



AD-HOC POLICY COMMITTEE
Report No. 24-010

8 February 2024

**TIER 2 REVISIONS TO POLICY P.038.SCO SECONDARY SCHOOL
COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES**

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PURPOSE:

1. To seek input on the proposed revisions to Policy P.038 Secondary School Commencement Ceremonies.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The proposed updates reflect the Board's commitments to inclusivity, social responsibility, and authentic community engagement as set out in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's (OCDSB) 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

CONTEXT:

3. The Board recognizes that celebrating the achievements of students in the District moving on from secondary school education is an important part of students' educational journey. Students' educational journeys are diverse, this means that all students' experiences ought to have the opportunity to be celebrated with their teachers, peers, families, and friends in attendance.

The proposed shift away from graduation ceremonies to commencement ceremonies is not just a change in language. The main difference between a commencement ceremony and a graduation ceremony is that a commencement ceremony is more inclusive.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Key Revisions to Policy P.038.SCO
The primary change to this policy is a move to the usage of the more inclusive practice of 'commencement.' Commencement serves as a formal acknowledgement and celebration of student accomplishments. This encompasses all students, including those who have historically faced challenges within the education system, both in the past and present.

Much like a traditional graduation ceremony, students will have the opportunity to join their peers, families, and supporters in commemorating their achievements. The principal distinction between a commencement ceremony and a graduation ceremony lies in the former's emphasis on inclusivity. For instance, within the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), certain students may not be graduating with their class, due to various reasons. However, this should not preclude them from celebrating the milestones they have attained alongside their peers throughout their elementary or secondary school journey.

The changes proposed to the Policy, attached as Appendix A to this report, include the following:

Section	Revision
Title	Change from 'graduation' to 'commencement' to reflect the new language and intentions of the policy. Specification of 'secondary school' to clarify the scope of the policy.
Throughout the policy	Migrating the policy to the new template including a new "Definitions" section.
3.2	Accentuating the Board's commitment to equity and inclusion in ceremony planning and execution.
4.2 and 4.3	Removal of clauses that refer to awards, as awards processes are to be covered in the Procedure PR.527.SCO Secondary School Commencement Ceremonies.
4.4	Replacing reference to awards; instead, accentuating that various achievements may be chosen and presented at ceremonies.
4.5	Clarifying the scope of the policy.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5. The proposed updates do not significantly alter resource allocation. There may be additional responsibility on the principal to determine which achievements are to be included in individual students' commencement presentations.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

6. As a Tier 2 Policy Review, the proposed draft will be posted to the District website and awareness will be raised on this consultation through parent/guardian, student, and school council communications. Feedback from the public will be received between 2 February 2024 to 29 March 2024.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Do the proposed changes to this policy align with Ontario regulations and Board policies, procedures, and by-laws?
- Have we covered all relevant equity considerations?

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Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Draft Policy P.038.SCO Secondary School Commencement Ceremonies

Appendix B - Standing Policy P.38.SCO Graduation And Commencement Exercises And Awards