

## **Appendix A: External Research Summary of Findings 2021-2024**

Since the 2020-2021 school year, there have been 21 external research projects approved. Of these, 9 researchers have reported findings back to the board. Those that are missing may still be in the data collection/analysis phase of research, examining longitudinal outcomes, or experienced delays due to external factors (i.e. COVID).

### 2020-2021

**Feeling Explorers: Building Emotional Resilience and Social Competence in Canadian Classrooms:** A study to measure the effectiveness of a classroom-based social and emotional learning (SEL) program. Small focus groups across three TCDSB classrooms were conducted. Participants reported the program having a significant positive impact on students' emotional awareness and social connections, learning coping strategies to manage their feelings and how to support their peers. Feedback from participants such as more frequent, and longer sessions will be used to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

**Evaluation of a School Sun Safety Program:** Working in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, this study evaluated their SunSense Certification program for elementary schools. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the program for promoting skin health and reducing skin cancer risk. The SunSense program uses an educational approach with students such as limiting outdoor time during peak UVR hours, increased access to, and time using shade. Results were used for replication and improvements to the program.

### 2021-2022

**TARGetKids! Healthy Children Together:** This is a research network that aims to improve health of children in Canada. Using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) for JK/SK students researchers learned about factors related to school readiness. In total, more than 1400 students across 15 school boards and 315 schools participated in this study. Researchers recruited participants prior to their application and approached TCDSB to complete the EDI for 24 JK/SK students across 14 schools. Results from the broader study indicate that children at high nutritional risk were more likely to be vulnerable on the EDI and children who met national sleep and screentime guidelines were better prepared for school.

**Evaluating Brief Digital Interventions for School-Aged Youth:** A feasibility study to measure the effectiveness of Brief Digital Interventions (BDIs) within a school context. Four BDIs were developed to teach students different skills: 1) solving problems, 2) feeling calm, 3) changing unhelpful thoughts, and 4) practicing the positive opposite of unhelpful behaviour. Each topic has a short introductory video and an online module, as well as supplementary materials for the student in-session and for at-home practice. TCDSB was one of four participating school boards and while board specific data is unavailable, the study results suggest the tools were well-accepted by staff and students, and results will inform revisions to the program and future training.

**#HearNowON for 2021:** This study was to hear from secondary school students across Ontario about their priorities for mental health learning and programming in their schools and communities. There is no specific information about TCDSB participation however the research suggests that more than 2/3 of participants know at least a little bit about the mental health resources in their school with a slightly lower number (63%) aware of board-level supports. This is an increase from 2019 where ~50% of students reported awareness of school and board level supports. Students identified ways to cope with stress, transitions, and managing emotions as important skills they want to learn. When asked about the most important topics they would like to learn about, students indicated 1) When to seek help, 2) Ways to cope, 3) How to ask for help, 4) Suicide warning signs, and 5) How to help a friend.

### **Talk to Learn: The Impact of Incorporating Different Types of Talk in a Language**

**Impaired – Intensive Support Program (LI-ISP) Classroom:** An evaluation of the Talk to Learn Program specifically how oral language impacts student learning with a focus on students with language impairment. Qualitative data from TCDSB participation, including 8 students, 5 teachers and 7 parents was collected and showed positive changes in school experience including increased engagement (i.e. collaboration, participation, frequency and quality of peer interactions) for students in the program.

### 2022-2023

**2023 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS):** This is an annual survey from the Center for Addiction and Mental Health that monitors drug use, mental health, physical health, gambling, bullying, and risk behaviours across Ontario. Schools are randomly selected and in 2023, 8 elementary and 15 secondary schools from TCSSB participated in the study. Trends in drug use indicate that while most drug use (including alcohol and tobacco) has declined since 1999, there has been a recent increase in the use of prescription opioids and cough/cold medications. Approximately 3% of students in Grades 7-12 report smoking tobacco while 13% of these students reported vaping (electronic cigarettes) with the majority of these students indicating they were vaping tobacco products.

### 2023-2024

### **Feeling Explorers: Building Emotional Resilience and Social Competence in Canadian**

**Classrooms:** An evaluation of a classroom intervention teaching Social-Emotional Skills (SEL) for students in Grades 1-3. 132 students (57 from TCDSB) participated in the study with students, parents and teachers completing pre and post assessments. Six classrooms in 4 schools were chosen where members of the TCDSB Psychology Department were available to deliver the program. Parents reported improvement in emotional problems, hyperactivity and prosocial behavior and teacher assessments indicate positive change in students' social-emotional competencies, such as optimistic thinking, self-awareness and self-management.

**The Health Canada Canadian Student Alcohol and Drug Survey:** Since 1994, this study collects information on substance use every two years from students in grades 7 to 12 attending private and public schools across Canada. The survey covers a broad range of topics that help to track changes in behaviours, perceptions, and wellbeing over time. In the 2023-24 survey, 46 students from 2 TCDSB schools participated. This study reports that across Canada substance use levels have remained steady since 2022-22 but have decreased since 2008-09.