

# Equity and Inclusion

Promoting and Supporting  
Student Well-Being



Strategic Plan  
2018-2020



*At the Near North District School Board, we value and embrace students with diverse backgrounds, identities, and personal experiences. It is our vision that every student should have the opportunity to find success in their school experience.*



## ***SETTING PRIORITIES***

The NNDSB believes that student well-being is fundamental to student success: that all students should be supported to build knowledge and skills associated with the four domains of well-being; social, emotional, physical, and cognitive using a whole child approach.

We are committed to knowing our learners: we need to deepen understanding of the learning profiles of our students, build on diverse identities, backgrounds, and learning strengths to facilitate the best conditions for learning.

“Our schools should be places where students not only learn about diversity but also experience it. Students should see themselves and their classmates reflected in their studies. Students and families should expect their interactions with their school community to leave them feeling accepted for who they are.” (Ontario’s Equity Action)



**Diversity:** The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

**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.

**Inclusive Education:** Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

(Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2009)

# 1

## KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

### Understanding Who We Serve...



*Promote a sense of belonging and increase positive outcomes for students identifying and addressing barriers to success and engagement for students, staff and families.*

- Develop and implement a student identity survey, "This is Me" to collect and analyze identity-based data to best understand our diverse student population. We want to recognize how they are experiencing their learning environments, address barriers and target programs and practices in an evidenced informed way.
- Engage staff analyzing school data (e.g., school climate survey /student identity survey data) for the purpose of planning equity strategies to support student achievement and well-being.

Understanding "who we are" will help to inform practices that honour and support the students, and families of the Near North District School Board.

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



To address the challenges of systemic barriers and bias we must know who our students are and what strengths and experiences they bring. We build upon our knowledge and understanding of current, evidence-based practices, programs and pedagogies that will help to address all forms of discrimination.

*Increase staff capacity to develop and implement practices that honour and engage Indigenous ways of knowing that reflect local communities.*

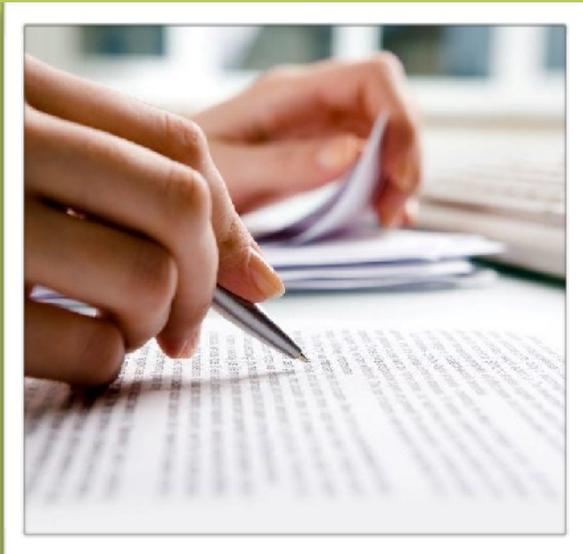
- Support the implementation of culturally relevant and responsive practices in our K-12 schools.
- Create and make available resources that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action # 62 and # 63 and the inclusion of indigenous ways.

*All educators will better understand and respond to the unique needs of students.*

- Develop and implement a multi-disciplinary approach to better understand and support students with challenging behaviours and support children with challenging needs so that they can experience success in school.
- Support provided for schools to implement and monitor social emotional learning approaches.
- Establish an evidence based mobile team approach as an intensive support model wrapping around for a group of students for a period of time.
- Ensure educators understand and use effective and intentional strategies in literacy and numeracy that would allow all students to develop a positive image of themselves as readers, writers and mathematicians.

## 2

# POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND BEST PRACTICE



“Applying an equity, inclusion and human rights perspective to internal organizational structures, programs and practices will help to identify, model, frame discussions about and work to support an inclusive and diverse education sector.”

