

# Toronto District School Board

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Policy P037

Title: **EQUITY POLICY**

Adopted: June 23, 1999

Effected: June 23, 1999

Revised: [date] 2017

Reviewed: [date] 2017

Authorization: Board of Trustees

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## 1.0 RATIONALE

This Equity Policy (the “Policy”) is developed to support the Toronto District School Board’s (TDSB) commitment to fairness, equity, acceptance and inclusion. The Policy is governed by and fully complies with the legislative requirements of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Education Act*, as well as the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Policy/Program Memoranda PPM 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, and decisions of the Board of Trustees.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVE

To ensure that fairness, equity, acceptance and inclusion are essential principles of our school system and are integrated into all TDSB policies, procedures, programs, operations, and practices.

## 3.0 DEFINITIONS

See Appendix A for full glossary of definitions and terms.

## 4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

The Director of Education holds primary responsibility for this Policy. Implementation is assigned to the Associate Director, Equity and Achievement.

## 5.0 APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees and Trustees of the Board.

The Policy also covers TDSB students, parents and guardians, volunteers, consultants, contractors and vendors, permit-holders, community partners and visitors.

## 6.0 POLICY FOUNDATION

- (a) The TDSB values the contribution from all members of our diverse community of students, staff, parents/guardians, and community groups to our mission, values and goals.
- (b) The TDSB believes that equity of opportunity, and equity of access to our programs, services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for our students, employees, and parent and community partners.
- (c) The TDSB recognizes that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status. Similar biases have also impacted on Canada's First Nation, Metis and Inuit population.
- (d) The TDSB acknowledges that biases exist within our school system, and we all need to take focused, persistent and determined action to overcome them.
- (e) The TDSB recognizes that inequitable treatment leads to educational, social, and career outcomes that do not accurately reflect the abilities, experiences, and contributions of our students, employees, and parent and community partners.
- (f) **“Katelynn’s Principle”**

The child must be at the centre, where they are the subject of or receiving services through the child welfare, justice and education systems. A child is an individual with rights:

- who must always be seen
- whose voice must be heard
- who must be listened to and respected

A child’s cultural heritage must be taken into consideration and respected, particularly in blended families.

Actions must be taken to ensure the child who is capable of forming his or her own views is able to express those views freely and safely about matters affecting them.

A child’s view must be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. A child should be at the forefront of all service-related decision-making.

According to their age or maturity, each child should be given the opportunity to participate directly or through a support person or representative before any decisions affecting them are made.

According to their age or maturity, each child should be engaged through an honest and respectful dialogue about how/why decisions were or will be made.

Everyone who provides services to children or services that affect children are child advocates. Advocacy may potentially be a child's lifeline. It must occur from the point of first contact and on a continual/continuous basis thereafter."

- (g) The TDSB believes that our school system should be built on the principles of equitable and inclusive education, which:
- i. **is a foundation of excellence;**  
*In a diverse society, equity is a fundamental requirement for educational excellence and high standards of student achievement.*
  - ii. **meets individual needs;**  
*Equity does not mean treating all people in the same way but, rather, responding to the individual needs of each and providing the conditions and interventions needed to help him or her succeed.*
  - iii. **identifies and eliminates barriers;**  
*All students and staff are supported equitably through the identification and removal of discriminatory barriers that limit their ability to equally participate in schools and workplaces and achieve their full potential.*
  - iv. **promotes a sense of belonging;**  
*Equity and inclusive education contribute to every student's and staff person's sense of well-being.*
  - v. **involves the broad community;**  
*Effective and meaningful school–community partnerships are an essential component of an equitable and inclusive education system.*
  - vi. **builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives;**  
*Sound research and analysis of successful policies and practices form the basis for the development and sharing of resources.*
  - vii. **is effectively demonstrated throughout the system.**  
*The Board must ensure accountability, transparency and clear measures of success to effectively incorporate the principles of equity and inclusive education throughout their policies, programs, and practices.*

## 7.0 POLICY REQUIREMENTS

The TDSB will ensure that principles of fairness, equity, and inclusion are embedded in each of the following areas of focus:

- Board Policies, Procedures, Programs, and Initiatives
- Shared and Committed Leadership
- School-Community Relationships
- Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices
- Counselling Supports, Academic Guidance and Mental Health and Well-being
- Human Rights Accommodations
- Staff Development/ Professional Learning
- School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment
- Accountability and Transparency

## **7.1 Board Policies, Procedures, Programs and Initiatives**

The TDSB will ensure that fairness, equity, and inclusion are integrated into our policies, procedures, programs and initiatives as essential elements of the school system.

