



REPORT TO

REGULAR BOARD

THE TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS - MAY 7 UPDATE

"God ... will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek ... immortality through perseverance in good works."
Romans 2:6-10

Created, Draft	First Tabling	Review
May 1, 2020	May 7, 2020	Click here to enter a date.

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INFORMATION REPORT

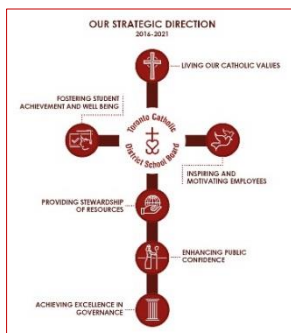
Vision:

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.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 23, the Board of Trustee received a report outlining the Toronto Catholic District School Board’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The report delineate the Board’s response in two distinct phases. In phase one, the period between March 13 and April 5, the Board focused on the development of its Business Continuity Plan, on the creation of its plan for teacher-led distance learning, and on a system-wide “check and connect”. Phase two began on April 6 with the launch of *A Faith Community of Believers: TCDSB’s Distance Learning Implementation Plan*.

Currently, the TCDSB is in the fifth week of its teacher-led distance learning plan. With new Ministry directions and on-going formal and informal feedback from students, parents, teachers, principals, vice-principals, and union and non-union employee groups, the TCDSB continues to monitor and refine its practices and procedures.

Included in this report is a revised version of *A Faith Community of Believers: TCDSB’s Distance Learning Implementation Plan 2.0* (Appendix A) which reflects the system’s commitment to continuous improvement within a faith-based learning environment. In addition, contemplating the eventual return to school, the TCDSB’s Business Continuity has been expanded to include the *Return to School Committee* charged with setting a roadmap for a safe return to the physical learning environment.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 25 hours.

PURPOSE

Focusing on the following key areas, this report provides a high-level summary update on key decisions, actions, and outcomes in the TCDSB’s response to the COVID-19 crisis:

Report Component
A Faith Community of Believers: TCDSB’s Distance Learning Implementation Plan (Updated)
Parent and Community Engagement (CSPCs, CPIC, Community Advisory Committees)
Distance Learning: Support for Parents

Video Conferencing/Synchronous Learning
Update on Distribution of Devices
Business Continuity Update - Return-to-School Committee
Human Resources Update
Communications

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis presents unprecedented challenges for Ontario’s Education System and for the TCDSB. With a commitment to sustaining faith development and an adherence to the principles of simplicity, flexibility, compassion, and equity the TCDSB has worked diligently to create and implement a distance learning plan that will ensure continuity of learning for its 90,000 students. The overarching challenge has been transitioning from a face-to-face education system to a virtual, teacher-led distance learning mode of curriculum delivery and assessment.

In the new distance learning environment, the TCDSB is committed to adopting a system-wide learning stance for continuous improvement of its practices and procedures.

EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

A Faith Community of Believers: TCDSB’s Distance Learning Implementation Plan (Updated)

With its commitment to continuous improvement, the TCDSB has revised its plan for teacher-led distance learning. The updated *A Faith Community of Believers: TCDSB’s Distance Learning Implementation Plan 2.0* (Appendix A) reflects new Ministry directions as well feedback from students, parents, teachers, principals, vice-principals, and union and non-union employee groups. The updated plan contains enhancements in a number of key areas:

1. Nurturing our Catholic Community

- a. Initiation of a regular check and connect with school Chaplains and Religion Department Heads;

- b. Support for student trustee elections;
- c. Nurturing our Families of Faith Newsletters;
- d. Monthly Newsletter and Virtues;
- e. Bi-Monthly Digital Resources for Administrators and Teachers;
- f. Email communications to Everyone on Exchange;
- g. Twitter account and YouTube Channel specifically for NCC; and
- h. Development and promotion of opportunities for students and staff to reflect and share how they live their faith: “we Believe in”...; “Let’s Talk Faith” (CSLIT); Radio Maria Faith Talk; Catholic Education Week.

2. Support for Families in Need

- a. Clarification of the role of our Community Relations Officers during COVID 19 and the school closure period;
- b. Additional information of the expansion of the FOOD FOR KIDS program;
- c. Linking with the Social Work department to develop strategies of different ways to link with specific ethno-cultural groups;
- d. Clarification of supports provided by settlement workers supports that can be provided to school communities;
- e. Use of videoconferencing with Community Advisory Committee members to gather further information of required services and supports required.
- f. List of additional translation services that have been provided to school communities since the initial version of the A Faith Community of Believers document;
- g. Scheduling a meeting with E-PAN network schools to determine additional supports that may be required; and

- h. Linking with the Ministry Equity and Human Rights division to identify key areas of focus related to ensuring equity during distance learning.

3. Human Resources

- a. Clarification for job responsibilities for a variety of TCDSB support staff.

