



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees
From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education
Date: May 25, 2021
Subject: **Supporting 2SLGBTQ+ Students in our Catholic Schools**
Origin: Administrative Council

Recommendation

Moved by _____, seconded by _____

“THAT the Rainbow Flag be flown at the Catholic Education Center in recognition of Pride month from June 1 – June 30 each year beginning in June 2021.

THAT every school in DCDSB raise the Rainbow Flag from June 1 – June 30 annually.

THAT a multi-disciplinary working group be established by the Director to act as an advisory body to ensure staff have resources and training to provide for the ongoing support of 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff in our Catholic Schools.”

Rationale

Durham Catholic District School Board has identified Equity as one of the three core commitments of our multi-year strategic plan. Specifically, we have indicated that we are committed to cultivating a positive sense of self and belonging for each individual by respecting and responding to diverse identities and strengths. Further, under Strategic Priority 2 – Celebrating Inclusion and Well-Being we indicate that our Catholic learning communities will cultivate the principles of equity and inclusion with a specific goal of creating a positive school climate that supports students’ feelings of belonging and safety.

Recently, the matter of Pride month in June and specifically the flying of the Rainbow flags in Catholic School Boards has gained a lot of public and media attention. For many years now, Catholic School Boards across the province, including Durham Catholic have been under scrutiny on this issue as a result of a perceived conflict

between our faith and the full inclusion of students, staff and members of the broader community who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

Equity and Inclusion in Catholic Schools

From both a legal and a moral perspective, all schools in DCDSB must make every effort to create safe and welcoming environments for staff and students that are free from any form of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination. The Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions) rightfully notes that we “need to educate children and young people *to respect every person* in their particularity and difference so that no one should suffer bullying, violence, insults or unjust discrimination based on their specific characteristics (such as special needs, race, religion, sexual tendencies etc.)”. (p. 10 *Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, Vatican City, 2019.)

Referring to people who are homosexual, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2358) asserts that they “must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided”. This Catholic anthropology is consistent with Ministry of Education policy requirements for Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools and the principles and tenets of the Ontario Human Rights Commission which apply to the Durham Catholic District School Board by virtue of being a publicly funded education provider.

Legislation

The denominational rights of Catholic Schools to teach and operate in accordance with the tenets of our Catholic faith is enshrined in s. 93(1) of the Canadian Constitution, recognized in section 29 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, referenced in section 19 of the Human Rights Code and included in s 1(4) of the Education Act. It is understood that parents/guardians who choose Catholic schools expect that Catholic faith and traditions will be woven into all aspects of their child’s education.

Publicly funded Catholic School Systems in Ontario must also follow provincial legislation, Ministry of Education policy and the legal requirements of the Human Rights Code.

Failure to address circumstances in which an individual suffers bullying, isolation or harassment as a result of their gender identity or sexual orientation and therefore does not have access to education free from discrimination would constitute a violation of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Discrimination is most easily identified in specific acts, however, the adoption of policies or procedures that do not adequately consider the lived experiences of individuals protected under the code is also discriminatory.

Practice

The Catholic Education community has always been able to effectively manage these various accountabilities while continuing to provide an authentically Catholic Education to our students. In fact, work in Catholic schools has in many cases provided examples of best practices that have later been utilized as a model to enhance education in all of the publicly funded systems. An example of this would be the provincial mandate regarding Character Education which mirrors our tradition of articulating our Catholic virtues and identifying Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

With the dramatic rise of civil rights movements during this past year has come a growing social awareness of the insufficiency of blanket universal statements of inclusion. Durham Catholic District School Board has recognized and actively responded to the call to provide specific and targeted support to equity seeking groups. This has taken many forms, including, but not limited to:

- the establishment of an active Indigenous Education Circle;
- the recognition of Louis Riel Day and the raising of the Métis flag;
- the development of an anti-racism policy;
- a clearly articulated Anti-Black Racism Strategy which includes student and community focus groups and training at all levels of the organization;
- the establishment of board level student advisory groups for French Programming and Indigenous Education;
- intentional hiring practices to support increased diversity;
- the completion of a workforce census;
- raising the flag for World Autism Day;
- adoption of practices to support accessibility for all Ontarians; and
- increased attention to days/weeks/months of recognition such as: Orange Shirt Day to commemorate Residential School Survivors; Franco-Ontarien Flag Day; World Down Syndrome Day; Black History Month; Asian Heritage Month; Indigenous History Month; Dress Loud Day (Speech and Hearing Awareness Month); Pink Shirt Day (Anti-bullying); Treaties Recognition Week – to name just a few.

In 2021, an increased number of communications have come forward from our community related to the recognition of Pride Month by DCDSB in June and specifically the flying of the rainbow flags at schools and the Catholic Education Center. Formal correspondence received by the Chair and Director have been included in this report.

Our Faith and the Dignity of the Human Person

Above all, it is important to acknowledge and affirm that Catholicism holds a central belief in the inherent dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and loved without condition. “In the eyes of the Church, every human person is a unique and irreplaceable gift created by our loving God and called to be his son or

daughter. Created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ, every person possesses an intrinsic dignity which must always be respected” (*Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction*, CCCB 2011).

In demonstrating respect for human dignity, it must be clearly stated that no one can or should be reduced to a single dimension:

“The human person... can hardly be described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation... Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as “heterosexual” or “homosexual” and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace God’s child and heir to eternal life.” (*Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1986).

Any reference to a person’s 2SLGBTQ+ identity in this report is in no way intended to reduce an individual’s personhood to the single dimension of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

School Climate Survey

Every two years the Board conducts a school climate survey in accordance with Ministry of Education requirements. Within this survey students are asked to respond to questions regarding how frequently they learn about the experiences and/or achievements of people who may be different from them (ex. women/girls, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people of diverse faiths, people from various racial backgrounds). Staff are asked to rate how frequently students have resources and opportunities to learn about the experiences and/or achievements of the same groups of people. In both cases, learning related to people who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community were rated significantly lower than all other groups.

The results of the DCDSB 2020 survey indicated the following:

59% of students from Grades 7-12 report *never* having learned about the experiences and/or achievements of people from the 2SLGBTQ+ community (next closest – people with disabilities – 30% indicating never)

37% of staff report that in their school students *never* have resources and opportunities to learn about the experiences and/or achievements of people from the 2SLGBTQ+ community (Next closest – Diverse religious/faith communities with 12% indicating never)

Data and Research

The Canadian Mental Health Association (<https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-queer-identified-people-and-mental-health/>) reports that *LGBTQ*

people experience stigma and discrimination across their life spans, and are targets of sexual and physical assault, harassment and hate crimesⁱⁱⁱ.

