



## YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### Policy #261.0, Equity and Inclusivity

WORKING DOCUMENT

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#### Executive Summary

As a Board that strives to serve all students equitably in an increasingly diverse school community, we recognize the value of ensuring equitable and inclusive learning and working environments. We also recognize our duty to protect and promote human rights and to proactively prevent discrimination in all York Region District School Board (YRDSB) learning and working environments. As a publicly funded school board, this is foundational to YRDSB's mandate and obligations to provide equitable education services to all students within our school community and to create inclusive workplaces for our employees.

We are committed to creating and sustaining ethical, inclusive, caring and safe learning and working environments through practices that are equitable, transparent and support the Board's [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#).

#### What has Changed?

**Major changes to the document:** Revisions to the policy reflect the Discriminatory Statements and Slurs Protocol (2022), Board Improvement and Equity Plan (2022), OCT Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism (2021), Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy (2020), Anti-Racism Data Standards (2018), Anti-Racism Act (2017), and Ontario Education Equity Action Plan (2016), Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy (2017).

Reason for review: Four-year cyclical review and to reflect the changed legislative environment and Board commitments.

**Who is affected by these changes and what is the impact on current practice?** Affected groups are listed in the Stakeholder Groups with Responsibilities list below.

**Implementation timelines:** Immediate.

**Lead Superintendent(s)/Subject Matter Expert(s):** Associate Director of Education, Equitable Outcomes and Schools

#### Stakeholder Groups with Responsibilities under this Policy

- Board of Trustees
- Director of Education
- Associate Directors of Education, Coordinating Superintendents of Education and Superintendents of Education

- Principals, Managers and Supervisors
- Teachers
- All Board Employees
- Students
- Parent and Community Members
- Curriculum and Instructional Services
- Student Services
- Leadership Development

## **Relationship to Board Priorities**

The Equity and Inclusivity Policy and Procedure supports each of the four areas of the Trustees' Multi-Year Strategic Plan as follows:

### **Foster Well-Being and Mental Health**

YRDSB is committed to creating and sustaining safe, healthy, and inclusive learning and working environments through practices that are equitable and transparent.

### **Champion Equity and Inclusivity**

In developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to remove barriers to learning and working, an environment of inclusion is created.

### **Build Collaborative Relationships**

In building trusting relationships based on respectful and responsive communication, we actively engage individuals in collaborative learning and working.

### **Empower Ethical Leadership**

In leading ethically by focusing on students and upholding our values, we build leadership capacity and accessibility.

## **Timelines and Next Steps**

This Policy was scheduled for first review at the May 10, 2022 Policy and By-Law Standing Committee meeting.

## **Providing Feedback**

Questions about this Policy and/or Procedure should be raised with your principal, manager or supervisor. If additional clarification is required, principals, managers and supervisors may contact the lead superintendent and/or subject matter expert through Trustee Services. In accordance with Board Policy #285.0, [Board Policies, Procedures and Supporting](#)

[Documents](#), the Board welcomes all comments and suggestions on Board policy.

Input is an important component of the review process. If you feel a policy and/or procedure needs to be revised, feedback may be submitted through the school council or by submitting the on-line form. In your response please:

- outline clearly the specific section(s) of the policy and/or procedure in which you are not comfortable,
- suggest specific alternate wording to reflect your position, and
- identify the reason(s) for your concern(s).

Specific recommendations or questions about the review process should be submitted using the on-line form or sent to the Policy Officer via email at [policy.committee@yrdsb.ca](mailto:policy.committee@yrdsb.ca), or via telephone at 905-727-0022 extension 2570 or in hard copy at [The Education Centre – Aurora](#).

## Legislative Context

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)  
[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)  
[Education Act](#)  
[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)  
[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

## Related Documents

[Accessibility](#)  
[Anti-Racism Act \(2017\)](#)  
[Anti-Racism Data Standards \(2018\)](#)  
[Board Improvement and Equity Plan](#)  
Discriminatory Slurs and Statements Protocol  
[Policy and Procedure #240.0, Human Rights: Code-Related Harassment and Discrimination](#)  
[Policy #250.0, Violence Prevention and Intervention and Non-Code Workplace Related Harassment – Employees](#)  
[Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy \(2020\)](#)  
[Equity and Inclusivity](#)  
[Human Rights: Code-Related Harassment and Discrimination](#)  
[Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy](#)  
[Conflict of Interest](#)  
[Ontario Education Equity Action Plan \(2016\)](#)  
[Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism \(Ontario College of Teachers\)](#)  
[Text Selection Tool](#)

It is the expectation of the York Region District School Board that all employees, students, and persons invited to or visiting Board property, or partaking/volunteering in Board or school-sponsored events and activities, will respect the policies and procedures of the Board.



