



Anti-Black Racism Policy

Date Approved: 2022

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PURPOSE:

Hamilton Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to dismantling structural and institutional anti-Black racism by identifying, preventing, and removing barriers in all HWDSB environments. This policy underlines HWDSB's commitment to understanding and addressing historical and current impacts of systemic anti-Black racism and discrimination that results in inequities experienced by Black students, staff and other members of the HWDSB community.

The United Nations proclaimed 2015-2024 The International Decade for People of African Descent. In proclaiming this Decade, the international community recognized that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected. Around 200 million people identifying themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. People of African Descent are not a monolithic group and represent multitudes of cultures, backgrounds and histories.

The impact and consequences of historical and ongoing marginalization have created systemic barriers that prevent students from fully participating in Ontario's education system including HWDSB. This is especially true for Black students who are disproportionately impacted by systemic Anti-Black racism and inequitable outcomes such as lower graduation rates, over representation in special education classes, and less likely to learn about their histories in school or to see themselves represented within school staffs in their K-12 school careers.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To strongly acknowledge the existence of anti-Black racism and affirm HWDSB's commitment to take a proactive and systemic approach to identify and address it in HWDSB learning and working environments.
- To acknowledge the need of incorporating awareness of intersectional identities in addressing inequities caused by racism and other forms of oppressions.
- To ensure HWDSB community members understand their roles and responsibilities in identifying and addressing the urgent issues that Black students face in a more targeted way, but in a way that will also benefit all students.
- To promote an approach of targeted universalism to remove systemic barriers experienced by the communities most negatively impacted by the construct of race, in ways that contribute to the universal goal of achieving educational equity for all students.
- To address the Ontario Human Rights Commission recommendations to address Anti-Black racism in a way that provides an intersectional analysis of interconnected socio-economic and racial inequities.
- To promote respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people of African Descent, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



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- To promote a greater knowledge of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture and contribution of people of African descent to the development of societies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- HWDSB structures must provide accountability and transparency to all stakeholders.
- K-12 classrooms promote culturally inclusive and responsive programming and assessment practices in ways that recognize Black heritages, histories, experiences, perspectives and contributions.
- HWDSB learning and working environments reflect employment equity and workforce diversity by recruiting, hiring and retaining Black educators, leaders and staff.
- HWDSB policies and procedures are free from anti-Black racism and bias with stakeholder input and feedback.
- Inclusive school-community relationships/partnerships are respectful, and intentionally engage Black students, staff and community organizations and service organizations.
- Learning and working environments promote a positive culture and well-being for students and staff through targeted programming and supports for Black students/staff.
- Professional learning on equity, anti-racism and anti-Black racism is provided for all employees and trustees.
- HWDSB fosters a shared leadership approach to the principles of equity and human rights education.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- HWDSB community members are able to learn, work, and access services and facilities in all HWDSB environments without facing anti-Black racism, discrimination or harassment.
- Structures are in place to ensure a proactive approach to identify and address biases, barriers and discriminatory actions related to anti-Black racism including:
 - Supportive positive learning and workplace environments where all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted.
 - Support inclusive community partnerships and engagement as well as communicate ongoing progress on related goals and strategies.
 - Advance barrier-free practices in recruitment, hiring and promotions.
 - Support workforce diversity and leadership that is inclusive of Indigenous, racialized and Black employees and honors intersectional identities.
 - Enhance data collection, analysis, and reporting for evidence-based decision-making, and clearly communicating how the data will be used.
 - Increase understanding of systemic racism and anti-Black racism.
 - Identify and address acts and systems of White Supremacy
 - Increase understanding of the Canadian Black Community and Black history in Hamilton.



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RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
 Members of Executive Council
 All members of the HWDSB Community

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.

Adverse impact: having a harmful result. Sometimes treating everyone the same will have a negative effect on some people.

African Descent (also referred to as Black, Black Canadian, and African Canadian): The terms African Canadians, Black Canadians, and Black people are used interchangeably to refer to all people of sub-Saharan African ancestry living in Canada, regardless of whether they arrived in Canada directly from their ancestral homeland on the continent of Africa or from other parts of the world. These terms include all people of African descent living in Canada, regardless of their citizenship status. Black Canadians are made up of a diverse mix of cultures, religions, backgrounds, and identities.