Further, with respect to suicide they indicate that:

LGBTQ youth and trans people face increased risk. For example:

- *LGBTQ youth face approximately 14 times the risk of suicide and substance abuse than heterosexual peers^{xii}*
- *77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide and 45% had attempted suicide*
 - *Trans youth and those who had experienced physical or sexual assault were found to be at greatest risk^{xiii}*

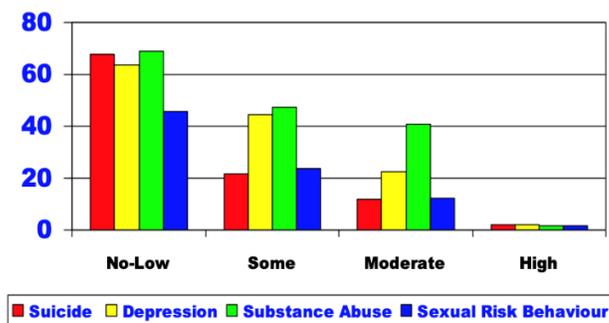
The Family Acceptance Project (<http://familyproject.sfsu.edu>)

The Family Acceptance Project is a San Francisco State University research study that began in 2002, under the Direction of Dr. Caitlin Ryan. This comprehensive study has specifically examined how family and caregiver reactions contribute to health, mental health and development for young people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

Dr. Ryan's research has demonstrated that the response of family, school and religious communities to learning about a young person's identity as 2SLGBTQ+ is critical to the individual's long-term health and well-being. Children and adolescents who experience little to no support from their family and schools regarding their 2SLGBTQ+ identity are at significantly greater risk for suicide, depression, substance abuse and sexually risky behaviour than non-2SLGBTQ+ youth. Alternatively, where young people experience a high degree of support from their family and community the gap in those areas of risk is almost eliminated.



Acceptance Continuum



(Representation of Family Acceptance Project Outcomes - Credit: York Catholic District School Board)

Rainbow Flag and Pride Month

The rainbow flag, designed by Gilbert Baker, was first introduced as a symbol of support for 2SLGBTQ+ in 1978, replacing the pink triangle flag that had its origins in World War II when the Nazi's used the pink triangle to identify and stigmatize homosexuals. Since that time, a number of variations have emerged.

The colours of the widely used six-stripe flag represent the following: red means life, orange means healing, yellow means sunlight, green represents nature, blue represents harmony, and violet means spirit. A newer version of the flag includes the colours black and brown to include racialized people.

“The Rainbow Flag’s meaning rests not in its individual colors but in the symbolism of the entire spectrum. Baker described the rainbow’s universal, all-embracing resonance best: ‘The rainbow came from earliest recorded history as a symbol of hope. In the Book of Genesis, it appeared as proof of a covenant between God and all living creatures.’”
(p. 7 *To Listen, To Reason and to Propose*)

In 2021 the rainbow flag is recognized world-wide as representing Pride, however in recent years it has also been generally accepted as a symbol of inclusion, hope and peace. A number of rainbow installations have been adopted throughout the Durham Region including but not limited to: rainbow crosswalks at the Regional Headquarters, Oshawa City Hall and Pickering Civic Center, a rainbow gazebo in Ajax, and a rainbow park bench in Port Perry.

June is officially recognized in Durham Region, Ontario and Canada as Pride Month in celebration of people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

As of the writing of this report the following Catholic School Boards in Ontario have made a public commitment to recognizing Pride Month by flying the flag:

- Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
- The Northwestern Catholic District School Board
- Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
- Toronto Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board

On April 26, 2021 the Board of Trustees in Halton Catholic District School Board voted to formally recognize Pride Month at all of its schools but not to fly the flag.

Our Catholic Schools

“The Catholic school community, like all school communities, has an obligation to ensure a safe environment for all students by vigilant and steadfast efforts to eradicate all forms of bullying as well as to provide personal and pastoral care for every individual

whose worth as a child of God has been attacked by acts of bullying. The Catholic school must continue to be a safe, inclusive community for all young people entrusted to our care.” (p.2 Respecting Difference: A Resource for Catholic Schools in the Province of Ontario, OSCTA, 2012)

The Directory of Catechesis states “The Church is well aware of the complexity of the personal situations that are lived out, at times, in a conflicted way. She does not judge persons but asks that they be accompanied always and in whatever situation.”

The Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “Christians owe all persons respect and love, however, regardless of their sexual orientation, because all people are respected and loved by God.” [2358-2359]

In 2018 the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Ontario released, *Renewing the Promise – A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education*. In writing this document, the Catholic Bishops joined with members of the Catholic Community “in reflection and discernment on the past, present and future of Catholic education.” (p. 3). The Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus provides the framework for the letter which calls upon the partners in Catholic Education to be a community that accompanies. The art of spiritual accompaniment requires that we walk alongside one another “to listen, to teach and in so doing, to transform” (p. 6).

Many students and staff in our Catholic Schools either personally identify as 2SLGBTQ+ or have immediate family members who do. Catholic education is rooted in the fundamental value of inclusion based upon Jesus’ exhortation “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34). This is a gospel value which we endeavour to live out in all that we do.

Recognizing Pride Month through the visible symbol of the Rainbow flag, clearly communicates that all are welcome and that our Catholic Schools are specifically committed to creating safe spaces for those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+.

Ongoing Support

It is recognized that while flying the Rainbow flag during the month of June is an important symbol of acceptance and identification of Durham Catholic as a safe haven, it is not a substitute for the fulsome pastoral care owed to our students.

In “The Human Person, Love and Sexuality: A Resource for Catholic Educators” (2016) the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario outline, and elaborate upon the four following principles for authentic Christian pastoral care of students:

- All authentic pastoral care begins with and is continually guided by the vision of the human person, love and sexuality
- The pastoral care of the Church must reach out to all with unconditional love

- Pastoral care must meet a person wherever they are along the path of their spiritual and moral life
- For pastoral care to be effective, Jesus Christ, the true shepherd, must be known, and his voice heard

To effectively teach, support and accompany our students in a manner that is consistent with our faith, Catholic Educators, Administrators and Chaplains need resources and ongoing opportunities for training and faith formation. For this reason, a multi-disciplinary working group should be established and maintained to act as a system level advisory body to the Director.

