Northeastern Catholic District School Board

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Administrative Procedure Number: APE032

POLICY STATEMENT

The Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) recognizes that all people are created equal, in the image and likeness of God, each with inimitable characteristics deserving dignity (Genesis: 1:27). The NCDSB strives to support and inspire every student to succeed in a culture of high expectations and acceptance. The NCDSB is committed to an equitable education system that upholds and reflects the principles of fair and inclusive education. In accordance with the Church's teachings, the NCDSB will provide in all its operations an educational environment which supports and enables diversity within its Catholic community.

REFERENCES

Education Act
Equity and Inclusive Education: Going Deeper (CODE, 2014)
Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017
Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)
Achieving Excellence – A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario
Policy Program Memorandum (PPM)
- 108 Opening or Closing Exercises in Public Elementary or Secondary Schools
- 119 Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools
- 144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention

NCDSB Administrative Procedure
- APE032 Equity and Inclusive Education

DEFINITIONS

Nil.

PROCEDURES

1.0 BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

The NCDSB is committed to serving staff, students, and families in its diverse Catholic community by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its policies, programs, procedures, and practices that are consistent with Catholic denominational rights.

1.1 General Principles

i) The NCDSB recognizes the importance of anti-racism and anti-harassment policies in promoting and maintaining a Catholic educational and working environment which fosters racial and ethno-cultural understanding.

ii) The NCDSB will ensure that its policy review cycle will result in the alignment and integration of the requirements of PPM 119 and the provincial strategy with all NCDSB policies, programs, procedures, and practices.

iii) The perspective of the entire diverse Catholic school community will be reflected in all areas of the teaching, learning and administrative culture. Every effort will be made to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit access to and opportunity for effective employment procedures for individuals from diverse communities and underrepresented peoples with the context of the denominational rights of Catholic school board.

1.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Establish the foundational framework that will inform their review and/or development and implementation of a comprehensive equity and inclusive education policy that recognizes and eliminates biases related to race, class, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, family status, religion and linguistic differences as well as socio-economic factors.

ii) Review existing equity and inclusive education policies and/or extend or develop such policies to fulfill the requirements of existing regulations, the provincial strategy, PPM 119, and the OHRC, in accordance with the denominational rights afforded to the Catholic school system.

iii) Ensure that principles of equity and inclusive education permeate and are explicitly state in all Board policies, programs, guidelines, operations, practices, and improvement plans.

iv) Ensure all future policies, guidelines and practices are drafted and implemented in accordance with the Board's equity and inclusive education policies.

v) Collect information needed to monitor the effects of the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education policies of the Board.

vi) Ensure all persons with disabilities are accommodated appropriately and in a manner consistent with the OHRC.

vii) Provide training for school and system leaders to facilitate equitable recruitment and hiring to reflect Ontario's diverse society.

viii) Provide opportunities for the diverse school community, including students, staff, parents, trustees, and community members, to provide active input into Board policies and improvement plans on an ongoing basis.

ix) Investigate in a thorough and timely manner any claims of discrimination and/or racism and take appropriate action consistent with the principles of the OHRC.

1.3 Our Schools will:

i) Review existing school policies and guidelines, for example, codes of conduct, to determine that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education.

ii) 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 equity and inclusive education.

iii) Implement Board equity and inclusive education policies, programs, and school improvement plan consistent with the Code and that reflect the needs of their diverse Catholic school community.

2.0 SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

The NCDSB is committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships with all members of our diverse Catholic community so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized, ant their needs are met.

2.1 General Principles

i) The NCDSB subscribes to an informed leadership philosophy that inspires, empowers, and supports all stakeholders in our Catholic community to implement institutional practices and behaviours that cultivate equity and inclusion.

ii) The NCDSB is committed to providing informed shared leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing, and removing all barriers and forms of discrimination.

iii) The NCDSB recognizes the critical connection between student leadership and improved student achievement and will strive to include the student voice in all aspects of the implementation of equity and inclusive education.

iv) System and school leaders will encourage and promote a collaborative approach to all dimensions of equity and inclusive education, which ensures the participation of students, parents, unions, post-secondary institutions, service organizations and other community partners.

