



REGULATION: Equity and Inclusive Education

REFERENCE NO: R-AD-38

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) believes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all. The Board is committed to implementing action programs which will allow students and staff to realize their full potential.

The Board's aim is to translate into action, PPM 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2009)", Ontario's "Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009)" (The Strategy), "Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2009)" as well as the Board's commitment to maximizing the potential of all of its students and staff. The GECDSB also affirms and upholds the principles enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution Act (1982) and the Ontario Human Rights Code (1981)" (The Code).

1. Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices

The Board is committed to the development and maintenance of policies, guidelines, programs, and practices designed to identify and eliminate discriminatory barriers in the workplace and learning environment. This commitment will assist in the achievement of a workforce and learning environment reflective of the composition of the communities served by the GECDSB.

The Board:

- 1.1 Will review its commitment to Equity and Inclusive Education in all existing and new GECDSB policies, guidelines, programs, and practices.
- 1.2 Will conduct a comprehensive systems review to identify and eliminate any discriminatory bias or barriers in its policies, programs, and practices to fulfill the requirements of existing regulations, The Strategy, Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, and The Code.
- 1.3 Is committed to establishing procedures at all levels of the school system for reviewing, developing, and implementing policies and practices that promote school and work environments that reflect its commitment to Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 1.4 Is committed to providing opportunities for students, staff, parents, trustees, and community members, where appropriate, to provide input into Board policies and improvement plans.
- 1.5 Will establish mechanisms to evaluate and measure its progress toward achieving its Equity and Inclusive Education Policy goals.

Employment Practices

The Board shall develop and maintain policies, procedures, programs, and practices which are bias-free and designed to eliminate and prevent discriminatory barriers in the recruitment, retention, transfer, and promotion of employees. Further, the Board shall encourage a workforce which reflects, is capable of understanding, and responds to the varied experiences of its diverse communities.

The Board:

- 1.6 Will, wherever possible, recruit, interview, select, train, and promote practices and procedures that are bias-free and support equitable representations of diversity at all levels of the school system. The Board is committed to instituting equitable opportunities for advancement for all employees; where their skills and knowledge are valued and used appropriately; and that they have equitable access to available supports for their professional development needs.
- 1.7 Is committed to advertising vacancies widely, internally within the organization, as well as externally through outreach to diverse groups within the community at large, when appropriate.
- 1.8 Is committed to providing training for school leaders and hiring managers to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring practices to reflect Ontario's diverse society.

Schools Will:

- 1.9 Review existing school policies, codes of conduct, and discipline procedures, on a cyclical basis so that they reflect the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 1.10 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 the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 1.11 Extend, develop, and 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, staff, and school communities.

2. Shared and Committed Leadership

The Board shall provide informed direction and leadership about the principles and practices of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. This leadership shall be responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario's communities and committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to learning to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps. Further, this leadership will empower staff and students to become involved in the development and promotion of Equity and Inclusive Education policies, programs, and practices which will help ensure harmony and understanding among staff, students, and the community.

In accordance with the Ministry's "Ontario Leadership Strategy", Board and school leaders will promote a collaborative approach to all dimensions of Equity and Inclusive Education, which encourages the participation of students, parents, unions, colleges and universities, service organizations, and other diverse community partners.

The Board:

- 2.1 Will identify and appoint a contact person to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices, and resources.
- 2.2 Will provide education and training for Trustees, Administrators, Teachers, Staff, and Students in implementing Equity and Inclusive Education and leadership initiatives that reflects comprehensive attention to the principles of human rights and their fundamental role in an equitable and inclusive environment.
- 2.3 Will identify expected outcomes for those who are responsible for the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, and incorporate these outcomes into the performance-appraisal process, including the on-going evaluation of staff at all levels of the organization, annual plans, and year-end reports.
- 2.4 Is committed to providing the resources needed to support the work of students, staff, and the community in promoting equity and inclusion in the school system and will strive to include members of communities that are underserved and /or marginalized in this shared leadership.
- 2.5 Will consider selection criteria for leadership positions that demonstrate commitment, knowledge, and skills related to Equity and Inclusive Education implementation, cognizant of The Code and in accordance with the Ministry of Education's Ontario Leadership Strategy.
- 2.6 Is committed to promoting a spirit of collaborative leadership and active engagement with students, parents, staff, and community partners who share a commitment to Equity and Inclusive Education practices.
- 2.7 Is committed to encouraging and acknowledging the important role that student leaders play in influencing their peers and the school culture.