Correspondence

- Appendix 1:** May 3, 2021
PRIDE Recommendations from GSA and Equity Group Consultations
Submitted by Student Trustees Declan Amaral and Annika Del Torre
- Appendix 2:** May 4, 2021
Request
Submitted by OECTA Presidents Paul Collicutt and Melissa Cowen
- Appendix 3:** May 4, 2021
Reflection from Archdiocese of Toronto
Sent by Barry White, Liaison for Catholic Education, Catholic Pastoral Center
- Appendix 4:** May 8, 2021
Letter for 2SLGBTQ+ Community
Kelly Stephen, Chaplain Monsignor John Pereyma Catholic Secondary School
- Appendix 5:** May 9, 2021
Email from S. Laforet, Principal of Monsignor John Pereyma Catholic Secondary School
- Appendix 6:** May 10, 2021
Email to Chair – Submitted by Tomy Valookaran, Chaplain, St. Mary Catholic Secondary School
- Appendix 7:** May 10, 2021
Letter of Support for 2SLGBTQ+ Students
Submitted by Rae Paul – St. Mary Catholic Secondary School, Class of 2015

- Appendix 8:** May 10, 2021
Letter of Support – Submitted by Amy Mather – St. Mary Catholic Secondary School, Class of 2015
- Appendix 9:** May 11, 2021
Letter re: Flying Pride Flags - Submitted by DCDSB Secondary School Principals
- Appendix 10:** May 11, 2021
Email – Alliance for Compassion Letter for DCDSB Board
Submitted by Charlene Rocha and the Alliance for Compassion Team, St. Mary CSS
- Appendix 11:** May14, 2021
Email – Pride Flag Possibilities
Submitted by Katie Walker – Father Leo Austin Catholic Secondary School
- Appendix 12:** May 14, 2021
Letter – Submitted by Katherine Mustachi, Senior Manager of Faith Formation and Chaplains, David Dubowitz, Kelly Stephen and Tomy Valookaran
- Appendix 13:** May 17, 2021
Email from Antonio Morra - Equity, Inclusivity and Acceptance of our LGBTQ+ Community Members
- Appendix 14:** May 17, 2021
Letter – Submitted by Beatrice Povolo, Chair, Catholic School Council, St. Mary CSS
- Appendix 15:** May 18, 2021
Letter of Support – Submitted by Holly Foord – St. Mary Catholic Secondary School, Class of 2011

Reference Documents:

1. Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, 2016: [The Human Person, Love, and Sexuality A Resource for Catholic Educators](#)
2. The Canadian Mental Health Association
(<https://ontario.cmha.ca/documents/lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-queer-identified-people-and-mental-health/>)
3. Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, 1986: [Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons: Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church](#)

4. Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2011: [Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction](#)
5. Institute for Catholic Education, Contemporary Issues Series, Monograph #2 Fall 2019: [Supporting Students who Identify as Transgender in our Catholic Schools](#)
6. Ontario Catholic Trustees Association, 2012: [Respecting Difference – A Resource for Catholic Schools in the Province of Ontario](#)
7. Nugent, Tamara and Runstedler, Yvonne; [To Listen, To Reason and To Propose: The Rainbow Flag and Catholic Schools](#)
8. Vatican City, Congregation for Catholic Education, 2019: [Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education](#)
9. [Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Legislative Policy Framework

The Education Act <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/S12005>

Ontario Human Rights Code <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>

Prohibitive Grounds for Discrimination

http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/code_grounds/gender_identity

PPM 119, Equity and Inclusive Education, April 22, 2013 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.pdf>

PPM 145, Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, December 5, 2012 <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf>

PPM 144, Bullying Prevention and Intervention, December 5, 2012

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/144.pdf>

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools (2014 Edition)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, Realizing the Promise of Diversity (2009 Edition) <http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>

TB:ml

Attachments: Appendixes 1-15

PRIDE Recommendations from GSA & Equity Group Consultations

Rationale:

The Durham Catholic District School Board's commitment to Excellence, Equity, and Engagement has always been at the forefront of the Student Trustees' and Student Senate Committee's initiatives. In this unprecedented year, we have witnessed a renewed passion in students and other community members to nurture an inclusive and diverse educational environment. As such, we have been hearing from students and staff that now is the time to address the need for a more safe and loving space for our LGBTQ2S+ community members.

In early March we began reaching out to Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) and Equity groups within our secondary schools to meet with students and staff to determine how the LGBTQ2S+ community can be supported at the board level. This report outlines the key takeaways from our meetings with five GSA and Equity groups, as well as recommendations that stem from student and staff suggestions.

Definitions:

Acceptance – an affirmation and recognition of people whose Race, Ancestry, Place of Origin, Colour, Ethnic Origin, citizenship, Creed, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Age, Gender Identity and expression, Marital Status, Family Status, abilities, or other, similar characteristics or attributes are different from one's own. Acceptance goes beyond tolerance; in that it implies a positive and welcoming attitude.

Biphobia – The intense hatred, fear or aversion towards bisexuals or bisexuality, which may include negative stereotyping or denial of the existence of bisexuals.

Diversity – the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group or organization. Diversity includes such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.

Equity – fairness, impartiality, even-handedness. A distinct process of recognizing differences within groups of individuals, and using this understanding to achieve substantive equality in all aspects of a person's life.

GSA – An acronym that means Gay-Straight Alliance. A group comprised of staff and/or students who form a safe and inclusive space. They may be members of the LGBTQ2S+ community or allies.

Homophobia – Intense hatred or fear of homosexual people or homosexuality.

IDAHOT – The International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia is observed internationally as a day to raise awareness for LGBTQ2S+ rights violations and discrimination.

Inclusion – appreciating and using our unique differences – strengths, talents, weaknesses and frailties – in a way that shows respect for the individual and ultimately creates a dynamic multi-dimensional organization.

LGBTQ2S+ – An acronym to describe a group made up of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, two-spirited and more.

PRIDE – The acronym PRIDE, stands for Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Diversity and Excellence. This term was originally used to commemorate the Stonewall Riots.

PRIDE flag – A multicoloured flag used as a symbol of peace; often used to represent gay and lesbian pride. Also referred to as the rainbow flag.

PRIDE month – The month of June is internationally recognized as a month of awareness and celebration for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Transphobia – The irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people.

Summary Report:

Prior to and throughout the pandemic, our schools' GSA and Equity groups have upheld their commitment to advocating for their school community through meaningful discussions, projects, or campaigns. Notably, a Day of Silence to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ2S+ community, writing letters with accompanying petitions to government officials, and fundraisers like bake sales and colour runs have been successfully implemented and/or are current projects that are in the planning stages. Despite having limited written or public support from the board level, students and staff have been able to run their activities and promote their GSA and Equity groups to students who want to become involved or show their support of the community.