2.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Share in the life and mission of the Church by developing a system plan to build and sustain Board and staff capacity in the areas of equity and inclusive education in curriculum and instruction, human resources, and governance.

ii) Identify and appoint a contact person to liaise with the Ministry and other Boards to share challenges, promising practices and resources.

iii) Provide extensive and ongoing education and training for students, administrators, teachers (including guidance counsellors), support staff and trustees in implementing equity and inclusive education and leadership initiatives.

iv) Establish selection criteria for leadership positions that prioritizes demonstrated commitment, knowledge and skills related to equity and inclusive education implementation and inclusive leadership, and consistent with proactive OHRC compliance.

v) Provide ongoing training for all staff that reflects comprehensive attention to the principles of human rights and their fundamental role in an equitable and inclusive environment.

vi) Strive to ensure that members of communities that are underserved and/or marginalized are included in the shared leadership.

2.3 Our Schools will:

i) Establish a collaborative culture where the collective capabilities and voices of all stakeholders are used to develop and implement equity and inclusive education goals.

ii) Promote equity minded student leadership related to issues of social justice.

iii) Develop initiatives with student facilitators representing diverse voices and experiences.

iv) Demonstrate leadership is setting the tone for the positive and proactive implementation of the equity strategy within the school.

3.0 SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The NCDSB is committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships with all members of our diverse Catholic community so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families, and employees are recognized.

3.1 General Principles

i) The NCDSB recognizes that the effective review, development, implementation and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies and practices requires the involvement of all members of the entire Catholic school community. The NCDSB further recognizes the importance of engaging specialized expertise in developing and implementing its equity and inclusive education policy.

ii) The NCDSB will seek collaboration with and active engagement from students, parents, staff and other Catholic community partners to create and sustain a positive school climate reflective of Catholic values that supports student achievement.

iii) The NCDSB will identify, examine, and remove any barriers that exist, that are part of systemic discrimination under the OHRC, and that prevent full participatory school-community relations.

3.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Develop a database of information that establishes the diversity of communities based on available self-identification.

ii) Review and/or initiate tools (for example school climate surveys) to determine stakeholders' views on school environment and act upon relevant next steps.

iii) Take proactive steps to ensure that existing committees represent the diversity of the wider community.

iv) Review and deepen existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education.

v) Expand community efforts to foster new partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members and various community organizations, including business groups to ensure inclusion.

vi) Establish processes to identify and address systemic barriers that limit or prevent all sectors of the school community from benefitting from enhanced opportunities for NCDSB representation and greater access to NCDSB initiatives.

vii) Identify under-represented communities and facilitate their participation and involvement in NCDSB activities.

viii) Gather and use the knowledge, skills, and experiences of NCDSB community partners to enrich the total educational and career experiences of staff, students, and volunteers.

3.3 Our Schools will:

i) Implement strategies to review existing community partnerships to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.

ii) Invite and support representation of diverse groups on school committees, including school improvement planning.

iii) Engage stakeholders in community forums to listen and address concerns and suggestions.

iv) Reflect the approaches described above in their outreach to the broader community.

4.0 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The NCDSB is committed to implementing an inclusive curriculum based on Catholic values and to reviewing resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize learning potential.

4.1 General Principles

i) In consideration of inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, the how and the what must be addressed. What is brought to students in terms of content is as important as the way it is delivered. Consideration must be given to both what is said and what is not said, as it is known that our students learn both the explicit and hidden curricula.

ii) Both in its content and methodology, inclusive curriculum seeks to recognize our commitment to Catholic values and to affirm the life experiences of all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, place of origin, religions, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability.

iii) Effective evaluation includes researched best practices that truly reflect the current level of achievement of the student. Multiple opportunities for assessment allow for student learning and accuracy of assessment and instruction.

iv) Students must represented in the curriculum and heard in the assessment and evaluation. Students' voice is fundamental in the planning for instruction and the accuracy of assessment.

4.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated in order to reduce the achievement gap. The principles of such a review will be consistent with the OHRC.

ii) Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices specifically addressing areas of discrimination cited in the OHRC.

