



Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

PROCEDURE 135

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EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

1) PURPOSE

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) is committed to excellence in education and supporting optimal learning and achievement for all students. Equity principles anchor all board improvement actions: equity of hope drives equity of opportunity, which influences equity of outcome. The board is also committed to the elimination of discrimination as outlined in Ontario's Ministry of Education *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan*, and the *Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)*. Equity of opportunity and equity of access to all programs, services and resources are critical to the well-being of those who serve our school system and to the achievement of successful outcomes by all those whom we serve. The board is engaged in a dynamic and ongoing process of building a community free from bias, discrimination or harassment in a culturally diverse and interdependent world based on the following guiding principles and areas of focus.

2) GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Equitable and inclusive education:

- is a fundamental condition for learning in order to nurture a culture that ignites and fosters hope in all students;
- is a foundation of excellence and is an essential requirement for educational excellence and high standards of student achievement;
- meets individual needs by providing conditions and interventions needed to help every student succeed;
- identifies and eliminates barriers;
- promotes a sense of belonging which contributes to every student's sense of well-being;
- involves the broader community and recognizes that school-community partnerships are an essential component of an equitable and inclusive education system;
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives; and
- is demonstrated throughout the system.

3) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board is responsible for:
 - i) ensuring that principles of equity and inclusive education are included and explicitly stated in all board policies and procedures, programs, guidelines, operations, practices and board improvement plans;
 - ii) providing training for school leaders and hiring managers to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring practices to reflect Ontario's diverse society;

- iii) providing opportunities for the diverse school community including students, staff, parents/guardians, trustees and community members to provide active input, as appropriate, into board procedures and improvement plans on an ongoing basis (e.g., School Climate Surveys);
 - iv) providing ongoing education and training for students, staff, and trustees in implementing equity and inclusive education and leadership initiatives;
 - v) reviewing committees to assess the levels of representation of the diversity of the board and the wider community;
 - vi) reviewing student assessment and evaluation practices to identify and address bias that may exist in the way student's work is assessed and evaluated in order to reduce the achievement gap. The principles of such review will be consistent with the *OHRC*;
 - vii) providing religious and creed accommodation for students and staff consistent with the *OHRC*;
 - viii) implementing strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement and/or participation by students, parents/guardians, and the community so that diverse groups and the broader community have board-level representation and access to board initiatives;
 - ix) establishing procedures that empower students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that enable the board to respond in a timely and effective manner;
 - x) reporting on its goals and progress in the implementation of the equity and inclusive education strategy and its impact on student achievement.
- b) Schools are responsible for:
- i) ensuring that the school procedures and practices (e.g., School Code of Conduct, instructional strategies and assessment) include the principles of equity and inclusive education;
 - ii) implementing board equity and inclusive education procedures and programs and school improvement plans that are consistent with the *OHRC* and reflects the needs of their diverse students and school communities;
 - iii) promoting equity-minded student leadership related to issues of social justice;
 - iv) ensuring that community partnerships and school committees reflect the diversity of the broader community;
 - v) reviewing student assessment and evaluation practices to identify and address bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated in order to reduce the achievement gap. The principles of such review will be consistent with the *OHRC*;
 - vi) reviewing resources, instructional strategies, and learning opportunities to align with the principles of equity and inclusive education;
 - vii) implementing the religious and creed accommodation practices to align with the board's Religious Accommodation Guideline;
 - viii) building staff capacity through ongoing professional learning.

- c) Students are responsible for:
 - i) practicing principles of equity and inclusion and adhering to the School Code of Conduct which work together to promote a welcoming and respectful school environment.

4) AREAS OF FOCUS

a) **Policy, procedures and programs**

The board serves students in diverse communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, procedures, programs, guidelines, initiatives and practices.