Students and staff expressed in the meetings that support from the board and administrative level would make it easier for these groups and different schools to run bigger initiatives to engage more students and staff, without fear of being condemned or refused outright. Group members also expressed that their vision for the future of the LGBTQ2S+ community in Durham Catholic was not just to be tolerated, but to be loved, accepted, and valued.

This vision could be accomplished through representation in the curriculum (history, sexual education, religion, science, arts), recognition and celebration of LGBTQ2S+ related days of observance (PRIDE month, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia [IDAHOT]), and displaying symbols of LGBTQ2S+ inclusion (flying the PRIDE flag, LGBTQ2S+ visuals in classrooms). Through Catholic education, we need to look no further than Jesus Christ's own teachings of inclusivity and love for all God's children to aid us in supporting these projects. This can come in the form of assemblies, webinars, videos, professional development, posters, or any other form of community engagement to continue educating our Durham Catholic families around this topic.

Recommendations:

Based on the feedback from meetings with GSA and Equity groups, the Student Trustees and Student Senate Committee recommends that the Durham Catholic District School Board:

- 1. Fly PRIDE flags at all board facilities from June 1st to June 30th, as well as on any other board-approved days of observance.**

This recommendation comes from our Church's mandate that we treat all children of God with love and respect. As a Catholic institution, we must ensure that these teachings and values are at the centre of all decisions made; this includes flying the PRIDE flag, a symbol of love and acceptance for our LGBTQ2S+ students and staff.

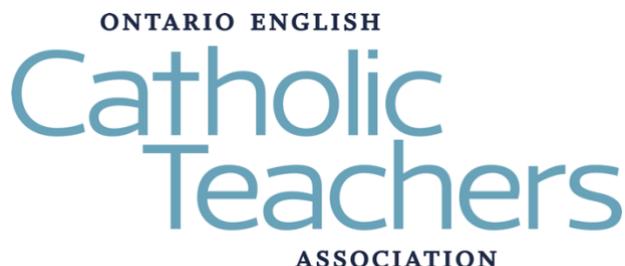
- 2. Recognize important days of observance in the LGBTQ2S+ community at a board level.**

In our meetings with the GSA and Equity groups, they expressed that the community wasn't being properly celebrated and recognized at our board. As Catholics, we are called to love and celebrate everyone's uniqueness and God-given gifts. In recognizing important dates such as the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHOT) and Pride month, we are creating a more inclusive and welcoming learning environment.

- 3. Develop and provide educational material about the LGBTQ2S+ community to staff, students, and the community through assemblies, webinars, professional development, or any other form of community engagement.**

As a Catholic educational institution, the school board has a responsibility to inform staff, students, and the community about how we are called to love one another regardless of our differences. It is important for educational material to accompany any initiative to ensure its longevity and success.

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 2**



OECTA Durham Secondary
29-2020 Wentworth St. West
Whitby, ON, L1N 9A8
905-728-9164

OECTA Durham Elementary
105-1450 Hopkins Street
Whitby, ON, L1N 2C3
905-430-0707

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Morgan Ste. Marie
Chair of the DCDSB and Trustee, City of Oshawa
morgan.ste.marie@dcdsb.ca

Dear Morgan,

The 2000 plus Catholic Teachers who work for the DCDSB strive every day to create safe and welcoming environments for all students, colleagues, and education workers. Our Association is proud of the role we have played in changing attitudes and advancing rights at the local level and throughout the province. However, just like in the wider community, some students and staff in our schools who identify as LGBTQ2S1+ continue to face bullying and discrimination.

The Pride flag is a symbol of the dignity of all people including those in the LGBTQ2SI+ community. Flying the flag is a crucial action for the School Board to take not only on behalf of the students and staff who identify as LGBTQ2SI+, but also for their parents and families, along with others in the broader community. It is a way of recognizing the struggles endured by people who identify as LGBTQ2SI+, while tangibly demonstrating our Catholic school community's support for the human rights of all. It is a meaningful gesture showing our belief in the unconditional love of God for us all, as well as a rebuke of those who continue to hold prejudice. And it is a small step toward creating a culture that respects the health and well-being of LGBTQ2SI+ people.

Throughout Pride month, our Association will be displaying our OECTA rainbow Pride flag and other materials as signs of support for our members, students, and others in the community. We strongly urge the Durham Catholic District School Board to join us by flying the **traditional Pride flag** at the Board Office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Collicutt".

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Cowen".

Paul Collicutt - Unit President OECTA Durham Secondary
Melissa Cowen - Unit President OECTA Durham Elementary

CC:

Tracy Barill - Director of Education/Secretary-Treasurer, DCDSB - tracy.barill@dcdsb.ca



Archdiocese
of Toronto

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May 4, 2021

In response to numerous inquiries from trustees, teachers, students and parents, the Archdiocese of Toronto offers the following reflection regarding inclusivity and acceptance.

Reflection on Inclusivity & Acceptance from the Archdiocese of Toronto

Earlier this year, Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, met with Directors of Education and Chairs of Catholic School Boards in the Archdiocese of Toronto. Among the items discussed were issues of inclusion, and specifically the request made in some boards to have Catholic schools fly the Pride flag during the month of June. We are well aware of the passionate feelings on both sides of this issue, and we pray that dialogue regarding these matters can be conducted respectfully and thoughtfully. It is painful that the public discussion around how to best promote inclusivity has, in itself, often caused division in the community.

As Catholics, we are taught that we must love our neighbour and treat every individual as a child of God, accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.

Parents make a clear choice when they decide that their children will attend a Catholic school. They rightly expect that trustees, principals, teachers – all partners in education – will ensure that Catholic teaching is presented, lived and infused in all that we do.

In that regard, the appropriate symbol that represents our faith, and the inclusion and acceptance of others, is the cross, which is visible at the entrance of every Catholic school. It is the primary symbol of our Christian faith: it draws us to contemplate the generous and sacrificial love of Jesus, as he lays down his life for all of us. In a world that would crucify an innocent man, Jesus returns love for hatred and says: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) The love represented by the cross is that sacrificial love, centered not on self, but on others. The cross outside of Catholic schools and any Catholic church, hospital or institution, signals our commitment that all who enter the building are welcomed and loved in their beauty and uniqueness as children of God.

Practically, we also know that there are any number of groups working to advocate for many diverse causes. For this reason, many school boards wisely fly only the Canadian flag out of a sense of equity for all.

There is a belief among some that unless one embraces secular symbols, one cannot be inclusive or accepting. This is simply not true. Where there are cases of injustice and mistreatment of any student, whether they are bullied or rejected due to their sexual orientation, appearance, race, sex or any other reason, we must seize the moment, address the situation and ensure that we lead by example, as we foster a culture of care and love for every individual. That truth is perfectly represented in our most fundamental Catholic symbol: the cross.



