

Gender Equity Procedure

RATIONALE:

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 and the Education Act.

TERMINOLOGY:

Gender: Gender may be defined in various ways and could include any or all of the following categories: physical anatomy (or sex organs), secondary sex characteristics that develop at and after puberty, behaviour and conduct, the mind, and fashion choices.

Gender Expression: Refers to the external attributes, behaviour, appearance, dress, etc., by which a person expresses themselves and through which others perceive that person's gender.

Gender Identity: Refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond with their birth sex, and with social norms of "male" and "female." It includes an individual's personal sense of their body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, such as dress, speech and mannerisms

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation is more than simply a status that an individual possesses; it is an immutable personal characteristic that forms part of an individual's core identity. Sexual orientation encompasses the range of human sexuality from gay and lesbian to bisexual and heterosexual orientations.

Sexism: Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination directed against people on the basis of their sex or gender. Sexism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

Transgender: People whose life experience includes existing in more than one gender. This may include people who identify as transsexual, and people who describe themselves as being on a "gender spectrum" or as living outside the categories of "man" or "woman."

Transphobia: Is the unrealistic or irrational fear and hatred of cross-dressers, transsexuals and transgenderists. Like all prejudices, it is based on negative stereotypes and misconceptions that are then used to justify and support hatred, discrimination, harassment, and violence toward people who are transgendered.

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PROCEDURES:

HWDSB is committed to:

1.0 Policies, Guidelines and Practices

Commitment to Equity

- 1.1 Ensuring that all policies, guidelines, procedures and practices (including but not limited to classroom practices, day to day operations and communication practices) are free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes and reflect the principles of gender equity.
- 1.2 Identifying and eliminating sexist, transphobic, gender-related biases and stereotypes, as well as barriers in Board policies, guidelines, day to day operations, protocols and practices.
- 1.3 Establishing practices and procedures to ensure compliance with the Equity Policy - Supporting Guidelines: Gender Equity and to ensure these are accessible to all.

Accountability

- 1.4 Establishing a transparent review process and timeframe to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Equity Policy -Supporting Guidelines: Gender Equity which will include community consultation and a report to the community.

2.0 Leadership

Commitment to Equity

- 2.1 Providing leadership at all levels that fosters an environment of respect for all people regardless of sex or gender and will raise awareness of issues related to sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes throughout the Board's jurisdiction.

Staff Development

- 2.2 Providing learning opportunities related to equity education as it pertains to sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes for all members of its staff and school communities. This commitment will be reflected in implementation and school/service improvement plans to assist Trustees, Administrators, Managers, staff, students and members of the school community in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours required to implement the Equity Policy - Supporting Guidelines: Gender Equity.

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Removal of Barriers

- 2.3 Striving to ensure that educational practices are inclusive and reflect the contributions of persons of all genders including the diverse groups of girls, women and transgender persons in our communities. Further, it will strive to ensure that all forms of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, sexism, and violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons, are challenged and eliminated.

3.0 School Community Partnerships

Commitment to Equity

- 3.1 Recognizing that school communities include people of all genders and gender identities and will promote active engagement to ensure inclusive school community partnerships.

Cultural Interpretation

- 3.2 Providing multiple opportunities for communication - using a variety of strategies - to enable participation from all gender and transgender communities in the development, implementation, application and review of the Board's policies.

Removal of Barriers

- 3.3 Identifying and remove all unlawful barriers related to gender and gender identities in its community partnership practices. The Board will strive to remove other barriers as they are identified.
- 3.4 School councils and other school initiatives or activities endorsed by or affiliated with HWDSB are welcoming to people of all genders and gender identities.

Community Partners

- 3.5 All partners involved in Co-operative Education, Community Service, and Work-related Experiences are advised of HWDSB's Equity Policy - Supporting Guidelines: Gender Equity and will be expected to provide HWDSB students and staff with a learning and working environment that is free from all forms of discrimination including sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.

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4.0 Curriculum

Commitment to Equity

- 4.1 Striving to ensure that the principles and practices of gender equity and anti-sexism are reflected in the curriculum in all subject areas by:
- supporting inclusive curriculum
 - developing a process to ensure that materials, programs and program delivery do not promote sexism, transphobia, gender biases and stereotypes as well as hatred and/or violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons;
 - providing adequate resources and training: to use materials, programs, and program delivery effectively to promote critical-thinking skills; and to identify and challenge bias and stereotypical assumptions.
- 4.2 Allocating learning resources to challenge sexism, violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons and hate propaganda based on gender and gender identity.

Staff Development

- 4.3 Providing staff with professional development to examine teaching practices and learning experiences for discriminatory bias related to gender and gender identity. This professional development will enable staff to employ differentiated teaching practices for delivery of program that is free of sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes and that is intended to maximize the learning potential of all students.

5.0 Student Languages

Commitment to Equity

- 5.1 Valuing and respecting all languages and cultures.
- 5.2 Ensuring that both its communication practices and communications with staff, students, parents/guardians and the community at large will be free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.
- 5.3 Ensuring that resources are available to schools and departments to enable appropriate communications with staff, students, parents/guardians, and the community at large.