Anti-Black Racism: Prejudice in attitudes and beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the extent that anti-Black racism is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger society. Anti-Black racism manifests in the current educational marginalization of African Canadians, which includes unequal opportunities, disproportionately low academic achievement, lessened experiences of well-being, and overrepresentation in the disciplinary and Special Education data.

Anti-racism: a proactive and consistent process of acknowledging racism; and of seeking to identify, challenge, disrupt and eliminate racism in all its forms (individual, institutional, systemic racism).

Anti-oppression: a proactive and consistent process of acknowledging different forms of oppression (colonialism, racism, ableism, classism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, classism, islamophobia, antisemitism, and other forms); and of seeking to identify, challenge, disrupt and eliminate oppressive ideologies, practices, and outcomes.



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Barrier: anything that prevents a person or groups of people with shared identities from fully taking part in all aspects of society, including physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, economic, and technological barriers, as well as policies or practices.

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

Board: Hamilton Wentworth District School Board or HWDSB

Board of Trustees: locally elected representatives of the public, who are required to carry out their responsibilities in a manner that assists the Board in fulfilling its duties under the *Education Act*.

Black People: The terms African Canadians, Black Canadians, and Black people are used interchangeably to refer to all people of sub-Saharan African ancestry living in Canada, regardless of whether they arrived in Canada directly from their ancestral homeland on the continent of Africa or from other parts of the world. These terms include all people of African descent living in Canada, regardless of their citizenship status. Black Canadians are made up of a diverse mix of cultures, religions, backgrounds, and identities.

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.

Competing rights: situations where parties involved in a dispute claim that the enjoyment of an individual or group's human rights and freedoms, as protected by law, would interfere with another's rights and freedoms.

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

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.



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Discrimination: Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups because 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 based on 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, Indigenous 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.

Equality: The principle that each person must be treated equally by and under the law. In Canada, the right to equality is enshrined in provincial and federal human rights legislations and the *Charter*. Equality is often understood by the notions of both formal equality (treating everyone the same in all situations) and substantive equality (treating some differently than others in order to treat some equally).

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

Equity: A condition or state in which access to opportunities and resources are distributed fairly, justly, and equitably. Equity involves treating some people differently or giving them what they need so they may meet the same outcomes as others.

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.

Harassment: is defined in the Code as *engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome*. This policy covers code-based harassment, which is a type of harassment that is directed towards a person or group on the basis of a protected code ground(s). It can involve words or actions that are known or should be known to be offensive,



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embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, or unwelcome. More than one event must take place for there to be a violation of the *Code*. However, one incident could be significant or substantial enough to be interpreted as harassment. Some examples of harassment are name-calling, unwelcome remarks, jokes, slurs, displaying derogatory or offensive messages, and bullying.

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 does not 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.

Intersectionality: recognizes how each person simultaneously exists within multiple and overlapping identities. Intersectional oppression may arise out of the combination of experiences of oppressions, which, compounded, produce a distinct experience of discrimination or oppression. (*See also 'Intersecting Grounds'*)

Intersecting Grounds: Discrimination can be connected to the compounding effects of more than one grounds of discrimination. For example, a Black Muslim woman can be seen as a “Black person,” or as a “Muslim,” or as a “woman” and is protected under the grounds of race, religion, and gender. She may experience discrimination on these intersecting grounds. (*See also 'Intersectionality'*)

Leadership: The Board of Trustees, Senior Administration, Principals, Managers 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 devoted areas such as education, jobs, housing, and services. The goal of the Code is to address and prevent discrimination and harassment. (Available at www.ohrc.on.ca)

Race: A social construct that groups people based on 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.



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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.

Reprisal: an action or threat that is intended as retaliation or punishment for claiming or enforcing a right under the *Code and under this policy*. Section 8 of the *Code* protects people from reprisal or threats of reprisal.

Special programs: are programs or measures that an organization may create to address inequalities and help generate opportunities for people who experience discrimination, hardship, and disadvantage. To be a special program, the program must meet one of the following conditions: (a) it must relieve hardship or economic disadvantage, or (b) help disadvantaged people achieve, or try to achieve, equal opportunity, or (c) help eliminate discrimination.