Archdiocese
of Toronto

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We also recognize that there are times when the presentation of Catholic teaching will clash with the views held by many in society, whether these relate to human sexuality, the sanctity of life, issues of social justice or other deeply held beliefs. Those who are faithful to these teachings are often ridiculed, mocked and excluded. Frequently, since the time of Jesus, Christian teaching has not aligned with currently prevailing opinions.

To be clear, locally elected Catholic school trustees will ultimately determine the path forward, but we trust that these insights will be helpful. We pray that we may all reflect on these challenging conversations and do so in a spirit of collaboration, mutual respect and care for one another.

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 4**

Morgan Ste. Marie
Chair of the Board and Trustee, City of Oshawa

Tracy Barill
Director of Education DCDSB

In so much of our church history people of faith have been called upon to act in moments of moral uncertainty but instead of acting they became victims of hesitation founded in confusion and fear. Time after time opportunities passed when members of our church waited to make their voices heard until the tide of public opinion elevated enough to lessened the risk. So much of our credibility as a church has been lost as we look back to moments when, at best our response was lukewarm and at worst, it was absent all together. These are not moments that make us proud but rather moments that eat away at the very integrity of our faith community.

There have been, however, other times, times when we, the church, responded to the call of the gospel with courage and clarity. There were those times when we worked to fight against fascism and the appalling ideologies found in Nazism. There were times when members of our faith community marched in the civil rights movement and called for peace at the risk of being declared traitors. There are those who sided with the poor against the rich and paid dearly for their solidarity. These moments are what, for many, typifies a follower of Jesus. Sadly, as much as we prefer to remember these heroic moments in our past we must also face the times when we were not heroic and instead of speaking out, remained silent, instead of acting we remained immobile.

At this point in our history the church is divided on how it should respond to the 2SLGBTQ+ community. There are those who rejoice at statements like “who am I to Judge”, and there are others who will dismiss such statements as misinterpretations. There is no doubt that a certain portion of the faithful will never believe that the church has gone far enough and another portion that will believes that the church has gone too far.

There are those in our church who would argue that the 2SLGBTQ+ community represents a direct opposition to Holy Scripture. There are many who would equate the 2SLGBTQ+ community with being diabolical in nature and an instrument of evil. These are reminiscent of a time when the overall atmosphere in Canada resulted in 2SLGBTQ+ members risking imprisonment, unemployment, homelessness, forced psychiatric hospitalization and social ostracization. This harkens to a time when one risked one’s life, family and freedom to come out as a member of a sexual minority. Many wish these days were behind us but sadly they are not, at least not entirely. It is true that over the past 50 years much sacrifice has been made by the 2SLGBTQ+ community and their allies to address these abuses but much of that progress has been only tentatively won. Even as nations such as Canada expand the rights and privileges of the 2SLGBTQ+ community there are other nations where being 2SLGBTQ+ results in imprisonment and even death.

In all this there has arisen one predominant symbol to represent this struggle, that symbol being the Rainbow Flag. Like so many symbols this one was born from a simple desire to have one symbol for a community to rally behind. The colours were more about decoration than dogma,

more about inspiration than ideology. Harvey Milk, a gay member of the San Francisco city council, requested that a friend design a symbol that has now grown to represent the global 2SLGBTQ+ community. That symbol, and that symbol alone, is what speaks to them of acceptance and safety. That flag represents hope to a marginalized community that remains stigmatized and fearful.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to LOVE OUR NEIGHBOUR not to CONDITONALLY LOVE THEM. It is tragic when the raw Gospel becomes clouded with exceptions so much so that the original message of Christ becomes edited to the point where we love only those who look like us, believe like us or in this case love like us.

The story of Noah is a poignant example of how the rainbow can be interoperated by Christians as an undeniable symbol of peace and the cessation of hostilities. God chose to reflect this known symbol, one where one places their bow with the string to the ground to represent the end of war and the advent of peace. To this day it is a beloved symbol, one that represents the end of the storm.

This Rainbow flag is central to the identity of the LGBTQ+ community and although there is not always a consensus about its origins and some have redacted much of its legend, it does have a universally accepted provenance. Its placement anywhere signals to all who identify with this community that welcome may be found within.

I compel the DCDSB to consider flying this flag for the Month of June, a month dedicated to 2SLGBTQ+ pride and I entreat them to fly it at all their schools and at their board office.

In Christ

Kelly Stephen
Chaplain
Monsignor John Pereyema CSS

Subject: 2SLGBTQ+ Pride Flag

Date: Sunday, May 9, 2021 at 10:29:32 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Suzanne Laforet

To: Tracy Barill

CC: Kelly Stephen

Good morning Tracy,

Kelly shared with me the wonderful letter that he sent to you regarding the flying of the Pride Flag in June. I am writing this to share my absolute agreement with him and his request that the DCDSB fly the Pride Flag for the month of June. At this time, we are in a position to stand up and publicly declare our commitment to support everyone within our schools and the greater community who are so frequently marginalized and, even worse, persecuted, because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. I believe that this a moral imperative, as we work to truly become a Board rooted in equity and inclusion for all. It is an opportunity for us to invite conversation, to provide education, and to demonstrate solidarity with the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

I look forward to working with you, the Board, and any others who are ready to make the next steps on the journey.

Thank you for your time,

Sue

Sue Laforet

Principal, Msgr. John Pereyma C.S.S

905-432-8470

Be the reason someone smiles today!



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[DCDSB-20111209]

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 6**

From: Tomy Valookaran <Tomy.Valookaran@dcdsb.ca>
Sent: Monday, May 10, 2021, 9:12 p.m.
To: Morgan Ste.Marie
Subject: Request for input on Rainbow flag

Dear Morgan,

I am not sure if we met personally but I worked with your Dad as Chaplain at Paul Dwyer from 1988 to 1999. Since then I have been at St.Mary CSS. I wanted to reach out at this important moment of discernment regarding the need to support our 2SLGBTQ+ community about flying the rainbow flag to publicly proclaim what we already proclaim in our local school communities that they are most welcome in our schools.

About eight years ago I had a profound encounter with a grade ten student. She came to talk with me as she was going through a difficult time. One of her teachers suggested that I am a good listener. She was nervous at first but as she started talking, she relaxed more and more. She revealed that she discovered in grade eight that she was gay. She was active in her parish serving as an altar girl. Her parents were active in the church choir. She could not live with it because she thought God did not like her according the teachings of the church as presented to her by the adults in her life and she tried taking her own life and was hospitalised. As she poured her heart out, I asked her why she was reluctant to come and talk to me in grade nine. She said “sir you are the chaplain and I was sure you would condemn me”. My heart was lit on fire of compassion and set out on a journey to change that perception of the Catholic Church in my School community.

