Our Mission

M.D. Bennie Public School is a diverse and inclusive community that works together to develop a nurturing, compassionate and accepting
environment for all.

Through rigorous and differentiated learning experiences, our students are inspired to develop a natural curiosity and
a lifelong love of learning.

We prepare our globally minded students to be creators
and innovators who share their voice and take
action to make positive contributions
to their ever-changing world.

Inclusion Policy

Who We Are

We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history, culture and language while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Greater Essex County District School Board, 2019). We would like to respectfully acknowledge that the land on which our school is situated is the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation, members of the Anishinabek Nation also known as the Three Fires Confederacy.

MD Bennie is a diverse learning community with approximately 20% of our students born outside of Canada, originating from about 16 different countries. Nearly 30% of our students have a mother tongue other than English, our language of instruction. Some of our students are proficient in more than three languages. In addition, a few of our students are non-verbal and they communicate using assistive technologies and/or personalized core boards. Considering this, it is our moral imperative to establish "inclusive support structures that value diversity and support equal opportunity for all members" (The Learning Community, 2018, p. 4). All three statements of our mission clearly express aspects of an inclusive community: developing a nurturing, compassionate and accepting environment for all, providing differentiated learning experiences and developing a natural curiosity for learning and lastly, preparing our globally minded students to be creators and innovators who make positive contributions to their world.

"Any inclusive environment must be effective, welcoming, healthy and protective and culturally and gender -sensitive for all learners" (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p.14). It is a truism that students who feel a sense of belonging at school do better academically (Greater Equity Means Greater Success, ? and Ontario's Equity and Inclusion Education strategy, 2009). This belief is underscored in the first statement of our mission.

We are committed to getting to know the whole child to differentiate our instruction with the strategies and learning opportunities to help our learners "develop, pursue and achieve appropriate personal learning goals" (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 13). This belief is highlighted in the second statement of our mission.

IB states that "inclusion is the learner profile in action, an outcome of dynamic learning communities" (The IB Guide to Inclusive Education, 2019, p. 1). It further explains, "its importance in empowering students …so that all students… are equipped to exercise their rights and accept their responsibilities as citizens in mainstream social life." "Valuing diversity and difference is a key aspect of becoming internationally minded and is an important goal of all IB programmes" (IB

Conference, 2014, p. 5). Moreover, "Ontarians share a belief in the need to develop students as learners and prepare them for their role in society as engaged, productive and responsible citizens (Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009, p. 6). This belief is emphasized in the third statement of our mission.

At MD Bennie, every educator is an educator of diverse learners, and every student is an IB learner who engages in inquiry (Learning Stories, 2013 and 2014, p. 2). As is noted in our assessment policy, we see students through an asset stance where we look to our students' strengths to support their areas for growth. It is with purpose and intention that we create the conditions to put our beliefs in action to support all learners in reaching their full potential both inside and outside of school, while continuously reflecting upon our beliefs and practices to seek ways to become more inclusive.

Rationale for this Policy
"Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers. This can only be successfully achieved in a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem solving" (The IB guide to inclusive education, 2019, p. 1). Through an asset stance, "students must experience teaching and learning that is reflective of their needs and who they are" (Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017, p. 16). IB identifies fourteen principles of an inclusive education (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes 2019, p. 10):

- education for all is considered a human right
- education is enhanced by the creation of affirmative, responsive environments that promote a sense of belonging, safety, self-worth and whole growth for every student
- every educator is an educator of all students
- learning is considered from a strength-based perspective
- learning diversity is valued as a rich resource for building inclusive communities
- all learners belong and experience equal opportunities to participate and engage in quality learning
- full potential is unlocked through connecting with, building on, previous knowledge
- assessment provides all learners with opportunities to demonstrate their learning, which is rewarded and celebrated
- multilingualism is recognized as a fact, a right and a resource
- all students in the school community fully participate in an IB education and are empowered to exercise their rights and accept their responsibilities as citizens
- all students in the school community have a voice and are listened to so that their input and insights are taken into account
- all students in the school community develop the IB learner profile attributes and develop into inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect
- diversity is understood to include all members of a community
- all students experience success as a key component of learning

IB explains that, "barriers to learning may be found in the way schools are organized and resourced, their cultures, and policies, the approaches to teaching and learning, the physical aspects of building and the ways in which individuals within the school community interact on a daily basis" (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 4). We need to be committed to considering barriers from multiple perspectives (p. 5) to cultivate the best conditions for learning for all. When students feel good about themselves the more comfortable they are to take risks with their learning to reach their full potential (p. 11).

