

**Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild @HWDSB: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF CARE**  
**Module 1: Physical & Mental Health and Safety**

**Lesson # 7: A Guide to Brave Conversations**

**Learning Goal:** Empower everyone to engage in new and uncomfortable conversations in a safe environment - in the classroom and in their daily lives.

**Key Vocabulary:**

- **Brave Space** - A brave space is a space where participants feel comfortable learning, sharing, and growing. A brave space is inclusive to all races, sexes, genders, abilities, immigration status, and lived experiences. A “brave space” is where students, teachers and citizens generally can come together to have hard conversations and hear each other out - even and especially when that is challenging.
- **Brave conversation** - In brave conversations, whether in the context of teaching, mentoring, or coaching, individuals are encouraged to express their views openly and truthfully, rather than defensively or with the purpose of laying blame. Integral to brave conversations is an openness to learn.
- **Safe space/safer space** - a place (as on a school campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations.

**Educator Pre-Reflection:**

Before engaging in this lesson, consider/think about...

- Any sensitivities amongst students as some may have personal (direct) experience of the issues (e.g. racism/discrimination/Covid-related trauma) and could be upset by the subject matter. You could warn students that you will be exploring some controversial subject matter and it is not your intention to upset anyone.
- If a student is upset during/following these conversations, let them know that they can speak with you or email you afterwards to support or direct them to receive the help they may need (i.e. school social worker, settlement workers, We Help Hotline/App, guidance, Kids Help Phone etc.)
- Be aware that some students may express negative attitudes. It is important to allow them to voice their views and they should be probed, but this should be followed by clearly stating that as a community of learners, you don't tolerate offensive and harmful attitudes and promote the importance of respecting each other's differences. If any remarks are directed towards specific students, then it may be necessary to follow up with the Safe School's policy.
- <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/secondary/supports/safe-schools/>
- It is important to shut down bias and hate at all levels and in all areas of the school. Here are some examples of statements to shut down harmful comments:
  - “Those words hurt and anger a lot of people. We do not use them in the classroom.”
  - “Using that word(s) to put someone down is unacceptable.”

- In response to a student saying “I was just joking” you can respond: “I’m not going to get into a discussion with you about if you were joking or not but that joke could hurt or offend someone, and my job is to help all our students feel safe, so it doesn’t belong in the classroom.
- “It’s not acceptable to put people down. We can arrange a time to talk about your comments later, but right now those comments need to stop.”

### Student Pre-Reflection:

Before you begin, think about...

Discomfort and needs:

- Why do babies cry? How do adults respond? Why?
- How do animals and plants signal their stress or signal their need for necessities?

**Teacher Note:** the connection to make here is that different living things communicate discomfort to bring change to the environment or situation. (This can also apply to non-living things in your specific classroom(s).

### Provocation / Minds-on:

**Teacher Prompt:** Think of a situation when you had a need that was not being met. Was it hard to advocate for your need? How did you communicate your need (digitally? In person?)? Did someone respond? How?

After identifying a situation where a need was not met, ask students to re-examine how they advocate for their needs:

- What strategies could you use to advocate for your needs?
- As we begin this new semester, what new or different communication strategies will you be using?
- Which caring adults in the school can you identify to communicate your needs?

### Learning Task/Activity:

The pandemic is an ongoing health crisis but also a time for collective reflection where many pressing issues have emerged. In future lessons we will be having conversations about some of these issues, however, to do this we need to maintain a questioning frame of mind in an environment of mutual respect so that everyone feels safe in participating in these conversations. To build this safe space, this learning task seeks to give students and educators the communication tools to engage in new, uncomfortable, and courageous conversations.

Guidelines to have Mutually Respectful Conversations	
If you need to seek clarity on someone’s statement...	“Tell me more about _____”
If you would like to offer an alternative perspective in the conversation....	“Have you ever considered _____.”
To respectfully speak your truth...	“I don’t see it the way you do. I see it as _____.”

To seek common ground...	"We don't agree on _____ but we can agree on _____."
To respectfully ask for time and space in a discussion...	"Could we revisit the conversation about _____ tomorrow?"
To respectfully set your boundaries...	"Please do not say _____ again to me or around me."

**Teacher Prompt:** After reviewing these guidelines, invite students to practice these statements in partners or groups of three by choosing one of the following topics:

**A) Distance Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic** – Was it a positive or negative experience? Why or why not?