Drawing upon the deeper teachings of the church, papal statements, Vatican two documents and the pastoral letter by the Ontario Bishops I put together a presentation explaining what the Catholic Church really teaches about inclusion, acceptance and celebration of our 2SLGBTQ+ students. I took every student and teacher through the Chapel, class by class by educating all, why any discrimination against those students is against what Jesus taught. Out of that, with help from the above student and her friends, we gathered a large group of students to start our 2SLGBTQ+ safe student group and they

called it Alliance for Compassion. This group is still going strong as an outreach of our retreat leader student leadership group.

One of the consistent requests I have received from them is to fly the rainbow flag as they feel it represents to the larger community that they are safe in our school communities. I brought it up to Chair meeting last week and I got unanimous consent to request the School Board to consider it. Vatican two document on 'church in the modern world', asks us to always read the signs of the times. I believe strongly that the St. Mary community is ready to embrace this move. The time is now for us to step up and make a bold statement that our 2SLGBTQ+children are loved, accepted and celebrated in our Catholic learning communities. This is a right to life issue for me as a Chaplain serving this school board for the last 33 years. By the way I have no knowledge of any other group wanting their particular flags flown at our buildings as consistent as this student group.

Since June is around the corner I want to request you to call an emergency meeting of the Board to make a decision. I am willing to put this on public record.



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[DCDSB-20111209]

May 10, 2021

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 7**

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing this letter to pledge my support for DCDSB students who endeavour to fly the rainbow flag proudly at their schools during the month of June for Pride. As an alumnus of the graduating class of 2015, I am dismayed, though unsurprised, at the lack of support, care and dignity granted to 2SLGBTQIA+ students in this school board. The indifferent attitudes of senior leadership in the DCDSB, underscores a complete disregard for marginalized students; they have yet to see themselves represented in a positive light in curricula, and are met with obstacle after obstacle when they seek to celebrate their identities. **The flying of a rainbow flag would be a clear indication of the board's willingness to change the pervasive, unquestioned culture of fear and shame in Catholic schools.**

As an alumnus, I want to add a personal story about the effect of inaction and indifference. I would be remiss to ignore that this is just one account, though I believe there are many more stories of 2SLGBTQIA+ young people who have struggled to reconcile their faith with their personhood. As a queer kid in high school, I had internalized many horrific meanings of what it meant to be queer, and gender non-conforming. I truly believed that the reason I did not see people like me represented in my school was because I was not welcome. **I believe that representation and celebration of my personhood as a queer kid would have saved me from years of internalized shame, hatred and suffering.** A belief that persists to this day, I was never given the opportunity to see myself as one of God's children.

Additionally, I want to highlight the many teachers and chaplains who threw their support behind me through various programs. Specifically, the Retreat Leadership Program at St. Mary CSS, that equipped me with the courage and opportunity to perform activism in my school. Perhaps, thinking back on it now, the opportunity to grow my skills in community with others saved my life.

Flying the rainbow flag is a significant step toward reconciling the board's historically homophobic and transphobic past. It is vital that senior leadership make space for young people to lead us towards a culture of inclusivity and compassion by lending their personal and monetary support towards student led initiatives such as this.

I look forward to seeing the celebration of our 2SLGBTQIA+ students in June with the flying of the flag and a comprehensive and intentional mandate for senior leadership to support them, now and in the future.

Sincerely,



Rae Paul (they/them/theirs)

St. Mary CSS Class of 2015

May 10, 2021

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 8**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my unconditional support for DCDSB students, **who are asking for their identities, existences, and experiences to be represented through the flying of the rainbow Pride Flag.** I graduated St. Mary CSS in 2015 as an out queer person. While it is sad that the rainbow Pride Flag has yet to be flown during the month of June at DCDSB head office and schools, I am far from surprised. The apathy, indifference, and outright ignorance toward 2SLGBTQIA representation in this board is outdated, careless and unlike the teachings of Jesus Christ. If it is true that this board has all students' best interests in mind, I implore DCDSB to raise the Pride Flag during the month of June. Doing so communicates the board's support for 2SLGBTQIA students' experiences and well-being. I cannot understate the role of meaningful representation for all young people.

My own experience as a queer femme at St. Mary, some of my experiences were good, but most were not. The culture of homophobia and transphobia was the unquestioned norm amongst my peers. **The pervasive erasure and condemnation of 2SLGBTQIA from the Catholic Church and the subsequent apathetic silence from DCDSB created an unsafe and outright hostile learning environment for me, and other 2SLGBTQIA students.** I refused to come out because I was afraid; of being rejected, attacked, silenced, or publicly ridiculed. I was outed and bullied by a fellow classmate in the last semester of Grade 12 via social media. In these situations, you would encourage a young person to reach out to a trusted adult; how can these youth trust in a system that perpetually condemns and erases their identities? I truly believe, that if the rainbow Pride flag had been flown during my time at St. Mary, that it could have changed the course of my Grade 12 year. **Flying the rainbow Pride Flag does not only provide representation for 2SLBTQIA folks, but it also tells cisgender and heterosexual students that bigotry, harassment, and intolerance of 2SLGBTQIA folks will not be tolerated.**

In my time now as a Child and Youth Counsellor, I realize I was one of the lucky ones. I had many supportive teachers, an amazing chaplain, a close community of Retreat Leaders, and mental health support; even with all those things, I still struggled to make it out of that school. **I ask you, how are the unsupported, closeted and terrified 2SLGBTQIA students doing? Who is supporting them? How can they reach out when every representation of their identity is routinely suppressed and erased in the name of "Catholicism"?**

Flying the rainbow Pride Flag is a massive step toward exhibiting highly visible support, nurturance, and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA students. It is imperative the DCDSB leadership team look beyond partisan issues, and focus solely on the wellbeing, inclusion, and success of all students, including 2SLGBTQIA students. Raise the Pride Flag.

Kindly,



Amy Mather (she/her), CYCP

St Mary C.S.S., Class of 2015

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 9**

Tuesday, May 11, 2021

Dear Director Barill and Chair Ste. Marie,

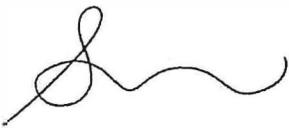
We are writing to respectfully request that the DCDSB fly the Pride Flag for the month of June, at both the Catholic Education Centre and all Secondary schools. At this time, we are in a position to stand up and publicly declare our commitment to support everyone within our schools and the greater community who are so frequently marginalized and, even worse, persecuted, because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Across the Board, we as Principals are concerned about the data that links mental health issues, specifically the risk of death by suicide and self-harm among young people, to membership in the 2SLGBTQ+ community. We believe that to provide a truly inclusive environment for all our students, we must be a source of safety and Witness. True inclusivity means welcoming and embracing all people, as we are all created in the image of Christ.

