



POLICY P.008.GOV
TITLE: ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY
Date Authorized: 30 January 1998
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Last Reviewed:

COMMITMENT TO INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND EQUITY

The Board recognizes its responsibility to ensure that the development of procedures and the associated work promotes and protects Indigenous rights, human rights, and equity. The Board will strive to address and eliminate discrimination and structural and systemic barriers for students, staff, and community.

1.0 RATIONALE

To establish an Advisory Committee on Equity (the “Committee”) to advise and provide recommendations to the Board of Trustees so that it may fulfil its commitment to cultivating discrimination-free, equitable, and inclusive learning and working environments that foster student, family, and staff well-being and success.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

Please refer to Appendix A for a full list of definitions used in this policy.

3.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The Board recognizes that individuals hold multiple identities which inform and shape the various, unique, and complex ways that people experience inequities and Discrimination.

- 3.2 The Board believes the Committee's diverse voices and lived experiences expand the District's capacity to identify and address systemic barriers. This, in turn, supports the creation of equitable and inclusive learning and working environments that serve, honour, and foster well-being for the full Diversity of students, families, staff, and communities within the OCDSB.

- 3.3 The Board recognizes Ubuntu as a universal principle that centres and embodies humanity’s interconnectedness, compassion, and mutual support that people require to thrive.

Terms of Reference

3.4 The Committee shall:

- a) in its advisory work as identified in 3.4(b), build productive relationships among committee members, including by
 - i) creating a welcoming, energizing, and safer space for change and growth that inspires committee members to learn and work together;
 - ii) implementing practices that promote awareness and understanding of historical contexts, fostering collaboration and healing within communities; and
 - iii) recognizing the dignity of all according to the *Ontario Human Rights Code*; and
- b) advise the Board of Trustees by:
 - i) providing strategic policy and program advice and/or recommendations on matters of Equity which address a wide range of topics, including but not limited to equitable education access, student learning and well-being, the development of citizenship, student achievement, and exit outcomes, amongst others;
 - ii) engaging in the review, development, and monitoring of all relevant policies, Equity strategies, and programs, ensuring that engagement is meaningful, timely, and collaborative;
 - iii) supporting the efforts to implement the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
 - iv) recommending methods and strategies for identifying and eliminating systemic barriers contributing to disparities and disproportionality in student well-being and achievement, including, policies and programs that may result in systemic Discrimination and marginalization for underserved members of the OCDSB community and reviewing the OCDSB’s available identity-based data; and
 - v) providing feedback on potential budget implications that may help or hinder the Board’s commitment to fostering equitable and inclusive education.

4.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES

Composition

- 4.1 The Committee shall be composed of thirteen (13) voting members and four (4) non-voting members.
- 4.2 The thirteen (13) voting members shall include:
 - (a) eight (8) Individual Members; and
 - (b) five (5) Community Organizations.
- 4.3 The non-voting members shall include:
 - (a) one (1) student trustee;
 - (b) two (2) Trustees and alternates as appointed by the Board of Trustees; and
 - (c) the Director of Education or designate.
- 4.4 Community Organizations shall appoint a primary named person to represent the organization on the Committee. Community Organizations may also appoint an alternate named person to fulfil the obligations of the primary named person if the primary named person becomes unavailable.
- 4.5 The non-voting members of the Committee shall have all the rights and obligations of voting members except for moving, seconding, and voting on a motion, and counting for quorum.
- 4.6 The Committee shall aim towards member composition that represents the fulsome diversity and inclusiveness of the school community, prioritizing those that represent the most underserved students and communities in relation to academic achievement, disciplinary action, and well-being. This is already being documented in District research, District identity-based data, and relevant external research, including
 - a) African, Caribbean, and Black;
 - b) Arab/Middle Eastern;
 - c) Indigenous;
 - d) newcomers and multilingual learners;
 - e) people with disabilities;
 - f) people from low socioeconomic status;
 - g) 2SLGBTIA+; and
 - h) other people subject to discrimination on a protected ground, as defined by [P.147.GOV](#) Human Rights.