The TDSB's policies, procedures, programs and initiatives will ensure that the equity needs of all students, employees, Trustees, parents/ guardians, volunteers, visitors, permit-holders, contractors, and partners are identified and addressed by:

- regular review and revision of existing policies and procedures to embed equity and inclusive education principles;
- system implementation of equity and inclusive education policies;
- ensuring that equity and inclusive education principles are embedded in TDSB, school and department improvement plans;
- implementation of positive employment practices that support equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning.

7.1.1 The TDSB will upgrade its policy development and policy review processes to ensure that equity is integrated into the TDSB's policies, procedures, programs and initiatives.

7.1.2 The TDSB will ensure that mechanisms are in place at all levels of the system for developing and implementing operations and practices that promote equity. These mechanisms will be regularly reviewed and assessed for their effectiveness.

7.1.3 TDSB policies, procedures, programs and initiatives will reflect the diverse viewpoints, needs, and aspirations of members of stakeholder communities, particularly those of groups whose voices traditionally and systemically have been marginalized and excluded.

7.1.4 Financial and human resources will be prioritized and devoted to promoting equity and inclusion within the school system.

## **7.2 Employment and Promotion Practices**

The TDSB recognizes that there are barriers to employment and promotion that historically have had a discriminatory impact on diverse groups of people. The TDSB is committed to the development, review, and implementation of employment and promotion policies, procedures, and practices that result in and sustain a workforce that, at all levels, reflects, understands and responds to a diverse population.

Therefore, the TDSB is committed to ensuring that our hiring and promotion practices are bias-free, and promote equitable representation of the diversity at all levels of the school system. All employees will have equitable opportunities for advancement; that their skills and knowledge are valued and used appropriately; and that they have equitable access to available support for their professional development needs (see Employment Equity Policy (P029)).

## **7.3 Shared and Committed Leadership**

The principle of shared and committed leadership recognizes that all partners in education – including community partners, parents/guardians, and students – are responsible for preparing students to live in a diverse society. However, bringing change to instructional practices and the learning culture requires strong, focused leadership from, in particular, the Board of Trustees, Director and Associate Director(s) of Education, executive officers, superintendents, principals, and teachers. To promote the principle of shared and committed leadership, leadership initiatives and leadership learning opportunities will be provided for students, school and system leaders, teachers, support staff, and Trustees.

### **7.3.1 System Leadership**

The TDSB will provide leadership that is committed to identifying individual discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, systemic inequities and barriers, and demonstrating accountability for their removal, with the goal of achieving equity for all.

### **7.3.2 School Leadership**

The TDSB's school leaders will have a consistent and continuous school-wide focus on student achievement within a culture of high expectations. This culture is guided by the fundamental principle that every child can learn and achieve the highest results by a commitment to reach every student.

### **7.3.3 Student Leadership**

The TDSB acknowledges the important role that student leaders play in influencing their peers and school culture. The TDSB will engage students in their education and encourage students to actively participate through opportunities of student voice, activism and collaboration that promotes a culture of fairness, equity, and inclusion.

## **7.4 School-Community Relationships**

- 7.4.1 The TDSB will continue to maintain and develop effective school-community relationships that enable representation and active participation from diverse communities. To enhance educational opportunities for all, the TDSB will ensure the inclusion of the perspectives, experiences, and needs of equity seeking groups and other historically disadvantaged communities.
- 7.4.2 The TDSB will continuously strive to increase cooperation and collaboration among home, school and the community at large through a commitment to on-going, constructive, and open dialogue in partnership with equity seeking groups and other historically disadvantaged communities. The TDSB will continue to work with educators, support staff, local employers, community stakeholders, parents/guardians, and students to build on success and increase system capacity through a whole-school approach.
- 7.4.3 The TDSB will regularly review the structures of its community advisory committees and partnerships to help ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community.

## **7.5 Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices**

To promote principles of equity and inclusive education through the curriculum, the TDSB will practice inclusive curriculum.

