
POLICY

It is the policy of the Upper Grand District School Board to provide and maintain a learning and working environment that promotes fairness, justice and equality for its staff, students and community.

The Board recognizes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to the full range of programs, the delivery of services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful educational and social outcomes for those served by the school system as well as those who serve the system.

The Board also recognizes that certain groups in society receive inequitable treatment because of individual and systemic biases related to differences in: race, colour, creed, ethnic origin, language, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, ability, disability, ancestry, place of origin, citizenship, age, family status, marital status, socio-economic status, housing, and employment.

The Board is committed to countering these biases by promoting fairness, equity and inclusion which are principles of the system reflected into all policies, programs, operations, practices and curricula.

The Board will maintain its working and learning environment free from oppression in the following eight areas:

1. Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices

It is the policy of the Board to serve staff, students, and families in diverse communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, procedures, guidelines, and practices, consistent with the principles of *The Code*.

2. Shared and Committed Leadership

It is the policy of the Board to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized to help meet their needs.

3. School-Community Partnership

It is the policy of the Board to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families, and employees are recognized and addressed.

4. Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices

It is the policy of the Board to implement an inclusive curriculum and to review resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize her or his learning potential.

5. Religious Accommodation

It is the policy of the Board to recognize and value the religious diversity within its community and to provide a safe, respectful and equitable environment for all, free from all forms of discriminatory or harassing behaviour, including those based on religion.

6. School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment

It is the policy of the Board to commit to the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive school climate and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

7. Professional Learning

It is the policy of the Board to provide administrators, staff, students and other members of the school community with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under *the Code*.

8. Employment Practices

It is the policy of the Board to develop and maintain practices to eliminate systemic discrimination in employment practices.

9. Accountability and Transparency

It is the policy of the Board to assess and monitor Board progress in implementing The *Strategy*; to embed the principles into all Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and to communicate these results to the community.

Administrative Detail

1. It is the responsibility of the Director of Education to provide leadership and support for the administration, implementation and review of this policy.
2. It is the responsibility of the appropriate Superintendent to administer this policy in accordance with the Equity and Inclusive Education Procedures Manual 504-A, the Religious Accommodation Guidelines and the Equity and Inclusive Education Implementation Plan.
3. It is the responsibility of the Superintendents of Education to provide appropriate recognition, support and feedback for the implementation of the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy.
4. It is the responsibility of Principals and supervisors to maintain a school and working environment which enhances the goals of equity and is supportive and protective of students and staff.
5. This policy applies to all students, staff, Trustees, parents, volunteers, visitors, permit-holders, contractors, and corporate partners when on Board business, on or off Board premises.
6. It is the responsibility of students to participate individually and collectively in ways that show an understanding of the goals of this policy.
7. It is the responsibility of school staff to ensure that diverse racial and ethnocultural values and heritage are recognized as significant means of enriching and strengthening the learning experience.
8. This policy will be reviewed annually for the first three years, or as required by the Equity and Inclusive Education Committee.

9. This policy operates in conjunction with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution Act (1982), the Ontario Human Rights Code (*The Code*), Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (*The Strategy*), Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, the Education Act and its Regulations, and Board policies including: #206 Violence-Free Schools, #213 Code of Conduct, #503 Student Discipline, Bullying Prevention and Intervention (Progressive Discipline, Suspension and Expulsion) #502 Child Abuse and Protection, the Police/School Board Protocol, individual school's Codes of Conduct, and other related Board policies and legislation.

A. GENERAL

The Board will provide and maintain its working and learning environment free from oppression through the adoption of a Mission Statement and Core Objectives in the following areas:

Board Policies, Guidelines and Practices;
Shared and Committed Leadership;
School-Community Partnership;
Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices;
Religious Accommodation;
School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment;
Professional Learning;
Accountability and Transparency.

B. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Policy and Procedures, the following definitions apply.

1. Creed

Creed is interpreted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission as "religious creed" or "religion". It is defined as a professed system and confession of faith, including both beliefs and observances or worship (see also the Religious Accommodation Guideline).

A belief in a God or gods, or a single supreme being or deity is not a requisite. Religion is broadly accepted by the Commission to include, for example, non-deistic bodies of faith, such as the spiritual faiths/practices of aboriginal cultures, as well as bona fide newer religions (assessed on a case-by-case basis).

2. The Code

"*The Code*" is the Ontario Human Rights Code, which identifies the following prohibited discrimination grounds: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), sex (includes gender identity and pregnancy), sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, and/or disability (includes perceived disability).