4.3 Our Schools will:

i) Review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated; the principles of such a review will be consistent with the OHRC.

ii) Promote effective, current, research-based practices to ensure a collaborative approach to student assessment.

iii) Ensure that assessment and evaluation support growth and learning, with the belief that each and every student can achieve and be successful given the appropriate time and support.

iv) Provide education and training based on the belief that all student can learn and ensure that it is reflected in expectations of students' assessment and evaluation practices, counselling about available program options, and other counselling practices.

v) Use a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to inform short and long term planning to reduce gaps in student achievement and improve student learning.

vi) Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices.

vii) Provide multiple opportunities for assessment (self, peer, teacher, student-led conferencing and/or parent/student conferences).

viii) Adjust instruction based on the results of formative assessment. Feedback to students must be specific, timely, and promote further learning.

ix) Ensure collaborative learning structures recognizing the variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences.

x) Ensure consistent monitoring of the growth of students who are on Individual Education Plans and/or are English Language Learners to ensure that the specific needs of students are addressed through the accuracy of programming based on best practices in assessment; all needed accommodations and modifications must be in place to assist the student in accessing the curriculum.

xi) Ensure all student who have English language learning needs receive an education program that closely aligns with their specific needs and that ensures equity of access to the curriculum.

xii) Ensure parents (and students where appropriate) are actively involved in identification and placement decisions, including those required by the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC).

xiii) Ensure access and use of assistive technologies for students who require accommodations to support achievement and success.

xiv) Improve student learning and achievement through the use of differentiated product (for example, an oral response for a reading comprehension task or a mind map in lieu of an essay or a dramatic performance that demonstrates the student's learning).

xv) Engage students as active participants in their learning (for example, students seeing and hearing themselves in the curriculum, gender specific teaching practices, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, research based practices in assessment and evaluation).

xvi) Review and reflect upon classroom practices and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.

xvii) Make certain that resource and instructional strategies are in accordance with Catholic teachings and values; are in compliance with the provisions of the OHRC with respect to the prohibited grounds of discrimination; show people of different races, genders, and ages in non-stereotypical settings, occupations, and activities; explore the roles and contributions of all peoples in Canada, and the factors that shaped these roles; encourage open discussion of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the OHRC in society, the community, and the school.

5.0 RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

The NCDSB is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion and will take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations within the legal rights afforded to the Catholic school system.

5.1 General Principles

i) Committed to the mission of the Church, the NCDSB provides a learning and working environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or disability, in accordance with the OHRC and PPM 108.

ii) Within the framework of gospel values, traditions, and the NCDSB's denominational rights, in recognition of this diversity, the NCDSB will attempt to provide reasonable accommodation for students' and staffs' religious beliefs and practices, while also protecting its denominational rights.

5.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Consult with a variety of individuals and groups who represent the religious diversity of the NCDSB in the development and implementation of this policy.

ii) Inform students and their parents/guardians and staff of their right to request accommodation for religious beliefs and practices.

iii) Prepare a religious accommodation guideline in keeping with the OHRC, and consistent with its denominational rights, which prohibits discrimination on the

grounds of creed, and other OHRC protected grounds, and provides a duty to accommodate.

iv) Provide religious accommodation for students and staff, where reasonable and consistent with the OHRC.

5.3 Our Schools will:

i) Revise/implement their religious accommodation practices to align the NCDSB religious accommodation guideline.

6.0 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The NCDSB is committed to the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive and Christ-centered school climate and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

6.1 General Principles

i) The NCDSB recognizes that a safe and welcoming environment is most conducive to learning. The NCDSB will therefore seek to foster a Christ-centered, positive school climate, free from discrimination or harassing behaviour.

ii) The NCDSB acknowledges that a Christ-centered, positive school climate is one where all members of the school community feel safe, welcomed, and accepted. The principles of equity and inclusive education support positive student behaviour.

6.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Implement strategies to identify and remove discriminatory barriers that limit engagement by students, parents, and the community, so that diverse groups and the broader community have better NCDSB-level representation and greater access to NCDSB initiatives.

ii) Put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will also enable the NCDSB to respond in a timely manner.

iii) In an effort to alleviate the negative impact of suspensions and expulsions on students, proactive programs will be initiated or expanded to decrease the number of suspensions and expulsions.

iv) Create a climate in which excellence is continually strived for and respect for all permeates the environment.

v) Communicate that administrators are expected to use progressive discipline and professional discretion, and to understand the duty to accommodate students with disabilities.