Curriculum is defined as the total learning environment, including the physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, accessibility, assessment instruments, school climate and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Inclusive curriculum strives for equity and provides a balance of perspectives. Based on the acknowledgement that inequities have existed in the curriculum, the TDSB will enable all students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum by ensuring that:

- the curriculum of our schools accurately reflects and uses the variety of knowledge of all peoples as the basis for instruction;
- that it actively provides students to understand the causes and impacts of inequity in society, and to understand the similarities, differences, intersectionality of multiple social identities and the connections between different forms of discrimination;
- that it helps students to acquire the skills and knowledge that enable them to challenge unjust practices, and to build positive and healthy human relationships among their fellow students, and among all members of the society.

- 7.5.1 Language and Literacy  
Language and literacy proficiency are an important foundation of

academic success. Students, regardless of their social identities, come from all language backgrounds. The TDSB will develop key strategies to actively engage the students as well as their parents/guardians through an acknowledgment of the importance that a student's first language can have on their engagement in learning. The TDSB recognizes the various languages spoken within its student population and affirms the value of students' first/indigenous languages while ensuring language and literacy proficiency in one or both of Canada's official languages.

#### 7.5.2 Student Evaluation, Assessment, and Placement

The TDSB is committed to evaluation, assessment, and placement processes that are sensitive to all students' backgrounds and individual needs, as well as personal and family experiences.

#### 7.5.3 Student Engagement

The TDSB will promote student voice, input and active involvement in their students' educational experiences. Students will be provided with engagement opportunities including (but not limited to) student council, SuperCouncil, and will have access to safe school committees and a variety of student-led activities, teams, and/or clubs.

Engagement will be equitable to ensure that no voices are excluded, ignored or privileged to the disadvantage of one or more social identity groups over another.

All students will be provided with equitable opportunities to be successful in our system. The TDSB will identify and remove institutional barriers to ensure that all learners are provided with supports and rewards to develop their abilities and achieve their aspirations. The TDSB recognizes the diverse needs of all student learners and that requires a wide variety of assessment strategies and instruments used to inform short- and long-term planning to reduce gaps in student achievement and improve student learning and well-being.

The TDSB further recognizes and encourages co-curricular activities that offer students opportunities to achieve success outside the classroom that can contribute to their engagement in learning and success inside the classroom, as well as with before- and after-school licensed child care and/or programs (e.g., those focused on sport, recreation, the arts, and culture).

### **7.6 Counselling Supports, Academic Guidance and Mental Health and Well-being**

The TDSB recognizes the link between equity, acceptance, inclusion, and mental health and well-being. The TDSB is committed to a transformed school culture where:

- mental health and well-being is integrated into every aspect of each student's school experience;

- a shared understanding of the connection between mental health, well-being and student achievement supports every student's academic and personal success;
- a shared responsibility for every student's mental health and well-being guides decision making and the allocation of resources; and
- services are aligned and responsive to the needs of students and staff.

The TDSB will ensure staff receive professional learning based on the belief that all students can learn, and that this belief will be reflected in classroom teachers' and guidance counsellors' expectations of students, assessment and evaluation practices, and placement practices.

The TDSB will identify stigma and bias and help to remove any discriminatory barriers that impact student success in the school system and support health and well-being for all students. The TDSB recognizes that counselors, including social workers, psychologists, guidance teachers, child and youth workers, and staff can help in responding to the needs of students from diverse groups while providing support for all students.

### **7.7 Human Rights Accommodations**

The TDSB will fulfill its legal duty to accommodate (short of undue hardship) under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The TDSB will take measures that enable people to benefit from, and access services equally and to perform to the best of their ability at school or at work.

Human rights accommodations include adjustments made to policies, procedures, programs or practices, as well as adjustments to physical settings which help remove barriers to equal access and eliminate discrimination. These accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination, as identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and also according to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.

The principles of inclusive design will be embedded in the TDSB's policies, procedures, programs and practices to enable fair access, participation and the elimination of systemic barriers where identified.

The TDSB will develop and communicate detailed operational procedures to ensure a clear process for human rights accommodations associated with areas of creed and gender identity and expression under the OHRC.

### **7.8 Staff Development/Professional Learning**

The TDSB is committed to ongoing staff development and professional learning to create an equitable, accepting, safe and inclusive positive climate that supports health and well-being for all students, staff, and parents/guardians.

The TDSB will provide assistance to staff to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that enables the identification and elimination of inequitable and discriminatory practices while contributing to positive school and workplace climates.

