

# Toronto District School Board

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Operational Procedure PR526

Title: **LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES INDEX**

Adopted: March 24, 2009

Revised:

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Authorization: Executive Council

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVE

To provide instructions to staff regarding the application of the Learning Opportunities Index for resource allocation

## 2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

Director of Education

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

*Learning Opportunities Index* A Board-designed tool that ranks schools based on a range of indicators that measure external challenges affecting student success; many of the Learning Opportunities Index indicators reflect levels of poverty

*External challenges* Conditions that are outside the control or influence of the school or Board and have an impact on student success

*Resources* Funds, staffing, goods, or services allocated to students or schools in order to help the students succeed

## 4.0 PROCEDURES

### 4.1. About the Learning Opportunities Index

The index measures external challenges in a way that compares each school to all other schools. It applies exactly the same set of consistent, reliable, and objective measures to each school and removes the subjectivity that may enter into the perceptions held about individual schools.

The index lists schools according to ranking. The highest ranking (Number 1) indicates the school with the greatest external challenges to student success. The index also provides a score for each school. A higher score leads to a higher ranking.

There are two indices, one for elementary schools (including junior high schools) and one for secondary schools.

#### 4.2. Allocations

When staff is allocating resources to schools, the Learning Opportunities Index should be used (exceptions can be found in the Policy P067, Learning Opportunities Index).

Resources can be allocated using different methods such as the use of cut-offs, stepped cut-offs, scaling, or a combination of these approaches.

Whenever possible, scores should be used in preference to rankings when determining the amount of allocation. Schools' scores on the index are a more accurate indication of relative external challenges than schools' ranking on the index. Schools that are several rankings away from one another may have similar levels of need.

#### 4.3. Allocations of Resources Directly to Schools

The index may be utilized for the direct allocation of resources to schools.

##### (a) Cut-offs

When cut-offs are used, all schools above the cut-off value receive the resource and all those below the cut-off point do not receive it.

##### (b) Stepped Cut-offs

When stepped cut-offs are used, all schools above a specified cut-off value receive a specified level of resource, all schools above a lower specified value receive a lower specified level of resource, and all schools below the final cut-off point do not receive any additional resource. There may be few or many steps (specified cut-off value) used in this allocation method

Where cut-offs are used, stepped cut-offs are preferable to one cut-off, in order to minimize arbitrary differences in allocations to schools with similar external challenges.

##### (c) Scaling

When scaling is used, allocation of the resources is tapered so that more resources are given to schools high on the index than schools low on the index proportionate to each school's score in the index. Each school receives a slightly different allocation, scaled accurately to its score on the index.

A scaled allocation is most appropriate when resources are readily divided into small units (such as dollars). In most instances, scaling is inappropriate in allocations of staff, because staffing full-time equivalents are not appropriately divided into small fractions.

Scaling should not be used when it attenuates the resource so much that it is not beneficial. It is more appropriate to use cut-offs when the resource to be

allocated is scarce, and as a result, should be focused on students and schools with the greatest need. It may be appropriate to combine scaling with a cut-off so that allocations are scaled but only for schools above a specified level of external challenge.

#### 4.4. Allocations of Resources to Families of Schools

The index may be utilized for central allocations to superintendents of education for use in their Families of Schools to achieve an equitable allocation of resources for different areas of the City. The amount received will be based on the score or ranking of individual schools on the Learning Opportunities Index in each Family of Schools.

- (i) Where central allocations using the index are made to Families of Schools, the superintendent has full discretion to allocate the resource among schools and students within his or her Family of Schools, based on whatever criteria the superintendent deems appropriate.
- (ii) Superintendents are encouraged to collaborate with principals in determining appropriate criteria for allocation within the Family of Schools.

#### 4.5. Measuring the Impact of Allocations Using the Learning Opportunities Index

The impact of allocations received by schools will be assessed by gathering information from a random sample of schools chosen based on their placement on the index. Schools will be representative of different levels of external challenge.

Specific information collected will include details about type of resources schools are receiving based on the Learning Opportunities Index; the value of these resources, how they are used, and the benefit to student learning. Resources received through the regular school budget allocation process will not be included in the analysis.

Information will also be collected about the use of resources allocated to Families of Schools for distribution by superintendents of education.

The information will be collected and analyzed every two years. The results of the research will be provided to the Board and shared with the Inner City Advisory Committee and other community advisory committees.

## **5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Policy P067, Learning Opportunities Index