4. Assessment

- a. Noted in the document is the creation of a TCDSB Assessment Guide for Teaching Staff;
- b. Clarification provided in regards to no final grade on the final report being lower than a student's mark as of March 13, 2020;
- c. Evaluations after April 6, 2020 can only be included on the final report card if the mark has improved from March 13, 2020;
- d. Exams for secondary school students have been cancelled for this 2019-2020 school year; and
- e. Teachers can adjust the weighting of any assignments, including culminating activities for secondary students, if this is in the best interest of the student.

5. Protocols for Students with Special Education Needs

- a. Development of a priority list of IPRCs that will be created remotely for student with special needs;
- b. Annual IPRC reviews will be organized and conducted remotely at the school level;
- c. No new assessments will be taking place during this time;
- d. Admission to/Demission from ISP classes will not occur during the closure period. Considerations for those will be made at an appropriate time upon return to school;
- e. Gifted program notifications will continue and IPRCs will be conducted upon a return to normal school operations;

- f. Kindergarten Language program will continue to receive referrals;
- g. Planning for transitions between Gr. 8 and Gr. 9 will be supported by Special Services central staff for students:
 - i. With Autism
 - ii. In ME/DD ISP classes;
- h. Exchange of information meetings will continue remotely for those students with special needs or considered at risk as they move from elementary to secondary;
- i. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) will continue to be updated during the distance learning phase;
- j. To date, parents of students with SEA equipment (devices and other equipment) have had the opportunity to alert the Principal regarding equipment left behind following the 13 March closure. Three controlled access-to-school opportunities have since been established for the arrangement of equipment pick-up by parents;
- k. The next wave of distribution of SEA devices will pertain to approved SEA applications. The details of distribution of said devices will be announced once the scope of availability of those devices from the vendor has been determined;
- l. Support staff have been involved in the Check and Connect and learning phases of the TCDSB Distance Learning Framework. They will continue to provide regular, daily supports to students with whom they have worked prior to the start of the closure period via email and/or teleconferencing. Teachers are encouraged to invite support staff to join their distance learning classrooms;
- m. For students who were previously referred, School-Based Rehab Services (SBRS) will continue with care plans for families who opt to receive service during the school closure;
- n. SBRS staff will contact the referral source (school or Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP)) to let them know the student is coming into service via tele-practice by encrypted email;

- o. For resources to aid in planning for students with special needs, please access the following link:
["https://sites.google.com/tcdsb.ca/specialeducationresourcesite/home"](https://sites.google.com/tcdsb.ca/specialeducationresourcesite/home)
(This site will be updated regularly);
- p. Link to the TCDSB Professional Learning to Support Student Learning site for a variety of documents to read, videos to view, live sessions to join;
- q. Staff are encouraged to visit the TCDSB Special Services Mental Health internal site for staff and student resources:
<https://tcdsbceec.sharepoint.com/sites/MentalHealth>;
- r. Resources for students and parents can be found on the TCDSB public-facing website at: <https://sites.google.com/tcdsb.ca/tcdsbcurriculumdept/mental-health-and-wellness>.

Parent and Community Engagement (CSPCs, CPIC, Community Advisory Committees)

The TCDSB values the engagement and involvement of parents during these times of great change. Parents share their distance learning experiences and challenges and provide invaluable insights, which can help, guide the TCDSB's distance learning strategies and approaches. With secure video conferencing technology, the TCDSB is committed to ensuring the parent voice is heard during the teacher-led distance learning phase.

- a. Principals are continuing to reach out to the CSPC chairs to plan and execute executive and official, CSPC meetings. These meetings are being conducted virtually using Zoom, as a video conferencing platform, until school communities are able to conduct in-person meetings.
- b. To ensure that the meetings are focused, collaborative and secure, with equitable access for all, processes and protocols for participation and engagement for all participants were developed, in collaboration with our parent partners.

- c. The Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC) - Toronto and the Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)-Toronto have continued to host virtually, using video conferencing platforms.
- d. On April 15th, CPIC-Toronto hosted a virtual Internet Safety Information Seminar, which had 150 parent participants.
- e. On April 23rd, the CPIC-Toronto Chair, along with the superintendent, and coordinator, of parent engagement attended a virtual provincial Ministry Parent Engagement Feedback Session.
- f. In order to engage Community Advisory Committees in assessing the unique needs of our diverse ethno-cultural groups during the pandemic crisis, the Community Relations Department has conducted both informal “check and connect” sessions as well as formal video conferencing meetings.

Distance Learning: Support for Parents

- a. Beginning March 23, 2020, the Curriculum, Leadership & Innovation and ICT Department and the Student Success Department have provided parents and guardians with online resources and activities for students via a dedicated website:
<https://www.tcdsb.org/FORSTUDENTS/LearningatHome/Pages/Default.aspx>

Daily activities highlighted literacy, numeracy, religion, science, social studies, STEAM, music and art.

- b. With the support of the Curriculum, Leadership & Innovation and ICT Department, staff have delivered virtual in-services to provide parents with tools and strategies, to support their children with learning at home.
- c. The sessions have focused on such online learning and teaching platforms, as Google classroom and assistive technology. The sessions were made available to all parents. Thus far, 1200 parents have participated in the sessions. In addition to recording the sessions for future reference, further opportunities for parent learning will be offered.