(Ontario’s Equity Action Plan 2016 p.20)

***Ensure that policies, guidelines and practices reflect a lens of equity and inclusion by upholding our shared obligation to promote human rights and support positive learning environments for all students.***

- Develop and make accessible transgender guidelines to support students and target programs and practices in an evidenced informed way.
- Review annually all safe school documentation and practices relating to codes of conduct, bullying prevention, and progressive discipline plans to foster a whole school inclusive approach to addressing student behaviour.
- The Board is committed to developing, implementing and maintaining employment and promotion policies, practices and procedures that encourage and sustain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the students, families and community members across the geographically vast district of the Near North.
- Acknowledging the role of Ontario’s hiring legislation and regulations, recognizing the importance of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and respecting the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Near North DSB will demonstrate an on-going commitment to promoting the principles of Employment Equity. As such, systemic barriers to equitable recruitment, selection, hiring, training, performance review and development will be identified and eliminated. Our commitment to anti-oppressive and bias-free hiring and promotion practices are foundational to fostering equity and inclusivity of employees.
- The Human Resources department will promote a proactive and positive culture of belonging while celebrating the valued diversity of our workforce.

# 3

## INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

We have a culture of high expectations for student engagement, learning, achievement and well-being for all students. The curriculum should be reflective of students' needs and of who they are.



*Implement the principles of Inclusive Design to respond to the diverse needs and abilities of all learners.*

- Plan programs based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), including providing multiple means of accessing and responding to the curriculum in order to demonstrate their learning.

*We are committed to reviewing curriculum resources, instruction, and assessment/evaluation practices that respond to the diverse needs and abilities of all learners.*

- Ensure that resources in school and classroom libraries including instructional materials reflect inclusivity.
- Ensure educators select inclusive and effective assessment tools and strategies that allow students equitable access to demonstrate what they have learned and need to learn.
- Ensure educators are accessing continuums of learning in mathematics and literacy in order to better understand our students' strengths and refine next steps for learning.

*“In a truly equitable system, factors such as race, gender and socio-economic status do not prevent students from achieving ambitious outcomes. Our experience shows that barriers can be removed when all education partners create the conditions needed for success.*

*(Ontario Ministry of Education 2008)*

## 4

## INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS



“Our schools should be places where students not only learn about diversity but also experience it. Students should see themselves and their classmates reflected in their school experience. Students and families should expect their interactions with their school community to leave them feeling accepted for who they are.”

(Ontario’s Equity Action Plan)

*We are committed to fostering safe, accepting and supportive learning environments that promote well-being.*

- Implement evidence based Social Emotional Learning programs and approaches (e.g., C.P.S., Minds Up, Zones of Regulation, Just Breathe) that support the culture of a Mentally Healthy classroom.
- School Climate Survey data is used to foster a whole school approach supporting student behaviour: results from the school climate survey are used to update and support school goals.
- Support students with challenging behaviour through a Tiered Approach.
- Ensure commitment to creating culturally safe spaces in which environments, places, areas, or groups, work positively and proactively to acknowledge, accept and provide inclusion of the full spectrum of diversity of participants in that space.

*Making a better space for everyone...“Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.” (Dei et al., 2000)*

# 5

## TRANSITIONS



**“When transitions are planned and managed appropriately, they can be learning opportunities for students, helping them develop resiliency and the capacity for self-advocacy.”**

*(Learning for All 2013)*

*To provide transition supports for, students moving from First Nation Communities to schools of the NNDSB, youth in care and students with special education needs to ensure students have every opportunity to succeed.*

- Implement a Graduation Coach Model focused on relationships, mentoring, cultural and community connections, and parent engagement, as a responsive and intentional support for First Nation students.
- Review IEPs to ensure transition plans are created and consistently implemented.
- Develop a best practices guide to support promising practices in supporting English Language Learners.
- Support the implementation of the Joint Protocol for Student Achievement focused on children in care, in collaboration with schools and the Children’s Aid Society.

*“It is clear that students who feel welcome and accepted in their schools are more likely to succeed academically. By ensuring equity in our education system, we can help all students achieve excellence. (Achieving Excellence April 2014)”*

## WHAT WILL TELL US WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

### *Evidence of our impact*

- Schools and classroom practices will reflect responsiveness to the identities, voices, and lived realities of our students.
- Schools and classroom environments will reflect the diverse identities in their spaces.
- Schools will utilize student data including, achievement, well-being, and identity to determine patterns of strengths and needs.
- School communities will report an increased sense of belonging and inclusiveness connected to students, families, and communities.



*“What we do doesn’t matter nearly as much as how kids experience what we do.” From “It’s Not What We Teach; It’s What They Learn” (Kohn, Education Week, 2008)*