Systemic barrier: a barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization, organizational policies, practices and decision-making processes, or the culture of an organization. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups protected by the Human Rights Code.

Systemic discrimination: patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage, advantage, or privilege for people of certain for groups.

Targeted Universalism: Targeted universalism, as a principle, recognizes that everyone benefits from HWDSBs targeted removal of systemic barriers faced by the most disadvantaged communities. Reducing barriers and disparities leads to a better HWDSB learning and working environment for everyone.

White Supremacy: The belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups, in particular Black or Jewish people.

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

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Implement culturally inclusive and responsive programming and assessment practices, taking proactive instructional steps to identify, prevent and mitigate systemic barriers in all classrooms.



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- Take proactive steps to identify, prevent and remove systemic barriers in hiring practices with measurable outcomes.
- To create an Anti-Black Racism Strategy that includes an intersectional anti-oppressive approach to address racial disparities in HWDSB learning and working environments.
- Use disaggregated race data to assist in assessing the potential of systemic barriers in board policies and procedures, taking into consideration that racism is experienced differently by various Black identifying and racialized groups, and within those groups, based on other dimensions of diversity including ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, disability and language.
- Create structures for respectful, open and ongoing communication between HWDSB and Black staff, students and community members by creating advisory groups. The lived experience, perspectives and guidance of those most adversely impacted by anti-Black racism will be considered when developing policies and programs.
- Use the approach of targeted universalism when identifying, removing, and preventing systemic barriers thereby supporting all students and staff in achieving full participation in all HWDSB learning and working environments. The targeted removal of systemic barriers faced by the most disadvantaged communities will reduce barriers for all communities in HWDSB.
- Develop and implement anti-Black racism capacity and competency building for all students, employees and trustees. All will be required to complete anti-Black racism training in order to promote and develop anti-racism competency, capacity and understanding and build a shared understanding of the principles of equity.
- Structure capacity building in a way that is customized for students, families and staff so all HWDSB members are able to share leadership and share in identifying and removing barriers that exist to full participation in the system.
- Regular review of mental health strategies/resources to ensure students and staff impacted by anti-Black racism or oppression, whether as targets or witnesses, are provided with the support to implement strategies for self-care and dialogue to address concerns and prioritize students feeling safe mentally, emotionally and physically.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

| Intended Outcome | Assessment |
|---|---|
| HWDSB community members are able to learn, work, and access services and facilities in all HWDSB environments without facing anti-Black racism, discrimination or harassment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights incidents, inquiries, reviews and reports related to anti-Black racism • School climate surveys • Staff voice surveys • Parent/community voice surveys • Student Voice Surveys |



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Structures to ensure a proactive approach to identify and address biases, barriers and discriminatory actions related to anti-Black racism including:

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- Advance barrier-free practices in recruitment, hiring and promotions.
- Support workforce diversity and leadership that is inclusive of Indigenous, racialized and Black employees and honors intersectional identities.
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- Environmental scan reports, policy reviews
- Training evaluation and feedback
- School climate surveys
- Staff voice surveys
- Parent/community voice surveys
- Human rights- Data collection and feedback mechanism
- Student Voice surveys
- Create a feedback mechanism to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of the policy and its associated strategy to be reviewed on a regular basis.
- Community Partner data base and feedback

REFERENCES:

[Ontario Anti-Racism Act, 2017](#)

[Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017](#)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009

[Ministry of Education | ontario.ca](#) Policy and Program Memorandums 119, 145, 151, 159 and 165
[Education Act](#)

[Student and Family Advocates initiative | ontario.ca](#)

[Ontario's Anti-Black Racism Strategy | ontario.ca](#)

UN General Assembly [resolution 68/237](#), The International Decade for People of African Descent

[United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Equity and Inclusion Policy 5.4.](#)

[HWDSB Code of Conduct Policy 5.3.](#)



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[Barrier-Free Learning Environments Policy 1.1.](#)

[Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy 4.9](#)

[Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy 5.2](#)

[Policies - Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board5.7](#)

[Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism - oct.ca](#)