Schools will:

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

3. School Community Relationships

The Board is committed to providing opportunities for members of the diverse communities it serves to participate in the development, implementation, and monitoring of policies, practices,

and programs to help ensure that community aspirations, perspectives, and needs are included and addressed. This participation will help foster the development of effective school community partnerships where understanding, mutual awareness, appreciation, and equity prevail.

The Board:

- 3.1 Will identify appropriate diverse community groups within its jurisdiction and encourage them to become involved in Board activities by reviewing and/or deepening existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 3.2 Is committed to developing partnership activities specifically designed to build capacity both within the Board itself and the various communities it serves to help ensure that all perspectives are represented and involved in meaningful ways. Existing community outreach efforts will be expanded 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.
- 3.3 Is committed to recognizing, respecting and valuing the knowledge, experiences, perspectives, values, and achievements of Canada's diverse peoples.
- 3.4 Will establish mechanisms to evaluate and measure its progress toward achieving effective school-community partnerships such as school climate surveys, to determine stakeholders' views on school environments and act upon relevant next steps.

Schools will:

- 3.5 Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.
- 3.6 Invite and support representation of diverse groups on school committees, including school improvement planning.
- 3.7 Engage stakeholders in community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions.

4. Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices

The Ministry of Education's curriculum policies supports respect for and acceptance of diversity in Ontario's schools. As such the Board will select, develop, and deliver curricula which reflect in equitable ways the experiences, values, achievements, and perspectives of a diverse society. Students will be provided with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, positive attitudes, and behaviours required to compete in a global economy.

Learning Opportunities and Resources

The Board is committed to providing students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Lessons, projects, and related resources shall allow students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

The Board:

- 4.1 Is committed to providing school curriculum that reflects in equitable ways the knowledge, experiences, perspectives, values, and achievements of Canada's diverse society.
- 4.2 Is committed to recognizing and affirming the identities of all students in equitable and appropriate ways through learning experiences in school.
- 4.3 Is committed to identifying and removing bias and discriminatory barriers in existing curriculum structures, policies, programs, and learning materials specifically addressing areas of discrimination under The Code.
- 4.4 Is committed to the principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy in the process of curriculum review, development and implementation.
- 4.5 Is committed to reflecting the diversity of staff, students, parents, and the community in all areas of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation and in the membership of curriculum committees.
- 4.6 Is committed to the provision of opportunities to affirm and value the first language of students.
- 4.7 Is committed to the provision of appropriate support programs for heritage language learning.
- 4.8 Is committed to the provision of appropriate support programs for Native Language learning.

Instructional Practices

The Board will support effective instructional practices that reflect the diverse needs and pathways of all students in order to provide content that is relevant and approaches that are suited to individual interests, aptitudes, and learning needs.

- 4.9 The Board is committed to providing resources and training to assist staff to use curriculum effectively in order to promote critical thinking and to challenge bias, stereotyping, and discrimination.

Closing the Achievement Gap

The GECD SB Student Success strategy promotes programs that are designed to engage students by meeting their diverse needs and interests.

The Board:

- 4.10 Shall promote programs at both the elementary and secondary levels that are designed to engage students by meeting their diverse needs and interests and recognizing their strengths and interests.
- 4.11 Is committed to identifying and eliminating stereotyping and bias in educational and career planning programs.
- 4.12 Is committed to providing support for students in identification of appropriate, equitable career options and academic pathways.

