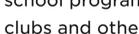


TDSB diverts \$61M from provincial funding grant for marginalized students: report

By David Shum
 Web Producer Global News



WATCH ABOVE: Social Planning Toronto says more than half of the money from the province's Learning Opportunity Grant is being diverted to fill funding gaps within the board. Marianne Dimain reports.



The [Toronto District School Board](#) (TDSB) is under fire for diverting \$61 million in provincial funding for marginalized students and instead using it to shore-up its general revenues, according to a [new report](#) released by Social Planning Toronto on Thursday.

The study, which used data provided by the TDSB, found that only 52 per cent of the \$127 million earmarked for low-income students were used for after-school programs, extra staff support, homework clubs and other programs to support students in need.

"This means that in 2014-15 alone, approximately \$61 million, that was supposed to support our most marginalized students, was diverted to other budget line items," the report stated.

The money, which is linked to Ontario's Demographic Allocation of the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG-DA) created in 1997, is part of an open-ended funding model that allows schools boards across the province to spend the cash as they see fit.

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"Given the fiscal pressures on school boards, it is no surprise that they seek to reallocate any available funding," the report states. "Unfortunately, the provincial government chose not to put in place any mechanism for accountability."

Facing budgetary constraints and chronic underfunding, the study further adds that the TDSB has been forced to make due with a "flawed funding model."

"The LOG-DA, as one of very few unprotected grants, appears to continue to be paying for a wide range of general programs and filling in gaps in provincial funding for mandatory core services, despite the long-time recognition of this problem," the report stated.

"The effect of this reallocation is that funds meant for our poorest students are being used to finance the education costs of their richer classmates."

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The social policy research group is urging the TDSB to rethink its funding allocation strategy and redirect the full grant amount back to supporting students in need.

Social Planning Toronto is also directing the Ontario government to make sure safeguards are in place so that LOG-DA money is properly used for its intended purpose.

Meanwhile, the TDSB approved a motion last summer to create a task force and conduct an audit of its current programs and initiatives for under-served students. Recommendations are expected by the spring.

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