate Director of Academic Affairs & Chief Operating Officer

**Derek Boyce**
Associate Director of Corporate Services and Chief Commercial Officer

**Ryan Putnam**
Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer
A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update of the TCDSB response to the release of the Right to Read report from the Ontario Human Rights Commission in January 2022. The Right to Read report made 157 recommendations to the Ministry of Education, faculties of education, and district school boards. This report outlines steps the TCDSB is taking to address recommendations, understanding that the Ministry of Education will be providing further direction.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 37 hours

B. PURPOSE


2. In February 2022, the board of trustees motioned staff to bring back information on how TCDSB is responding to the recommendations.

3. Currently, we continue to await Ministry direction with respect to the recommendations that impact on our ability to respond fully to the request including the identification of a screening tool(s), a tracking mechanism, a new reading curriculum, and changes to various Policy/Program Memoranda that are integral to the response to the OHRC recommendations.

4. This report outlines some of the strategies the TCDSB is actioning in response to the recommendations, with the understanding that some will require Ministry direction and funding to support.

C. BACKGROUND

1. On November 9, 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized that “learning is not a privilege, but a basic and essential human right”. In response to this decision, on January 27, 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released the Right to Read: Public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities.

2. The OHRC report identified reading as a basic right and provided guidance on a structured literacy approach that includes; phonemic awareness, decoding and spelling words, and practice with reading words.
3. The report identified key requirements to teach students foundational reading skills:

   a. Curriculum and Instruction: A curriculum that is reflective of the scientific research that supports instruction that is systematic.

   b. Early Screening: Students are to be screened using standardized evidence-based screening assessments twice a year.

   c. Reading Interventions: Students are to be provided reading support and interventions based on sound evidence-based strategies.

   d. Accommodations: Students are to be provided the accommodations required for reading and these instructional accommodations must align with an evidence-based curriculum and reading interventions.

   e. Professional Assessments: Students should be provided professional assessments in a timely manner and staff must take into account the risk of bias for culturally/linguistically diverse students when administering these assessments.

4. The report identified systemic issues including inconsistencies at the Ministry and board levels and called for more systematic collection, management, analysis and mobilization of data to inform areas for learning in reading that equalize the learning opportunities for all students, especially students in underserved communities, students with special needs and English language learners.

5. The report identified the continued need for teacher professional learning, both pre-teaching and job embedded, that emphasizes reading development, including direct and systematic instruction in foundational reading skills.

6. On-going communication and transparency with parents, students and educators was another area identified by the report for continued improvement.

7. The Ministry of Education is currently undergoing consultation with various stakeholders and has not provided direction to district school boards on next steps.
8. This report provides information on the implementation status of OHRC recommendations at the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. A review of the recommendations made by the OHRC report is currently underway to identify and implement the strategies/directions provided in the report while understanding that many of the recommendations are contingent on Ministry of Education direction and funding.

2. The OHRC report references Scarborough’s Rope model (2001) to explain how children learn to read. Students learn to read by developing word recognition, achieved through phonological awareness, decoding (and spelling) and sight recognition. These decoding skills, when combined with background and vocabulary knowledge, an understanding of language, verbal reasoning and literacy knowledge lead to skilled reading in students. It takes a number of years of instruction and practice to reach mastery.

3. The Ministry introduced the Effective Early Reading Instruction: A Guide for Teachers in 2022 to provide direction with respect to the elements that make for a reading program. The guide focused on systematic and explicit instructional strategies for each reading skill: phonological awareness; phonemic awareness; alphabet knowledge; phonics and word study.

**TCDSB Current Programming**

4. Like many district school boards, TCDSB has a tiered approach to reading interventions similar to those outlined in the inquiry report. Table 1 below identifies three tiers of intervention.

5. 

| **Table 1: TCDSB Tiered Instruction** |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **LEVEL**                     | **Description of Support**       | **Examples**                    |
| Tier 1 MOST STUDENTS          | • Supports are provided to all students within the regular classroom.  |
|                               | • This includes small group instruction on reading skills being learned. | Classroom based Review of concepts learned |
Tier 2
SOME STUDENTS

- Reading support provided through individual reading intervention online with specific teacher instruction as needed.
- Supports are provided to students experiencing difficulties in reading through small group instruction in an alternate setting. Students undergo screening in reading to participate. (e.g., 5th Block)

Tier 3
FEW STUDENTS

- Students are screened early on for participation in small group intervention programming.
- Students receive reading interventions within a special education setting.
- Students participate in specific reading interventions within a special education setting.

