



POLICY – PO216

Equity and Inclusive Education

Area:	Governance
Source:	Superintendent of Education – Equity and Inclusive Education
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1. Introduction

The Durham Catholic District School Board recognizes that an equitable, inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving its strategic priorities. Equity and Inclusive Education aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limits students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. The Board is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and bias from our schools and classrooms to support the potential for all students to succeed. The Board recognizes that any form of discrimination or bias is not compatible with Catholic values and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

2. Definitions

Barrier – anything that prevents a person from fully taking part in all aspects of society, including physical, architectural, information or communication, attitudinal, economic and technological barriers, as well as policies or practices.

Bias – a predisposition, prejudice or generalization about a group of persons based on personal characteristics or stereotypes.

Competing Rights – situations where an individual's or group's human rights and freedoms, as protected by law, interfere with another's rights and freedoms.

Cultural Competence – an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures, particularly in human resources, non-profit organizations, and government agencies whose employees work with persons from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Cultural competence has four components:

1. Awareness of one's own cultural worldview
2. Attitude towards cultural differences
3. Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews
4. Cross-cultural skills (developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures).

Disability – the Ontario Human Rights Code defines disability in two ways:

- a) A disability as a medical condition: from this perspective, disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental, cognitive and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities and other conditions.
- b) A disability as a problem that occurs when a person's environment is not designed to suit their abilities: a person with a medical condition is not necessarily prevented (or disabled) from fully taking part in society. If society is designed to be accessible and include everyone, then people with medical conditions often don't have a problem taking part.

Discrimination (under the Ontario Human Rights Code) – treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them, or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their Race, Ancestry, Place of Origin, Colour, Ethnic Origin, Citizenship, Creed (Religion), Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Disability, Age, Marital Status (including same-sex partners), Family Status, receipt of public assistance (in housing accommodation only), and record of offences (in employment only).

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.

Harassment – engaging in a course of vexatious comments or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

Human Rights – rights that recognize the dignity and worth of every person, and provide for equal rights and opportunities without Discrimination, regardless of Race, Ancestry, Place of Origin, Colour, Ethnic Origin, Citizenship, Creed, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Age, Marital Status, Family Status, Socio-Economic Status or Disability/Level of Ability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or other similar factors.

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.

Inclusive Education – education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

Ontario Human Rights Code (the “Code”) – a provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities, without Discrimination, in specific areas such as education, jobs, housing, and services. The goal of the Code is to address and prevent discrimination and harassment.

Ontario Human Rights Code Grounds – the grounds of discrimination under the Code include: Race, Ancestry, Place of Origin, Colour, Ethnic Origin, Citizenship, Creed (Religion), Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Disability, Age, Marital Status (including same-sex partners), Family Status, receipt of public assistance (in housing accommodation only), and record of offences (in employment only). People are also protected from discrimination based on intersecting grounds, or association with someone who identifies with a Code ground, or when they are perceived to be a member of a group identified by a Code ground.

Oppression – prolonged, systemic, abuse of power or control by one group of people (the Dominant Group) at the expense of others (the Oppressed) and maintains a cultural imbalance of Power which socially supports mistreatment and exploitation of all groups of ‘less powerful’ individuals. This results in unjust advantages, status and benefits for one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs, economic and institutional structures and subtle and overt cultural practices. Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often face Barriers and limitations in many aspects of social participation i.e. school, health care, social services, employment, parenting, housing, etc. Oppression actively provides unearned Privileges and protections to some members of our community, allowing them to ignore the presence of Discrimination and or Barriers to fair and equal access and opportunity such as Classism, Racism, Ableism, Sexism, Homophobia, Transphobia.

Positive School Climate – the school climate may be defined as the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included,

and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of Equity and Inclusive Education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a Culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

Prejudice – the negative pre-judgment or preconceived feelings or notions about another person or group of persons based on preconceived characteristics.

Progressive Discipline – a Whole-School approach that uses a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address in appropriate student behaviour, as well as a variety of strategies to promote and foster positive behaviours. Disciplinary measures are applied within a framework that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive.