C. BOARD POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES1. Mission Statement

The policies, guidelines and practices of the Board will reflect the diverse viewpoints, needs and aspirations of the school community. Every effort will be made to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit access to, and opportunity for, effective student engagement and achievement.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) articulate clearly the Board's commitment to principles of equity in all existing and new Board policies, guidelines, operations, and practices, and
- b) eliminate biases in Board policies, guidelines, and day-to-day practices.

D. SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP1. Mission Statement

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

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) provide 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, consistent with the principles of *The Code*;
- b) assist all Trustees and employees to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to implement the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy in the system;
- c) ensure that Board policy directions and priorities as well as the day-to-day implementation of programs and services are consistent with the aims of the equity policy, and

- d) incorporate equity principles and objectives in annual plans and year-end reports.

E. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP**1. Mission Statement**

The Board is committed to the maintenance, development, and expansion of partnerships with students, families, and employees and diverse communities that support system and school improvement.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) involve individuals from diverse communities in partnership activities with the Board;
- b) identify, examine, and remove barriers that exist which may prevent full participatory school-community relations, and
- c) review existing community partnerships so that they support the principles of equity and inclusive education and reflect the diversity of the broader community.

F. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**1. Mission Statement**

The Board is committed to implementing an inclusive curriculum and to reviewing resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize his or her learning potential.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) support curriculum which recognizes and affirms the life experiences of all students, regardless of race and ethnicity, gender, place of origin, religion, cultural and linguistic background, social and economic status, sexual orientation, age, and ability/disability;

- b) enhance teachers' abilities to use biased materials constructively to develop students' critical thinking about discrimination;
- c) reflect the diversity of staff, students, parents, and the community in all areas of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation, and in the membership of curriculum committees;
- d) ensure that students/staff will not be denied participation in programs, or receive academic penalties because cultural or religious observances require their absence from class, examinations or activities;
- e) ensure that assessment and placement teams, instruments, and procedures are bias-free, designed to meet the needs of the individual student, and take into consideration the student's age, previous education and personal experiences, and are communicated regularly to students and parents;
- f) ensure that all students have equal opportunity to develop their abilities and interests and are afforded equal access to all school programs, and
- g) reflect the cultural, racial and religious diversity of the school in the school calendar, celebrations, food service, athletics, assemblies, concerts, announcements, bulletin boards, hall-way displays, libraries, guidance offices and media centres.

G. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

1. Mission Statement

The Board acknowledges each individual's right to follow or not to follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations to staff and students.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) recognize and value Freedom of Religion as an individual right and a collective responsibility;

- b) have religious accommodation guidelines in place, and communicate these guidelines to the school community;
- c) work with the community in order to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects religious freedom for all individuals, and
- d) communicate with students and their families in order to understand their religious needs and to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations.

H. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

1. Mission Statement

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

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) continue to review policy and guidelines and to develop a clearly delineated process for dealing with harassment involving staff, students, and other individuals in the school Board;
- b) put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely, and to communicate these procedures to the school community;
- c) 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 board-level representation and greater access to Board initiatives;
- d) provide staff with the knowledge and skills to identify discriminatory harassment and to respond effectively and sensitively to it, and
- e) provide students with the skills and knowledge to effectively recognize and respond to discriminatory harassment.

I. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING1. Mission Statement

The Board is committed to ensuring that Trustees and Board staff acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary to identify and eliminate bias and discrimination.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) enable Trustees and staff to deal confidently and effectively with issues of racism and discrimination and with incidents of racial, religious, sexual and ethnocultural harassment, and
- b) provide staff with information for identifying and dealing with bias in learning materials.

J. EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES1. Mission Statement

The Board is committed to the development and maintenance of practices designed to eliminate systemic discrimination in employment practices. This includes eliminating barriers in hiring, retention and promotion practices. The Board shall promote and make reasonable progress in the work place towards reflecting the diversity of the community.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) ensure that vacancies are advertised widely, internally as well as throughout the community, in compliance with Collective Agreements;
- b) ensure that recruitment, interview, selection, training, retention and promotion practices and procedures are inclusive and guided by the principles of equity, and
- c) develop interview teams that are reflective of the community and maximize opportunities for diversity in the team itself.

K. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY1. Mission Statement

The Board is committed to assessing and monitoring its progress in implementing the Equity and Inclusive Education policy; to embedding the principles into all other Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices; and to communicating these results to the community.

2. Core Objectives of the Board are to:

- a) provide information about the Equity and Inclusive Education policy, procedures, and practices to students, administrators, teachers, parents, school staff, school councils, and volunteers, and make efforts to assist parents who do not understand the language of the Board, and
- b) establish processes that include performance indicators to monitor progress and assess the effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.