

	POLICY NO: 6.5
Adopted	2015
Projected Review Date	2027
Revisions	2019, 2023, 2025

POLICY: ENVIRONMENT

PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to promoting and supporting environmental education, environmental action and care of the environment. HWDSB acknowledges that humans have an impact on the environment that, in part, contributes to climate change. The HWDSB also acknowledges it resides on the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy and that its use of the land must be responsible, respectful and sustainable. The Board further commits to implementing environmentally responsible practices. HWDSB uses an understanding of environmental impact to inform decision-making.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Builds a shared responsibility for care of the environment as a Treaty Partner among the HWDSB Community alongside our local Indigenous communities.
- Supports learning about environmental education, environmental action, care of the environment, and climate change.
- Fosters an understanding of the importance of the land to the local Indigenous communities through learning experiences such as land-based learning.
- Provides access to free fresh water during the school day and at school events, where HWDSB Community is encouraged to bring their own refillable water bottle.
- Respects and cares for the environment to meet the needs of the present and future generations.
- Achieves a high standard of institutional accountability by implementing best management practices to prevent or reduce environmental impacts.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Educators foster student knowledge and awareness of environmental and climate-related issues and how to care for the environment.
- Learning Services staff support educators in providing students with learning opportunities about the environment, care for the environment, climate change, land-based learning and the importance of the land to the local Indigenous communities.
- HWDSB ensures accessible and sustainable practices (including capital projects), uses land responsibly and respectfully, and reduces the environmental footprint of the Board.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education
Members of Executive Council

TERMINOLOGY:

Climate Change: Climate change is a long-term shift in weather conditions identified by changes in temperature, precipitation, winds, and other indicators. Climate change can involve both changes in average conditions and changes in variability, including, for example, extreme events. Retrieved from www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/causes.html

Environmental footprint: Measures of the impact that human activities have on the environment.

Environmental Education: Environmental education is education about the environment, for the environment, and in the environment that promotes an understanding of, rich and active experience in, and an appreciation for the dynamic interactions of the:

- Earth's physical and biological systems.
- Interdependency of our social and economic systems on these natural systems.
- Scientific and human dimensions of environmental issues.
- Positive and negative consequences, both intended and unintended, of the interactions between human-created and natural systems.

Environment Education and Management Committee: an internal, multi-departmental steering committee supporting the ongoing implementation of the policy.

Environmental Stewardship: Environmental stewardship or sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

HWDSB Community: Students, staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, trustees, community advisory committee members, school council members, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers, visitors and all other persons who are invited to access, provide services or attend Board and school events. It also includes any person or organization who enters into an agreement with HWDSB or uses Board property.

Indigenous Educational Wellness: We untangle education from trauma and understand that education can now be part of total wellness and that Indigenous Knowledges will be celebrated.

Land-Based Learning: Learning that “brings together layered concepts like the importance of language and the geography of stories, cosmologies and world views, land protections and rights, relationality and accountability, a connection to reconciliation, and much more.” Retrieved from: [Land as teacher: understanding Indigenous land-based education \(ccunesco.ca\)](http://Land as teacher: understanding Indigenous land-based education (ccunesco.ca))

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Support effective environmental education programs and learning opportunities that:
 - Highlights land-based learning and the importance of the land to the local Indigenous communities.
 - Identify and address sustainability and the underlying causes of environmental stresses, which are rooted in personal and social values and in organizational structures.
 - Promote changes in personal, behavioural and organizational practices that will minimize our ecological footprint.
 - Foster greater community engagement.
- Engage students in environmental education programs and learning opportunities that expand students' knowledge of the environment, enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and increase their community awareness and the likelihood of initiating proactive involvement.
- Maintain an Environmental Education and Management Committee.

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Educators foster student knowledge and awareness of environmental and climate-related issues and how to care for the environment.	The Environmental Education and Management Committee's annual report summarizes examples of student work and projects related to environmental education.
Learning Services staff support educators in providing students with learning opportunities about the environment, care for the environment, climate change, land-based learning and the importance of the land to the local Indigenous communities.	The Environmental Education and Management Committee's annual report summarizes examples of learning opportunities related to environmental education and land-based learning.
Ensures accessible and sustainable practices (including capital projects), uses land responsibly and respectfully, and reduces the environmental footprint of the Board.	The Environmental Education and Management Committee's annual report provides evidence of environmental stewardship. The Facilities Master Plan provides information about all Board facilities.

REFERENCES:**Government Documents**

[Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow \(gov.on.ca\)](#) September 2009.

[Environmental Education: Scope and Sequence of Expectations \(Elementary\). 2017.](#)

[Environmental Education: Scope and Sequence of Expectations\(Secondary\). 2017.](#)

Energy Efficiency Act: General – O. Reg. 38/06

Environmental Protection Act

Waste Management Act

Revision 2025 – template migration