# Board Policy #261.0 Equity and Inclusivity

WORKING DOCUMENT

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## 1. Policy Statement

The York Region District School Board (“YRDSB” or the “Board”) is committed to student achievement and well-being, and staff diversity and inclusion by working to ensure equitable access and outcomes through accessible and inclusive learning and working environments. YRDSB is committed to fostering learning and working environments that uphold [human rights](#) and equity, are proactively anti-racist and anti-oppressive, and are welcoming, safe, equitable, inclusive, accessible and free from discrimination, oppression, harassment and harm.

YRDSB recognizes that Indigenous students, Black students, racialized students, 2SLGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and students of diverse social identities have been historically marginalized by systemic barriers and may be underserved, which may result in varying levels of underperformance, and gaps in student achievement and well-being. Systemic barriers may result in structures, policies, practices and standards that could have serious negative consequences for staff and students.

At YRDSB, we work to identify and implement strategies that create identity-affirming learning environments and agencies in order to support the well-being and academic achievement of all students. We have a collective responsibility to close gaps through explicit and deliberate actions. These actions must be grounded in human rights and the Calls to Action from the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education.

In adopting this Equity and Inclusivity Policy (the “Policy”), YRDSB confirms its commitment to understanding and dismantling all forms of oppression. We are also committed to helping students and staff understand racist and oppressive ideologies and how they operate at the interpersonal, systemic, and structural levels.

YRDSB is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment that upholds and reflects the Seven Guiding Principles of [Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan](#) (the “Action Plan”) and fulfills the requirements of the Action Plan. Key to achieving this goal is the ongoing collection, analysis and reporting of data from multiple sources to align resources that support our schools; identify and eliminate systemic barriers to student success; create more equitable and inclusive school environments; and improve student achievement and well-being.

## **2. Application**

The Policy and its related procedures outline YRDSB's commitment to creating and maintaining equitable and inclusive learning and working environments that uphold and reflect the following Seven Guiding Principles of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (the "Strategy"):

Equity and inclusive education:

- a) is a foundation of excellence;
- b) meets individual needs;
- c) identifies and eliminates barriers;
- d) promotes a sense of belonging;
- e) involves the broad community;
- f) builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives; and
- g) is demonstrated throughout the system.

This will be accomplished by aligning the following eight areas with the requirements of the Strategy.

### **2.1 Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices**

All Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices will work to serve staff, students, trustees, and families in all communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusivity into structures, policies, procedures, guidelines, programs, and practices, consistent with the principles of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

### **2.2 Shared and Committed Leadership**

The Board will work with all educational partners to provide leadership that is responsive to the diverse nature and needs of York Region's communities by working to identify and remove discriminatory biases and/or systemic barriers for staff, student achievement and well-being.

### **2.3 School Community Relationships**

The Board will work to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with all school communities so that the perspectives and needs of all students, families, trustees, and employees are recognized and addressed through shared and committed leadership, and positive community relationships.

### **2.4 Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices**

The Board will review curriculum and resources, instruction, and assessment/evaluation practices, and will endeavour to identify and address discriminatory biases, as part of its goal to ensure equity of opportunity and access for each student.

The Board will work to uphold the implementation of an inclusive curriculum, supported by resources and instructional strategies, and assessment and evaluation practices that are

identity-affirming and respond to the needs of the diversity of learners.

## **2.5 School and Workplace Climate and Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment**

The Board is committed to the principle that every person is entitled to work and learn in a respectful, positive environment, free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and exclusion.

## **2.6 Professional Learning**

The Board will work to provide employees, students, and other members of YRDSB, including trustees, parents/guardians, visitors, contractors, third parties and others, with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

## **2.7 Accountability and Transparency**

The Board will assess, monitor and report on the implementation of the Action Plan within YRDSB, and will work to reflect these principles into Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices.

## **2.8 Accommodation of Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual Observance**

The Board acknowledges the right to hold religious beliefs and practices, and to be free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour with respect to one's religious beliefs and practices. The Board will take reasonable steps to accommodate the religious, Indigenous and spiritual observances of staff members, trustees and students, as outlined in the Board's [Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes: A Guideline for Religious Accommodations](#).

