

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Title: Equity and Inclusive Education

Effective Date: September 2010 Responsibility: Superintendent of Schools and Program

PURPOSE

The Near North District School Board believes that all students can learn. Our role is to enable each and every student to learn effectively, to reduce achievement gaps and to improve learning outcomes for all, regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and other historical forms of marginalization.

The Board and its staff are committed to the elimination of all types of discrimination as outlined in *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy Policy and Memorandum No. 119 "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools"* (June 24th, 2009)

This administrative guideline outlines the steps and practices that the Board and its schools will take to ensure an equitable and inclusive environment in schools, at school events and Board activities.

This administrative guideline applies to all Near North District School Board students, employees, trustees, and other members of the broader community who participate in Board and school business and activities.

REFERENCES/RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 1.1 The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- 1.2 Ontario Human Rights Code (referred to as "the Code" in this guideline).
- 1.3 Education Act
- 1.4 Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2009: Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, Guidelines for Policy Development, 2009.
- 1.5 Policy and Program Memorandum 119: "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" (June 24, 2009)
- 1.6 NNDSB Harassment guideline
- 1.7 NNDSB Code of Conduct
- 1.8 NNDSB Religious Accommodation Guideline
- 1.9 NNDSB Human Rights Guideline

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

ACCOMODATION: An adjustment to policies, programs, guidelines or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally, to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code or other similar grounds.

BARRIER: An obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systematic or specific to an individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

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

DISCRIMINATION: Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender orientation, age, marital status or disability as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other similar factors.

DIVERSITY: The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society.

EQUITY: A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

ETHNICITY: The shared national, ethno-cultural, racial, linguistic, and/or religious heritage of a group of people, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

HARASSMENT: A form of discrimination that may include unwelcome attention and remarks, jokes, threats, name-calling, touching or other behaviour (including the display of pictures) that insults, offends, or demeans someone because of his or her identity.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION: An obligation under the Ontario Human Rights Code to provide reasonable accommodation for students and employees who wish to observe the tenets or practices of their faith, as well as for those who wish *not* to participate in any form of religious observance.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Eight areas of focus for implementing equity and inclusive education are identified in this guideline and PPM 119.

Each focus area outline in this guideline contains:

- a preamble and a mission statement which will serve to guide the actions of the Board and its schools, in honouring its commitments to equity and inclusive education policy development, implementation, monitoring and reporting.
- Actions that the Board and its schools will take to ensure an equitable and inclusive educational environment

The eight areas of focus are:

- Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices
- Shared and committed leadership
- School-community relationships
- Inclusive curriculum and assessment practices
- Religious accommodation
- School climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment
- Professional learning
- Accountability and transparency

1.0 BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

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 and/or extend or develop such policies to fulfill the requirements of existing regulations, the *Strategy*, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, and the *Code*.
- 1.3. Ensure that principles of equity and inclusive education permeate 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*.

Our Schools will:

- 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.

2.0 SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

The Board will:

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.

- 1.13. Identify and appoint a contact person to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.
- 1.14. 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.
- 1.15. Establish selection criteria for leadership positions that include demonstrated commitment, knowledge and skills related to equity and inclusive education implementation and inclusive leadership, and cognizant of *Code* compliance.

- 1.16. 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.
- 1.17. Strive to include members of communities that are underserved and /or marginalized in shared leadership.

Our Schools will:

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

3.0 SCHOOL- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The Board will:

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.

- 1.21. Review and/or initiate tools, school climate surveys, to determine stakeholders' views on school environments and act upon relevant next steps.
- 1.22. Review existing committees, for example, Parent Involvement Committee, to assess the levels of representation of the diversity of the Board and the wider community.
- 1.23. Review and /or deepen existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education.
- 1.24. 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.
- 1.25. 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.

Our Schools will:

- 1.26. Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.

1.27. Invite and support representation of diverse groups on school committees, including school improvement planning.

1.28. Engage stakeholders in community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions

4.0 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The Board will:

1.29. 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*.

1.30. 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).

Our Schools will:

1.31. 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*.

1.31.1 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.

1.31.2. 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.

1.31.3. 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.

1.32. Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices;

1.32.1 Provide multiple opportunities for assessment (self, peer, teacher, student led conferencing and/or parent/student and teacher interviews).

1.32.2 Instruction should be adjusted based on the results of formative assessment. Feedback to students should be specific, timely and promote further learning.

1.32.3 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.

- 1.32.4 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.
- 1.32.5. Provide access and use of assistive technologies for students who require accommodations to support achievement and success.
- 1.32.6. 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)
- 1.32.7. 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.
- 1.32.8. 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.

5.0 RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION - SEE ALSO APPENDIX A

The Board will:

- 1.33. Consult with members of the multiple faith communities that represent the Board in the development and implementation of this policy.
- 1.34. Inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodation for religious beliefs and practices.
- 1.35. 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.
- 1.36. Provide religious accommodation for students and staff consistent with the *Code*.

Our Schools will:

- 1.37. Revise /Implement their religious accommodation practices to align with the Board's religious accommodation guideline.

6.0 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

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:

- 1.38. 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;
- 1.39. 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
- 1.40. 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.
- 1.41. Create a culture of high expectations in which excellence is continually strived for and respect permeates the environment.

Our Schools will:

- 1.42. Revise codes of conduct are to identify and address any evidence of racism or discrimination.
- 1.43. Use Progressive Discipline practice which may include peer mediation and restorative justice.
- 1.44. Welcome, respect and validate the contributions of all students, parents, and other members of the school community.
- 1.45. 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.
- 1.46. 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.
- 1.47. 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*.

7.0 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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:

- 1.48. Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices.
- 1.49. 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:
- 1.50. Provide antiracism and antidiscrimination training to students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees.
- 1.50.1 Ensure that the principles of equity and inclusive education are modelled and incorporated in professional learning programs.

Our Schools will:

- 1.51. 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.
- 1.52. Promote collaboration among staff to select and implement best practices in equity and inclusive education.
- 1.53. Build staff capacity through ongoing professional learning that is based on needs determined through results-oriented and evidence-based research.
- 1.54. Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.
- 1.55. Undertake initiatives which promote a welcoming and respectful school environment and provide timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.

8.0 ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

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

Action Items:**The Board will:**

- 1.56. Embed the principles of equity and inclusive education into all Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.
- 1.57. 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.
- 1.58. Engage Board and school teams in school improvement planning with particular emphasis on identifying and removing barriers to student achievement.
- 1.59. Establish processes to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.
- 1.60. Report on the progress of implementation of The Strategy and its impact on student achievement using specific criteria to the Ministry of Education upon request and the local community.
- 1.61. Ensure the transparency of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process, inform, and support parents through this process.

Our Schools will:

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