Lexia
5th Block

Kindergarten Language Program
Specific Reading programs (e.g., SRA, etc)
Empower Reading

6. Although TCDSB has a tiered approach to reading interventions, there exist opportunities to change or augment what is currently in place to implement the recommendations made to district school boards. The TCDSB is exploring opportunities that will best and equitably serve our students’ reading needs and simultaneously enhance instructional efficacy.

**TCDSB Early Reading Strategy**

7. TCDSB is in the process of implementing an Early Reading Strategy that will change how reading is taught and will augment the supports for students who continue to struggle with reading beyond regular classroom instruction.

8. Table 2 outlines the steps TCDSB will be addressing to support early reading implementation across the system:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Instruction (TIER 1)</td>
<td>Training will be provided to all teachers through a job-embedded approach to reading in the primary grades K-3. (Screening tools will assist in identifying student needs.)</td>
<td>Instruction will focus on developing decoding and will include phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge; phonics and word study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/Small Group Instruction (TIER 1)</td>
<td>Training in differentiated instruction will support teaching strategies to reach all students. Students who demonstrate difficulties in reading will be provided with individual or small group instruction through direct teaching approaches within the regular classroom.</td>
<td>Individual/Small Group Instruction that can identify student areas for learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual/Small group instruction (TIER 2)</td>
<td>Augment teacher training in the use of online programming such as Lexia to support students within the classroom.</td>
<td>Students are provided with direct teacher instruction when they encounter difficulty with specific elements of reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group instruction (TIER 2)</td>
<td>Teachers in 5th block program will receive training on screening tools and teaching strategies that align with the OHRC recommendations.</td>
<td>Revise and update the program to align with the elements of reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group instruction (TIER 3)</td>
<td>Continue to identify kindergarten learners to participate in the Kindergarten Language Program. The program currently provides early interventions strategies in alignment with the OHRC report as well as speech/language interventions.</td>
<td>Use of new screening tools will support the identification of kindergarten students in addition to the battery of assessments already in place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Small Group instruction (TIER 3) | Empower programming aligns with the tenets of reading identified in the OHRC report as a successful Tier 3 intervention. TCDSB will review current Empower offerings and expand these sessions of Empower to additional schools over the next three years. | Reduce the number of students not participating and reduce the number of students required to attend programming at alternate sites.

9. The OHRC outlined the need for the Ministry to revise Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 8 - Learning Disabilities, PPM 11 - Early Identification and PPM155 Diagnostic Assessment in Support of Student Learning to provide clear directives to teachers, principals and school boards on the collection of data. These changes are essential to ensure that the board is able to gather data on student performance and the impact of interventions.

10. The implementation of the TCDSB Early Reading Strategy will require job-embedded specialized training and the purchase of classroom resources to support students in every classroom.

11. Currently TCDSB has 17 elementary schools with French instruction in the primary grades. TCDSB expects that there will be additional costs to using screeners and instructional materials in French Immersion classes.

12. The cost to implement the strategy would require approximately $1 million per year to provide training on use of screeners to staff by grade and the basic classroom resources (e.g., decodable texts) necessary to use with students.

13. Additional costs may be incurred once the Ministry of Education outlines the responsibilities to district school boards with respect to the implementation of screeners and their tracking over time. Thus far, the Ministry has not announced direction or funding to support the implementation of the OHRC recommendations.

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Over the last year, while TCDSB reviewed the OHRC report and the changes that are required to support all students to reach success in reading, the TCDSB used Tutoring Support funds to provide after school, online weekend, Summer school, online after school tutoring to support students with challenges in both reading and mathematics.
2. Teachers participating in the summer tutoring program were provided with training and the opportunity to implement strategies and use instructional materials in line with the recommendations. They were able to use the strategies within their own classrooms in the fall.

3. Additionally, some TCDSB students participated in synchronous strategic reading interventions (e.g.; corrective reading) that align with the commission’s recommendations.

4. TCDSB is currently piloting the use of screeners and instructional materials in regular classes and 5th Block programs that align with the Right to Read report recommendations to better understand implementation requirements, including successes and obstacles.

5. TCDSB will continue to collect data on student performance within current programs, including the number of students participating in the diverse programming offerings and their experienced success levels.

6. TCDSB will receive and respond to Ministry of Education direction/mandates and will review alignment with current practices and implement any newly provided direction programs/strategies.

**F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

This report is for the information of the Board of Trustees.