7.8.1 Building Capacity

The TDSB will increase capacity among staff to understand and address issues that pertain to equity, diversity, and inclusive education, through collaborative learning communities and professional learning opportunities at all staff levels.

The TDSB will create an inclusive, respectful, fair, and discrimination-free school system by changing individual and collective behaviour and organizational and institutional practices that support student achievement and help to close achievement gaps.

7.8.2 Professional Learning Activities

The TDSB will provide opportunities for teachers, guidance counsellors, support staff, administrators, and trustees, to participate in professional learning and training opportunities on topics such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and gender-based violence (see Gender Based Violence Prevention Policy (P071)). The TDSB will also provide information to students and parents/guardians to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education.

The TDSB will also ensure professional training in the areas of gender diversity and sexual orientation. Professional learning will be offered in effective early intervention and prevention strategies as well as practices to deal with incidents related to racism, gender-based violence, homophobia/transphobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

7.8.3 The TDSB will develop annual professional development programs that educate teachers and other staff about bullying prevention and strategies for promoting a positive school climate.

7.8.4 Building Awareness

The TDSB will make every effort to improve awareness of the negative impact on students' lives of discriminatory behaviour and attitudes, including racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and homophobia/transphobia, and to help education leaders, Trustees, and staff change individual behaviour and institutional practices in order to eliminate systemic barriers.

A school improvement plan will have priorities based on data results specific to the needs assessment of a school's community which would reference the results

of the school's bi-annual school climate survey. A review of the school's classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education will be completed by the school's safe and accepting schools team. The TDSB will ensure that, in accordance with the Ministry of Education's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy (PPM144), each school has in place a Safe and Accepting Schools Team.

## **7.9 School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment**

The TDSB will embed principles of equity and inclusive education in the TDSB's learning and working environment to support a positive school climate and culture of mutual respect.

A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, where positive behaviours and interactions are actively promoted and supported.

The TDSB will create positive school and workplace climates, free of harassment and discrimination by ensuring a clear prevention education strategy focused on:

- increasing staff capacity and student awareness;
- a transparent process for students, staff, parents/guardians and community to voice concerns and lodge complaints if subjected to harassment or discrimination or a target of bias, prejudice or hate.

Harassment, bullying and/or discrimination whether intended or not, is unacceptable as outlined in the TDSB's Human Rights Policy (P031) and the Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034), the Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051), and the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Procedure (PR703).

The TDSB will follow the stipulations on discipline for harassment for staff and students for any code of conduct violations, including those motivated by hate, bias or prejudice. Harassment is prohibited under the Ontario Human Rights Code, Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Ontario Education Act.

Students, employees, parents/guardians, and community partners will be provided with effective procedures for resolving concerns and complaints that may arise from their experiences of unfair or inequitable treatment within the school system. These procedures will give students and staff the opportunity to report incidents of bullying, discrimination and harassment without fear of reprisal and while also ensuring the TDSB respond in a timely manner.

Complaints of discrimination and/or harassment based on any of the prohibited grounds under the OHRC are subject to investigation and action under TDSB Human Rights Policy (P031). Complaints of employee harassment may be subject to investigation and action under the Workplace Harassment Prevention Policy (P034), Complaints of bullying, repeated bullying and any behaviours motivated by bias, prejudice and hate are

subject to investigation and action under the Provincial Code of Conduct (as detailed in Promoting A Positive School Climate (PR697) and Board Code of Conduct (PR585). All complaints must be taken seriously and investigated by the appropriate administrator, manager or supervisor.

## **7.10 Accountability and Transparency**

The TDSB will:

- i. develop an Equity Assessment Tool based on requirements of this Policy and will apply it to development and review of all TDSB policies, procedures, programs and initiatives.
- ii. ensure that an annual Board improvement plan is aligned with the commitments of this Policy and Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy;
- iii. establish processes that include performance indicators to monitor progress and assess the effectiveness of this Policy and related procedures;
- iv. provide information about equity and inclusive education policies, procedures, and practices to students, administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, school staff, school councils, and volunteers. Support will also be provided to access this information for those whose first language is not English;
- v. publish an annual equity report from the Director of Education, which will inform the Ministry of Education and the local community about the progress the TDSB has made in meeting its strategic goals.

### **7.10.1 TDSB School Principals will:**

- i. develop school improvement plans that are aligned with the Equity Policy commitments and Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy;
- ii. review and establish self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of the school's equity and inclusive education plans and procedures;
- iii. report progress annually.