Assessment and Evaluation

The Board is committed to student evaluation and assessment procedures, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's, "Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools", that are bias free and support parental consultation as an integral part of the process. The Board recognizes that in order to achieve an accurate view of a student's capabilities for placement, prior learning, cultural and linguistic experiences, and parental information must be considered.

The Board:

- 4.14 Will review its assessment and evaluation practices to identify and address any discriminatory biases that prevent students from fulfilling their full learning potential. The principles of such a review will be consistent with The Code.
- 4.16 Is committed to assessment and placement teams, instruments, and procedures that are bias-free and designed to meet the needs of the individual students, and take into consideration the students' previous education and personal experiences.
- 4.17 Is committed to parents/guardians being consulted about assessment and placement procedures and being involved in placement decisions.

Communication

The Board shall inform parent(s)/guardian(s) and students about its assessment and evaluation policies and practices. Information about the learning expectations and the student's academic progress will be communicated to the student and parents on an on-going basis.

The Board:

- 4.18 Is committed to parental/guardian consultation in assessment and placement decisions
- 4.19 Will foster partnerships among schools, staff, parents/guardians, and community partners to involve all stakeholders in program review and development.

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- 4.20 Is committed to providing communication strategies to keep parents/guardians informed, relative to their children's current educational achievements, in a language they understand.

Schools will:

- 4.21 Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias relative to student assessment and evaluation; the principles of such a review will be consistent with The Code.
- 4.22 Provide for assessment and evaluation to support growth and learning, with the belief that each and every student can learn and be successful given the appropriate time and support.
- 4.23 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.
- 4.24 Use a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to inform short- and long-term planning, to reduce gaps in student achievement and to improve student learning.
- 4.25 Review classroom strategies that promote school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices.
- 4.26 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.
- 4.27 Provide access and use of assistive technologies for students who require accommodations, in accordance with SEA (Special Equipment Amounts) guidelines, to support achievement and success.
- 4.28 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; and research based practices in assessment and evaluation).

5. Religious Accommodation

Religious accommodation provisions help promote a learning environment that is safe and respectful for all. The GECDSB acknowledges each individual's right to follow or not to follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations to staff and students.

Freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. The Board and the communities it serves must work together to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects religious freedom for all individuals. While the Board and its staff will take all reasonable steps to ensure freedom of religion and religious practices, it is expected that students and their families will help the Board to understand their religious needs and will work with the Board and its schools to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

Please refer to the Greater Essex County District School Board's "Guidelines for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices, and Observances".

The Board:

- 5.1 Will consult with members of the multiple faith communities that represent the Board in the development and implementation of this protocol.
- 5.2 Will inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodation for religious beliefs and practices.
- 5.3 Will 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.
- 5.4 Will support religious accommodation for students and staff consistent with The Code.

Schools will:

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

6. School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment

The principles of Equity and Inclusive Education support positive student behaviour. The Board is committed to providing equitable learning and working environments. Students and staff have the right to learn and work in an environment free of harassment and discrimination, where a spirit of equity prevails. The Board has a duty to maintain an environment respectful of human rights and free of all forms of harassment and or discrimination. The Equity Strategy requires Boards to address discrimination by using a range of tools, including an equity lens, reflection tools, and Code principles to examine their policies, procedures and practices.

The Board shall condemn and refuse to tolerate all manifestations of discrimination and harassment and will take an active role in the elimination of these manifestations. Board mechanisms work towards the eradication of discrimination and harassment by ensuring that all members of the school community are aware of a timely and measured response to claims of discrimination of any kind.

The Board:

- 6.1 Will develop, implement, and monitor policy guidelines and a clearly delineated process for preventing, reporting, and responding to harassment and discrimination involving staff, students and other individuals in the school community as required in PPM 145 (2009) "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour".
- 6.2 Is committed to fostering a culture where both students and staff are able to learn and work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment; where effective

procedures are made available for resolving concerns and complaints that may arise from their experience of perceived unfair or inequitable treatment within the school system.