Thank you for considering this request which will allow us to further support the members of the 2SLGBTQ+ in our schools and the greater community.

Sincerely,

P Sorhate

Jelt



J. Dr. Vignola

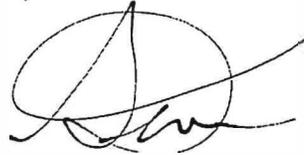


Ch. Cus

Michelle O'Brien

Stacey Ritchie

K. Demore



Subject: Flying the Pride flag at DCDSB Schools
Date: Tuesday, May 11, 2021 at 10:26:52 AM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Charlene Rocha (201084634)
To: Morgan Ste.Marie, Tracy Barill
CC: Barbara A Tyler, Michelle Zeenaeme, Tomy Valookaran
Attachments: Alliance for Compassion Letter for the DCDSB Board.pdf

Good morning Mr. Ste. Marie and Ms. Barill,

My name is Charlene Rocha and I'm a Grade 12 student at St. Mary C.S.S.. I also lead our school's Alliance for Compassion team. On behalf of our group, we would like to present you with the attached letter.

As a Catholic school board that promotes the Catholic Social Teachings of Promotion of Peace, Solidarity, Stewardship of Creation, Rights and Responsibilities, and Community and Common good, we recommend the DCDSB fly the rainbow flag during the month of June in support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. This particular symbol, the rainbow flag, has been identified to represent the diverse 2SLGBTQ+ community and out of respect for their right to select representations of themselves, we recommend that this flag be displayed.

We hope that, as a school board, we are able to support the students in our school by flying the flag.

Best,

Charlene Rocha and the Alliance for Compassion team



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[DCDSB-20111209]

May 7, 2021

To the Durham Catholic District School Board,

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.” - John 4:7-8

God knows and has crafted every crucial part of our identity. He loves us all unconditionally for all that we are. Every student from our school board should be able to feel and understand this all-encompassing love—regardless of their identity. However, over 10% of all Canadian youth are part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community yet 86% of them have faced harassment at school. We believe it is imperative to help all students to feel safe and welcomed in their own school.

As a Catholic school board that promotes the Catholic Social Teachings of Promotion of Peace, Solidarity, Stewardship of Creation, Rights and Responsibilities, and Community and Common good, we recommend the DCDSB fly the rainbow flag during the month of June in support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. This particular symbol, the rainbow flag, has been identified to represent the diverse 2SLGBTQ+ community and out of respect for their right to select representations of themselves, we recommend that this flag be displayed. The flag represents the progression of 2SLGBTQ+ rights and God’s promise to us as Catholics. By flying it, we are supporting the students in our board while upholding God’s proclamation of loving all his children equally.

In keeping with our commitment to support marginalized communities within our school board, we feel this action will create a greater sense of belonging and acceptance for those who self-identify as being part of a sexual or gender minority.

As Catholics, it is our duty to maintain a loving, inclusive community for all. Flying the flag will be a visual representation of our support as well as God’s love for everyone. We hope that, as a school board, we are able to support the students in our school through flying the flag.

Sincerely,

St. Mary Catholic Secondary School’s Alliance for Compassion Team

Subject: Fwd: Pride Flag Possibilities

Date: Friday, May 14, 2021 at 1:13:54 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Katherine Walker

To: Morgan Ste.Marie

CC: Tracy Barill

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Hello Mr. Ste. Marie,

I recently sent this letter to Director Barill and in response she suggested I forward it to you so that it may be included in the report being considered on May 25th.

Thank you for your consideration,
Katie Walker

Begin forwarded message:

From: Katherine Walker <katherine.m.walker@icloud.com>

Subject: Pride Flag Possibilities

Date: May 14, 2021 at 12:30:44 PM EDT

To: tracy.barill@dcdsb.ca

Good afternoon Director Barill,

With Pride Month approaching, I have noticed that DCDSB has yet to make a public decision as to whether or not the schools within the board will fly the Pride flag. With other Catholic school boards already having announced their plans, I am writing this letter to appeal to the DCDSB to follow TCDSB's lead.

My name is Katie Walker and I am a senior student at Father Leo J. Austin CSS. As part of the student body, I believe that it is important for the school board to demonstrate their support of staff members and students who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Students can have a particularly difficult time finding allies within their peers, teachers, and families, and a symbol as strong as this flag would help to communicate that they are truly accepted and valued.

As a member of my school's Mental Health Club, I know how vital peer and staff support can be. During the Elementary and Secondary School period of a student's life, they start to learn more about themselves; this can be scary if they are not sure where or if they are accepted. Familial support systems can be rare for queer people so it is important that their school offer them a safe space in which they know they are loved and accepted. Flying the Pride flag would be a very impactful show of this support.

In section 5.1.1 of DCDSB's Flying and Displaying Flags policy, it states that "flags are symbolic of our values as a society". Durham Catholic students have always been taught to love everyone, no matter our differences. A person's sexuality is a key part of their identity and should be no particular exception. Flying the Pride flag during the month of June would be a great way to demonstrate this fundamental teaching.

Last June, DCDSB released a statement in support of Pride Month and the importance of valuing and respecting every member of our community. If that sentiment was sincere, then this year it is critical to fly the Pride flag as a strong visual representation of that support.

Thank you for your consideration, I know it would mean a great deal to many LGBTQ+ members and their allies within DCDSB.

Katie

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - **Appendix 12**

Durham Catholic District School Board
650 Rossland Rd. W
Oshawa, ON, L1J 7C4

May 14, 2021

Dear Chair Ste. Marie,

We wish to address you and the Board of Trustees at this time compelled by the Gospel of Jesus Christ who preaches compassion, love of neighbour and the imperative to minister to the marginalized.

The undersigned Chaplains recommend that the DCDSB fly the rainbow flag during the month of June in support of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. In keeping with our commitment to support marginalized communities within our school board, we feel this action will create a greater sense of belonging and acceptance for those who self-identify as being part of a sexual or gender minority.

This particular symbol, the rainbow flag, has been identified to represent the diverse 2SLGBTQ+ community and out of respect for their right to select representations of themselves, we recommend that this image, and this image alone, be displayed.