Equity needs of all stakeholders are identified and addressed by:

- i) regular review and revision of existing policies and procedures to embed equity and inclusive principles;
- ii) ensuring that equity and inclusive principles are embedded in board and school improvement plans.

b) **Shared and committed leadership**

The board provides informed leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by endeavouring to identify and address all forms of discrimination consistent with the *OHRC*. To promote shared and committed leadership, related initiatives and leadership learning opportunities will be provided for students, school and system leaders, teachers, support staff and trustees.

c) **School-community relationships**

The board establishes and maintains partnerships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized and their needs are met. This will be addressed by:

- i) expanding community outreach efforts to ensure inclusion of perspectives, experiences, rights and needs;
- ii) drawing upon the expertise of related partners to explore innovative ways of sharing resources to meet the diverse needs of students and provide new and relevant learning opportunities;
- iii) ensuring all permits for community use of schools be subject to an equity review, to ensure equitable distribution and elimination of any bias or barriers to community permit access/participation.

d) **Inclusive curriculum and assessment practices**

Curriculum resources, instruction, experiential learning opportunities, and assessment and evaluation practices are inclusive and reviewed in order to identify and address possible discriminatory biases or barriers (e.g., cost of out-of-school learning trips, accessibility sites, etc.). Universal Design will be employed so that each student may maximize their learning potential. HPEDSB is committed to evaluation, assessment and placement processes that are sensitive to all students' background and individual learning needs (including accommodations and modifications), as well as personal and family experiences. HPEDSB will promote, acknowledge, and value student voice, input, and active involvement in all educational experiences.

e) **Human Rights accommodation**

HPEDSB will fulfill its legal duty to accommodate under the *OHRC*. HPEDSB will take measures that enable stakeholders to benefit from, and access services equally and to perform to the best of their ability at school or work.

The board acknowledges each individual's right to follow or not follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodation to students and staff. The *Religious Accommodation Resource Guide* provides further information regarding steps to be taken to provide religious accommodation for students and staff.

HPEDSB will develop and communicate operational procedures, to ensure a clear process for human rights accommodations associated with areas of creed and gender identity and expression and any other area requiring accommodations under the *OHRC*.

f) **School climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment**

A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted. School communities should be respectful, positive school climates and learning environments, free from discrimination and harassment. Positive behaviours and interactions are actively promoted and supported. A specific breakdown of various discriminatory behaviours such as anti-Indigenous, anti-Semitism and anti-oppressive racism are provided under Definitions.

g) **Professional learning**

Professional learning opportunities will be provided annually to board staff, students, and trustees to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the *OHRC* (e.g., bias, power, and privilege). The principles of equity will be the consistent foundation for all school improvement plans and related professional learning across the district.

h) **Accountability and transparency**

Equity and inclusive education are assessed and monitored through the strategic plan and these results are communicated to the community. HPEDSB will ensure that annual board improvement plans align with the commitments of this procedure and *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* and *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*.

5) DEFINITIONS

The list of definitions is provided to assist all HPEDSB stakeholders in understanding various terms used in the areas of equity and inclusivity. HPEDSB recognizes that terms and usages favoured by various groups and individuals are always evolving, and at different points in time may differ and that this list is not meant to be a comprehensive, nor definitive list.

Ableism - is defined as a belief system, analogous to racism, sexism or ageism, that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others. Ableism may be conscious or unconscious, and may be embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society. It can limit the opportunities of persons with disabilities and reduce their inclusion in the life of their communities. (Refer to the *Ontario Human Rights Commission's Guidelines on Accessible Education* and Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability at www.ohrc.on.ca.)

Aboriginal peoples – are the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, states "In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada". These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.

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.

Accommodation - an adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria that ensures fair and equitable access, service, and treatment for individuals to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodation is considered appropriate if it results in equal opportunity to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges experienced by others, or if it is proposed or adopted to achieve equal opportunity, and meets the individual's needs. The most appropriate accommodation is the one that respects dignity (including autonomy, comfort and confidentiality), responds to a person (including autonomy), comfort, and allows for integration and full participation, short of undue hardship. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination identified in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* or other factors. (Refer to the *Ontario Human Rights Commission's Guidelines on Accessible Education* and Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate at www.ohrc.on.ca).