Membership Criteria

- 4.7 All members of the Committee shall have the following characteristics and qualities, as determined by the Membership Sub-committee:
- (a) the ability to work effectively and collaboratively with representatives from various communities who may have diverse opinions and perspectives in order to maintain a safe environment;
 - (b) the ability to demonstrate and model dignity and respect;
 - (c) a professional approach and ability to motivate and support others; and/or
 - (d) the ability to attend regular meetings during the school year.

In addition to the above, the members shall have one or more of the following characteristics and qualities:

- (e) knowledge and understanding of how Equity and inclusive education support student well-being and achievement;
 - (f) lived experience or expertise in advancing and protecting Equity and human rights and challenging Discrimination.
- 4.8 In addition to the above, the eight (8) Individual Members shall be directly connected to supporting students in an OCDSB school (i.e. parent/guardian/caregiver, volunteer).
- 4.9 Community Organizations represented on the Committee shall be purposed towards supporting and representing communities experiencing systemic barriers and marginalization, this may involve having a Diversity, Equity, and inclusion-centered mandate.

Term of Office

- 4.10 The term of membership for a voting member of the Committee shall be two (2) years, beginning on November 15 and ending on November 14 of the second following year.
- (a) In order to assist with continuity, the Membership Sub-committee will endeavour to assign term lengths in a staggered approach, with the intention of ensuring that no more than one-half of the members' terms expire each year.
 - (b) Individual members may only serve four (4) consecutive terms, subject to the Committee's appointment process.
 - (c) Community Organizations may serve as many consecutive terms as the Membership Sub-committee deems appropriate.

4.11 The non-voting members shall not have specified terms of office and be confirmed annually.

Appointment of Members

4.12 The Committee shall create a Membership Sub-committee to review its membership needs. The Membership Sub-committee must include the Co-Chairs and the Director of Education or designate. Each year, the Committee may select up to three (3) other voting members to sit on the Membership Sub-Committee.

4.13 The Membership Sub-committee shall,

- (a) meet each year to review the Committee's membership needs, including the status of members whose terms are set to expire, and initiate a membership campaign to attract prospective members to fill any anticipated vacancies;
- (b) publicize anticipated vacancies and invite eligible prospective members to apply for such vacancies;
- (c) proactively identify eligible prospective members, and inform those prospective members about the application process;
- (d) receive, review, and assess all applications in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner;
- (e) create and maintain a list of both Individual Members and Community Organizations that are eligible for membership for the purpose of expeditiously filling any vacancies that arise; and
- (f) submit a recommendation to the Committee for the appointment of new and returning members to meet the membership needs of the Committee.

Vacancies

4.14 A vacancy in the membership of the Committee shall not prevent the Committee from delivering on its objectives.

4.15 A member shall vacate their seat if absent from three consecutive regular meetings of the Committee without notice.

4.16 If a voting member vacates their seat during the appointed term, the Committee shall make every effort to fill the position for the remainder of the term. To choose a new voting member, the Committee shall use the list created by the Membership Sub-committee as described in section 4.13 of this policy.

4.17 The Board of Trustees and the Director of Education shall ensure that the non-voting member seats are filled appropriately.

Roles and Responsibilities of Members

4.18 All members of the Committee shall:

- (a) demonstrate a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and inclusive education in fulfilling the mandate of the Committee;
- (b) adhere to the OCDSB's Policy P.125.SCO, School District Code of Conduct, including maintaining respectful behaviour throughout all forms of communication, ensuring that differences in positions or perspectives are discussed with care, compassion, and humanity;
- (c) review all relevant material prior to the Committee meetings;
- (d) focus Committee's discussions and decisions on student well-being and achievement;
- (e) maintain a District-wide focus in all discussions safeguarding the privacy of students and staff; and
- (f) when representing the Committee at other committees or the Board, fairly represent the full breadth of perspectives shared in Committee meetings and report back to the Committee on relevant matters.

4.19 Community Organizations' representatives shall act as a liaison between the Committee and their respective organizations, by reporting to their respective organizations on the work of the Committee.

4.20 The Committee shall elect two Co-Chairs from among its thirteen (13) voting members. Non-voting members are not eligible for the Co-Chair position.