**B) Voting Age** – Should we lower the voting age to 16? Why or why not?

Considerations to keep in mind when participating in your conversation:

- Listen with respect. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.
- Make comments using "I" statements.
- If you do not feel safe making a comment or asking a question, write down your thought. You can share the idea with your teacher first and together come up with a safe way to share the idea.
- If someone says an idea or question that helps your own learning, say thank you.
- If someone says something that hurts or offends you, do not attack the person. Acknowledge that the comment—not the person—hurt your feelings and explain why.
- Put-downs are never okay.
- If you don't understand something, ask a question.
- Think with your head and your heart.
- Share the talking time—provide room for others to speak.
- Do not interrupt others while they are speaking.
- Write your thoughts down if you don't have time to say them during class.
- If at any time you feel upset following a conversation in the classroom, speak with or email your teacher or caring adult in the building so that they can support you or direct you to receive the help you may need (i.e. school social worker, settlement workers, HWDSB Helps Hotline/App, guidance, Kids Help Phone etc.)

Source: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/contracting>

**Ideas for Follow up / Discussion:**

- **Classroom Contracts:** After having brave conversations, this might be an opportunity to build or rebuild a classroom community contract to explicitly include considerations for listening or include mandatory statements that support having mutually respectful conversations or disagreements.
- **Prior Knowledge:** In anticipation of upcoming lessons, connect with students' prior knowledge/experiences:
  - What types of issues have emerged (in society) during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Educator Post-Reflection:**

Reflect on...

- Was the classroom environment a safe or brave space (today)? What are some next steps to help students continue to have courageous conversations beyond this learning task?
- Where will the “Guidelines to Mutually Respectful Conversations” be available/uploaded to be accessible for students (i.e. The Hub, classroom poster)?
- When can you model the use of these statements in your day-to-day classroom all year round? In lessons? In conversations with students and colleagues?

### Student Post-Reflection:

The main idea I want to remember or take away from this lesson is ...

- *Was I an attentive listener?*
- *Did I express my disagreement in a respectful way?*
- *Were the prompts useful?*
- *How did I process the experience?*
- *What was my emotional reaction?*

### Further Resources:

[HWDSB We Help Hotline](#) send a message through the app or send a text to 905-963-0066

[Kids Help Phone](#) - 24/7 counselling for youth, crisis line 1-800-668-6868

[SWIS - Settlement Workers in Schools](#) (ESL and ELL learners)

[COAST Hamilton](#): Mental health crisis line (905) 972-8338; coasthamilton.ca

[Responding to Hate and Bias at School](#)

[Making it Meaningful: Interrupting Biased Comments in the Classroom](#)

[Contracting - creating a safe space for conversation](#)

[Talking About Race: Being Anti-Racist](#)

### Curriculum Connections:

**Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild@HWDSB: Building a Community of Care** is a curriculum resource that aligns with HWDSB Equity Action Plan priority area – School and Classroom Practices. The goal of this priority area is to remove barriers to ensure that school and classroom practices reflect and respond to the diversity of students, staff and the community. Further, the lessons in **Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild@HWDSB** support the board’s goal to develop and integrate Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) approaches to promote teaching, curriculum and assessment that are responsive to students’ needs and lived experiences. These lessons are intended to support staff as they address issues related to equity, mental health, and well-being.

The lessons included in **Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild@HWDSB** align with the [Ontario Curriculum](#) across several subject areas, as articulated within the [Considerations for Program Planning](#) (i.e., front matter) applicable to all curriculum documents, Grades 1 to 12. Educators must consider this information to guide the implementation of curriculum and in creating the environment in which it is taught. These considerations include areas such as Student Well-being and Mental Health; Healthy Relationships; Human Rights, Equity and Inclusive Education. Outlined below is the specific language that has been used to align Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild@HWDSB with the Ontario Curriculum across several secondary subject areas.

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/curriculum#secondary>

## **The Arts (2010)**

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE ARTS PROGRAM**

The Ontario equity and inclusive education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy (p.36).

## **Business Studies (2006)**

### **Antidiscrimination Education in Business Studies**

Antidiscrimination Education in Business Studies Antidiscrimination education promotes a school climate and classroom practice that encourage all students to work to high standards, ensure that they are given a variety of opportunities to be successful, affirm their self-worth, and help them strengthen their sense of identity and positive self-image.

The business studies curriculum is designed to help students acquire the habits of mind that are essential in a complex democratic society characterized by rapid technological, economic, political, and social change. These include respect and understanding with regard to individuals, groups, and cultures in Canada and the global community, including an appreciation and valuing of the contributions of Aboriginal people to the richness and diversity of Canadian life.

Learning the importance of protecting human rights and of taking a stand against racism and other expressions of hatred and discrimination is also part of the foundation for responsible citizenship and ethical business practice (p.23).