Accommodations for students with special education needs - the term accommodations has a specific meaning in special education. Accommodations for students with special education needs include special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment that help the student learn and demonstrate learning.

Achievement gaps - refers to the average difference in levels of educational achievement between different demographic sub-groups of students in a given educational context (e.g., school or district). These sub-groups may reflect differences in gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, country of origin, socio-economic circumstances, sexual orientation, disability/level of ability, or any other social characteristic of the student. Achievement gaps among sub-groups of students may be identified at any grade or age and may exist within one or many achievement variables (e.g., course report card results, graduation rates, standardized test scores).

Age - how old a person is or is perceived to be. Age discrimination involves treating persons in an unequal fashion due to age in a way that is contrary to *Human Rights* law.

Ancestry - lineage, or whom you are descended from and how you trace family and heritage.

Anti-black racism - is one of the many results of white supremacy, and is distinct from anti-racism. The distinction comes about because anti-black racism and its complexities and nuances are specific to the histories and bodies of African/African descendant/black peoples. Anti-black racism promotes and upholds unearned privileges based on whiteness and proximity to whiteness and Eurocentric ideals, in terms of phenotype, culture, and performativity. It also reinforces internalized hate and oppression faced by people of African descent as a result of the idealizing and privileging of whiteness. This includes shadeism, colourism and other damaging manifestations of white supremacy such as the use and (re)perpetuation of the dominant and "universal" Eurocentric lens and views. Anti-black racism is deeply invested in the continuation of power structures within the dominant society that disadvantage, deny and exclude people of African descent, and actively works against measures implemented to improve equity and ultimately liberation for African/African descendant/black peoples. At the core of anti-black racism is seeing African/African descendant/black bodies as sub-human. An example of anti-black racism is anti-blackness, which is based on a negative, essentialized, criminalized view and interpretation of the black body and the black experience. Anti-black racism is unequal power relations, and its intersections include but are not limited to destructive beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination that are directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization globally, including here in Canada. Antidiscrimination education seeks to identify and change educational policies, procedures, and practices that may unintentionally condone or foster discrimination, as well as the attitudes and behaviours that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. It provides

teachers and students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to critically examine issues related to discrimination, power, and privilege. Antidiscrimination education promotes the removal of discriminatory biases and systemic barriers.

Anti-Indigenous racism - a distinct form of racism that targets indigenous peoples based on race, heritage, traditions, languages and ancestry and rooted in colonial notions of white, settler dominance and superiority - resulting in systemic oppression, denial of rights, cultural erasure, erosion of dignity and individual actions of discrimination, hatred and violence. In Canada the process of colonization has resulted in ongoing and entrenched systemic racism and systematic destruction of traditions, values, language, and basic Human Rights against indigenous peoples that has been described by some as 'cultural genocide'. Racist and colonial ideologies continue to significantly affect the health, well-being, success, fair and just treatment and opportunities for indigenous peoples, cutting across the social determinants of health; impacting access to education, housing, food security and employment, and permeating societal systems and institutions including the health care, child welfare, and criminal justice systems.

Anti-oppressive education - premised on the notion that many "traditional" and "commonsense" ways of engaging in education contributes to oppression in schools and society. It also relies on the notion that many "commonsense" approaches to education reform mask or exacerbate oppressive education methods. The consequences of anti-oppressive education include a deep commitment to changing how educators conceptualize and engage in curriculum, pedagogy, classroom management and school culture. There is a recognition that bias and barriers exist and are reinforced within the institutional structure and policies and therefore must be transformed along with the teaching practices. Anti-oppressive education explores privileges and power imbalances within social groups and structures and expects to be different, perhaps uncomfortable, and even controversial.

Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) - an interdisciplinary approach that requires the practitioner to critically examine the power imbalance inherent in an organizational structure with regards to the larger sociocultural context to develop strategies for creating an egalitarian environment free from oppression, racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of Discrimination in the larger society by engaging at both the local and systemic level. In general community practice, it is about responding to oppression by dominant groups and individuals. In social services, it challenges oppressive practices and structures and helps remove barriers and bias, ensuring access and service delivery provided in a fully inclusive manner.

Anti-racism - is the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism (Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat). Anti-racism examines the power imbalances between racialized people and non-racialized/white people. These imbalances play out in the form of unearned privileges that white people benefit from and racialized people do not (McIntosh, 1988).

Antiracist - seeking the elimination of racism in all its forms, including systemic racism.

Anti-racist education - teaches an active way of seeing, and being in the world, in order to transform it. It challenges bias and discriminatory colonial curriculum assessment and pedagogy by embedding the perspectives of aboriginal and racialized communities into an educational system and its practices. Antiracist education seeks to identify and change educational policies, procedures, and practices that may foster racism, implicit bias, colonial settler privilege and white privilege as well as the racist attitudes and behaviours that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. Because racism occurs at all levels and spheres of society (and can function to produce and maintain exclusionary 'levels' and 'spheres'), anti-racism education/activism is necessary in all aspects of society. In other words, it doesn't just happen 'in the workplace,' 'in the classroom,' or in selected aspects of our lives. A person who practices anti-racism education works to become aware of how racism affects the lived experience of people of colour and indigenous peoples; how racism is systemic, and has been part of many foundational aspects of society throughout history, and can be manifested in both individual attitudes and behaviours as well as formal (and 'unspoken') policies and practices within institutions; how white people participate often unknowingly, in racist systems of oppression with white privilege – which left unchallenged contributes systemic racism throughout society.

Anti-Semitism - a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

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. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing. Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking, making quick decisions or working under time pressure.

Bisexual - a word describing a person whose sexual orientation is directed toward men and women, though not necessarily at the same time.

Body image - a person's sense of their own physical appearance, usually in relation to others or in relation to some cultural "ideal". A person's perception of their appearance can be different from how others actually perceive them leading to body image discrimination or lookism.

Caregivers - persons involved in a care and commitment relationship that may be ongoing, long-term, significant and where responsibilities have shifted to a non-family member. (*Ontario Human Rights Commission, Defining Family Status* www.ohrc.on.ca).

Cisgender – people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.

Cisnormativity – the belief that gender identity normally matches the sex that one is assigned at birth.

Classism - prejudice or discrimination based on socio-economic class. The institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socio-economic class, oppressing many and privileging few. Almost universally, classism specifically denotes the prejudice against and subjugation and oppression of those in the lower classes by the more privileged upper class and an economic system which creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.

The Code - protects people from discrimination because of past, present, and perceived disabilities. For example, the Code protects a person who faces discrimination because she is a recovered alcoholic. So is a person whose condition does not limit their workplace abilities, but who is believed to be at greater risk of being able to do less in the future. (Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Ableism and Discrimination based on Disability and the Policy on preventing Discrimination based on mental health disabilities and addictions).

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. Refer to www.ohrc.on.ca/en/about-commission.

Collaborative learning communities – are communities that build, support and value partnerships among students, educators, families and communities within dynamic and flexible learning environments. Learners in collaborative communities embrace challenges, creativity and problem solving with a commitment and responsibility for contributing to the shared learning of all members of the learning community.

Colonialism - is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. Settler colonialism, such as in the case of Canada, is the unique process where the colonizing population does not leave the territory, asserts ongoing sovereignty to the land, actively seeks to assimilate the indigenous populations and extinguish their cultures, traditions and ties to the land.

Creed (religion) – creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. A creed is sincerely, freely, and deeply held; is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfilment; is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices; addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence; and has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief (OHRC Policy on Preventing Discrimination based on Creed (2015)).

Culture - broadly described, culture can include economic systems, political ideologies and processes, ways of life and social mores, educational institutions, social programs, the environment, technological systems, recreational practices, customs and traditions, artistic and heritage activities, transportation and communication industries, and religious and spiritual activities.

