

## **ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE**

### **Title: Equity and Inclusive Education**

**Effective Date: November 4, 2019 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, colour, ancestry, place of origin, citizenship, ethnic origin, disability, creed, (e.g., religion), sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, family status, and marital status.

Providing a high-quality education for all is a key means of fostering social cohesion based on an inclusive society where diversity is affirmed within a framework of common values that promote the well-being of all citizens. The Near North District School Board shares a belief in the need to develop students' character and to prepare students for their role in society as engaged, productive, and responsible citizens. Active and engaged citizens are aware of their rights, but more importantly, they accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others.

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" (April 22, 2013)

This administrative guideline outlines 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" (April 22, 2013)
- 1.6 NNDSB Harassment Guideline
- 1.7 NNDSB Code of Conduct
- 1.8 NNDSB Religious Accommodation Guideline
- 1.9 NNDSB Human Rights Guideline
- 2.0 Equity and Inclusion: Promoting and Supporting Student Well-Being, Strategic Plan 2018-2020

## **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**ACCOMMODATION:** 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 follow or not follow religious or creed beliefs or practices.

## **AREAS OF FOCUS:**

### **Commitments**

#### **1.0 BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES**

The Board commits that all Board structures, policies, procedures, programs, guidelines, and practices will reflect a lens of equity and inclusion by upholding the shared obligation to promote human rights and support positive learning environments for all students, staff members, trustees and families in all communities.

The Board aims to do so by incorporating the principles of anti-oppression, equity and inclusion into the development and regular review of structure, policies, procedures, programs, guidelines, and practices (consistent with the Human Rights Code). The development and regular review includes collecting information, monitoring, training, and creation of guidelines will reflect the principles of equity and inclusion.

#### **2.0 SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP**

The Board commits to establishing and maintaining partnerships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized to help meet their needs.

The Board aims to do so by developing 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. The Board will provide leadership that is committed to removing discriminatory biases and system barriers to learning.

A strong focus on leadership from all Board staff, including school board trustees, directors of education, superintendents, principals, educators, support workers and business staff, will support schools, staff and student success and bring change to instructional practices and learning cultures.

#### **3.0 SCHOOL- COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

The Board commits to establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families, and employees are recognized and addressed.

The Board aims to review the structures of existing committees and partnerships to help ensure they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education. The Board will expand upon their outreach efforts in order to foster new partnerships and draw upon the expertise of their partners to explore innovative ways of sharing resources to meet diverse needs. Equitable school community relationships recognizes the importance of consistent communication with families premised on trust, dignity, openness, respect and the recognition of the unique expression of individual identities.

#### 4.0 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The board will commit to the use of inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of all students and the learning pathways they are taking.

The Board aims to review curriculum and resources, instruction, and assessment/evaluation practices that respond to the diverse needs and abilities of all learners to identify and eliminate stereotypes, discriminatory biases, and systemic barriers. The Board will draw upon strategies that have been shown by the evidence to support student success and reduce achievement gaps. For example, implement the principles of inclusive design and differentiated instruction to respond to the diverse needs and abilities of all learners.

Anti-oppressive and inclusive assessment practices are furthermore grounded in Overall and Specific Expectations of subject-specific curriculum documents, and assessment practices informed by *Learning for All* (2013) and the “seven fundamental principles of assessment and evaluation and reporting” as identified in *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools* (2010, pg. 6).

#### 5.0 RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

The Board will commit to acknowledging each individual’s right to follow or not follow religious or creed beliefs or practices free from discrimination or harassing behaviour.

The Board has established a process to respond to religious/creed accommodation to students and staff as outlined in the NNDSB Guideline for Religious Accommodation (2010) and that is consistent with the principles of accommodation established by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

#### 6.0 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The Board will commit to the fostering safe, accepting and supportive learning environments that promote well-being. This is guided by the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive working and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

The Board will support the creation of learning and working climates that value and accept all students, staff and families, inclusive of their intersecting race and ethnicity; gender; gender identity; place of origin, citizenship; religion; creed; cultural and linguistic background; social and economic status; sexual orientation; age, and ability/disability. This work will be monitored and informed by the completion of school climate surveys and student identity-based data collection. The Board will 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.

## 7.0 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The Board is committed to providing 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 Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Board will support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices. The principles of equity and inclusive education are modelled and incorporated in professional learning programs. The Board will provide opportunities for training to build upon knowledge and understanding of current, evidenced-based practices, programs and pedagogies that will help to address all forms of discrimination in order to support all educators to better understand and respond to the unique needs of students.

## 8.0 ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The Board will implement assessment and monitoring processes to ensure that the principles of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy are embedded into all Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and will communicate these results to the community.