

POLICY – PO216

Equity and Inclusive Education

Area: Governance
Source: Superintendent of Education – Equity and Inclusive Education

Approved: November 22, 2005
Revised: May 6, 2019; January 11, 2021; March 23, 2026

1. Introduction

The Durham Catholic District School Board (“the Board”) recognizes that all people are created equal, in the image of God, each with unique characteristics deserving of dignity (Genesis 1:27). An equitable and inclusive education system is essential to achieving the Board’s strategic priorities and supporting diversity within its Catholic community. The Board affirms that any form of discrimination is incompatible with Catholic moral principles and violates the Ontario Human Rights Code. Guided by Catholic teachings, the Board is committed to identifying and removing systemic barriers, biases, and discriminatory practices so that all students can learn, grow, and contribute fully to society.

2. Definitions

Barrier (*Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*) – 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, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

Bias (*Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*) – An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual’s or a group’s ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.

Discrimination (*Ontario Human Rights Commission*) – 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, citizenship, family status, disability, sex or other personal characteristics.

Diversity (*PPM119: Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario schools*) – 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, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Equity (*PPM119: Developing and implementing equity and inclusive education policies in Ontario schools*) – 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 (*Ontario Human Rights Commission*) – engaging in a course of comments or actions that are known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive, embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning or unwelcome.

Inclusive Education (*PPM119 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools*) – 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.

Progressive Discipline (*PPM145 Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour*) – a whole school approach that utilizes a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote positive behaviours.

Racism (*OHRC Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination*) – any distinction, conduct or action, whether intentional or not, but based on a person's race, which has the effect of imposing burdens on an individual or group, not imposed upon others which withholds limits access to benefits available to other members of society.

Whole-School Approach (*adapted from Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan and PPM145 Progressive Discipline*) – engages all key learning areas, all grades, and the wider community. Students and adults in the school and the wider community develop awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to safe, inclusive, caring, and accepting school climates. All aspects of school life are considered, such as curriculum, school climate, teaching practices, policies and procedures.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that equity and inclusive education are implemented in accordance with Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and

PPM 119 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools. This commitment is carried out in a manner consistent with Catholic faith traditions and the Board's constitutionally protected denominational rights. The policy provides a framework for eliminating discrimination while affirming the Board's responsibility to uphold both Catholic values and legal obligations.

4. Application / Scope

This policy applies to all members of the Board community including students, parents/guardians, educators, administrators, board staff, trustees and community members. This policy and administrative procedures apply to all Board policies, programs, procedures, and practices.

5. Principles

5.1 The Board recognizes that:

5.1.1 Equity and inclusive education:

- is a foundation of excellence;
- meets individual needs;
- identifies and eliminates barriers;
- promotes a sense of belonging;
- involves the broad community;
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives (e.g., policies, programs, procedures, practices); and
- is demonstrated throughout the system.

5.1.2 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 Constitution Act, 1982, and confirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Any form of social or cultural discrimination is incompatible with Catholic moral principles and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

6. Requirements

6.1 The Director of Education shall issue administrative procedures to support this policy and amend them thereafter as the need may arise.

6.2 The Board shall:

6.2.1 embed the principles of equity and inclusive education in all policies, programs, guidelines, and practices, so that an equity and inclusive education focus is integral to the operations of the Board;

- 6.2.2 commit to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that limit opportunities for individuals from diverse communities in employment, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning across all board and school positions, and implement equitable employment practices, within the denominational rights of Catholic schools to ensure the workforce reflects community diversity and can understand and respond to the experiences of those it serves;
- 6.2.3 promote the development of collaborative environments in which participants share a commitment to equity and inclusive education principles and practices, and which 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;
- 6.2.4 regularly review the structures of existing committees and partnerships to help ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education and seek opportunities 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);
- 6.2.5 support schools in the use of inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse learning needs and pathways of all students, and in the delivery of authentic and relevant learning opportunities about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives so that students are able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school;
- 6.2.6 provide reasonable religious accommodation for students and staff in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and relevant Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum, while ensuring consistency with the Board's denominational rights;
- 6.2.7 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, while applying principles of equity and inclusive education to progressive discipline, including consideration of mitigating and other factors (e.g., using restorative circles grounded in dignity, compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation to address behaviour, ensuring each student is affirmed as created in the image of God);
- 6.2.8 support and promote procedures that will enable students and staff to report incidents of bullying, discrimination, and harassment safely, without fear of reprisal, and that will also enable a timely response;

- 6.2.9 implement a School Climate Survey of students, staff, and parents/guardians every two years to identify inappropriate behaviours, barriers, or issues to be addressed, as outlined in PPM No. 144, “Bullying Prevention and Intervention” and in accordance with subsection 169.1(2.1) of the Education Act;
- 6.2.10 ensure professional learning activities are ongoing, evidence-based, and focused on positive outcomes, provide opportunities for all educators, support staff, administrators, and trustees to participate in training on topics (e.g., anti-racism, anti-discrimination, gender-based violence), and will provide information for students and parents/guardians to enhance their understanding of equity and inclusive education; and
- 6.2.11 foster accountability and transparency by publicly sharing progress toward strategic goals, ensuring equitable access to information about inclusive education policies and practices, and implementing measurable processes to monitor and improve the effectiveness of equity-focused initiatives in alignment with Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.
- 6.3 Principals shall implement the Board’s Equity and Inclusive Education Policy and strategic priorities through a Christ-centred, whole-school approach that promotes student well-being, progressive discipline, and achievement. They will embed equity in school planning, support student leadership in equity and inclusion, ensure safe reporting of discrimination, and uphold required accommodations in accordance with Board policy.
- 6.4 Educators shall comply with the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and its related procedures, ensure instructional and assessment strategies align with the Board’s mission and vision, Church teachings, and the principles of equity and inclusive education, promote diverse student voice, support student-led equity and social justice initiatives, and address discrimination and harassment promptly and appropriately.
- 6.5 Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall support the principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education policy and its related 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.

7. Sources

- 7.1 [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- 7.2 [Policy/Program Memorandum 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools](#)
- 7.3 [Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation](#)
- 7.4 [Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan](#)
- 7.5 [Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools](#)
- 7.6 [Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12](#)

- 7.7 Policy/Program Memorandum 144: Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- 7.8 subsection 169.1(2.1) of the Education Act

8. Related Policies and Administrative Procedures

- 8.1 Equity and Inclusive Education Administrative Procedure (AP216-1)
- 8.2 Religious Accommodation Administrative Procedure (AP216-2)
- 8.3 Student Groups Administrative Procedure (AP216-3)
- 8.4 Opening or Closing Exercises Administrative Procedure (AP216-4)
- 8.5 Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (PO320)
- 8.6 Workplace Harassment and Workplace Sexual Harassment Administrative Procedure (AP320-1)
- 8.7 Accessibility Policy (PO434)
- 8.8 Code of Conduct Policy (PO610)
- 8.9 Code of Conduct Administrative Procedure (AP610-1)
- 8.10 Student Discipline Policy (PO611)
- 8.11 Student Discipline Administrative Procedure (AP611-1)
- 8.12 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (PO612)
- 8.13 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Administrative Procedure (AP612-1)