Curriculum - the total learning environment, including physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, assessment instruments, school climate and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Cyber-bullying - under the *Education Act* (s.1.0.0.2), bullying by electronic means, including by "(a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals." Cyber-bullying can involve the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and/or social media sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships. It may include put-downs or insults and can also involve spreading rumours, sharing private information, photos, or videos or threatening to harm someone. Cyber-bullying is always aggressive and hurtful. (Refer to *Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students*, at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/multi/english/BullyingEN.pdf).

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 and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities, and other conditions.

Disaggregated demographic data - in the context of social identity data, this means breaking down composite (aggregate) categories such as race, sexual orientation and gender identity into component parts, such as black, Chinese, Arab, straight, gay, lesbian, male, female, non-binary, etc.

Discrimination - any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which has a negative effect on an individual or group because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability/level of ability or socio-economic status. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities,

benefits, services, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Disparity - refers to the unequal outcomes of one group as compared to another.

Disproportionate - refers to the overrepresentation of a particular group of people in a particular program or system as compared to their representation in the general population.

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.

Dominant group - a group that is considered the most powerful and privileged of groups in a particular society and that exercises power and influence over others through social, economic and institutional means.

Duty to accommodate - the legal obligation that school boards, employers, unions, and service providers have under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* to take measures that enable people to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Refer to www.ohrc.on.ca.

Elder - are very important members of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities. The term elder refers to someone who has attained a high degree of understanding of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit history, traditional teachings, ceremonies, and healing practices. Elders have earned the right to pass this knowledge on to others and to give advice and guidance on personal issues, as well as on issues affecting their communities and nations. First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples value their elders and all older people, and address them with the utmost respect, but it is important to note that “elder” does not necessarily indicate age. In First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, an elder is designated as such having been deemed to have acquired significant knowledge about essential teachings in their culture and to have gained the wisdom drawn from experience that enables them to share their insight with others. (Source: OISE UoT Deepening Knowledge Project; Elder Invitation Protocol).

Employment equity - a program designated to identify, challenge, and remove systemic barriers to equality of access and outcomes in all aspects of employment and which leads to equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of employment.

Equality - the achievement of equal status in society in terms of access to opportunities, support, rewards and economic and social power for all without regard to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability/level of ability, socioeconomic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Equity - ensures equality of opportunities and outcomes for all by responding fair and proportionality to the needs of individuals. Equity is not the same as equal treatment because it recognizes a social-cultural power imbalance that unfairly privileges some while oppressing others and therefore focuses on redressing disparity – meeting individual needs to ensure fair access, outcomes and participation that results in equality, acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination and current oppression. Equity practices ensure fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people with consideration of individual and group diversities and intersectionality of multiple social identities, access to privileges and impacts of oppression. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/groups.

Ethnicity - refers to a group of people having a heritage and a common ancestry or shared historical past, as well as identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

Eurocentrism - is a worldview centered on and biased towards western civilization. The exact scope of centrism varies from the entire western world to only Europe focusing on European culture or history to the exclusion of a wider view of the world; implicitly regarding European culture as preeminent. When applied to history, it may refer to an apologetic stance towards European colonialism and other forms of imperialism.

Fairness - impartial and just treatment or behaviour without favouritism or discrimination.

Family status - the status of being in a parent/caregiver/guardian and child relationship.

First Nation - a term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word Indian, which many found offensive. The term First Nation has been adopted to replace the word “band” in the names of communities.

Gay - a word to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same sex or who identifies as a member of the gay community. This word can refer to men and women, although many women prefer the term “lesbian.”

Gender expression - refers to the way an individual expresses their gender identity (e.g., in the way they dress, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the volume of their voice, and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up.). Understandings of gender expression are culturally specific and will change over time.

Gender identity - how a person identifies themselves based on an individual's intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their biological sex.