Video Conferencing/Synchronous Learning

As the TCDSB's teacher-led distance learning framework continues to evolve, guidelines for video conferencing are being developed in consultation with teacher unions and other stakeholders. The guidelines will be informed by research, Ministry direction, as well as the recently-released Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) video on video conferencing.

- a. Video Conferencing Guidelines will be customized to address the unique needs of the TCDSB distance-learning environment.
- b. The TCDSB Video Conferencing Guidelines will contain safety and privacy protocols for all staff.
- c. The TCDSB Video Conferencing Guidelines will encourage teachers to use their professional judgement in the use of video conferencing as an instructional tool.
- d. The TCDSB Video Conferencing Guidelines will be shared with all staff during the week of May 3, 2020 for anticipated implementation during the same week.

Device Distribution Update

The TCDSB continues to deliver devices to students at an accelerated pace. Most of the devices ordered in March and the first week of distance learning have been delivered, but additional requests continue to come in.

As of Friday, May 2:

- i. **Devices Requested/Ordered**
 - Chromebooks 5,214
 - iPads 3,699
- ii. **Devices Shipped** (Delivery by Purolator done 1 to 2 days after ship date)
 - Chromebooks 4,006
 - iPads 933

Business Continuity Plan – Return to School Committee

The business continuity plan continues to evolve in order to ensure key operations processes and procedures are maintained throughout the closure of schools. These include:

- a. Update of protocols for employee access to the CEC and other admin locations;
- b. Developing protocol for retrieval of student/staff items from schools in the event that the closure extends past May 31.
- c. Acquisition of PPE, supplies required for safe operation of facilities.

The newly formed *Return to School Committee* will create a roadmap for the safe return to the physical environment. Comprised of representatives from a variety of departments including Health and Safety, Business, Research, Transportation, as well as Academic Superintendents, it will:

- d. address ongoing issues related to COVID-19 restrictions on the operation of school buildings;
- e. review a body of research and best return-to-school practice used in a variety of national and international jurisdictions; and
- f. consider the academic program with a focus on:
 - i. students’ emotional wellbeing
 - ii. addressing learning loss
 - iii. adoption of blended learning models, and
 - iv. addressing the unique needs of special education students and students in risk.

Human Resources Update

The Human Resources Department continues to maintain key operations such as recruitment, staffing, and promotions, on-going consultations with unions and other employee groups, support for employee mental health and well-being, and monitoring of employee engagement during the distance learning delivery model:

- a. Senior staff maintain authentic and fulsome consultation with our union partners as we enhance our implementation of distance learning. Important joint board and union committees dealing with technology guidelines and health and safety have been/will be virtually re-engaged to inform continuity and re-entry planning.
- b. Senior HR staff are proceeding with all regular recruitment, interviewing, and promotion practices to ensure organizational and programming sustainability.
- c. Senior HR staff have deliberately responded to personal, professional and social/emotional stressors that accompany this uncertain COVID environment. All TCDSB employees and their family members can access our multi-faceted and confidential TCDSB-sponsored Employee Family Assistance Plan. Ergonomic checklists have also been provided to ensure that employees are assessing the effectiveness of their workspaces.
- d. Employees that are not permanently engaged in the current mode of service delivery have been provided with the appropriate documentation that will facilitate their access to government supports. We value their regular contributions to the TCDSB and we look forward to re-engaging their services when schools re-open.
- e. The Employee Relations component of the HR department is providing the organization with legal advice and continuing with arbitrations and investigations to ensure a successful re-entry process.

Communications

Given the rapid pace of developments during the pandemic crisis, the Communications Department continues to provide all stakeholders, including parents, with timely updates and pertinent information using various communications channels. The Communications Department continues to:

- a. provide regular COVID-19 webpage updates;
- b. provide regular updates to FAQs based on parent inquiries;

- c. curate weekly social media content targeting various audiences about new health information and practicing social distancing;
- d. provide weekly updates shared with everyone on exchange through the weekly wrap-up; and
- e. provide weekly Briefing Notes for Trustees on COVID-related updates, TCDSB responses, and summaries of key communications.

METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a constantly changing landscape requiring that the TCDSB be proactive, adaptable, and responsive.
2. With ongoing feedback from students, parents, teachers, unions and other employee groups, the TCDSB's teacher-led distance learning framework will evolve in order to meet new challenges resulting from the pandemic crisis.
3. With the creation of the Return to School Committee, the TCDSB will create a road map for a safe return school.
4. Using research-based practices, the aim of monitoring is to support, validate, mentor and nurture staff through the distance learning phase.
5. The senior team and school administrators will lead and learn in the virtual environment by:
 - a. checking and connecting with staff to provide professional supports validation, and affirmation of efforts;
 - b. continuing to listen and address issues and challenges articulated by staff;
 - c. supporting professional learning for improved efficacy;
 - d. providing support for mental health and well-being;
 - e. leading with an equity frame of reference; and
 - f. leading with calm, compassion, and empathy.

A. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is for the consideration of the Board.