

REGULATIONS

SUBJECT: Equity and Inclusive Education

The Lambton-Kent District School Board believes that all students can learn and is committed to affording every student the opportunity to achieve successful outcomes, regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, abilities, sexual orientation or other historical forms of marginalization. The Board upholds the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and confirmed in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. The Board is also committed to the elimination of all types of discrimination as outlined in *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* and recognizes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful educational and social outcomes for all.

The Board is therefore committed to an equitable education environment that upholds and reflects the principles of fair and inclusive education that permeates all policies, programs, practices, and operations. Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy identifies eight areas of focus for policy implementation.

1. BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

Context: The Board will ensure that its policy review cycle results in the alignment and integration of the requirements of the *Code*, Policy/Program No. 119 and the Strategy into all Board policies, programs, procedures, and practices. Respect for the diverse perspectives of the entire school community will be reflected in all areas of the teaching, learning and administrative culture. Every effort will be made to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit access to, and opportunity for, effective student engagement and achievement. The goal is to ensure that schools are inclusive and reflect the makeup of their diverse communities.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Serve staff, students, and families in diverse communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, procedures, guidelines, and practices, consistent with the principles of the *Code*.

The Board will:

- 1.1. Establish the foundational framework that will inform their review and/or development and implementation of a comprehensive equity and inclusive education policy that recognizes and addresses biases related to race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, family status, and religious and linguistic differences as well as socio-economic factors.
- 1.2. Review existing equity and inclusive education policies and/or extend or develop such policies to fulfill the requirements of existing regulations, the *Strategy*, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, and the *Code*.

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- 1.3. Ensure that principles of equity and inclusive education permeate and are explicitly stated in all Board policies, programs, guidelines, operations, practices, and Board improvement plans.
- 1.4. Ensure all future policies, guidelines and practices are drafted and implemented in accordance with the Board's equity and inclusive education policy.
- 1.5. Collect information needed to monitor the effects of the implementation of the Equity and Inclusion Education policy by the Board.
- 1.6. Ensure persons with disabilities are accommodated appropriately and in a manner consistent with the *Code*.
- 1.7. Provide training for school leaders and hiring managers to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring practices to reflect Ontario's diverse society
- 1.8. Provide opportunities for the diverse school community, including students, staff, parents, trustees and community members, to provide active input into Board policies and improvement plans on an ongoing basis.
- 1.9. Investigate in a thorough and timely manner any claims of discrimination and/or racism and take appropriate action, consistent with the principles of the *Code*.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 1.10. Review existing school policies, for example, codes of conduct and discipline procedures, to determine that they include the principles of equity and inclusive education.
- 1.11. Extend, develop, and implement strategies to actively engage students, parents, families, and the wider community in the review, development, and implementation of initiatives to support and promote equity and inclusive education.
- 1.12. Implement Board equity and inclusive education policies, programs and school improvement plans that are consistent with the *Code and* reflect the needs of their diverse students and school communities.

2. SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

Context: The Board subscribes to an informed leadership philosophy that inspires, empowers, and supports all stakeholders to join together to implement institutional practices and behaviours that cultivate equity and inclusive education.

The Board is committed to providing informed shared leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing, and removing all barriers and forms of discrimination, consistent with the principles of the *Code*.

The Board recognizes the critical connection between student leadership and improved student achievement and includes the student voice in the implementation of equity and inclusive education.

In accordance with the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy, effective Board and school leaders encourage and promote a collaborative approach to all dimensions of equity and inclusive education, which ensures the participation of students, parents, unions, colleges and universities, service organizations and other diverse community partners.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Establish and maintain partnerships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized to help meet their needs.

The Board will:

Develop a system plan to build and sustain staff capacity in the areas of equity and inclusive education in curriculum and instruction, human resources and governance.

- 2.1. Identify and appoint a contact person to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.
- 2.2. Provide ongoing education and training for students, administrators, teachers (including guidance counsellors), support staff and trustees in implementing equity and inclusive education and leadership initiatives.
- 2.3. Establish selection criteria for leadership positions that prioritize demonstrated commitment, knowledge, and skills related to equity and inclusive education implementation, inclusive leadership, and cognizance of *Code* compliance.
- 2.4. Provide ongoing training for all staff that reflects comprehensive attention to the principles of human rights and their fundamental role in an equitable and inclusive environment.
- 2.5. Strive to ensure members of communities that are underserved and /or marginalized are included in shared leadership.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 2.6. Establish a collaborative culture where the collective capabilities and voices of all stakeholders are used to develop and implement equity and inclusive education goals.
- 2.7. Promote equity-minded student leadership related to issues of social justice.
- 2.8. Demonstrate leadership in setting the tone for the positive and proactive implementation of the Equity Strategy within the school.

3. SCHOOL- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Context: The Board recognizes that the effective review, development, implementation, and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies and practices requires the involvement of all members of the school community.

The Board values the assets that all stakeholders can contribute to enable each and every student to learn effectively and enhance educational opportunities for all.