Racism – a belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don't even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions.

Stereotype – incorrect assumption based on things like Race, Colour, Ethnic Origin, Place of Origin, Religion, etc. Stereotyping typically involves attributing the same characteristics to all members of a group regardless of their individual differences. It is often based on misconceptions, incomplete information and/or false generalizations.

Systemic Barrier – a barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization, organizational policies, practices and decision-making processes, or the culture of an organization. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups protected by the Human Rights Code.

Systemic Discrimination – a pattern of discrimination that arises out of apparently neutral institutional policies or practices, that is reinforced by institutional structures and Power Dynamics, and that results in the differential and unequal treatment of members of certain groups.

Undue Hardship – under the Ontario Human Rights Code, undue hardship is the measure for any limitations to provision of Human Rights Accommodations. Accommodations need not be provided if it causes undue or excessive hardship. However, some degree of hardship is acceptable. Undue hardship is assessed in terms of overall cost, outside sources of funding (if any) and health and safety factors. Evidence must be objective, real, direct and in the case of cost, quantifiable and so substantial it would alter the essential nature of the enterprise. Other 'bona fide' requirements of an organization, such as legislative requirements may also account for undue hardship factors to consider, as long as the said requirement is adopted in good

faith and reasonably meant to fulfil a necessary goal, purpose or function of the organization.

Whole-School Approach – an all-inclusive approach to building a positive and inclusive School Climate that is based on healthy and respectful relationships throughout the whole school and community which includes everyone and their role to play in achieving safe, inclusive and accepting schools. This includes fostering a bias-free approach to progressive discipline, prevention, and early intervention practices to support positive behaviour among all students. A whole-school approach includes the government, school boards, school staff, parents/guardians, students and community members.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to support the aims of the guiding principles and goals set out in the Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, and Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan Strategy. This policy provides a framework designed to meet the needs of all, with a particular focus on advocacy for marginalized individuals in the system and removing exclusionary practices.

4. Application / Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Durham Catholic District School Board community including students, parents/guardians, educators, administrators, board staff, trustees and community members. This policy and administrative procedures apply to all Board practices, policies, procedures and other forms of information.

5. Principles

5.1 The Board believes that:

- 5.1.1 the implementation of equity and inclusive education must be consistent with Catholic denominational rights and shall be incorporated into all aspects of Board policies, programs, procedures, and practices to ensure an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment for all.
- 5.1.2 the establishment and maintenance of partnerships with diverse members of our community is encouraged so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, staff and families are recognized, understood and honoured.

- 5.1.3 the implementation of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy that is inclusive of all members of our school community allows all students may reach their learning potential.
- 5.1.4 all reasonable steps must be taken to provide religious accommodations to staff, students and families in accordance with the Board's Religious Accommodation Administrative Procedure (AP216-2).
- 5.1.5 it is essential to provide all members of the school community, including students, with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the Code.
- 5.1.6 it is essential to assess and monitor its progress in implementing this policy and will report on its goals and progress in the areas of policy review, school improvement planning and the implementation of the Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.

6. Requirements

- 6.1 The Director of Education shall issue administrative procedures to support this policy and amend them thereafter as the need arises.
- 6.2 Through cyclical policy reviews, the Board will embed the principles of equity and inclusive education in all other policies, programs, guidelines, and practices, so that an equity and inclusive education focus is an integral part of the operations of the Board and permeates everything that happens in all schools.
- 6.3 The Board will make every effort to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit the opportunities of individuals from diverse communities for employment, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning in all board and school positions. The Board's work force, within the context of the denominational rights of Catholic schools should reflect the diversity within the community so that students, parents/guardians, and community members are able to see themselves represented. The Board's work force should also be capable of understanding and responding to the experiences of the diverse communities within the Board's jurisdiction.
- 6.4 In accordance with the principles of the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy, the Board and school leaders will promote the development of collaborative environments in which participants share a commitment to equity and inclusive education principles and practices. This collaborative approach includes and supports the active engagement of students, parents/guardians, parish priests, federations and unions, colleges and universities, professional associations, service organizations, and other community partners.