## **3. Relationship to Board Priorities**

The Board prioritizes Championing Equity and Inclusivity and Mental Health and Well-Being within its Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Director's Action Plan. These priorities are also reflected within the Action Plan and the Strategy's guiding principles. Connections between the Strategy and the priorities of the Board include: engaging students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members; providing equitable access to differentiated and relevant learning opportunities, resources and programs; and demonstrating professionalism and accountability for high standards of practice.

In addition, YRDSB has also prioritized closing gaps for Indigenous and Black students through its [Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy](#) and the [Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy \(2020\)](#).

## **4. Application of Policy**

This Policy applies to all members of YRDSB. It provides the framework for the review and

creation of YRDSB policies, procedures, practices, and guidelines, such as #240.0, Human Rights: Code-Related Harassment and Discrimination and Policy #250.0, Violence Prevention and Intervention and Non-Code Workplace Related Harassment – Employees, and the Director’s Action Plan and Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

It is the expectation of YRDSB that all students, staff, trustees, parents/guardians, visitors, contractors, third parties and others invited to, visiting, using, or permitting Board property, will strive to maintain the highest level of professional and personal courtesy when interacting with all members of YRDSB’s community, in accordance with this Policy to uphold the OHRC.

## **5. Responsibilities**

### **5.1 The Board of Trustees is responsible for:**

- a) supporting the effective implementation of the Policy by:
  - knowing and applying the seven guiding principles of the Strategy;
  - understanding, identifying, disrupting, and addressing discriminatory policies during their review and amendment;
  - reviewing and amending the Board’s Multi-Year Strategic Plan through an equity and inclusivity lens;
  - applying equity principles to inform decisions regarding resource allocation to support the Board improvement and equity planning process; and
  - representing the views of all YRDSB communities.

### **5.2 The Director of Education is responsible for:**

- a) providing leadership for a collaborative system-based process in the development, implementation and/or review of all Board policies, procedures and practices through an equity and inclusivity lens by:
  - knowing and applying the seven guiding principles of the Strategy;
  - supporting the development, collection and use of data that will identify the needs of the diverse YRDSB community;
  - supporting the use of data to inform practices that enhance and sustain equity and inclusivity; and
  - monitoring and assessing organizational compliance with this Policy.

### **5.3 Associate Directors of Education, Coordinating Superintendents of Education and Superintendents of Education are responsible for:**

- a) providing leadership for the effective implementation of equitable and inclusive policies, procedures, guidelines;
- b) knowing and applying the seven guiding principles of the Strategy;
- c) supporting school staff in understanding, using and communicating fair, transparent and equitable practices at the individual student, classroom and school levels;
- d) understanding the disproportionality and disparities experienced by underserved student populations and developing strategies to close these gaps;

- e) implementing a process through which concerns and issues about racism, oppression, and accessibility can be identified and resolved; and
- f) providing leadership opportunities and support for district, school, classroom, and facilities staff who are reflective of the broader community.

#### **5.4 Principals, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:**

- a) providing leadership to enable the effective implementation of the Policy;
- b) knowing and understanding the seven guiding principles of the Strategy;
- c) understanding, identifying, disrupting, and addressing discriminatory practices, rules, and ideologies;
- d) providing guidance on the use of educational materials that are identity-affirming and which promote equity and inclusion using the text selection tool;
- e) supporting school staff in identifying and addressing disproportionality and disparities resulting from discriminatory bias to enable equity and inclusivity in school practice;
- f) implementing Board equity and inclusivity policies, programs and action plans that reflect the needs of their diverse school communities;
- g) taking reasonable steps to provide accommodation of religious, Indigenous and spiritual observance to staff and students, as outlined in the Board's guideline on [Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes: A Guideline for Religious Accommodations](#);
- h) taking reasonable steps to implement the Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy, Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy, Discriminatory Slurs and Statements Protocol;
- i) investigating incidents when they witness, learn of or experience racist or oppressive language or behaviours and participate in the investigation process to resolve the situation;
- j) leading the restoration of working relationships and the learning environment following incidents of racism or oppression;
- k) developing and implementing strategies to engage students, parents, and the broader community; and
- l) participating in the review, development, and implementation of initiatives to support and promote equity and inclusive policies and practice.

