

# EQUITY IN ACTION

## Lambton Kent District School Board Equity Action Plan



Lambton Kent  
District School Board  
*Student Achievement* ✓ *Community Success*

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# Equity in Action: LKDSB's Equity Action Plan

## Introduction

As a commitment to inclusive diversity and the championing of anti-oppressive education, which was identified in our 2020/2021-2025/2026 strategic plan, Lambton Kent District School Board (LKDSB) sought the services of a consultant to conduct a [Human Resources Equity Audit \(Equity Audit\)](#). Through this Equity Audit, three priorities were identified:

- Create a Culture of Human Rights
- Strengthen the Hiring Process
- Strengthen Policy Framework

Belonging to each of these priorities are several corresponding recommendations to address any identified barriers and gaps, increase diversity, develop equitable policies and practices, and create a truly inclusive organization.

**Equity in Action** outlines what the LKDSB will do, with intentionality, at all levels of the organization to ensure that equity, inclusion, and respect for human rights permeate in our classrooms, school communities, and central offices.

Equity and inclusion are imperative for a thriving environment, and **Equity in Action** outlines LKDSB's commitment to make certain that both are prevalent at all levels of our organization. This Action Plan identifies LKDSB priorities in the first year of implementation, as well as the corresponding recommendations stemming from the Equity Audit.

In addition to these priorities, several goals, supporting action items and expected outcomes, which champion equity and inclusion, are included in the [LKDSB 2023-2024 Operational Plan](#), a guiding document that addresses significant areas of growth and opportunity to better the organization.

## CREATE A CULTURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Recommendation 65:** It is recommended that the Workplace Discrimination, Workplace Harassment, Workplace Sexual Harassment, and Workplace Violence Prevention Policy, Regulations, and Administrative Procedures be revised to address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 71:** It is recommended that the LKDSB develop an Accommodation Policy to address the Board's obligations to provide accommodation based on any human rights protected grounds. The Board may want to consider developing one accommodation policy for persons with disabilities and another accommodation policy that deals with accommodation related to the other Code-protected grounds.

**Recommendation 76:** It is recommended that a policy and administrative procedures be developed to address the LKDSB's duty to accommodate and support the full inclusion of employees from all gender identities and gender expressions.

**Recommendation 3:** It is recommended that the LKDSB develop a multifaceted communications/learning strategy—which may include newsletters, lunch and learns, book clubs, podcasts, and other informal methods of promoting knowledge, resources, and tools, among others—with the goal of:

- Increasing employee understanding of workplace equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Developing the competence and confidence of employees, particularly those in leadership positions, to support the implementation of the Employment Equity Strategy
- Defining key terms and concepts, and
- Developing and communicating a business case for workplace equity, diversity, and inclusion that connects this work to student success.

**Recommendation 14:** It is recommended that LKDSB staff be reminded that, per Board policy, they are not to contact medical professionals for information related to employee medical conditions.

**Recommendation 15:** It is recommended that the Board track the outcomes for requests for accommodations, including the following: the nature of the request, when the request was

responded to, the amount of information requested from doctors, the number of independent medical examinations conducted, the number of employees on short- and long-term sick leave, and the number and type of accommodations provided. A summary report should be prepared and presented to the Director of Education on a quarterly basis.

**Recommendation 17:** It is recommended that the Board continue to provide appropriate training and ongoing education for all managers and school leaders about their duty to accommodate employees based on any human rights protected ground, particularly disability, religion, and family responsibilities. This training should also help supervisors understand the range of physical and mental disabilities, both evident and nonevident, for which accommodation may be requested, the types of accommodation that may be provided, and the principles of accommodation. Emphasis should be placed on explaining the Board's legal obligations under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, as well as how accommodation helps get the best from employees, so that accommodation is not seen as special treatment provided to some employees. This training should also address the obligation to keep employee information confidential.

**Recommendation 18:** It is recommended that easily accessible information be shared with employees about their right to accommodation, the process for requesting accommodation, the principles of accommodation, the need for medical information, the type of information that may be required, the timelines, and FAQs to ensure employees have the information needed to fully understand the process. Emphasis should be placed on explaining the Board's legal obligations under the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as well as how accommodation helps get the best from employees so that accommodation is not seen as special treatment provided to some employees.

**Recommendation 19:** It is recommended that orientation and onboarding for employees include information on accommodation and the processes for requesting the needed accommodation, as required by the AODA.

**Recommendation 28:** It is recommended that, in addition to training, the Board use visual displays of positive spaces to support the creation of inclusive, anti-racist, and safe workplaces that allow 2SLGBTQ+, Indigenous, and racialized employees to bring their full selves to work.

## STRENGTHEN THE HIRING PROCESS

**Recommendation 7:** It is recommended that all hiring panels be required to provide constructive feedback to unsuccessful internal candidates, when requested, and that they be provided with the appropriate tools to be able to do so.

**Recommendation 8:** It is recommended that all those involved in the hiring process (from screening of applications through to interviewing and making the hiring decision) be required to sign a declaration that they have no conflict of interest, including that they have not been influenced by another Board employee to hire someone.

**Recommendation 12:** It is recommended that the LKDSB keep employees and the community updated about its efforts to create a bias-free hiring process and that it communicate changes to the hiring and promotion process broadly throughout the school community to increase employee confidence in the hiring and selection process.

**Recommendation 13:** It is recommended that all those involved in the hiring process receive appropriate training and written guidance to support a bias-free hiring process (both in person and virtual), including training on how to identify and minimize unconscious bias.

**Recommendation 32:** It is recommended that the LKDSB's equity statement be revised to encourage applications from the members of the groups that experience persistent and systemic discrimination in employment, namely Indigenous peoples from North America (or Turtle Island), racialized people, persons with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, and women.