4.21 At least one of the Co-Chairs shall be an Individual Member.

4.22 The Co-Chair(s) shall:

- (a) in consultation with voting members of the Committee and the department responsible for the Equity portfolio, lead the agenda planning process, ensuring the agenda aligns with the Committee's terms of reference,
- (b) invite guest speakers to support items relevant to the agenda. This may include District staff;
- (c) collaborate with Board Services to facilitate communication and logistics for agenda items;
- (d) lead Committee meetings according to the established agenda and maintain the specific directives and guidance within this policy;

- (e) act as spokespersons and representatives for the Committee in communicating with members of the OCDSB community;
- (f) review the minutes before they are circulated to Committee members; and
- (g) share relevant information received from the OCDSB community with the other members of the Committee.

4.23 Trustees, as non-voting members, shall:

- (a) adhere to the OCDSB's Policy P.073.GOV Board Member Code of Conduct;
- (b) in reporting back to the Board of Trustees, fairly represent the full breadth of perspectives shared in Committee meetings;
- (c) be mindful of the power dynamics of a Trustee serving on an Advisory Committee, particularly, the unique positionality of the Trustee in relation to other members of the Committee as volunteers and meeting participants;
- (d) report back to the Committee on relevant Board matters.

Meetings

- 4.24 The Committee shall meet six to nine (6 to 9) times in each school year. The Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Director of Education or designate, may approve additional meetings, but before doing so shall meaningfully consult with Board Services staff and carefully consider the feedback received through that consultation.
- 4.25 A notice of each regular meeting shall be provided to all members of the Committee at least five (5) days before the meeting. The notice shall include all necessary documents.
- 4.26 The Committee shall establish practices that provide for the safe participation of members of the Committee, the public, and the OCDSB Community.
- 4.27 Board Services shall provide resources and assign staff for the facilitation of all regular meetings of the Committee.
- 4.28 Meetings must adhere to Policy P.018.GOV, *Electronic Meetings of the Board and Committees and Meeting Attendance*. For certainty, meetings must be open to the public. A meeting may only be closed to the public in accordance with s.207(2) of the *Education Act*.
- 4.29 The rules of order for the conduct of meetings shall be consistent with OCDSB policies, procedures, By-Laws, and Standing Rules.

Quorum

- 4.30 A meeting of the Committee achieves quorum when a majority of voting members are present. The majority is fifty (50) per cent plus one (1) of the filled seats. When determining quorum, vacant seats are not included in the calculation.
- 4.31 Notwithstanding the above, a meeting of the Committee may proceed without achieving a quorum. If this happens, the meeting shall not include any decision making process or outcomes, and shall not result in any action by the Committee.

Decision Making

- 4.32 The preferable decision-making model for ACE is consensus. However, it is recognized that, at the discretion of the Co-chair, voting may be required from time to time.
- 4.33 When a vote is taken, each voting member is entitled to one (1) vote.

Sub-committees

- 4.34 The Committee may establish sub-committees as it deems appropriate to the achievement of its objectives. Sub-committees may include voting and non-voting members and invite non-members to attend. Where a sub-committee is established, the Committee shall ensure the mandate of the sub-committee is clear, and that an appropriate mechanism is in place to bring the sub-committee's work to a reasonable conclusion.
- 4.35 Updates from the sub-committee discussion and work shall be shared during the next full Committee meeting and will be included in the minutes of the Committee meeting.

Accountability

- 4.36 The records of the Committee, including meeting minutes, and reports shall be maintained and posted publicly on the District website.
- 4.37 The Committee shall provide an annual report to the Board which summarizes its activities and achievements during the past year and its plans for the upcoming year.
- 4.38 The Board shall consider each recommendation made to the Board by the Committee and shall advise the Committee of the action, if any, taken in response to the recommendation.
- 4.39 The Director of Education shall have the authority to establish procedures that are consistent with this policy.