Harassment - a form of discrimination that is often but not always, persistent, ongoing conduct or communication, in any form, of attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group which are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, inappropriate, intimidating or offensive. A single act or expression can constitute harassment; for example, if it is a serious violation or it is from a person in authority. Harassment may be either subtle or blunt.

Hate - expressions of bias, prejudice and bigotry that are carried out by individuals, groups, organizations and states, directed against stigmatized and marginalized persons and groups in communities, and intended to affirm and secure existing structures of domination and subordination. Hate activities and incidents represent some of the most destructive forms of Human Rights-based discrimination by promoting hatred against identifiable groups of people. Some hate incidents are also considered criminal offences committed against a person or property and motivated, in whole or in part, by bias or prejudice based on real or perceived 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/or any other similar factor.

Heteronormativity – the belief that heterosexuality, predicated on the gender binary, is the norm or default sexual orientation. It assumes that sexual and marital relations are most fitting between people of the opposite sex.

Historically and currently disenfranchised groups and communities – persons and communities who have experienced, and/or are more likely to experience, and/or are experiencing bias, oppression, disadvantage or discrimination based on one or more of these factors: colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability or level of ability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, biological sex, gender Identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

Homophobia - irrational fear, hatred, prejudice or negative attitudes toward homosexuality and people who are gay or lesbian. Homophobia can take overt and covert, as well as subtle and extreme forms. Homophobia includes behaviours such as jokes, name-calling, exclusion, gay bashing, etc. Homophobia may be caused by individual actions or systemic/institutional bias and oppression, towards people who are, or who are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

Human Rights – are 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 - 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 (Alberta Education Principles of Inclusion) <https://www.alberta.ca/inclusive-education.aspx>.

Inclusive design - identifying and removing barriers for people that require individual accommodations before an individual accommodation request or complaint has been made. Effective inclusive design in organizations reduces the need for people to ask for individual accommodations because the principles of inclusive design have been used when creating policies, procedures, programs, and facilities (from the *Ontario Human Rights Commission*, Inclusive Design Fact Sheet).

Inclusive education - education that is rooted in anti-oppressive practice ensuring equity in content, pedagogy, access and climate based on the principles of acceptance, inclusion and learning designed to meet the individual needs of all learners to achieve fair and successful outcomes. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, school staff teams, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

Indigenous peoples - this is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three distinct groups of aboriginal peoples: Indians (referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit.

Internalized oppression - when members of a marginalized group accept negative aspects of stereotypes assigned to them by the dominant group, and begin to believe that they are inferior. The incorporation by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society can result in self-hatred, self-concealment, fear of violence, feelings of inferiority, resignation, isolation, and powerlessness. It is a mechanism within an oppressive system for perpetuating power imbalance.

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 e.g., race, disability, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation.

Inuit - Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the *Indian Act*.

Islamophobia - includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level. (*Ontario Human Rights Commission*, Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed).

LGBTQ+ - a common acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered, two-spirit, intersex and queer individuals/communities. This acronym may or may not be used in a particular community. For example, in some places, the acronym LGBT (for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered/transsexual) may be more common.

Language - the first language we learn or the language spoken by our parents/caregivers/guardians and others who take care of us as children. This may also include dialects. There is almost inevitably a link between the language we speak or the accent with which we speak a particular language on the one hand, and our ancestry, ethnic origin or place of origin on the other. A person's accent is also often associated with their "mother tongue" or place of origin.

Lesbian - a female whose primary sexual orientation is to other women or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community.

Lookism - a form of discrimination or prejudice against people based on their physical appearance.

Marginalization - refers to a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. These groups become permanently confined to the margins of society; their status is continually reproduced because of the various dimensions of exclusion particularly in the labour market, but also from full and meaningful participation in society.

Marital status - the status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes the status of living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage, including but not limited to same-sex and opposite sex relationships.

Métis - people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe, and Cree.