The TDSB will regularly communicate all equity related legislative, Board and Ministry directives to administrators, staff, students, parents/guardians and the community. The TDSB will make efforts to assist parents/guardians whose first language is not English.

## **8.0 SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The Director is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

## 9.0 EVALUATION AND MONITORING

This Policy will be reviewed at a minimum every four (4) years from the effective date.

The TDSB will measure successful implementation of its policy commitments through regular evaluation, reports and review:

- At least every two years each student (from grades 4-12), parent/guardian and staff will be anonymously surveyed about their experience within school climates with a focus on positive school climates, acceptance, inclusion, well-being, equity and safety.
- At least every 5 years a demographic census of students, parent/guardians, and staff will also be conducted.

This school climate data and demographic census data will be analysed for correlations with all other relevant reporting data and statistics. The analysis results should be used to identify equity gaps and systemic barriers. The results can also be used to measure success of prevention programs and to prioritize areas of focus for Board and school improvement plans.

## 10.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

### TDSB Policies:

- Accessibility for Persons With Disabilities (P083)
- Accessibility Standards for Customer Service (P069)
- Caring and Safe Schools Policy (P051)
- Employment Equity (P029)
- Gender Based Violence (P071)
- Human Rights Policy (P031)
- Integrated Accessibility Standards (P084)
- Workplace Harassment Prevention (P034)

### TDSB Operational Procedures:

- Bullying Prevention and Intervention (PR703)
- Promoting A Positive School Climate (PR697)
- School Code of Conduct (PR585)
- Use of Service Animals by the General Public (PR604)
- Use of Support Persons by the General Public (PR605)
- Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public (PR606)

### Legal Framework

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Education Act

- Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, 2014
- Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2009
- Ontario Human Rights Code
- Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act

Ontario Ministry of Education’s Policy/Program Memoranda

- Policy/Program Memorandum 119 (PPM 119), Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools
- Policy/Program Memorandum 144 (PPM 144), Bullying Prevention and Intervention

## **11.0 APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Definitions Glossary

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## Definitions Glossary

This glossary is provided to assist in understanding various terms used in this document, as well as terms they may encounter in the context of discussions of equity and inclusive education. Terminology in the area of equity and inclusive education is constantly evolving. The TDSB recognizes that terms and usages favoured by various groups and individuals, in various contexts, and at different points in time may differ and that this glossary is not meant to be a comprehensive, nor definitive list.

**Aboriginal peoples:** The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: “In this Act, ‘Aboriginal peoples of Canada’ includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada”. These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.

**Acceptance:** An affirmation and recognition of people whose race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, abilities, or other, similar characteristics or attributes are different from one’s own. Acceptance goes beyond tolerance, in that it implies a positive and welcoming attitude.

**Accommodation:** An adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of the prohibited grounds of discrimination identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code or other factors. (Refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s *Guidelines on Accessible Education and Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate*, at [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).)

**Achievement Gap:** Refers to the average difference in levels of educational achievement between different demographic sub-groups of students in a given educational context (e.g., school, or district). These sub-groups may reflect differences in gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, socio-economic circumstances, sexual orientation or any other social characteristic of the student. Achievement gaps among sub-groups of students may be identified at any grade or age and may exist within one or many achievement variables (e.g., course report card results, graduation rates, standardized test scores) (Council of Ontario Directors of Education, page 15).

**Age:** How old a person is. Age discrimination involves treating persons in an unequal fashion due to age in a way that is contrary to human rights law.

**Ancestry:** Lineage, or whom you are descended from and how you trace family and heritage.

**Barrier:** An obstacle to equity that may be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to and individual or group, and that prevents or limits access to opportunities,

benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society.

**Bias:** An opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination that limits an individual's or a group's ability to make fair, objective, or accurate judgements.

**Board:** The Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as "TDSB".

**Collaborative Learning Communities:** Communities that build, support and value partnerships among students, educators, families and communities within dynamic and flexible learning environments. Learners in collaborative communities embrace challenges, creativity and problem solving with a commitment and responsibility for contributing to the shared learning of all members of the learning community. (from York Region District School Board)

**Creed (Religion):** Creed includes religion in the broadest sense. Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. A creed is sincerely, freely and deeply held; is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfillment; 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 or community that professes a shared system of belief.