In addition, we recommend the DCDSB provide an intentional statement and resources to inform and equip staff and students with the appropriate knowledge that would educate our communities about the decision to fly the rainbow flag.

Lastly, in the spirit of equity, we hope that every effort will be made to ensure that all other groups will be given similar consideration.

In Christ,

DAVID DUBOWITS, Chaplain of Monsignor Paul Dwyer CHS
KATHERINE MUSTACHI, Senior Manager of Faith Formation DCDSB
KELLY STEPHEN, Chaplain of Monsignor John Pereyema CSS
TOMY VALOOKARAN, Chaplain of St. Mary CSS

Subject: Equity, inclusivity and acceptance of our LGBTQ+ community members

Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 at 10:48:13 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Antonio Morra

To: Tracy Barill, Morgan Ste.Marie

Dear Durham Catholic District School Board Executive,

I am writing this letter to pledge my support for DCDSB to proudly fly the rainbow flag at their schools over the month of June for Pride. Due to the lockdown and remote learning, I would I also recommend changing the colors of the school logos and DCDSB logo into rainbow colors on our websites for the month of June.

Personally, I believe that publicly supporting our LGBTQ+ youth by flying the flag is just one small thing we can do to let them know that they are loved, valued and accepted. I think that it is important that we overtly show this support. Many LGBTQ+ youth have struggled with feelings of shame, self-hatred and guilt that has effected their overall mental health and has impacted their relationship with others. These feelings are due to external factors that have continuously been thrust onto them that imply, both directly and indirectly, that they are not normal, they don't belong, and that they are not valued. This is damaging and does not reflect the teaching of Christ in that we should love others as ourselves. The time is now to make the changes we wish to see in our community. I pray that you will do the right thing and publicly announce your support of our LGBTQ+ youth, staff and community members.

respectfully,

Antonio Morra



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[DCDSB-20111209]

Morgan Ste. Marie
Chair, Board of Trustees
Durham Catholic District School Board

Dear Mr. Ste. Marie,

On behalf of St. Mary's Catholic School Council, we are writing to lend our support to the current petition, led by our students from our Alliance for Compassion Team, to allow the Pride Flag to be displayed at schools within our board during the month of June.

As a parent council we believe that **ALL** students within our schools deserve respect and to be supported, included and accepted, as defined by our Catholic school values. Our 2SLGBTQ+ students deserve to have symbols of representation that they identify with and make them feel recognized and included. The Pride Flag is a symbol that will show our community support for our 2SLGBTQ+ students, allies and their families.

Our students have also been writing letters in support of this petition. We would like to share a quote from their letter that we feel is very powerful and that calls on all of us as Catholics to come together and put the well-being, health and safety of our students before all else.

"As Catholics, it is our duty to maintain a loving, inclusive community for all. Flying the flag will be a visual representation of our support as well as God's love for everyone.... By flying it, we are supporting the students in our board while upholding God's proclamation of loving all his children equally."

As parents and educators, we need to set a positive example for our children and show them that we are all equal and deserving of support, love and acceptance.

We urge the Board to recognize the needs of our 2SLGBTQ+ students and acknowledge their voices, which deserve to be heard. Help ensure they feel welcomed within our schools and have a strong sense of belonging within our community. As we all are managing through the pandemic and trying to ensure all our students are feeling safe and supported, it is more important now than ever, to recognize the needs of the 2SLGBTQ+ students and do everything we can to show them they are a valued part of our community.

Thank you in advance for your support of this request, which will have a positive long-lasting impact on our 2SLGBTQ+ student community. We look forward to seeing the Pride Flag flying proudly at our schools this June!



Yours truly,

Beatrice Povolo
Chair, Catholic School Council
St. Mary CSS

Supporting 2SLGBTQ+Students in our Catholic Schools - Appendix 15

To Whom It May Concern,

The argument being considered here today by the Durham Catholic District School Board of raising a rainbow flag for Pride Month can be summarized in a single question, and it's not a difficult one or one requiring education or study of anything other than one's own heart and beliefs – and it is this: Is the biggest problem facing society today a surplus of love, or a lack of it?

It's a common concept in psychological theory that the opposite of love isn't hate, it's apathy. It's the indifference to human suffering that does the most damage, and in the most insidious of ways, because 'doing nothing' is the crime and therefore unpunishable. There is no such thing as a neutral position in a child's eyes. If you were to tell a first grader that you didn't stop someone from hurting them because you didn't engage in political or religious matters, you would quickly realize there was no explaining away your actions, or inactions as they might be. Indeed, inaction is a form of action and should therefore be assigned just as much blame.

Doing nothing or not taking a stance tells these children they don't belong, can't belong, are tainted, inherently bad or sinful and are a lesser class of people than anyone else. Similarly, doing nothing tells cisgender students the same thing. Both groups are harmed by this inaction.

The Bible does actually list which people Jesus thought were worth dying for, and even without looking it up, I believe I can quote exactly "For God so loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son." Not, "For God so loved the heterosexual, cisgender..." If He loved the World, including minorities and stigmatized groups and the LGBTQIA+, enough to give His Son, should we not show them the respect befitting that sacrifice? What would or could ever make us think otherwise unless we've stopped listening to God and His teachings?

The DCDSB website states that they are "Guided by the teachings of Jesus and committed to Excellence, Equity and New Evangelization".

The universally accepted foremost teaching of Jesus is to 'love one another as thyself', and there is little to suggest there is 'excellence' in teaching this, if THIS, this letter, this issue is even an issue in the first place. If the mission is to evangelize, then behaviour and words that infer God is NOT for everyone is a pretty poor method of evangelization. And I don't mention 'equity' because there is little to mention without affirmative action. Flying a rainbow flag does not mean a month long LGBTQIA+ recruiting campaign, as many fear will be the case. It signals that this (the school) is a safe place and a welcoming one. There aren't flags for heterosexual, cisgender students because they aren't necessary – all spaces are safe for them, and they don't have to fear entering them. Making any child, or person, feel as though they are not welcome in a school, especially a Catholic one who places precedence on morality, or God forbid, (literally) a Church is perhaps the least Christian act there is and instead promotes a hypocritical dichotomy of beliefs and an atmosphere of anti-evangelization.

Show these kids and this community they are loved by the same God the Catholic Church claims to love and serve. As a St. Mary's alumni, I spent four years being told my mission and purpose was '**Amare et Servire**' (To Love and to Serve). Let's practice what we preach and engrave on the walls meant to protect all students. Jesus lived to set an example. His example was love, and ours should follow.

Yours Sincerely, Holly Foord (St. Mary, 2011)