



HURON-PERTH CATHOLIC District School Board

Equity and Inclusive Education

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BELIEF STATEMENT:

The Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board (the Board) recognizes that all people are created equal, in the image and likeness of God, each with inimitable, distinctive, diverse characteristics deserving of dignity (Genesis: 1:27).

The Board recognizes that any form of social or cultural discrimination is incompatible with Catholic moral principles and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code (the Code). The Board recognizes that the school system gives pre-eminence to the tenets of the Catholic faith, congruent with the protection afforded in the Code (race, ethnicity, gender, place of origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability), the Constitution Act, 1982 and confirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops has been consulted and has collaborated on Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy through the Bishops' Institute for Catholic Education (ICE). The Board and its staff are committed to the implementation of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and the Ontario Ministry of Education (the "Ministry") Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, in a manner which is consistent with the exercise of the Board's denominational rights under Section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and as recognized at Section 19 of the Code.

The Board believes and works towards a collaborative culture where the collective capabilities and voices of all stakeholders are used to develop and implement equity and inclusive education goals.

The Board believes in a leadership philosophy that empowers and supports all stakeholders in our Catholic community to implement institutional practices and behaviours that cultivate equity and inclusion.

The Board is committed to improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing, and removing all barriers and forms of discrimination.

The Board recognizes the importance of student voice in all aspects of the planning and implementation of equitable and inclusive education.

The Board recognizes that all curriculum, in both content and methodology, needs to honour our commitment to Catholic values and our respect for 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.

POLICY STATEMENT:

In accordance with the Church's teachings, it is the policy of the Board to provide in all its operations, an educational environment which supports and acknowledges the dignity of all people who are created in the image and likeness of God, to create cultures of belonging which foster inclusion and build an equitable foundation within our Catholic community.

The Board will ensure that its policy reviews will result in the alignment and integration of the requirements of Policy/Program No. 119 and Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy with all Board policies, programs, procedures, and practices.

It is the policy of the Board that an Equity Action Plan (the Plan) be developed, implemented and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the perspectives of the diverse Catholic school community will be reflected in all areas of the teaching, learning and administrative processes. Through the Plan, every effort will be made to identify and remove biases and systemic barriers that may limit access to and opportunity for effective employment procedures for individuals from diverse communities and underrepresented peoples within the context of the denominational rights of Catholic school boards.

Within the framework of gospel values, traditions, and the Board's denominational rights, in recognition of this diversity, the Board will provide reasonable accommodations for students and staff, in accordance with the Code, while also protecting its denominational rights.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 DISTRICT-LEVEL PROCEDURES

1.1 The Equity Action Plan

The district shall gather appropriate data, develop an Equity Action Plan (the Plan) that includes the ongoing revision of policies and procedures and training to address equity and anti-racism, implement the plan, monitor the effectiveness of the plan and revise the plan on an ongoing basis.

- 1.1.1 Identify and appoint an Equity Lead to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices, resources and implement Ministry initiatives.
- 1.1.2 Collect information needed to monitor the effects of the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, including the development of a database based on a student and workforce census.
- 1.1.3 Provide opportunities for the diverse members of the school community (those protected by the Code), including students, staff, parents, trustees and community members, to provide input into Board policies, their

implementation and improvement plans on an ongoing basis and ensure that existing committees represent the diversity of the community we serve.

- 1.1.4 Create partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members and various community organizations, including business groups. Gather and use the knowledge, skills, and experience of Board community partners to enrich the total educational and career experiences of staff, students, and volunteers. (e.g. Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC), Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EIAR) Subcommittee, Catholic Education Team (CET) and Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC)).
- 1.1.5 Engage Board and school teams in school improvement planning with particular emphasis on using data to identify and remove barriers to student achievement, to raise awareness about discriminatory practices and to encourage conversations and collaborative actions about racism and other equity issues.
- 1.1.6 Share in the life and mission of the Church by developing an Equity Action Plan (the Plan) to build and sustain Board and staff capacity in the areas of equity and inclusive education in curriculum and instruction, human resources and governance.
- 1.1.7 Ensure that principles of equity and inclusive education permeate and are explicitly stated in all district programs, guidelines, operations, practices, and Board improvement plans.
- 1.1.8 Ensure all Board policies and procedures are drafted, revised and implemented in accordance with Board policies 2:6 “Development and Review of Board Policies” and 3A:21 “Equity and Inclusive Education”.
- 1.1.9 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.
- 1.1.10 Establish and implement processes to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures including the Plan.
- 1.1.11 Establish processes and implement strategies to identify and address systemic barriers that limit or prevent all sectors of the school community from benefiting from enhanced opportunities for Board representation and greater access to Board initiatives (e.g. EIAR subcommittee, Equity Plan).
- 1.1.12 Establish selection criteria for leadership positions that prioritize demonstrated commitment, knowledge and skills related to equity and inclusive education implementation and diverse leadership.