**Culture:** Broadly described, culture can include economic systems, political ideologies and processes, ways of life and social mores, educational institutions, social programs, the environment, technological systems, recreational practices, customs and traditions, artistic and heritage activities, transportation and communication industries, and religious and spiritual activities.

**Curriculum:** the total learning environment, including physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, assessment instruments, school climate and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

**Cyber-bullying:** Under the Education Act (s.1.0.0.2), bullying by electronic means, including by "(a) creating a web page or a blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; (b) impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and (c) communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals." Cyber-bullying can involve the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and/or social media sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships. It may include put-downs or insults and can also involve spreading rumours; sharing private information, photos, or videos; or threatening to harm someone. Cyber-bullying is always aggressive and hurtful. (Refer to *Bullying – We Can All Help Stop It: A Guide for Parents of Elementary and Secondary School Students*, at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/multi/english/BullyingEN.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/multi/english/BullyingEN.pdf).)

**Disability:** A term that covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others not (e.g., physical, mental, and learning disabilities, hearing or vision disabilities, epilepsy,

environmental sensitivities). A disability may be present from birth, may be caused by an accident, or may develop over time.

**Discrimination:** Any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which has a negative effect on an individual or group because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability or socio-economic status. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals.

**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, race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

**Duty to accommodate:** The legal obligation that school boards, employers, unions, and service providers have under the Ontario Human Rights Code to take measures that enable people to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. (Refer to [www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca).)

**Employment equity:** A program designed to remove systemic barriers to equality of outcomes in all aspects of employment and which leads to equitable representation of designated groups at all levels of employment.

**Equality :** The achievement of equal status in society in terms of access to opportunities, support, rewards and economic and social power for all without regard to race, colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

**Equity:** The provision of opportunities for equality for all by responding to the needs of individuals. Equity of treatment is not the same as equal treatment because it includes acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination.

**Equity Seeking Groups and other Historically Disadvantaged Communities:**

Persons and communities who have experienced, and or, are more likely to experience, and or, are experiencing bias, oppression, disadvantage or discrimination based on one or more of these factors: colour, creed, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

**Ethnicity:** Refers to a group of people having a heritage and a common ancestry or shared

historical past, as well as identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic and religious characteristics, whether or not they live in their country of origin.

**Family Status:** The status of being in a parent/caregiver/guardian and child relationship.

**First Nation:** A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word Indian, which many found offensive. The term *First Nation* has been adopted to replace the word “band” in the names of communities.

**Gender Identity:** How a person identifies themselves based on an individual’s intrinsic sense of self and their sense of being female, male, a combination of both, or neither regardless of their biological sex.

**Gender Expression:** Refers to the way an individual expresses their gender identity (e.g. in the way they dress, the length and style of their hair, the way they act or speak, the volume of their voice, and in their choice of whether or not to wear make-up.) Understandings of gender expression are culturally specific and will change over time.

**Harassment:** A form of discrimination that is often but not always, persistent, ongoing conduct or communication, in any form, of attitudes, beliefs or actions towards an individual or group which are known to be, or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome, inappropriate, intimidating or offensive. A single act or expression can constitute harassment, for example, if it is a serious violation or it is from a person in authority. Harassment may be either subtle or blunt.

**Hate:** expressions of bias, prejudice and bigotry that are carried out by individuals, groups, organizations and states, directed against stigmatized and marginalized persons and groups in communities, and intended to affirm and secure existing structures of domination and subordination. Hate activities and incidents represent some of the most destructive forms of human rights-based discrimination by promoting hatred against identifiable groups of people. Some hate incidents are also considered criminal offences committed against a person or property and motivated, in whole or in part, by bias or prejudice based on real or perceived race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability or any other similar factor.

**Human Rights:** Rights that recognize the dignity and worth of every person, and provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, socio-economic status or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or other similar factors.

**Inclusive Design:** Identifying and removing barriers for people that require individual accommodations before an individual accommodation request or complaint has been made. Effective inclusive design in organizations reduces the need for people to ask for individual

accommodations because the principles of inclusive design have been used when creating policies, procedures, programs, and facilities (from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Inclusive Design Fact Sheet).

**Inclusive Education:** Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, school staff teams, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

**Indigenous Peoples:** This is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three distinct groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit.