- 6.5 The Board and all schools will regularly review the structures of existing committees and partnerships to help ensure that they reflect the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education. The Board will seek opportunities to expand upon its outreach efforts in order to foster new partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents/guardians, staff, community members, and various organizations, including business groups (e.g., business education councils).
- 6.6 The Board and all schools will use inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of all students and the learning pathways that they are taking. Schools must provide students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Students should be able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school.
- 6.7 The Board and schools will support and promote a Christ-centred whole-school approach to foster positive student behaviour reflective of Catholic values in support of student well-being and achievement. The principles of equity and inclusive education will also be applied in progressive discipline, particularly when it is necessary to take into account mitigating and other factors, not only in response to inappropriate behaviour but in all interactions with students along the continuum of progressive discipline.
- 6.8 The Board will put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely, and without fear of retaliation. The Board will respond to all such concerns in a timely manner.
- 6.9 The Board will implement the School Climate Survey, as outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, “Bullying Prevention and Intervention”, every two years to help identify inappropriate behaviours, barriers, or issues that should be addressed.
- 6.10 The Board will ensure professional learning activities are ongoing, evidence-based, and focused on positive outcomes. The Board will provide opportunities for all educators, support staff, administrators, and trustees to participate in training on topics such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and gender-based violence, and will provide information for students and parents/guardians to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education.
- 6.11 The Director of Education shall oversee compliance with the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and procedures.
- 6.12 The Principal shall:
 - a) implement the Board’s Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and the Equity and Inclusive Education strategic priorities to meet the needs of the diverse school population;

- b) develop and promote a Christ-centred whole-school approach to foster positive student behaviour reflective of Catholic values and bias-free progressive discipline in support of student well-being and achievement;
- c) develop School Improvement goals and practices that are aligned with the Board's policy on Equity and Inclusive Education;
- d) promote and support student leadership opportunities and actively engage students in initiatives with a focus on equity, social justice, inclusion and diversity;
- e) implement procedures that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination safely and ensure a timely and appropriate response; and
- f) ensure that all required accommodations for students are in compliance with Board policy and procedures.

6.13 Educators shall:

- a) ensure that instructional resources, strategies, as well as, assessment and evaluation practices are in accordance with the Board's Mission and Vision, Church teachings and the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education;
- b) develop and promote initiatives that support and promote diversity of student voice and experience;
- c) encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, inclusion and diversity in schools and classrooms; and
- d) address discrimination and harassment issues immediately and help all members of the school community identify and respond appropriately to such incidents.

6.14 Employees shall be knowledgeable about and comply with the expectations of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures as required.

6.15 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall support the principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures and inform the Principal of the need for accommodations (including, but not limited to, medical, educational or religious accommodation requests) as required by this policy.

6.16 Third Party Providers shall comply with the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures in all interactions with agents of the Durham Catholic District School Board.

7. Sources

- 7.1 Ontario Human Rights Code
- 7.2 PPM 119 – Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, 2013
- 7.3 Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, 2014
- 7.4 Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan, 2017
- 7.5 Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010
- 7.6 Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013

8. Related Policies and Administrative Procedures

- 8.1 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (PO612)
- 8.2 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Administrative Procedure (AP612-1)
- 8.3 Code of Conduct Policy (PO610)
- 8.4 Code of Conduct Administrative Procedure (AP610-1)
- 8.5 Workplace Harassment and Workplace Sexual Harassment Policy (PO320)
- 8.6 Workplace Harassment and Workplace Sexual Harassment Administrative Procedure (AP320-1)
- 8.7 Inclusion Policy (PO804)
- 8.8 Religious Accommodation Administrative Procedure (AP216-2)
- 8.9 Student Discipline Policy (PO611)
- 8.10 Student Discipline Administrative Procedure (AP611-1)
- 8.11 Accessibility Policy (PO434)