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- 5.4 Providing language learning programming that is free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes and will ensure that students' gender identities are valued and affirmed.

6.0 Student Assessment, Evaluation, Reporting and Placement

Commitment to Equity

- 6.1 Ensuring that its assessment, evaluation, reporting, and placement practices and procedures are free of sexism, transphobia, and gender stereotyping; furthermore, these practices and procedures will be differentiated to offer students opportunities to reach their highest potential.
- 6.2 Making sure that placement and programming practices and procedures are free from discriminatory biases related to gender and gender identity.
- 6.3 Identifying and striving to eliminate discrimination and barriers by identifying, reviewing, and changing practices that lead to the streaming of students into programs on the basis of gender or gender identity so as not to limit education and life opportunities.
- 6.4 Collaborating with students, parents/guardians, and caregivers by informing them of assessment, evaluation, reporting and placement practices and procedures. This collaborative process must consider gender and its interconnections to cultural and linguistic factors, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity, socio-economic factors, disabilities, personal/family experiences, previous education, students' future expectations, and students' rights to continuity, stability, and community belonging. The process includes:
- making informed placement decisions which are re-evaluated as required;
 - implementing strategies to ensure that the abilities and goals of students are not under- or overestimated on the basis of gender-bias and gender identity;
 - ensuring that gender-bias does not adversely impact on programming, placement, and academic decisions and that students, with the support of their parents/guardians and caregivers (as appropriate), are able to consider and make informed programming, placement, and academic decisions.

7.0 Counseling/Guidance/Support Services

Commitment to Equity

- 7.1 All programs addressing students' personal needs, as well as their academic and career choices, will be delivered in a manner that is free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.

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- 7.2 Ensuring that Counseling, Guidance and Support Services are free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes. The confidentiality and privacy of the students accessing and utilizing these services will be protected within the boundaries of existing legal framework.
- 7.3 Striving to include representation from Transgender students, families and community organizations in Counseling, Guidance and Support Service program development and review processes.
- 7.4 Making sure that its Counselling, Guidance and Support Service programs do not under- or over-estimate the potential of students because of sexism, transphobia and gender-related biases and stereotypes.
- 7.5 Encouraging and supporting students and their families in the identification and consideration of non-traditional career options based on gender identity.

Cultural Interpretation

- 7.6 Ensuring that communication strategies are in place to keep all parents/guardians informed about their children's current educational achievement, progress, and their plans for the future, in a language they understand, and including the provision of translations where necessary.

8.0 Harassment and Gender-Based Violence

Staff

- 8.1 Harassment, Safe Schools, and/or Respectful Working and Learning Environments Policies being applied for reporting, responding to and resolving incidents of harassment based on gender and gender identity as well as incidents of violence against all genders. These incidents of harassment and violence include but are not limited to sexual harassment and sexual assaults. Every individual has the right to report these incidents without fear of reprisal and every complaint will be investigated confidentially as may be permitted by law in order to protect the rights of all individuals.

Staff Development

- 8.2 Providing staff with the knowledge, skills, and resources to identify and respond to harassment on the basis of gender and gender identity as well as violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons.

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- 8.3 Communicating its commitment to safe schools and workplaces for all persons regardless of gender or gender identity by ensuring that staff, trustees, students, parent/guardians and community members are aware of the Harassment Policy; Safe Schools Policy; Respectful Working and Learning Environments Policy; and Equity Policy.

Accountability

- 8.4 Developing an accountability process to monitor and report instances of harassment on the basis of gender and gender-identity as well as violence against all genders.

9.0 Employment Practices

Commitment to Equity

- 9.1 Recruitment, interview, selection, training, placement, and promotion practices and procedures not discriminating based on sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes and will endeavour to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment.
- 9.2 Trying to provide interview teams that are aware of and sensitive to issues of sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.
- 9.3 Procedures for progressive discipline, performance appraisal, review and reporting being free from sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.
- 9.4 Human Resources practices, policies and procedures that are a part of the annual report and reviewed for sexism, transphobia, and gender-related biases and stereotypes.
- 9.5 Ensuring that the Board's commitment to anti-sexism and gender equity will be communicated throughout the Board, so that staff, students, and community are aware of this commitment.

10.0 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

System Level

- 10.1 Identifying staff development needs to enable trustees and staff to develop the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to implement the Equity Policy - Supporting Guidelines: Gender Equity.

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- 10.2 Implementing professional development programs to enable trustees and staff to understand, identify and challenge bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination based upon gender and gender-identity.
- 10.3 Providing training to empower staff to deal effectively, sensitively, and confidently with issues of sexism, transphobia, gender bias, discrimination and violence against all genders, in particular, girls, women and transgender persons.
- 10.4 Providing staff with the professional development, information, skills, and resources needed to teach, work and learn in environments that are free from sexism, transphobia, and gender bias.
- 10.5 Involving, as appropriate, community groups who advocate on behalf of Gender Equity in the design and delivery of development programs.