**Recommendation 33:** It is recommended that the LKDSB's accommodation statement be revised to specify that the Board will provide accommodation based on any Code-protected ground and that candidates should let their needs be known when contacted for an interview.

**Recommendation 34:** It is recommended that equity-related competencies be included in each role description and on each job ad, appropriate to the role, to ensure that candidates have demonstrated their commitment to and competence in equity, anti-racism, and anti-oppression, as required by each role.

**Recommendation 35:** It is recommended that the Employment webpage be updated to provide additional information that could support job seekers from Indigenous communities and the equity-seeking groups to apply for jobs at the LKDSB.

**Recommendation 38:** It is recommended that the LKDSB ensure that guidance be provided to those involved in the hiring process should a candidate be unable to obtain their original certificate or degree to ensure that candidates receive the needed accommodation.

**Recommendation 40:** It is recommended that all job applicants invited for an interview be informed that accommodations are available upon request. In addition, the email should describe the selection process (e.g., panel interview and other assessments such as presentation, written test, etc.) with sufficient detail so that candidates can determine whether they will require accommodation.

**Recommendation 44:** It is recommended that the Interview Opening Checklist be revised to ensure that it supports bias-free hiring, and that it be used in all interview processes.

**Recommendation 45:** It is recommended that guidance be provided to ensure that all competitions include an interview guide that includes look-fors and a scoring scale to support the fair and consistent scoring of each candidate.

**Recommendation 46:** It is recommended that a Hiring Toolkit be developed to:

- Provide guidance to hiring managers on developing interview questions that focus on assessing the candidate's skills and abilities to do the job and the need to score each question against predetermined "look-fors"
- Provide guidance on developing interview questions, including ensuring that: (1) the questions clearly assess the candidates' skills and abilities for the job; (2) panel members are instructed to take verbatim notes on candidates' responses to the interview questions; and (3) the response to each question is scored
- Require that the interview panel provide a written copy of the interview questions for the candidate to refer to during the interview and, where possible, allow the candidate to review the written questions a few minutes prior to the interview
- Include instructions for interview teams that reflect a number of best practices:



- Open the interview by explaining the process to the candidate, including the number of questions to be asked and the time allotted for the interview
- Guidance on the use of “look fors”
- Guidance on probing
- Consensus scoring
- Guidance on not assessing candidates based on cultural norms (e.g., candidates not making eye contact)
- Address the potential impact of unconscious bias in the hiring process, including tips for hiring managers to mitigate the impact of bias on the hiring process.

**Recommendation 47:** It is recommended that the reference check include questions to assess the candidate’s ability to work with and support students and staff from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities.

**Recommendation 49:** It is recommended that the Board engage with Indigenous staff and leaders to explore ways to decolonize the promotion process in order to support the advancement of Indigenous staff into positions of leadership at the Board.

**Recommendation 50:** It is recommended that the principal and vice principal promotion process be revised to:

- Ensure that candidates are informed that accommodation will be provided and invite candidates to let their accommodation needs be known. Candidates should be informed that accommodation may include changing the interview date and time as needed.
- Embed equity-related skills and competencies into the job posting, Supervisor’s Report, and interview questions, and
- Update the language used in the job posting to refer to “Indigenous peoples and diverse ethnic and racial communities,” and ask for experience working with the members of other communities, including 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

**Recommendation 51:** It is recommended that interview questions in the principal and vice principal promotion process include a question about the candidate’s ability to lead a diverse school community and support the achievement and well-being of marginalized students.

## STRENGTHEN POLICY FRAMEWORK

**Recommendation 20:** It is recommended that the LKDSB develop a policy and administrative procedures for accommodating religious, Indigenous, and spiritual observances that provide clear instructions on how to access accommodation, including Indigenous cultural and spiritual observances. These procedures should be consistent with the requirements of the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and the principles of accommodation.

**Recommendation 21:** It is recommended that a guide for employees, managers, and school leaders be developed about the duty to provide religious accommodation and the process for doing so, which may include accommodation with respect to not only time off for religious observance, but also schedule changes, prayer space, scheduling of interviews, and dietary restrictions.

**Recommendation 23:** It is recommended that the Board develop a guide on addressing domestic violence in the workplace, including addressing provisions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the availability of leaves for employees experiencing domestic violence.

**Recommendation 52:** It is recommended that the Teacher Hiring Process Administrative Procedures be revised to address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 53:** It is recommended that the Non-Teaching Hiring Process Administrative Procedures be revised to embed the equity considerations included in the Teacher Hiring Process Administrative Procedures and address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 54:** It is recommended that the Interview Guidelines – Elementary and Secondary Teachers Administrative Procedures be revised to address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 55:** It is recommended that the Selection Process for School Administrators Administrative Procedures be revised to address the identified issues in order to align the process with best practices and support the LKDSB to hire individuals who possess equity competencies.



**Recommendation 56:** It is recommended that the Recruiting and Hiring the Supervisory Officers Policy, Recruiting and Hiring the Director of Education, and Recruiting and Hiring of the Associate Director and Superintendents be revised to address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 57:** It is recommended that the Criminal Background Check Policy and Administrative Procedures be revised to ensure that criminal background checks and the annual Offences Declaration are required of all employees.

**Recommendation 62:** It is recommended that the Disability Support Program Administrative Procedures be revised to address the identified issues.

**Recommendation 81:** It is recommended that gendered language be removed from all employment policies, regulations, and administrative procedures as they progress through the policy review process. Instead, the gender-inclusive pronouns “they” and “their” should be used.

**Recommendation 83:** It is recommended that the Board develop a policy review cycle to ensure that each policy, regulation, and administrative procedure is reviewed at least every 5 years and that each document be reviewed through an equity lens.