**Intersectionality:** The condition in which a person simultaneously belongs to two or more social identities and the unique consequences that result from that combination.

**Inuit:** Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Ontario has a very small Inuit population. The Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act.

**Language:** The first language we learn or the language spoken by our parents/caregivers/guardians and others who take care of us as children. This may also include dialects. There is almost inevitably a link between the language we speak or the accent with which we speak a particular language on the one hand, and our ancestry, ethnic origin or place of origin on the other. A person's accent is also often associated with her or his "mother tongue" or place of origin.

**Marital Status:** The status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes the status of living with a person in a conjugal relationship outside marriage, including both same-sex and opposite sex relationships.

**Métis:** People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwe, and Cree.

**Nationality:** The status of belonging to a particular nation.

**Opportunity Gap:** Closely related to an achievement gap this term refers to the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations, or other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for certain groups of students. Opportunity gap refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities; while achievement gap refers to the unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results.

**Place of Origin:** Where one is originally from, generally meaning country of birth, or if born in Canada it could include an area, province or region of the country, (ie Quebec, Newfoundland, The West Coast, Toronto, etc.)

**Positive School Climate:** The school climate may be defined as the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community. A positive school climate exists when all members of the school community feel safe, included, and accepted, and actively promote positive behaviours and interactions. Principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in the learning environment to support a positive school climate and a culture of mutual respect. A positive school climate is a crucial component of bullying prevention.

**Power Dynamics:** The process by which one group defines and subordinates other groups and subjects them to differential and unequal treatment.

**Power Imbalance:** A situation in which an individual or group is able to influence others and impose its beliefs, subjecting other individuals and/or groups to differential and unequal treatment.

**Prejudice:** The pre-judgment (usually negative) of groups or individuals, or preconceived notions about them, based on misinformation, bias, or stereotypes.

**Privilege:** The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access, and/or opportunities on the basis of group membership or social context, which is denied or not extended to members of all groups.

**Race (Colour):** Race is a socially constructed way of judging, categorizing and creating difference among people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, eye, lips and nose shape, hair texture and body shape. The process of social construction of race is termed “racialization.” This is the “process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life. Despite the fact that there are no biological “races”, the social construction of race is a powerful force with real consequences for individuals. Someone’s “race” can also extend to specific traits which are deemed to be “abnormal” and of less worth. Individuals may have prejudices related to various racialized characteristics. In addition to physical features, these characteristics could include accent, dialect or manner of speech, name, clothing and grooming, diet, beliefs and practices, leisure preferences, and places of origin.

**Safe and Accepting Schools Team:** Team established at every TDSB school that are responsible for fostering a safe, inclusive, and accepting school climate. Each team includes at least one student and must include at least one parent, one teacher, one non-teaching staff member, one community partner, and the principal. The chair of this team must be a staff member. (from the Ministry of Education’s PPM144 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy)

**School Climate:** The learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community.

**Sex/ Biological Sex:** Generally refers to the sex assigned at birth based on external genitalia but also includes internal reproductive structures, chromosomes, hormone levels, and secondary sex

characteristics such as breasts, facial and body hair, and fat distribution.

**Sexual Orientation:** A term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction, desire or affection for another person. Examples include asexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality. Sexual orientation is much more accurately viewed as an attraction continuum that includes a range of gender identities, expressions and biological sexes.

**Socio-Economic Status:** The economic, social and political relationships in which people operate in a given social order. These relationships reflect the areas of income level, education, access to goods and services, type of occupation, sense of ownership or entitlement and other indicators of social rank or class.

**Social Identity:** Those aspects of a person that are defined in terms their group membership, or their perceived group membership in broad social categories ( i.e. race, disability, gender identity, etc.) Social identities are most accurate when individuals self-identify or chose of how they want to be identified, as opposed to being labelled by society or others.

**Stereotype:** A false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other factors.

**Systemic Discrimination:** A pattern of discrimination that arises out of apparently neutral institutional policies or practices, that is reinforced by institutional structures and power dynamics, and that results in the differential and unequal treatment of members of certain groups.

**TDSB:** the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the “Board.”

**Whole-School Approach:** An all-inclusive approach to building a positive and inclusive school climate that is based on healthy and respectful relationships throughout the whole school and community which includes everyone and their role to play in achieving safe, inclusive and accepting schools. A whole-school approach includes the government, school boards, school staff, parents, students and community members.