- 1.1.13 Following the Ministry of Education direction, the Board will monitor and implement the process to review and replace curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, culturally responsive teaching strategies and instructional materials to ensure that schools are promoting equity and inclusivity for all students including those protected by the Code.
- 1.1.14 Put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will also enable schools to respond in a timely manner.
- 1.1.15 Initiate or expand programs that are bias-aware to decrease the number of suspensions and expulsions, in an effort to alleviate their negative impact on students.
- 1.1.16 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.
- 1.1.17 Seek and use feedback to improve this policy, related policies and the Plan on an ongoing basis.
- 1.1.18 Report on the progress of implementation of the Plan annually to the Board of Trustees, the EIAR subcommittee and the Catholic Education Team.
- 1.1.19 Provide current/evidence-based anti-racism, bias-aware and anti-discrimination training for students, administrators, teachers, support staff and trustees that promotes respect and courtesy in all interactions, virtuous conduct, including prevention and early intervention strategies (e.g. conflict resolution and restorative practices).
- 1.1.20 Ensure that training includes information on differences between individual abilities, to promote a deeper understanding of exceptionalities and how to mitigate discipline, in light of its effect on students with disabilities.
- 1.1.21 Ensure that the principles of equity and inclusive education are modeled and incorporated in all professional learning programs.
- 1.1.22 Provide training for school and system leaders to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring that reflects the community it serves.

2.0 SCHOOL-LEVEL PROCEDURES

2.1 School-based Equity Action Plans

Schools shall incorporate a school-based Equity Action Plan into their School Improvement Plans. The equity components of the plans shall address data gathering/community input, the development, implementation, monitoring and ongoing revision of school-based activities, policies and procedures as they relate to equity, inclusion and anti-racism.

- 2.1.1 Review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.
- 2.1.2 Include representatives of diversity in the community on school committees, including school improvement planning.
- 2.1.3 Welcome, respect and validate the contributions of all students, parents, and other members of the school community by conducting community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions.
- 2.1.4 Review existing school policies, for example, codes of conduct, to determine that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education and the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Code as they may apply to students, staff, and others in the Catholic community. This may include a consultation with a cross-section of community members.
- 2.1.5 Ensure that all information about new or revised procedures involving equity and inclusive education is communicated to all students, staff, families, and others in the school community.
- 2.1.6 Promote equity-minded student leadership by developing initiatives with student facilitators representing diverse voices and experiences that support social justice, equity, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination in schools and classrooms.
- 2.1.7 Include instructional materials as well as guest speakers that are culturally responsive, as well as representative of our students and include dimensions of diversity of our wider Canadian community; 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) in society, the community, and the school.
- 2.1.8 Develop equity initiatives that align with the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy as well as our district Equity Action Plan. Monitor the Plan annually and provide timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.
- 2.1.9 Through school improvement planning, review classroom strategies, instruction, assessment and evaluation policies and practices and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education practices.
- 2.1.10 Provide guidance about all available program options and pathways to each student so that opportunities are known about and available to all (e.g. Transition planning, Guidance, Student Success, System and School Support Teams).

- 2.1.11 Ensure that every student is supported as outlined in Student Success strategies, Learning for All, Reach Every Student and other applicable legislation, and is inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.
- 2.1.12 Build staff capacity and cultural competency through ongoing equity and anti-racism professional learning determined through data analysis. Promote collaborative teams that learn together through job-embedded learning, implementing their learning and reflecting together on best practices.
- 2.1.13 Report student achievement data annually to the Board and intervene at all levels to ensure the achievement and success of those students who are marginalized community members in our system.
- 2.1.14 Review and establish self-reflection and self-assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of the school's implementation of the Plan and inclusive education practices plans and procedures, in order to identify next steps in a process of continuous improvement.

3.0 HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOMMODATIONS - GENERAL

- 3.1 The Board and all schools shall provide reasonable accommodations (including but not limited to religious accommodations) in accordance with the Code, investigate and respond to claims of discrimination and/or racism in a thorough and timely manner and take appropriate action consistent with the principles of the Code.
- 3.2 All accommodation requests will be taken seriously. No person will be penalized for making an accommodation request. The Board will base its decision to accommodate by applying the *Code's* criteria of undue hardship, the Board's ability to fulfill its duties under Board policies and the *Education Act*.
- 3.3 Schools shall inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodations on any grounds protected by the Code on an annual basis.
- 3.4. Schools shall support, upon the request of at least one student, students who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance of and respect for others and the creation of a positive school climate, including:
 - i. activities or organizations that promote gender equity;
 - ii. activities or organizations that promote anti-racism;
 - iii. activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities;

- iv. activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name. (The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and the Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board has implemented the Respecting Differences guideline, and promotes the use of the name Respecting Differences for such organizations).