Microaggression - a casual comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group or social identity. People perpetrating microaggressions often intend no offense and are unaware they are causing harm with statements or actions that repeat or affirm stereotypes about minority groups or subtly demean them. They also position the dominant culture as normal and the minority as other – different or aberrant, express disapproval of or discomfort with minority groups that assume all minority group members are the same, minimize the existence of discrimination against minority groups, seek to deny their own bias, or minimize real conflict between minority groups and the dominant culture.

Minority group - a group of people within a given society that has little or no access to social, economic, political, cultural, or religious power. The term may refer to a group that is small in number or it may connote inferior social position.

Nationality - the status of belonging to a particular nation.

Non-discrimination - the principle of non-discrimination seeks "to guarantee that Human Rights are exercised without discrimination of any kind based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status such as disability, age, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation" (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 20, Non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights; 2009).

Ontario Human Rights 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 *Ontario Human Rights Code* is to address and prevent discrimination and harassment. Refer to www.ohrc.on.ca

Opportunity gap - closely related to an achievement gap, this term refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students. Opportunity gap refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities, while achievement gap refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results.

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 e.g., 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.

Place of origin - where one is originally from, generally meaning country of birth, or if born in Canada it could include an area, province or region of the country, (e.g., Quebec, Newfoundland, the West Coast, Toronto, etc.).

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.

Power - access to privileges such as information/knowledge, connections, experience and expertise, resources and decision making that enhance a person's chances of getting what they need to live a comfortable, safe, productive and profitable life. Each person has different levels of power in different contexts depending on a personal combination of privileges and oppression.

Power dynamics - the process by which one group defines and subordinates other groups and subjects them to differential and unequal treatment.

Power imbalance - a situation in which an individual or group is able to influence others and impose its beliefs, subjecting other individuals and/or groups to differential and unequal treatment.

Prejudice - the pre-judgment (usually negative) of groups or individuals, or preconceived notions about them, based on misinformation, bias, or stereotypes.

Privilege - unearned freedoms, rights, benefits, access, and/or opportunities that provide unfair advantages for members of the dominant group(s) in society. Because privileges are granted by mere affiliation with the dominant group(s), some people are not always aware of the privileges they have. Examples include cisgender privilege, straight privilege, male privilege, settler privilege, white privilege, etc. When we take for granted advantages our privileges may bring us – those advantages are gained at the expense of and systemic disadvantaging of others.

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.

Queer - traditionally a derogatory and offensive term for LGBTQ+ people. Many LGBTQ+ people have reclaimed this word and use it proudly to describe their identity. Often used as a description of people's non-heterosexual sexual orientations in a nonspecific and unbiased manner because the terms gay, lesbian, or bisexual are not sufficient for their inner feelings or sense of identity. Also used as a rejection of hetero and cisnormative binary to better culturally identify the wide spectrum of relationships, gender expressions, identities and sexual orientations.

Race (colour) - race is a socially constructed way of judging, categorizing and creating difference among people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eyes, lips and nose shape, hair texture and body shape. The process of social construction of race is termed "Racialization." This is the "process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that

matter to economic, political and social life. Despite the fact that there are no biological “races”, the social construction of race is a powerful force with real consequences for individuals. Someone’s “race” can also extend to specific traits which are deemed to be “abnormal” and of less worth. Individuals may have prejudices related to various racialized characteristics. In addition to physical features, these characteristics could include accent, dialect or manner of speech, name, clothing and grooming, diet, beliefs and practices, leisure preferences, and places of origin.

Racialization - racialization refers to the “the process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life” (Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, 1995). Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has chosen to emphasize, with significant consequences for people’s lives. People can be racialized not only based on skin colour but also other perceived characteristics such as their culture, language, customs, ancestry, country or place of origin, or religion as is the case with islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

Racialized group - a group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of race, colour, and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment.

Racism - a set of erroneous assumptions, opinions, and actions stemming from the belief that one race is inherently superior to another. Racism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Racist - a term referring to the beliefs and/or actions of an individual, institution, or organization that imply (directly or indirectly) that certain groups are inherently superior to others.

