

GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Policy: Equity and Inclusive Education

Reference No: P-AD-38

The Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) is committed to student achievement as well as student and staff well-being, diversity, and inclusion. The Board is working to ensure equitable access and outcomes through accessible, inclusive, diverse, and anti-colonial learning and working environments. The Board is committed to fostering learning and working environments that uphold human rights and equity, are proactively anti-racist and anti-oppressive and are welcoming, safe, equitable, inclusive, accessible, affirming, and free from discrimination, oppression, harassment, harm, and reprisal.

The GECDSB affirms and upholds the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and confirmed in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (2015)*. The Board is committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers and celebrating diversity and respect for all as outlined in:

- Ontario's Education Equity and Action Plan (2017).
- Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2009)".
- Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy and Development and Implementation – Realizing the Promise of Diversity (2014).
- Policy and Program Memorandum 128, in the Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct (2019).
- The GECDSB Equity Plan.
- Indigenous Education Protocol.
- Special Education Plan.
- Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy.

The GECDSB is committed to equity, inclusion, and respect for all being reflected in all policies, programs, and practices. The GECDSB confirms its commitment to understanding and dismantling all forms of oppression. The GECDSB is also committed to helping students and staff acknowledge racist and oppressive ideologies and how they operate at the interpersonal, systemic, and structural levels. The GECDSB understands that greater equity in education is critical to the achievement and successful education, social-emotional and well-being outcomes for students.

The GECDSB is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment that upholds and reflects the Seven Guiding Principles of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy.

Equity and Inclusive Education is founded on the Seven Guiding Principles Equity and Inclusive Education :

- Is a foundation of excellence.
- Meets individual needs.
- Identifies and eliminates barriers.
- Promotes a sense of belonging.
- Involves the broad community.
- Builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives.

- Is demonstrated throughout the system.

Key to achieving this commitment is the ongoing collection, analysis and reporting of data from multiple sources to align resources that support schools; identify and eliminate systemic barriers to student success; create more equitable and inclusive school environments; and improve student achievement, socio-emotional development, and well-being.

NOTES:

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* identifies the following prohibited discrimination grounds in alphabetical order: age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex, and sexual orientation. Every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to services without discrimination based on a prohibited ground.

The GECD SB recognizes that individuals may experience discrimination and harassment based on the intersection of more than one ground of discrimination which is called intersectionality.

DEFINITIONS

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, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009)

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of grounds set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, or on the basis of other similar elements such as:

- 1) Not individually assessing the unique merits, capacities, and circumstances of a person.
- 2) Instead making stereotypical assumption based on a person's presumed traits.
- 3) Having the impact of excluding persons, denying benefits, or imposing burdens.

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. (Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009)

HARASSMENT

Harassment is defined in subsection 10(1) of the *Ontario Human Rights Code* as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome".

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Education is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students need to see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected. (Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009)