## **Canadian and World Studies - (2018/2015)**

### **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CANADIAN AND WORLD STUDIES**

Every student is entitled to learn in a safe, caring environment, free from violence and harassment. Research has shown that students learn and achieve better in such environments. A safe and supportive social environment in a school is founded on healthy relationships – the relationships between students, between students and adults, and between adults. Healthy relationships are based on respect, caring, empathy, trust, and dignity, and thrive in an environment in which diversity is honoured and accepted. Healthy relationships do not tolerate abusive, controlling, violent, bullying/harassing, or other inappropriate behaviours. To experience themselves as valued and connected members of an inclusive social environment, students need to be involved in healthy relationships with their peers, teachers, and other members of the school community (p.47/p. 53).

## **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CANADIAN AND WORLD STUDIES PROGRAM**

The Ontario equity and inclusive education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other similar factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. In an inclusive education system, all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, so that they can feel engaged in and empowered by their learning experiences (p.48/p.54).

## **Classical Studies and International Languages (2016)**

### **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CLASSICAL STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES**

Every student is entitled to learn in a safe, caring environment, free from violence and harassment. Research has shown that students learn and achieve better in such environments. A safe and supportive social environment in a school is founded on healthy relationships – the relationships between students, between students and adults, and between adults. Healthy relationships are based on respect, caring, empathy, trust, and dignity, and thrive in an environment in which diversity is honoured and accepted (p.46).

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CLASSICAL STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES PROGRAM**

The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy (p.46).

## **Computer Studies (2008)**

### **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION IN COMPUTER STUDIES**

Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship. Schools have the responsibility to ensure that school-community interaction reflects the diversity in the local community and wider society (p. 26).

## **Cooperative Education (2018)**

### **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND COOPERATIVE EDUCATION**

Every student is entitled to learn in a safe, caring environment, free from violence and harassment. Research has shown that students learn and achieve better in such environments. A safe and supportive social environment in a school is founded on healthy relationships - the relationships between students, between students and adults, and between adults. Healthy relationships are based on respect, caring, empathy, trust, and dignity, and thrive in an environment in which diversity is honoured and accepted (p. 60-61)

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, creed, gender identity/expression, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued when all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed, and accepted (p. 61)

## **English**

### **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION (2007)**

The implementation of antidiscrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to high standards, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the wider society. It requires schools to adopt measures to provide a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, violence, and expressions of hate (p.33).

## **Antidiscrimination Education in the English Program**

Learning resources that reflect the broad range of students' interests, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences are an important aspect of an inclusive English program. In such a program, learning materials involve protagonists of both sexes from a wide variety of backgrounds. Teachers routinely use materials that reflect the diversity of Canadian and world cultures, including those of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, and make them available to students (p.33)

## **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION IN PROGRAMS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

The implementation of antidiscrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to high standards, affirms the worth of all students, and helps them strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the wider society. It requires schools to adopt measures to provide a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, violence, and expressions of hate. Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship (p.51).

## **French as a Second Language (2014)**

### **SUPPORTING STUDENTS' WELL-BEING AND ABILITY TO LEARN**

Educators play an important role in promoting children and youth's well-being by creating, fostering, and sustaining a learning environment that is healthy, caring, safe, inclusive, and accepting. (p.3)

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS**

The Ontario equity and inclusive education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other similar factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted.

In an environment based on the principles of inclusive education, all students, parents, caregivers, and other members of the school community – regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, sex, physical or intellectual ability, race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other similar factors – are welcomed, included, treated fairly, and respected. Diversity is valued, and all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted (p.45).

## **Guidance and Career Education (2019)**

## **Antidiscrimination Education in Guidance and Career Education**

The guidance and career education curriculum is designed to help students acquire the habits of mind essential in a complex democratic society characterized by rapid technological, economic, political, and social change. These involve respect and understanding with regard to individuals, groups, and cultures in Canada and the global community, including an appreciation and valuing of the contributions of Aboriginal people to the richness and diversity of Canadian life. They also involve respect and responsibility for the environment and an understanding of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of citizenship. Learning the importance of protecting human rights and of taking a stand against racism and other expressions of hatred and discrimination is also part of the foundation for responsible citizenship.

Learning activities used to implement the curriculum should be inclusive in nature, reflecting diverse points of view and experiences. They should enable students to become more sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of others and to understand and respect themselves. The critical thinking and analytic skills acquired in guidance and career education will allow students to recognize barriers, biases, and stereotypes that may be exhibited in social interactions and in the workplace, and to develop the skills needed to deal with these situations effectively. In guidance and career education courses, students will learn about the importance of cultural diversity and the value of a broad range of skills and knowledge needed to be successful in a global economy (p.23).

## **Health and Physical Education (2015)**

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy (p. 72).