The Board is committed to the maintenance, development, and expansion of partnerships with parents and diverse communities that support system and school improvement.

The Board undertakes to identify, examine, and remove barriers that may prevent full participatory school-community relations.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families, and employees are recognized and addressed.

The Board will:

- 3.1. Review and/or initiate tools, for example, school climate surveys, to determine stakeholders' views on school environments and act upon relevant next steps.
- 3.2. Review existing committees to assess the levels of representation of the diversity of the Board and the wider community.
- 3.3. Review and /or deepen existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education.

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- 3.4. Expand community outreach efforts to foster new partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members and various community organizations, including business groups to foster and support an inclusive environment.
- 3.5. Establish processes to identify and address systemic barriers that limit or prevent all sectors of the school community from opportunities for Board representation and involvement in Board activity.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 3.6. Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.
- 3.7. Invite and support representation of diverse groups on school committees, including school improvement planning.
- 3.8. Engage stakeholders in community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions

4. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Context: When we consider inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, we need to consider the “why”, the “how”, and the “what”. The context of our world view and belief systems is relevant. What we bring to students in terms of content is as important as the way it is delivered. We consider both what is said and what is not said, as it is known that our students learn both the explicit and underlying curricula. Both in its content and methodology, inclusive curriculum seeks to recognize and affirm the life experiences of all students, regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, place of origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability.

Providing opportunities for formative assessment (assessment for learning) is an essential component of an inclusive curriculum. Multiple opportunities for assessment allow for student learning and accuracy of instruction and assessment, differentiated instruction and multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. Effective evaluation includes researched best practices that truly reflect the current level of achievement of the student. A student perspective on assessment and evaluation practices increases the depth of understanding.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Implement an inclusive curriculum (physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, assessment and evaluation strategies, and co- and extra-curricular activities) and to review resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize her or his learning potential.

The Board will:

- 4.1. Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address bias that may exist in the way students’ work is assessed and evaluated in order to reduce the achievement gap. The principles of such a review will be consistent with the *Code*.
- 4.2. Support the schools’ review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices specifically addressing areas of discrimination under the *Code* (e.g., race, gender, disability, creed/religion, sexual orientation).

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 4.3. Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students’ work is assessed and evaluated; the principles of such a review will be consistent with the *Code*.

- 4.3.1. Provide for assessment and evaluation to support growth and learning, with the belief that each and every student can achieve and be successful given the appropriate time and support.
- 4.3.2. Provide education and training based on the belief that all students can learn and that it is reflected in the expectations of students' assessment and evaluation practices, counselling about available program options, and other counselling practices.
- 4.3.3. Use a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to inform short- and long-term planning to reduce gaps in student achievement and improve student learning.
- 4.4. Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices;
 - 4.4.1. Provide multiple opportunities for assessment (self, peer, teacher, student led conferencing and /or parent/student and teacher interviews).
 - 4.4.2. Instruction should be adjusted based on the results of formative assessment. Feedback to students should be specific, timely and promote further learning.
 - 4.4.3. Provide a learning environment that recognizes and supports a variety of learning styles found in students. Provide for consistent monitoring of the growth of students who are on Individual Education Plans and/or are English Language Learners to meet the specific needs of students are addressed through the accuracy of programming based on best practices in assessment; all needed accommodations and modifications must be in place to assist the student in accessing the curriculum.
 - 4.4.4. Provide an education program for students who have English language learning needs that aligns with their specific needs and that provides equity of access to the curriculum.
 - 4.4.5. Provide access and use of assistive technologies for students who require accommodations to support achievement and success.
 - 4.4.6. Engage students as active participants in their learning (e.g. students seeing and hearing themselves in the curriculum; gender specific teaching practices; culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy; research based practices in assessment and evaluation).
 - 4.4.7. Review and reflect upon classroom practices and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.
 - 4.4.8. Make certain that resources and instructional strategies respectful to the prohibited grounds of discrimination; show people of different races, genders, and ages in non-stereotypical settings, occupations, and activities; explore the roles and contributions of all peoples in Canada, and the factors that shaped these roles; encourage open discussion of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the *Code* (e.g., race, gender, disability, faith, sexual orientation) in society, the community, and the school.

5. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION -

Context: The Board recognizes and values the religious diversity within its community and is committed to providing a safe, respectful and equitable environment for all, free from all forms of discriminatory or harassing behaviour, including those based on religion.

Freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. The Board and the community it serves work together to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects religious freedom for all individuals, while balancing freedom from proselytizing. While the Board and its staff take all reasonable steps to ensure freedom of religion and religious practices, it is expected that students and their families help the Board to understand their religious needs and work with the Board and its schools to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Acknowledge each individual's right to follow or not to follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and to take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations to staff and students.