Definition of Key Terms:

Key Term	GECDSB and/or Ontario Ministry	International Baccalaureate
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 (GECDSB Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, 2017, p.1)	
Inclusion	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 (GECDSB Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, 2017, p.1)	Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers (Meeting Student Learning Diversity in the Classroom, 2019, p. 2)
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 (GECDSB Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, 2017, p.1)	
Learner Variability		A term that embraces all students and does not exclude on the grounds of strengths, challenges, age, social status, economic status, language, gender, race, ethnicity or sexuality. Taking into account changing histories, circumstances and contexts, learner variability represents the shifting combination of strengths and challenges that learners experience (Meeting Student Learning Diversity in the Classroom, 2019, p. 2)

Resources and Supports

We implement a variety of resources and supports to understand, reflect and engage all learners in our school. We provide scaffolds to help foster independence in our learners; such as, graphic organizers, demonstrations, anchor charts, visual aids and chunking (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 11). We hold these shared beliefs (Learning for All, 2013, p. 17):

- All students can succeed
- Each student has their own unique patterns to learning
- Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience
- Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students
- Classroom teachers are the key educators for a students' literacy and numeracy development (and the integration into all subject areas)
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports all students
- Fairness is not sameness

Supports can help to extend learning for all (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 11):

1. Prior knowledge: Accessing prior knowledge helps to anchor new learning. This information gained helps to create differentiated learning engagements that met our students at their zone of proximal development.

2. Differentiated Instruction: "To differentiate instruction is to recognize students varying levels of background knowledge, readiness to learn, language ability, learning preferences, and interests, and to react responsively," (Learning for All, 2013, p. 17). We differentiate based on content, process, products and learning environment to meet the students where they are currently at in their learning (Learning for All, 2013 and Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019).

3. Universal Design for Learning: UDL is based on the notion that "assistance targeted at a specific group can help everyone" (Learning for All, 2013, p. 13) and that "variability among leaners is the norm" (Using Universal Design for Learning in the IB Classroom, 2016, p. 1). It provides "all students with equal opportunities to learn (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 13). It suggests that flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies empower educators to meet these varied needs (Using Universal Design for Learning in the IB Classroom, 2016, p. 1). The UDL framework takes into account multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement.

4. Optimal Learning Environments: We consider the physical, emotional, and social environments when creating safe, welcoming and accepting places for all students and staff to learn. We look to outdoor spaces and common learning spaces as well as field trips and guest speakers to extend our learning outside of our classroom walls.

5. Assessment Practices: We use a variety of assessment for, as and of learning to determine where our students currently are in their learning. Learning goals and co-constructed success criteria help our students know where they are going in their learning and how to get there. Please refer to our assessment policy.

6. Collaboration: Collaborative learning happens regularly within each classroom. Staff collaborate together frequently during our IB collaborative times, staff meetings and professional development days. Students of all ages are viewed as partners in learning and sit elbow to elbow with staff during UOI reflection meetings. "Inclusion is achieved through a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, support and problem-solving in dynamic learning communities" (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 15). We collaborate with many Board level staff and outside agencies to best support our learners.

Collaborative Partnerships	
Board Personnel	Outside Agencies

• Speech and Language Pathologist
• Education Co-ordinator
• Social Worker
• Psychologist
• Behavioural Management Team
• Hearing and Vision itinerant teacher
	• John McGivney Centre
	    o Speech and Language Pathologist
	    o Physiotherapist
	    o Occupational Therapist
	• Talk to Me
	• Newcomer Welcome Centre
	• Settlement Workers in Our Schools
	• Children's Aid Society
	• Regional Children's Centre
	• Health Unit
	• Police Services – VIP program

7. Technology: We have multiple technologies (ipads, laptops, data projectors, smart boards, document cameras, robotics) in our school to support inquiries, research, documentation of learning and portfolio use. Some students have personal assistive technologies to support their communication and learning.

Process

It is the goal of inclusion to support all learners inside of their homeroom classroom setting for the full school day. Reaching every student through a three-tiered focused intervention approach helps to close the learning gap and identify which students would benefit for additional supports both inside and outside of their homeroom setting (GECDSB Learning For All Brochure). This is the process that we follow to determine intentional instructional supports and placements (Learning for All, 2013, pp. 36-39):

1. Gathering, organizing, recording information about students to determine strengths and areas for growth using a variety of assessment data.
2. Selecting instructional strategies to support our learners
3. Program planning and the implementation of UDL and DI. Using the three-tiered approach, where and when needed:

    Tier 1:
    o Effective, whole class instruction
    o Differentiate instructional practices
    o Classroom benchmark assessments

