



Policy

Title: Equity and Inclusive Education	Policy #: PO216
Policy Area: Governance	
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1.0 Introduction

The Durham Catholic District School Board recognizes that an equitable, inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving its core priorities of Excellence, Equity and New Evangelization. The Board recognizes that any form of discrimination is incompatible with Catholic values and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Equity and Inclusive Education aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. Barriers may be related to 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. It is also recognized that several factors may intersect to create additional barriers for some students. These barriers and biases, whether overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional, need to be identified and addressed.

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 also recognizes that the school system gives pre-eminence to the tenets of the Catholic faith, congruent with the protection afforded in the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the Code), the *Constitution Act, 1982* and confirmed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

2.0 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.

2.0 Definitions (Cont'd)

Barrier - an obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to an individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities, benefits, services or advantages that are available to other members of society.

Bias - an opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits the ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution and may be either conscious/ explicit or unconscious/ implicit. Unconscious/ implicit biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.

Code grounds - the grounds of Discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code: 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 (see *Intersectionality*), 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.

Disability - 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. These include physical, mental and learning disabilities.

Discrimination – unequal or different treatment or harassment that causes harm.

Diversity - the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, Race, Colour, Creed, Culture, Ethnicity, Linguistic Origin, Disability/ Level of Ability, Socio-economic Class, Age, Ancestry, Nationality, Place of Origin, Religion, Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Sexual Orientation, Family Status, and Marital Status.

Equity - a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

Harassment - a form of discrimination. It can include sexually explicit or other inappropriate comments, questions, jokes, name-calling, images, email and social media, transphobic, homophobic or other bullying, sexual advances, touching and other unwelcome and ongoing behaviour that insults, demeans, harms or threatens a person in some way. Assault or other violent behaviour is also a criminal matter.

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.

2.0 Definitions (Cont'd)

Inclusion - a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates universal acceptance and promotes a sense of belonging for all learners. It is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and learner differences and promotes equitable opportunities for all learners.

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.

Intersectionality - the overlapping, in the context of an individual or group, of two or more prohibited grounds of Discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code, or other factors, which may result in additional, compounded biases or barriers to equity for that individual or group.

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.

Oppression - prolonged, systemic, abuse of power or control by one group of people (the Dominant Group) at the expense 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 pre-judgment (usually negative) of groups or individuals, or preconceived notions about them, based on misinformation, bias, or stereotypes.

Progressive discipline - a Whole-school approach that uses a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate 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.

2.0 Definitions (Cont'd)

Racism - an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others.

School Climate - the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community.

Stereotype - a false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on Race, Ancestry, Place of Origin, Colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, Creed, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Age, Marital Status, Family Status, or Disability/level of ability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other factors.

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.

Systemic Racism - when institutions or systems create or maintain racial inequity, often as a result of hidden institutional Biases in policies, practices and procedures that Privilege some groups and disadvantage others.

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. A whole-school approach includes the government, school boards, school staff, parents, students and community members.

3.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy is to support the aims of the guiding principles and goals set out in *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*, and *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan Strategy (the Strategy)* including:

- the shared and committed leadership by all members of the school community to eliminate discrimination through the identification and removal of biases and barriers;

3.0 **Purpose** (Cont'd)

- equity and inclusive education practices to support positive learning environments that are respectful and welcoming to all; and
- accountability and transparency with ongoing progress demonstrated and communicated to the ministry and the community.

4.0 **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. The requirements of this policy and administrative procedure apply to all Board practices, policies, procedures and other forms of information. The policy provides a framework designed to meet the needs of all, with a particular focus to remove exclusionary practices and advocacy for marginalized individuals in the system.

5.0 **Principles**

- 5.1 The Board believes that every person shall be entitled to a respectful, positive and Christ-centred learning and working environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.
- 5.2 The guiding principles of equity and inclusive education shall 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.
- 5.3 The Board supports the establishment and maintenance of partnerships with all members of our diverse Catholic community so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized and their needs are met.
- 5.4 The Board is committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships with all members of our diverse Catholic community so that the perspectives and experiences of families, and employees are recognized.
- 5.5 The Board supports the implementation of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy that is inclusive of all members of our school community, so that all students may reach their learning potential.
- 5.6 The Board shall take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations to staff, students and families in accordance with the Board's Religious Accommodation procedures.
- 5.7 The Board is committed to providing 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*.

5.0 Principals (Cont'd)

- 5.8 The Board is committed to assessing and monitoring 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*.

6.0 Requirements

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The Board should 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, 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.
- 6.3 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, parish priests, federations and unions, colleges and universities, professional associations, service organizations, and other community partners.
- 6.4 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, staff, community members, and various organizations, including business groups (e.g., business education councils).
- 6.5 The Board and all school 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.
- 6.6 The Board and school 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.

6.0 Requirements (Cont'd)

- 6.7 The Board will also put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely, and that will enable the Board to respond in a timely manner.
- 6.8 The Board will monitor every two years school climate through school climate surveys, as outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, "Bullying Prevention and Intervention", to help identify inappropriate behaviours, barriers, or issues that should be addressed.
- 6.9 The Board will ensure that 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 antiracism, antidiscrimination, and gender-based violence, and will provide information for students and parents to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 The Director of Education shall:
 - 7.1.1 oversee compliance with the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures.
- 7.2 The Principal shall:
 - 7.2.1 implement the Board's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and the components of the three-year Equity and Inclusive Education Action Plan to meet the needs of the diverse school population;
 - 7.2.2 develop 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;
 - 7.2.3 develop School Improvement goals and practices that that are aligned with the Board's policy on Equity and Inclusion;
 - 7.2.4 provide regular and on-going professional learning opportunities to all staff members on the principles of Equity and Inclusive education;
 - 7.2.5 promote student leadership opportunities and actively engage students in initiatives with a focus on equity, social justice, inclusion and diversity;
 - 7.2.6 implement procedures that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination safely and ensure a timely and appropriate response; and
 - 7.2.7 ensure that all required accommodations for students are in compliance with the policy and procedures.

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities (Cont'd)

7.3 Educators shall:

- 7.3.1 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;
- 7.3.2 develop and promote initiatives that support and promote diversity of student voice and experience;
- 7.3.3 encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, inclusion and diversity in schools and classrooms; and
- 7.3.4 address discrimination and harassment issues immediately and help all students identify and respond appropriately to such incidents.

7.4 Employees shall:

- 7.4.1 be knowledgeable about and comply with the expectations of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures as required.

7.5 Parents/Guardians & Students shall:

- 7.5.1 support the principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures; and
- 7.5.2 inform the Principal of the need for accommodations (including, but not limited to, medical, educational or religious accommodation requests) as required by this policy.

7.6 Third Party Providers shall:

- 7.6.1 comply with the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and procedures in all interactions with agents of the Durham Catholic District School Board.

8.0 Sources

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

9.0 **Related Policies and Administrative Procedures**

- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy PO612
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Administrative Procedure AP612-1
- Code of Conduct Policy PO610
- Code of Conduct Administrative Procedure AP610-1
- Equity and Inclusive Education Policy PO216
- Workplace Harassment and Workplace Sexual Harassment Policy PO320
- Workplace Harassment and Sexual Harassment Administrative Procedure AP320-1
- Inclusion Policy PO804
- Religious Accommodation Administrative Procedure AP216-2
- Student Discipline Policy PO611
- Student Discipline Administrative Procedure AP611-1
- Accessibility Policy PO434