

## Sexual Orientation 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:

*Culture:* The way in which people live, think, and define themselves as a community.

*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.

*Heterosexism:* The assumption that heterosexuality is superior and preferable, and is the only right, normal or moral expression of sexuality. This definition is often used when looking at discrimination against gay, lesbian or bisexual people that is less overt, and which may be unintentional and unrecognized by the person or organization responsible.

*Homophobia:* The irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as "homosexual."

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities (LGBT):* "GLBT" is also used. An acronym that also encompasses the diversity within the Trans and Queer community is LGBTTIQQ2A – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, 2-spirited and Allies.

*Lesbian:* A woman who has emotional, physical, spiritual and/or sexual attraction to other women.

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*Gay:* People whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex. Also used as an umbrella term for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community.

*Bisexual:* A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to members of more than one gender.

*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.”

*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.

*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.”

### 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 anti-homophobic and anti-heterosexist.
- 1.2 Identifying and eliminating homophobic and heterosexist biases and barriers in Board policies, guidelines, day to day operations protocol, and practice
- 1.3 Establishing practices and procedures to ensure compliance with the Equity Policy Supporting Guidelines: Sexual Orientation.

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### **Accountability**

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

### **2.0 Leadership**

#### **Commitment to Equity**

- 2.1 Providing leadership at all levels that fosters an environment of respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation and will endeavour to raise awareness of issues related to sexual orientation and equity throughout the Board jurisdiction.

#### **Accountability**

- 2.2 Providing opportunities and support implementation of equity education and initiatives as they pertain to sexual orientation. This will be reflected in implementation plans and school/service improvement plans to ensure inclusive environments for students, staff and community.
- 2.3 Ensuring that educational practices are inclusive and reflect the contributions of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities and that all forms of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and homophobia and violence against these communities are challenged and eliminated.

### **3.0 School Community Partnerships**

#### **Commitment to Equity**

- 3.1 Recognizing that school communities include people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender and will promote active engagement with these communities to ensure inclusive school community partnerships.

#### **Removal of Barriers**

- 3.2 Acknowledging that there are barriers which may prevent full participation in school-community partnerships by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities. Through engagement with these communities, Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will identify and remove unlawful barriers that do exist.

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- 3.3 School councils and other -school initiatives or activities endorsed by or affiliated with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will be welcoming to parents/guardians and caregivers of all sexual orientations.

### 4.0 Curriculum

#### Commitment to Equity

- 4.1 Ensuring that curriculum delivery in all subject areas is consistent with the principles and practices of Equity as they relate to sexual orientation. Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board will honour this commitment by:
- Ensuring that its staff has access to a wide variety of bias-free teaching and learning materials;
  - Supporting staff who choose to use learning materials with themes, topics or characters that reflect the diversity of sexual orientations;
  - Ensuring that best practice, age and developmentally appropriate teaching and learning strategies are used to address the topic of sexual orientation;
  - Ensuring that its facilities are spaces in which Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students can participate in learning experiences without fear of harassment.
- 4.2 Delivering program, providing learning materials and promoting best practices in all accepted subject matter that reflects a balance of perspectives and includes a diversity of experiences including those of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender communities.
- 4.3 Ensuring staff delivers curriculum and provides learning experiences that are free from homophobia and heterosexism.

#### Staff Development

- 4.4 Providing staff with professional development to examine teaching practices and learning experiences for discriminatory bias related to heterosexism.
- 4.5 Developing student critical thinking skills about heterosexism to enable students to challenge bias and stereotypical assumptions.

### 5.0 Student Languages

#### Commitment to Equity

- 5.1 Valuing and respecting all languages and cultures.

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- 5.2 Ensuring that both its communication practices and communications with staff, students, parents/guardians and the community at large will be free from heterosexism and homophobia.

### **Cultural Interpreters**

- 5.3 Resources being available to schools and departments to enable appropriate communications with staff, students, parents/guardians and the community at large.
- 5.4 Providing language learning programming that is free from heterosexism and homophobia.

## **6.0 Student Assessment, Evaluation Reporting and Replacement**

### **Commitment to Equity**

- 6.1 Ensuring that assessment, evaluation, reporting and placement practices and procedures are free from heterosexism and homophobia.
- 6.2 Placement and programming practices and procedures are free from discriminatory biases related to gender roles and sexual orientation. Further, it will ensure that assessment, evaluation, reporting and placement decisions meet individual student needs and offer students opportunities to reach their highest potential.

### **Removal of Barriers**

- 6.3 Attempting to identify and eliminate discrimination and unlawful barriers by identifying, reviewing and changing practices that lead to the streaming of students into programs on the basis of sexual orientation.
- 6.4 Collaborating with students and parents/caregivers by informing them of assessment, evaluation, reporting and placement practices and procedures. This collaboration includes making and re-evaluating placement decisions.

## **7.0 Counseling/Guidance/Support Services**

### **Commitment to Equity**

- 7.1 Programs addressing students' personal needs, as well as their academic and career choices, will be delivered in a manner that is free from heterosexism and homophobia.

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- 7.2 Counselling/Guidance and Support Services being free from discriminatory biases related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Further, it will strive to include representation from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students, families and community organizations in program development and review processes.
- 7.3 Counselling, Guidance and Support Service programs do not underestimate the potential of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender students because of discriminatory bias and stereotyping related to sexual orientation.
- 7.5 The confidentiality and privacy of the students accessing and utilizing these services will be protected within the boundaries of existing legal framework.
- 7.6 To using communication practices that are free from heterosexism and homophobia to facilitate parent/guardian involvement in matters relating to their child's academic achievement, social and emotional development, behaviour and future direction.

### **8.0 Harassment**

#### **Commitment to Equity**

- 8.1 Harassment and/or Safe Schools Policies being applied for reporting, responding to and resolving incidents of harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Every individual has the right to report harassment without fear of reprisal. Every complaint will be investigated in confidence to the extent permitted by law and in accordance with the principles of natural justice 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 sexual orientation.
- 8.3 Communicating its commitment to safe schools and workplaces for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons by ensuring that Staff, Trustees, students, parent/guardians and community members are aware of its Harassment Policy, Safe Schools Policy and Equity Policy as they relate to sexual orientation.

#### **Accountability**

- 8.4 Developing an accountability process to monitor and report instances of harassment on the basis of sexual orientation.

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### 9.0 Employment Practices

#### Commitment to Equity

- 9.1 Recruitment, interview, selection, training, placement and promotion policies, practices and procedures being fair and equitable and not discriminatory based on sexual orientation.

#### Removal of Barriers

- 9.2 Trying to identify and eliminate systemic barriers related to sexual orientation in its recruitment, employment and promotion practices.
- 9.3 The procedures for progressive discipline, performance appraisal, review and reporting being free from bias and stereotypical assumptions based on sexual orientation.
- 9.4 Endeavouring to ensure that the sexual orientations of its staff remain confidential and protected.

### 10.0 Staff Development

#### Commitment to Equity

- 10.1 Implementing professional development programs based on identified needs to enable trustees and staff to understand, identify and address bias, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination based on heterosexism and homophobia.
- 10.2 Providing staff with the professional development, information, skills and resources needed to teach, work and learn from a perspective that is free from heterosexism and homophobia.
- 10.3 Providing staff development to enable staff to challenge bias and stereotypical assumptions based on heterosexism and homophobia.
- 10.4 Providing staff development to assist all staff in creating physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and spiritually safe learning environments for all students.
- 10.5 Consulting, as Board officials deem appropriate, members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities in the design and implementation of staff development programs related to Equity and sexual orientation.