    Tier 2:
    o Flexible, small, needs-based group instruction
    o Explicit instructions driven by data and observation
    o Strategic, focused intervention by the classroom teacher
    o On-going progress monitoring
    o On-going communication with parents to elicit valuable information (Special Education Ontario, 2017, p. C24)
    o If a student continues to make limited progress, steps for a School Team Meeting (STM) usually begin. Parents are notified. The goal is to determine interventions and make accommodations that will enable the student to learn successfully (Special Education Ontario, 2017, p. C24)

    Tier 3:
    o Students who are not responding to Tier 1 and 2 interventions

- o Apply interventions and accommodations: intensive, individualized and explicit instruction which may occur both inside and outside of the classroom
- o May need specialized assessments, support and instruction from Special Education Services
4. Monitoring and adjusting strategies while reviewing the overall program. In the case of students who have persistent learning challenges, the need for more targeted, intensive instructional support or for special intervention by an in-school team or external specialized may also be noted. (Tier 3)
5. Continued consultation with the in-school team(s) and out-of-school resources (including community agencies) to discuss progress monitoring. Completion of a non-identified Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This may lead to referral to an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) where a formal IEP is created in consultation with families and classroom placement to meet learner variability is recommended. The intent of the IEP is to "celebrate learning success, build on strengths and circumvent difficulties to develop the whole student" (Learning Diversity and Inclusion in IB Programmes, 2019, p. 17). It is a legal document.

Our Commitments

Our commitments will support inclusion for students by helping to identify and remove barriers for learning. Through collaborating with our colleagues across grade levels and subject areas and partnering with our students and their families along with Board level and community supports, we will support all of our learners in achieving their full potential. Our policy has gone through focus group reviews of teachers, parents and students. It has been shared with all staff and in turn, every teacher has shared relevant components with their students. It is part of our Staff Handbook and posted on our Edsby IB Learning Journey staff group. This policy is published on our website for all families to access.

Bennie Bulldog teachers are committed to:
- o Implementing our assessment policy to support learning for all
- o Implementing our language policy to support learning for all
- o Implementing our academic honesty policy to support learning for all
- o Taking on an asset stance
- o Being aware of the process to support all learners
- o Accessing students' prior knowledge
- o Using Universal design
- o Differentiating instruction and assessment practices
- o Creating safe and inclusive learning environments
- o Collaborating with students, families, staff, and outside agencies, both inside and outside of our school
- o Reflecting on our beliefs and practices to remove barriers to learning and become more inclusive

Bennie Bulldog educational support staff are committed to:
- o Creating safe and inclusive learning environments that foster well-being, self-regulation and independence
- o Collaborating with students, outside agencies, staff and supporting families
- o Reflecting on beliefs and practices while persevering to remove barriers of learning and inclusion
- o Advocating for and supporting learners in reaching their full potential using a variety of resources and strategies
- o Encouraging learners to communicate to the best of their ability and enact their agency to advocate for their strengths, areas for growth, interests and learning styles.

  - o Empowering students to use a variety of verbal and non-verbal communication skills to express their wants and needs

Bennie Bulldog students are committed to:
  - o Creating safe, respectful, and nurturing learning environments
  - o Putting their agency in action as they:
    - o Share their voice in the learning process
    - o Communicate their strengths and learning challenges and ask questions when needed
    - o Make choices to best demonstrate their learning
    - o Take action to improve their learning and the learning of others
    - o Be mindful of their peers learning and how to help them and give guidance when requested
    - o Take action to improve their local and global community
  - o Developing a growth mindset
  - o Sharing their prior knowledge and experiences
  - o Showing their personal best while challenging themselves
  - o Advocating for their strengths, areas for growth, interests and learning styles

Bennie Bulldog families are committed to:
  - o Engaging students in conversations about school
  - o Supporting their children with any work they bring home to practice their learning
  - o Connecting with the teacher to discuss, understand and support learning progress and areas for growth
  - o Attending parent-teacher conferences
  - o Celebrating their child's learning, agency and action
  - o Communicating their children's learning backgrounds, experiences and goals with the school team
    - o Participate in the development of the Individual Education Plans (IEP) https://www.publicboard.ca/Programs/specialeducation/Documents/GECDSB%20Parent%20Guide%20to%20IEP%20AODA%20Version.pdf#search=a%20parents%20guide%20to%20individual%20education%20plans
    - o Participate in Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRCs) https://www.publicboard.ca/Programs/specialeducation/Documents/GECDSB%20Parent%20Guide%20to%20IPRC%20AODA%20Version.pdf#search=parents%20guide%20to%20the%20identification

Policy Review
This year our goal as a school community is to reflect upon our inclusive practices to identify barriers to inclusion. As our learning community learns together our policy will become more precise with intentional strategies to becoming more inclusive. It will be reviewed and adapted to reflect and extend who we are annually at the end of June with focus groups of our stakeholders.

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