The Board will:

- 5.1. Consult with members of the multiple faith communities that represent the Board in the development and implementation of this policy.
- 5.2. Inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodation for religious beliefs and practices.
- 5.3. Prepare a religious accommodation guideline in keeping with the *Code*, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed, and other *Code* protected grounds, and provides a duty to accommodate.
- 5.4. Provide religious accommodation for students and staff consistent with the *Code*.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 5.5. Revise /Implement school-level religious accommodation practices to align with the Board's religious accommodation guideline.

6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Context: School climate welcomes all stakeholders and encourages active participation of parents, students and staff in ensuring that the principles of the *Code* and the Equity Strategy are applied in our schools. The Equity strategy requires Boards to use a range of tools, including an equity lens, reflection tools and *Code* principles to examine their policies, procedures and practices to address what may be discriminatory practices. Respectful school climate includes the active participation of underrepresented peoples as valued participants. Board mechanisms work towards the eradication of discrimination and harassment by ensuring that all members of the school community are aware of a timely and measured response to claims of discrimination of any kind.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Commit to the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive school climate and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

The Board will:

- 6.1. Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents, and the community, so that diverse groups and the broader community have Board-level representation and access to Board initiatives;
- 6.2. Put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will also enable Boards to respond in a timely and effective manner as required in P/PM 145- **2009 Progressive discipline and promoting positive student behaviour, and reflected in Board Policy Progressive Discipline** P-AD-110-10, and Regulation Progressive Discipline A-AD-110-10

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- 6.3. Promote positive behaviour through initiating or strengthening proactive programs to reduce suspensions and expulsions and as required by P/PM 144 – **2009- Bullying Prevention and Intervention**, and reflected in Board Policy Bullying P-AD-137-10, and Regulation Bullying A-AD-137-10.
- 6.4. Create a culture of high expectations in which excellence is continually strived for and respect permeates the environment.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 6.5. Revise codes of conduct to identify and address any evidence of racism or discrimination.
- 6.6. Use Progressive Discipline practices which may include such approaches as peer mediation and restorative justice.
- 6.7. Welcome, respect, and validate the contributions of all students, parents, and other members of the school community.
- 6.8. Ensure that every student is supported as identified in Student Success strategies, *Learning for All, Reach Every Student*, including the *Code*, and is inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.
- 6.9. Ensure that school codes of conduct are developed with the active consultation and involvement of students, staff, parents, and a representative cross-section of community members to address the needs of diverse communities.
- 6.10. Assure the school community that Board procedure will enable students and staff to report incidents of harassment and discrimination safely and to have confidence that they will receive a timely and appropriate response in accordance with the requirements of the *Education Act*.

7. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Context: Professional learning increases the knowledge and skills that teachers bring to the craft and science of teaching, and, thus, engages the student with increasing complexity and precision teaching. Perpetual professional learning is the groundwork for positive changes in our schools. Professional learning includes both local and international perspectives, to ensure that all voices are represented. We recognize that there is no essential knowledge, and rather a continued quest towards deeper representation of all.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

Provide administrators, staff, students and other members of the school community with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the *Code*.

The Board will:

- 7.1. Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices.
- 7.2. Allocate resources to provide ongoing opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives:
- 7.3. Provide antiracism and antidiscrimination training to students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees.
 - 7.3.1. Ensure that the principles of equity and inclusive education are modelled and incorporated in professional learning programs.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 7.4. Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.
- 7.5. Promote collaboration among staff to select and implement best practices in equity and inclusive education.
- 7.6. Build staff capacity through ongoing professional learning that is based on needs determined through results-oriented and evidence-based research.
- 7.7. Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.
- 7.8. Undertake initiatives which promote a welcoming and respectful school environment and provide timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Context: As a publicly funded education system, the Board acknowledges and assumes the responsibility for its policies, actions, and decisions. In the pursuit of greater transparency and accountability, the Board, in respectful collaboration and communication with the whole school community, will report on its goals and progress in the areas of policy review, school improvement planning and the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education strategy.

It is the Policy of the Board to:

Assess and monitor Board progress in implementing *The Strategy*; to embed the principles into all Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and to communicate these results to the community.

The Board will:

- 8.1. Embed the principles of equity and inclusive education into all Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.
- 8.2. Actively communicate the equity and inclusive education policy to students, teachers, parents, staff, school councils, community partners, and volunteers and post it on the Board's website. Seek and use feedback to improve the Equity and Inclusive Education policy, in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- 8.3. Engage Board and school teams in school improvement planning with particular emphasis on identifying and removing barriers to student achievement.
- 8.4. Establish processes to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.
- 8.5. Report on the progress of implementation of *The Strategy* and its impact on student achievement using specific criteria to the Ministry of Education and the local community.
- 8.6. Ensure the transparency of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process, inform, and support parents through this process.

It is the responsibility of the principal to:

- 8.7. Report student achievement data annually to the Board and intervene at all levels to ensure the achievement and success of all students.
- 8.8. Develop and communicate evidence based school improvement plans that are aligned with *The Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*.
- 8.9. Review and establish self-reflection and self-assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of the school's equity and inclusive education plans and procedures.

Implementation Date: September 28, 2010

Reference:

Ontario Human Rights Code

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009) "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools"