



ADMISSION PRACTICES: SPECIALIZED SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

In November 2009 a committee was struck to review the Admission Practices associated with elementary and secondary Specialized Schools and Programs in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The goal of the Committee was to ensure admission practices for specialized schools and programs in the TDSB are fair, equitable, transparent and clearly communicated to students, parents/guardians and caregivers.

Specialized Schools and Programs have the following criteria:

- (a) A written, clearly articulated specific program focus (e.g., the arts, athletics, information technology) is required. To be designated a specialized school; this focus must apply to the whole school.
- (b) In secondary schools, students must take a minimum of seven courses directly related to the school's particular program focus. In the case of professional performing arts students or gifted athletes, students are not required to take the minimum number of courses related to their areas of focus. However, timetable accommodation must be made by the school to allow these students to pursue their area of focus.
- (c) Each school has developed specific admission criteria.

The following recommendations went into effect on **October 27th, 2010**. The new system expectation for the application process to all specialized schools and programs are as follows:

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

- All requirements outlining admission procedures for specialized schools and programs must be communicated clearly to students, parents/guardians and caregivers
- If there are prerequisites required for the admission process, prerequisites must be clearly stated before students begin the application process
- Communication must clearly state that transportation, including bussing and distribution of TTC tickets, is not included for Specialized Schools and Programs

REPORT CARDS and CHECKLISTS

Schools may request:

- The previous grade report card, however, it is not to be used to exclude students with ELL and/or IEP boxes checked.
- The Fall Elementary Progress Report Card which outlines Learning Skills and Work Habits
- Schools will not ask TDSB staff to complete additional Learning Skills and Work Habits checklists as the Learning Skills and Work Habits section of the new Ministry elementary progress and provincial report card and the secondary provincial report card will suffice.
- Schools may request additional information regarding Learning Skills and Work Habits from students who apply from outside the TDSB.

REFERENCE LETTERS

- Reference letters will no longer be requested from Board staff by specialized schools and programs that have auditions, portfolios and/or admission assessment practices in place



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(e.g. letters from Grade 8 teachers for Grade 9 placement). Therefore internal applicants' reference letters will not be considered.

- Reference letters may be requested from persons or organizations external to the TDSB (e.g. the coach for an elite athlete).

USE OF PHOTOS

Photographs will not be requested as part of any admissions package. However, due to the unique nature of the audition process for schools and programs in The Arts, Arts applicants may be asked to bring a photograph for use solely during the audition process or through a portfolio presentation.

APPLICATION FEES

1. Application fees must be pre-approved by the Superintendent for the Family of Schools.
2. Parents/guardians/caregivers and students must be notified of the application fee in writing.
3. Fees are used only to offset the costs of the application process.
4. Where there is financial hardship, the Principal may waive the requirement for the application fee and this should be explicitly stated in the application form.
5. The Principal must ensure appropriate accounting practices and procedures are clearly enforced.
6. Receipts must be issued in duplicate for all moneys collected.
7. Students who apply but are not invited for interview or audition are entitled to a full refund of the application fee.

ADMISSION ASSESSMENTS

Where forms of written assessment such as exams or tests are utilized as part of determining criteria for admission to specialized schools and programs, these assessments must adhere to the following fundamental principles outlined in the policy document: *Growing Success, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, Grades 1 to 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010)* :

- Are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
- Support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
- Are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students

OPTIONAL ATTENDANCE

- The current Optional Attendance Policy allows for students to apply to two specialized schools or programs and two regular schools. Once a student engages in any application process with a specialized school or program, whether audition, test or portfolio etc., it counts as a one of their choices under the policy.