4.0 HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOMMODATIONS - REQUESTS

- 4.1.1 Requests from parents/guardians or students for accommodation on grounds established by the OHRC shall be submitted to the principal in writing. The written request shall include the Code ground the accommodation is being requested on, the reason the accommodation is required and shall include enough information to confirm the existence of the need for accommodation and the specific needs related to the Code ground.
- 4.1.2 Upon receipt of the accommodation request, the school principal shall notify the school superintendent and consult with respect to the request.
- 4.1.3 The school principal shall meet with the party requesting the Code accommodation to cooperatively engage in the process, share information and avail themselves of potential accommodation solutions.
- 4.1.4 The school principal shall notify the party requesting the accommodation of the outcome of the request in a timely manner. The response may include and is not limited to the following:
 - i. A statement of the accommodation seeker's relevant limitations and needs, including any needed assessments and information from experts or specialists, bearing in mind the need to maintain the confidentiality of medical reports;
 - ii. Arrangements for needed assessments by experts or professionals;
 - iii. Identification of the most appropriate accommodation short of undue hardship;
 - iv. A statement of annual goals, and specific steps to be taken to meet them;
 - v. Clear timelines for providing the accommodation;
 - vi. Criteria for determining the success of the accommodation plan, together with a process for reviewing and re-assessing the accommodation plan as needed; and
 - vii. An accountability mechanism.
- 4.1.5 In the instance that a dispute arises in the accommodation process, the party in dispute shall provide the principal or the party being accommodated written notification of the nature and extent of the dispute. Upon receipt of the dispute, the parties shall endeavour to meet to resolve the dispute. Where the Board alleges undue hardship, the Board must

demonstrate it. It is not the responsibility of a party seeking accommodation to prove that a proposed accommodation would not cause undue hardship.

- 4.1.6 Parties making accommodation requests that are unsatisfied with the outcome of their request may appeal the decision to the Director of Education or designate. Appeal requests shall be in writing and shall indicate the extent and nature of their disagreement with the decision. The Director of Education or designate shall conduct an investigation and shall render a decision regarding the appeal in writing. The decision of the Director of Education or designate is final.

DEFINITIONS:

Anti-Discrimination: opposed to or intended to prevent discrimination

Anti-racism: an active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism as well as the oppression and injustice racism causes.

Barrier: anything that prevents a person 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: a predisposition, prejudice or generalization about a group of persons based on personal characteristics or stereotypes.

Creed: One of the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Ontario Human Rights Code, interpreted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to mean “religious creed” or “religion”. Creed is “a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship” that is “sincerely held” and includes non-deistic belief systems. Creed does not include “secular, moral, or ethical beliefs or political convictions” or “religions that promote violence or hate towards others or that violate criminal law: Individuals who do not belong to a religion or practise any specific faith are also protected by the Code.

Culture: the customs, beliefs, behaviours and/or achievements of a particular time and/or people; behaviour within a particular group.

Culturally Responsive: is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures.

Dimensions of diversity: the unique personal characteristics that distinguish us as individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, class, creed, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.

Disability: There are two common ways of looking at what disability is.

One way is to see a disability as a medical condition that a person has. From this perspective, disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A

disability may have been present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time. There are physical, mental, cognitive and learning disabilities, mental disorders, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy, drug and alcohol dependencies, environmental sensitivities and other conditions.

A newer way of looking at disability is that it is not something a person has. A person with a medical condition is not necessarily prevented (or disabled) from fully taking part in society. If society is designed to be accessible and include everyone, then people with medical conditions often don't have a problem taking part. From this point of view, disability is a problem that occurs when a person's environment is not designed to suit their abilities.

Discrimination: treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, citizenship, family status, disability, sex or other personal characteristics (note: this is not a legal definition).

Diverse: of various kinds, forms, characters, etc.; varied.

Diversity: the presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group or organization. Diversity includes such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.

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

Equity: fairness, impartiality, even-handedness. A distinct process of recognizing differences within groups of individuals, and using this understanding to achieve substantive equality in all aspects of a person's life.

Equity-minded: the perspective or mode of thinking that calls attention to patterns of inequity

Ethnicity: sharing a distinctive cultural and historical tradition often associated with race, place of origin, ancestry or creed.

Exclusion: denying access to a place, group, privilege, etc.

Gay: people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex. Also used as an umbrella term for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community.

Inclusion: appreciating and using our unique differences – strengths, talents, weaknesses and frailties – in a way that shows respect for the individual and ultimately creates a dynamic multi-dimensional organization.

Ontario Human Rights Code (the “Code”): A provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities, without discrimination, in specific areas such as education, jobs, housing, and services. The goal of the Code is to address and ultimately prevent discrimination and harassment.

Prohibited/protected grounds: the Ontario *Human Rights Code* prohibits discrimination or harassment based on these personal characteristics. The specific protected grounds include: age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity and gender expression (recently added to the *Code*), marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment).

Racism: a belief that one group is superior or inferior to others. Racism can be openly displayed in racial jokes, slurs, microaggressions or hate crimes. It can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, people don't even realize they have these beliefs. Instead, they are assumptions that have evolved over time and have become part of systems and institutions.

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, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups identified under the *Human Rights Code*.

REFERENCES:

- The Constitution Act
- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- PPM 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2009)
- Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2009)
- HPCDSB Mission and Vision Statement
- Appendix A - Religious Accommodation Guidelines
- Employee Harassment Policy
- Ontario Equity Action Plan (2017)
- The Ontario Human Rights Code
- Appendix 1: Glossary of Human Rights Terms | Ontario Human Rights Commission
- PPM 145: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour (2018)

RESOURCES, APPENDICES AND FORMS:

- N/A