Safe and accepting schools team – is a team established at every HPEDSB school that are responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate. Each team includes at least one student and must include at least one parent, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner, and the principal. The chair of this team must be a staff member (taken from the Ministry of Education’s Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy).

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

Sex/biological sex - generally refers to the sex assigned at birth based on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution.

Sexism - prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination directed against people on the basis of their biological sex and/or gender identity/expression. Sexism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. Sexism can affect either gender, but is particularly documented as affecting women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and may include the belief that one sex or gender identity is intrinsically superior to another and is most commonly associated with attitudes, procedures and/or patterns – economic, social and cultural – whose effect, though not necessarily whose conscious intention, is to create, maintain and extend the power, influence and privilege of males and/or masculinity over females and/or femininity. Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence.

Sexual harassment – a type of harassment technique that relates to a sexual nature and the unwelcoming or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours. Sexual harassment includes a range of actions from mild transgressions to sexual abuse or assault.

Sexual orientation - a term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction, desire or affection for another person. Examples include asexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality. Sexual orientation is much more accurately viewed as an attraction continuum that includes a range of gender identities, expressions and biological sexes.

Socio-economic status - the economic, social, and political relationships in which people operate in a given social order. These relationships reflect the areas of income level, education, access to goods and services, type of occupation, sense of ownership or entitlement and other indicators of social rank or class.

Social identity - those aspects of a person that are defined in terms their group membership, or their perceived group membership in broad social categories (e.g., race, disability/level of ability, gender identity, etc.). Social identities are most accurate when individuals self-identify or chose of how they want to be identified, as opposed to being labelled by society or others.

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.

Social inclusion - is based on notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition and entails the realization of full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political institutions. It is about recognizing and valuing diversity; it is about engendering feelings of belonging by increasing social equality and the participation of diverse and disadvantaged populations.

Transgender - refers to individuals whose gender identity is different from what is assumed based on their biological sex at birth, and/or whose gender expression is different from the way males or females are stereotypically expected to look or behave.

Transphobia - is a range of negative attitudes, feelings or actions toward transgender or transsexual people, or toward transsexuality. Transphobia can be emotional disgust, fear, violence, anger or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who do not conform to society's gender expectations. It is often expressed alongside homophobic views and hence is often considered an aspect of homophobia. Transphobia is a type of prejudice and discrimination similar to racism and sexism and transgender people of color are often subjected to all three forms of discrimination at once.

Two-spirit - an English term coined to reflect specific cultural words used by First Nations and other indigenous peoples for individuals who have both a male and female spirit. Many two-spirit people are understood by settler society to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or transsexual, or have multiple gender identities.

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.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - a teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for all students, regardless of age, skills, or situation.

White supremacy - is a racist ideology based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and therefore white people should be dominant over other races. In academic usage, particularly in usage which draws on the critical race theory, the term white supremacy can also refer to a political or socioeconomic system where white people enjoy a structural advantage (white privilege) over other ethnic groups, both at a collective and an individual level. White privilege is rooted in social-cultural systems of racial oppression that disproportionately advantage white people over other racialized groups and perpetuate white dominance as the cultural norm.

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/guardians, students and community members.

Legal References:

- *The Education Act*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Employment Standards Act*

District References:

- Board Policy No. 1: Board Mission and Goals
- Administrative Procedure 133: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
- Administrative Procedure 137: Aboriginal Education: Voluntary, Confidential Self-Identification
- Administrative Procedure 139: Harassment
- Administrative Procedure 145: District Code of Conduct and School Codes of Conduct
- Administrative Procedure 225: Character Development
- Resource Guide: Religious Accommodation

Resources:

Ministry of Education:

- Equity Policy: Toronto District School Board (2018)
- Equity and Inclusive Education Procedure: Limestone District School Board (2017)
- *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan* (2017)
- *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009)
- *Equity and Inclusive Education Guidelines for Policy Development* (2009)
- Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive education Policies in Ontario schools