



# Equity and Inclusive Education

Date Approved: 2014

Projected Review Date: 2018

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## PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to the principles of equity through inclusive programs, curriculum, 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 PPM 119 areas of focus:

- Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity
- Anti-classism and Socio-economic Equity
- Gender Equity
- Persons with Disabilities
- Religious Accommodation
- Sexual Orientation

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

HWDSB is committed to:

- Ensuring equity in all policies, guidelines and operating practices. This commitment will be reviewed annually to ensure accountability and transparency.
- Providing leadership at all levels that fosters an equitable environment.
- Recognizing and promoting active participation from all members of school communities in order to maintain and affect equitable education policies, practices and outcomes and religious accommodations.
- Supporting curriculum, learning materials and school practices, which reflect and include the principles of equity, as regulated by the Ministry of Education.
- Affirming and valuing students' first languages, while providing the students with the opportunity to acquire competence in Canada's first languages.
- Providing appropriate and bias-free assessment, evaluation, reporting, placement, and programming to equitably meet the educational needs and to maximize the learning potential of all students.
- Providing counseling/guidance/support services that reflect the principles of equity.
- Ensuring that harassment towards diverse communities by trustees, employees, parents, volunteers, students, and the community at large will not be tolerated.
- Employment policies, practices and procedures being non-discriminatory, fair and equitable.
- Providing equity training and resources for trustees and all employee groups.



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## INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Eliminate discrimination through the identification and removal of biases and barriers.
- Support positive learning environments that are respectful and welcoming to all.
- Demonstrate and communicate ongoing progress to the community.

## RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council

## TERMINOLOGY:

**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.

**At-Risk Students:** The Chairs of the Expert Panels on Students at Risk in *Building Pathways to Success: The Report of the Program Pathways for Students at Risk Work Group*, Toronto, 2003 defined At-Risk students as:

- Elementary students who are performing at level 1, or below grade expectations;
- Secondary students who would have studied at the Modified or Basic level in the previous curriculum;
- Secondary students who are performing significantly below the provincial standard, earning marks in the 50s and low 60s and who do not have the foundations to be successful in the new curriculum;
- Students who are disengaged, with very poor attendance;

**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.

**Best Practice:** A best practice is “a working method or set of working methods, which is officially accepted a being the best to use in a particular business or industry, usually described in detail.

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



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*Community Consultation:* A formal or informal dialogue with the community.

*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.

*Counseling/Guidance/ Support Services:* The process whereby skilled and informed persons assist in the resolution of difficulties and/or choosing of options, which are in the best interests of an individual or group.

*Culture:* Cultural identity refers to (a) the collective self-awareness that a given group embodies and reflects (e.g. racial, ethnic, gender groups) and (b) the “identity of the individual in relation to his or her culture.” Refer to *Carl E. James, Seeing Ourselves: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Culture, Toronto, Canada, 1995.*

*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 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.



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*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.

*First Languages:* A person's native language or mother tongue.

*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.

*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

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

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

*Minority Knowledges/Perspectives:* The knowledges/perspectives of minority groups that have historically been silenced and marginalized.

*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))

*Outcome:* A result or visible effect.

*Personal Needs:* Physical, emotional, social, interpersonal and spiritual needs.



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*Prejudice:* Negative prejudgment or preconceived feelings or notions about another person or group of persons based on perceived characteristics.

*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.

*Staff:* Any person employed by HWDSB.

*Stakeholders:* Persons employed by HWDSB and those individuals who have a vested interest.

*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, age, marital status, family status, or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other, similar factors.

## ACTION REQUIRED:

HWDSB recognizes the importance of equity of opportunity, and equity of access, to the full range and delivery of programs, services, and resources. The Board is therefore committed to an equitable education system that upholds and reflects the principles of fair and inclusive education, which should be reflected in all policies, programs, practices, and operations.

Support documents will be developed which are aligned with the Ministry of Education Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and PPM 119 areas of focus:

- Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity
- Anti-Classism and Socio-Economic Equity
- Gender Equity
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## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Eliminate discrimination through the identification and removal of biases and barriers.	Parent Voice Survey Positive School Climate Survey Student Voice Forums Staff Voice Survey
Support positive learning environments that are respectful and welcoming to all.	Positive School Climate Survey Student Voice Forums
Demonstrate and communicate ongoing progress to the community.	Equity of Access, Opportunity and Outcome Report

## REFERENCES:

### Government Documents

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

### HWDSB Policies

This policy is applicable to all policies and procedures