



# Equity and Inclusion

Date Approved: 2019

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## PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to the principles of equity through inclusive programming, services, and operations, in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and Ministry of Education PPM119 areas of focus:

- Ableism and discrimination based on disability
- Anti-classism and Socio-economic Equity
- Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity
- Gender Equity
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- Religious and Creed-Based Accommodation
- Sexual Orientation

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

HWDSB is committed to:

- Accountability and transparency to stakeholders
- Consistent approach to identity-based data collection, integration, utilization and reporting
- Culturally inclusive and responsive programming and assessment practices
- Employment equity and workforce diversity
- Equitable and inclusive Board policies and procedures
- Inclusive school-community relationships/partnerships
- Positive culture and well-being for students and staff
- Professional learning on equity for all employees and trustees
- Shared leadership to the principles of equity

## INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Identify and address biases, barriers and discriminatory actions
- Support positive learning and workplace environments where all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted
- Support inclusive community partnership, engagement and communicating ongoing progress



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## RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council

## TERMINOLOGY:

*Ableism: The Law Commission of Ontario defines Ableism as a belief system 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.'* (Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate, 2001)

*Accountability:* Refers to the process whereby organizations and institutions as members of a diverse community are subject to the obligation to maintain a certain level of ethics and responsiveness and reporting regarding the quality, effectiveness and relevance of their service or practices and the method of delivery.

*Anti-racism:* Seeking the elimination of racism in all its forms, including systemic racism.

*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, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

*Bias:* An opinion, preference, prejudice or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.

*Community Partnerships:* Collaborative relationships between institutions and groups within the community in which there is recognition of the experience of participants and evidence of their involvement in the decision making of the institutions.

*Culturally Responsive Curriculum:* A curriculum that accurately reflects and uses the variety of knowledge of all peoples as the basis for instruction; that acknowledges and respects the diverse social backgrounds, identities and experiences of all students, and places them at the centre of the learning environment. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to understand the similarities, differences and connections between people of diverse communities. The curriculum helps students to acquire the skills and knowledge that enable them to challenge unjust practices and to build positive human relationships among their peers and among all members of the society.

*Curriculum:* Curriculum is defined as the total learning environment, including physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, assessment instruments and co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

*Discrimination:* Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability, gender expression, gender identity, receipt of public assistance, record of offences (in employment only), as set



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out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other, similar factors. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, 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.

*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, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

*Employment Equity:* A program designed to remove systemic barriers to equality of outcome in employment by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices, remedying the effects of past discrimination, and ensuring appropriate representation of designated groups, i.e., women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities. Employment equity programs usually involve setting goals and timelines in order to ensure that defined objectives are met by a specified date.

*Equitable:* Just or characterized by fairness or equity. Equitable treatment can at times differ from same treatment.

*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.

*Ethnic / Ethnicity:* The shared national, ethnocultural, racial, linguistic, and/or religious heritage of a groups of people, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

*Ethnocultural Group:* A group of people who share a particular cultural heritage or background.

*Gender Identity:* A person's innermost concept of self as being female, male, neither or both. Gender identity may or may not align with one's sex assigned at birth. Physical attraction and emotional attraction are not determined by our gender identity.

*Gender Expression:* How we express our gender to the world. This could include the clothes we wear, the way we style our hair, the way we talk and the pronouns that we use.

*Harassment:* A form of discrimination that may include unwelcome attention and remarks, jokes, threats, name-calling, touching, or other behaviour (including the display of pictures) that insults, offends, or demeans someone because of his or her identity. Harassment involves conduct or comments that are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be, offensive, inappropriate, intimidating, and hostile.



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**Inclusion:** While diversity is the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society, inclusion is about people with different identities feeling valued, accepted and welcomed within an environment. Having diversity doesn't mean there is inclusion.

**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.

**Inclusive school-community relationships:** Relationships and partnerships that reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education and engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members and community organizations.

**Identity-based data:** Refers to the socio-demographics information about a person including, but not limited to, their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity and so on.

**Leadership:** The Board of Trustees, Senior Administration and any person placed in a position of added responsibility within HWDSB.

**Ontario Human Rights Code:** A provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities, without discrimination, in special areas such as education, jobs, housing, and services. The goal of the Code is to address and ultimately prevent discrimination and harassment. (Available at [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca))

**Race:** A social construct that groups people on the basis of common ancestry and characteristics such as colour of skin, shape of eyes, hair texture, and/or facial features. The terms are used to designate the social categories into which societies divide people according to such characteristics. Race is often confused with ethnicity; there may be several ethnic groups within a racial group.

**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.

**Religious and Creed-Based Accommodation:** Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, 'discrimination because of religion (creed) is against the law. Everyone should have access to the same opportunities and benefits, and be treated with equal dignity and respect, regardless of their religion. Employers, service providers, unions and housing providers have a legal duty to accommodate people's beliefs and practices to the point of undue hardship where these are: Adversely affected by a standard, rule or requirement of the organization; Sincerely (honestly) held; Connected to a creed.' (Policy on creed and the accommodation of religious observances, 1996)

**Sexual Orientation:** a person's experience of being romantically, physically, and emotionally attracted to women, men, both, or neither.

**Workforce Diversity:** Workforce diversity is a characteristic of a workplace that is comprised of people with a wide range of experiences, backgrounds and characteristics. Those key characteristics include (but are not limited to): race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation. In the education sector, strengthening diversity in leadership and in the classroom is proven to be important; not only to promote



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a sense of belonging among students, but also to enhance innovation and creativity in the school environments.

## ACTION REQUIRED:

Implement the following Procedures:

- Ableism and discrimination based on disability
- Anti-classism and Socio-economic Equity
- Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity
- Gender Equity
- Gender Identity and Gender Expression
- Religious and Creed-Based Accommodation
- Sexual Orientation

Develop and implement an Equity Strategy aligned with Ministry of Education direction.

## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Identify and address biases, barriers and discriminatory actions	Parent Voice Survey Elementary and Secondary Positive Culture and Well-Being Surveys Staff Voice Survey Staff Census Student Census
Support positive learning and workplace environments where all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted	Elementary and Secondary Positive Culture and Well-Being Surveys Staff Voice Survey
Support inclusive community partnership, engagement and communicate ongoing progress	Partnership Database Parent voice survey

## REFERENCES:

### Government Documents

Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017  
 Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009  
 Ontario Human Rights Code  
 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
 Ministry of Education Policy and Program Memorandum 119  
 Education Act