- 6.3 Will convey to all members of the educational community its commitment to fostering a working and learning environment which actively promotes and supports the dignity, worth, and human rights of all students, staff, and the community.
- 6.4 Is committed to regular monitoring of school climate to identify inappropriate behaviours, issues, or barriers – overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional – that should be addressed.
- 6.5 Will implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, staff, parents, and the community, so that diverse groups and the broader community have Board-level representation and access to Board initiatives.
- 6.6 Will 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**”.
- 6.7 Will create a culture of high expectations in which excellence is continually strived for and respect permeates the environment.

Schools will:

- 6.8 Revise codes of conduct to identify and address harassment and/or discrimination.
- 6.9 Use Progressive Discipline practices which may include peer mediation and restorative justice.
- 6.10 Welcome, respect and validate the contributions of all students, parents, and other members of the school community.
- 6.11 Provide student support as identified in Ministry mandated Student Success Initiatives, including The Code, so that students are inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.
- 6.12 Develop school codes of conduct with the active consultation and involvement from students, staff, parents, and a representative cross-section of community members to address the needs of diverse communities.
- 6.13 Inform the school community that Board procedures 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. Professional Learning

The Board will seek opportunities to build capacity among staff for understanding and addressing issues that pertain to equity, diversity, and inclusive education.

The Board:

- 7.1 Is committed to identifying staff development needs to support the Board's Equity and Inclusive Education Policy
- 7.2 Is committed to developing and implementing staff development programs based on identified Equity and Inclusive Education needs.
- 7.3 Is committed to developing and implementing staff development programs to enable staff to deal confidently and effectively with issues and incidents of harassment and discrimination.
- 7.4 Is committed to developing and implementing staff development programs to provide staff with the skills needed to identify and eliminate bias in learning materials.
- 7.5 Is committed to providing administrators, staff, students and other members of the school community with on-going development opportunities in Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 7.6 Will support involving community groups in the development and implementation of in-service programs and other staff development programs.
- 7.7 Is committed to supporting school reviews of classroom strategies that promote school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies and practices.
- 7.8 Is committed to promoting and incorporating the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education in professional learning programs.

Schools will:

- 7.11 Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to align with and reflect school-wide Equity and Inclusive Education policies.
- 7.12 Promote collaboration among staff to select and implement best practices in Equity and Inclusive Education.
- 7.13 Build staff capacity through on-going professional learning that is based on needs.
- 7.14 Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, antihomophobia, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.
- 7.15 Undertake initiatives which promote a welcoming and respectful school environment and provide timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.

8. Accountability and Transparency

The Board is committed to assessing and monitoring its progress in implementing an Equity and Inclusive Education policy; to embedding the principles into all other Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices; and to communicating these results to the community.

The Board:

- 8.1 Is committed to embedding the principles of Equity and Inclusive Education into all Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.
- 8.2 Will 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. In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Board will seek and use feedback to improve the Equity and Inclusive Education policy.
- 8.3 Will reinforce school improvement planning involving collaboration with various stakeholders in recognition of the collective responsibility to foster student achievement and success.
- 8.4 Is committed to using comprehensive, valid, and reliable data to identify the root causes of barriers to student achievement to raise awareness of all of the different grounds of discrimination that exist and find ways to address and remove the identified barriers.
- 8.5 Will assess and monitor its progress in reviewing its policies, programs, guidelines, and practices and in implementing the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy.
- 8.6 Is committed to incorporating an Equity and Inclusive Education focus in developing school improvement plans and Board Multi-Year plans.
- 8.7 Is committed to reporting progress as it relates to the implementation of its Equity and Inclusive Education Policy.

Schools will:

- 8.8 Report student achievement data annually to the Board and intervene at all levels to ensure the achievement and success of all students.
- 8.9 Develop and communicate evidence based school improvement plans that are aligned with the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy.
- 8.10 Review and establish self-reflection and self-assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of the school's Equity and Inclusive Education plans and procedures.