## **Interdisciplinary Studies (2002)**

### **The Place of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Curriculum**

Our world is increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Communications networks exchange information around the globe, creating new forms of collaboration and transforming the nature of work and learning. New areas of study develop to advance human knowledge and respond to the challenges of our changing world with insight and innovation. These include areas that often combine or cross subjects or disciplines, such as space science, information management systems, alternative energy technologies, and computer art and animation. Students today face an unprecedented range of social, scientific, economic, cultural, environmental, political, and technological issues. To deal with these issues, they first need competencies derived from discrete disciplines (p.5)

## Mathematics

### **Antidiscrimination Education in Mathematics (Grade 9 & 10) 2005**

To ensure that all students in the province have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, the curriculum must be free from bias and all students must be provided with a safe and secure environment, characterized by respect for others, that allows them to participate fully and responsibly in the educational experience.

Learning activities and resources used to implement the curriculum should be inclusive in nature, reflecting the range of experiences of students with varying backgrounds, abilities, interests, and learning styles. They should enable students to become more sensitive to the diverse cultures and perceptions of others, including Aboriginal peoples (p.26).

### **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION IN MATHEMATICS (Grade 11 & 12) 2007**

Students need to recognize that ordinary people use mathematics in a variety of everyday contexts, both at work and in their daily lives. Connecting mathematical ideas to real-world situations through learning activities can enhance students' appreciation of the role of mathematics in human affairs, in areas including health, science, and the environment. Students can be made aware of the use of mathematics in contexts such as sampling and surveying and the use of statistics to analyse trends. Recognizing the importance of mathematics in such areas helps motivate students to learn and also provides a foundation for informed, responsible citizenship.

To achieve their mathematical potential, however, different students may need different kinds of support. Some boys, for example, may need additional support in developing their literacy skills in order to complete mathematical tasks effectively. For some girls, additional encouragement to envision themselves in careers involving mathematics may be beneficial. For example, teachers might consider providing strong role models in the form of female guest speakers who are mathematicians or who use mathematics in their careers (p.35).

## Science (2008)

### **Antidiscrimination Education and Science (Grade 9 and 10)**

The science program provides students with access to materials that reflect diversity with respect to gender, race, culture, and ability. Diverse groups of people involved in scientific activities and careers should be prominently featured. In planning the science program, teachers should consider issues such as access to laboratory experiences and equipment. Laboratory benches and lighting should be adjustable and appropriate for students with physical disabilities. Equipment and materials can also be adapted in ways that make them accessible to all students.

In many instances, variations in culture and location (whether rural, urban, or suburban) can be found in a single classroom. Students living in apartment buildings will have different access to plants and animals than students living in a rural setting or on a First Nation reserve. There may be cultural sensitivities for some students in areas such as the use of biological specimens. For example, a number of religions have prohibitions regarding pigs. Although it is impossible to anticipate every contingency, teachers should be open to adjusting their instruction, if feasible, when concerns are brought to their attention (p.37).

## **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION (Grade 11 and 12)**

The implementation of antidiscrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to attain high standards, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the wider society. It requires schools to adopt measures to provide a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, violence, and expressions of hate.

Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship. Schools have the responsibility to ensure that school–community interaction reflects the diversity in the local community and wider society (p. 39).

## **Social Sciences and Humanities (2013)**

### **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES PROGRAM**

The Ontario equity and inclusive education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of students to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy.

### **SUPPORTING STUDENTS' WELL-BEING AND ABILITY TO LEARN**

Educators play an important role in promoting children and youth's well-being by creating, fostering, and sustaining a learning environment that is healthy, caring, safe, inclusive, and accepting. A learning environment of this kind will support not only students' cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development but also their mental health, their resilience, and their overall state of well-being. All this will help them achieve their full potential in school and in life.

The Role of Mental Health: Mental health touches all components of development. Mental health is much more than the absence of mental illness. Well-being is influenced not only by the absence of problems and risks but by the presence of factors that contribute to healthy growth and development. By nurturing and supporting students' strengths and assets, educators help promote positive mental health in the classroom (p.6).

## **Technological Education (2009)**

### **ANTIDISCRIMINATION EDUCATION IN TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

The implementation of antidiscrimination principles in education influences all aspects of school life. It promotes a school climate that encourages all students to work to attain high standards, affirms the worth of all students, and helps students strengthen their sense of identity and develop a positive self-image. It encourages staff and students alike to value and show respect for diversity in the school and the wider society.

It requires schools to adopt measures to provide a safe environment for learning, free from harassment, violence, and expressions of hate.

Antidiscrimination education encourages students to think critically about themselves and others in the world around them in order to promote fairness, healthy relationships, and active, responsible citizenship.

Teaching strategies, assessment and evaluation materials, and the classroom environment should be designed to value the experiences and contributions of all people (Grade 9 & 10, p.35 and Grade 11 & 12 p.39).

# DRAFT