5.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Policy Definitions

6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

[The Education Act, 1998, section 8.1 \(29.1\)](#)
[Honouring the Truth. Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015](#)
[OHRC Policy on ableism and Discrimination based on disability](#)
[OHRC Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities](#)
[OHRC Policy and guidelines on racism and racial Discrimination](#)
[OHRC Policy and guidelines on Discrimination on the basis of family status](#)
[OHRC Policy on preventing Discrimination on the basis of creed](#)
[OHRC Policy on preventing Sexual and gender-based harassment](#)
[OHRC Policy on Discrimination because of pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)
[OHRC Policy on Discrimination against older persons because of age](#)
[OHRC Policy on preventing Discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression](#)
[OHRC Policy on Discrimination and Harassment because of sexual orientation](#)
[Ontario's Equity Action Plan, 2017](#)
[Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools", 2013](#)
[Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. 2009](#)
[OCDSB By-Laws and Standing Rules](#)
[OCDSB Policy P.001.GOV: Policy Development and Management](#)
[OCDSB Policy P.010.GOV: Community Involvement on Board Standing Committees](#)
[OCDSB Policy P.018.GOV: Electronic Meetings of the Board and Committees](#)
[OCDSB Policy P.065.GOV Advisory Committees to the Board](#)
[OCDSB Policy P.098.CUR: Equity and Inclusive Education](#)
[OCDSB Policy P 147 GOV: Human Rights](#)

APPENDIX A: POLICY DEFINITIONS

In this policy,

Board means Board of Trustees.

Community Organizations mean entities focused on serving youth and families with an equity and inclusion lens or groups representative of communities that experience systemic barriers and marginalization.

Creed means a religious or non-religious belief system, including Indigenous spirituality and cultural practices, which influences a person's identity, worldview and way of life. A creed:

- is sincerely, freely and deeply held;
- integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfilment;
- is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices;
- addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence; and
- has some "nexus" or connection to an organization that professes a shared system of belief.

Discrimination means any form of unequal treatment based on a Protected Ground, whether imposing extra burdens or denying benefits. It may be intentional or unintentional. It may involve direct actions that are discriminatory on their face, or it may involve rules, policies, practices, procedures, or systems that appear neutral, but disadvantage certain groups of people. Discrimination may take obvious forms or it may happen in very subtle ways. Even if there are many factors affecting a decision or action, if discrimination is one factor, that is a violation of this policy. Discrimination may happen because of perceptions about a person based on a Protected Ground or because of association with a person or group with characteristics that are a Protected Ground. Engaging in a Hate-related Behaviour and Harassment are types of discrimination.

District means the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

Diversity refers to 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, creed, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

Equity means the fairness of treatment and processes by the removal of systemic Barriers, disparity, and disproportionality between groups using extra and positive measures to bring about equal access to opportunities and benefits in society. It does not mean treating everyone the same.

Inclusive Education refers to 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.

Individual Member means an appointed member of a Board Committee who is from the OCDSB community.

OCDSB Community means trustees, committee members, council members, staff members, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers, visitors, and all other persons learning, working, or accessing services in the OCDSB environment.

Protected Ground means the attributes or characteristics upon which Discrimination is prohibited under the Code or by the OCDSB. The Code-Protected Grounds are age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability (including mental, physical, developmental or learning disabilities), ethnic origin, family status (such as being in a parent-child relationship), gender expression, gender identity, marital status (including married, single, widowed, divorced, separated or living in a conjugal relationship outside of marriage, whether in a same-sex or opposite-sex relationship), place of origin, race, record of offences (criminal conviction for a provincial offence, or for an offence for which a pardon has been received), sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), and sexual orientation.

An additional ground protected from Discrimination at the OCDSB is Socioeconomic Disadvantage.

Systemic Discrimination means patterns of behaviour, policies, or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups because of a Protected Ground. This is characterized by the presence of harmful power dynamics, where entrenched biases and unequal power relations systematically disadvantage certain groups while privileging others.

Ubuntu is a principle that underscores the interdependence of individuals within a community, grounded in kindness, compassion, and respect for one another. Rooted in the belief that "a person is a person through other persons," Ubuntu emphasizes that our humanity is realized through mutual support, shared responsibility, and solidarity. This worldview recognizes that individual well-being and growth are intertwined with the well-being of the broader community, fostering an environment where dignity, openness, trust, and cooperation are foundational. Ubuntu thus calls for a commitment to fulfilling obligations to others, affirming that "I am because we are, and we are because I am."

2SLGBTQI+ means Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex, and additional sexual and gender identities.