6.3 Our Schools will:

i) Ensure that codes of conduct are revised to address all forms of racism, discrimination, and harassment.

ii) Ensure the use of progressive discipline including peer mediation and restorative justice.

iii) Welcome, respect, and validate the contributions of all students, parents, and other members of the school community.

iv) Ensure that every student is supported as outlined in student success strategies, Ministry of Education resources and other applicable legislation, and is inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

v) Ensure that school does of conduct reflect the needs of the divers Catholic community served by the school and are developed with the active consultation and involvement of students, staff, parents, and a representative cross-section of community members.

vi) Review or develop guidelines and procedures to address the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the OHRC as they may apply to students, staff, and others in the Catholic community.

vii) Ensure that the established NCDSB procedure 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 Bill 157.

viii) Ensure that all information about the new or revised procedures involving equity and inclusive education is communicated to all students, staff, families, and others in the school community.

7.0 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The NCDSB is committed to providing the school community, including students, with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the OHRC.

7.1 General Principles

i) The staff of the NCDSB is its most important asset and is the vehicle by which Catholicity and equity are taught in the classroom and throughout the system. The NCDSB therefore, recognizes the importance of ongoing professional learning to create a foundation for Catholic values, ecclesial and cultural identity, human rights education and effective teaching practices.

ii) Professional learning increases the knowledge and skills that teacher bring to the craft and science of teaching and thus, engages the student with increasing complexity and precision teaching. Perpetual professional learning is the groundwork for positive changes in our schools. We recognize that in addition to the essential knowledge embraced by the Catholic faith, there is a continued quest toward honouring and appreciating the knowledge that exists within the diversity of the community.

7.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices.

ii) Allocate adequate resources to provide ongoing opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives.

iii) Provide antiracism and antidiscrimination training that examines power and privilege, including training in prevention and early intervention strategies.

iv) Ensure that training includes information on cross-cultural differences, and promotes a deeper understanding of exceptionalities and of how to mitigate discipline, in light of its effect on students with disabilities.

v) Provide ongoing opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives.

vi) Ensure that the principles of equity and inclusive education are modelled and incorporated in professional learning programs.

vii) Identify an NCDSB equity and inclusive education contact to liaise with the Ministry of Education and other Catholic school districts in order to share challenges, promising practices, and resources.

7.3 Our Schools will:

i) Review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to help ensure that they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education practices.

ii) Promote collaborative teams that learn together through job embedded learning, implement their learnings and reflect together on best practices.

iii) Build staff capacity through ongoing needs-based professional learning determined through data analysis and based on results.

iv) Encourage and support students in their efforts to promote social justice, equity, antiracism, and antidiscrimination in schools and classrooms.

v) Develop opportunities and initiatives for students and staff to demonstrate advocacy and commitment to equity, providing timely and specific feedback that will further school-wide equitable practices.

8.0 ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The NCDSB is committed to assessing, monitoring and communicating outcomes related to equity and inclusive education in its policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.

8.1 General Principles

i) The NCDSB acknowledges and assumes the responsibilities for its policies, actions, and decisions in the pursuit of greater transparency and accountability, the NCDSB, in respectful collaboration and communication with the whole Catholic school community, will report on its goals and progress in the areas of policy review, MYSP reporting, and improvement planning.

8.2 The NCDSB will:

i) Embed the principles of equity and inclusive education into all NCDSB policies, programs, guidelines, and practices.

ii) Actively communicate the equity and inclusive education policy to students, teachers, parents, staff, school councils, community partners, and volunteers and post it on the NCDSB website.

iii) Seek and use feedback to improve its policies, in the spirit of continuous improvement.

iv) Engaged NCDSB and school teams in school improvement planning with particular emphasis on using data to identify and remove barriers to student achievement,

to raise awareness about discriminatory practices and to encourage conversations and collaborative actions about racism and other equity issues.

v) Establish processes to monitor progress and assess effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.

vi) Report on the progress of implementation equity and improvement plans and the impact on student achievement using specific criteria.

vii) Ensure the transparency of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process, inform, and support parents through this process.

8.3 Our Schools will:

i) Report student achievement data annually to the NCDSB and intervene at all levels to ensure the achievement and success of those students who are underserved in our system.

ii) Develop and communicate evidence-based school improvement plans that are aligned with the MYSP and related action plans.

iii) Review and establish self-reflection and self-assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of equity, inclusive education, and improvement plans.

9.0 RELATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT: Religious Accommodation Guidelines

Chief Executive Officer: *Tricia Stefanic Weltz*
Date: March 2023