#### **5.5 Board employees are responsible for:**

- a) knowing, understanding and ensuring the effective implementation of the seven guiding principles of the Strategy;
- b) identifying, disrupting and addressing discriminatory practices, rules and ideologies;
- c) using inclusive, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and respectful language and approaches in all interactions;
- d) fostering a welcoming and inclusive work environment;
- e) demonstrating a belief that all students can learn, and seeking to meet the needs of all students in an equitable manner;
- f) addressing incidents of hate, discrimination or hate using the Board's [protocol](#);
- g) providing materials and activities that are accessible, culturally responsive and that will represent the diversity, values, backgrounds, and experiences of all;



- h) being aware of and implementing the Board's guideline on Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes: A Guideline for Religious Accommodations and Scheduling Events on Faith Days communication;
- i) being aware of and implementing the Indigenous Education and Equity Strategy, Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy, Discriminatory Slurs and Statements Protocol; and
- j) understanding that equity and inclusive principles apply to everyone.

#### **5.6 Students are responsible for:**

- a) fostering a commitment to equity and inclusivity, as outlined in this Policy and its related procedures;
- b) using inclusive and respectful language and approaches in all interactions;
- c) communicating and working effectively with everyone;
- d) modeling the equity and inclusivity values and vision of the school;
- e) participating in "learning moments" to address non-inclusive, disrespectful, or discriminatory behaviours;
- f) understanding that equity and inclusive principles apply to everyone; and
- g) assuming responsibility for examining and taking steps to modify behaviours that are inconsistent with equity and inclusive principles using Report It; and upholding the OHRC.

#### **5.7 Parents are responsible for:**

- a) fostering a commitment to supporting equitable and inclusive practices in schools;
- b) using inclusive and respectful language and approaches in all interactions;
- c) using "learning moments" to address non-inclusive, disrespectful, or discriminatory behaviours;
- d) understanding that equity and inclusive principles apply to everyone;
- e) assuming responsibility for examining and taking steps to modify behaviours that are inconsistent with equity and inclusive principles; and
- f) reporting incidents of hate and discrimination that are witnessed or experienced to the school Principal.

## **6. Definitions**

### **6.1 Accessibility**

A general term for the degree of ease that something (e.g., device, service, physical environment, and information) can be accessed, used, and enjoyed by persons with disabilities. The term implies conscious planning, design and/or effort to make sure something is barrier-free to persons with disabilities. Accessibility also benefits the general population, by making things more usable and practical for everyone.

### **6.2 Accommodation**

Accommodation is a means of preventing and removing barriers that impede students from participating fully in the educational environment and workers from participating in the work

environment in a way that is responsive to their own unique circumstances.

### **6.3 Discrimination**

Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or based on other, similar factors. (Ministry of Education Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation – 2009, Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools)

### **6.4 Diversity**

Diversity is 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, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. (Ministry of Education Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation – 2009, Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools)

### **6.5 Equity**

Equity is a condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. (Ministry of Education Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation – 2009, Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools).

### **6.6 Equity (in education)**

A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all students, families and staff regardless of social and cultural backgrounds, social identities, or personal life circumstances. Equitable treatment of students means removing discriminatory barriers to teaching and learning, and to ensuring proportionate levels of support to those who need it the most, in order to improve student achievement and well-being and to close achievement gaps. Equitable treatment is not the same as equal treatment.

### **6.7 Harassment**

Harassment is defined in subsection 10(1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code as "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome".

The Ontario Human Rights Code states that every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to education and employment free from harassment because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status, or disability.

### **6.8 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive Education is based on the principle 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. (Ministry

of Education Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation – 2009, Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools)

Seven Guiding Principles of [Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy](#)

- a) is a foundation of excellence;
- b) meets individual needs;
- c) identifies and eliminates barriers;
- d) promotes a sense of belonging;
- e) involves the broad community;
- f) builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives; and
- g) is demonstrated throughout the system.

### **6.9 Inclusive Education:**

Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of, and respect for, students of all social and cultural backgrounds, social identities, or personal life circumstances. Through inclusive education, students see themselves reflected in their total learning environment in positive empowering ways. Each student is given fair and equal consideration in the school's priorities and plans and has equal opportunity to participate in all school activities, and to contribute to the learning environment.

### **6.10 Third Parties**

Third parties are defined as someone who is not a party to a lawsuit, agreement, or other interaction, but is in some way involved or affected by it; someone other than the principles to an agreement or a lawsuit.

### **6.11 Workplace Harassment**

Workplace harassment is defined as engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

Workplace Violence (also defined in [Policy # 250.0, Violence Prevention, and Intervention](#))

Workplace violence is:

- a) the exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury;
- b) an attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker; or
- c) a statement or behavior that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

**7. Contact**

Inclusive School and Community Services

**8. History**

Approved: 2011

Working Document: July 3, 2012

Revised: April 2013

Working Document: June 2022