

Realizing the Promise of Diversity

ONTARIO'S EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY

2009

reach every student




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A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Michael Adams, in his optimistic work *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism*, describes our Canadian national project this way:

It is the effort to live in a country of peace and prosperity, with laws that are just, with people who are humane, and where citizens of all backgrounds encounter equal opportunities when they set out to realize their potential, contribute to their communities, participate in the Canadian economy, and engage the Canadian political system. (p. 149)

As Canadian citizens, we are all engaged in this noble project, which I firmly believe can provide lessons and guidance for the world. As the Minister of Education in the most diverse province in the country, I am responsible to do whatever I can to support and advance the project, and to strive to remove all systemic barriers that impede student achievement and student success.

This is why I believe it is critical for us to articulate an equity and inclusive education strategy for Ontario schools. Embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance to acceptance and respect will help us reach our goal of making Ontario's education system the most inclusive in the world. We believe – and research confirms – that students who feel welcome and accepted in their schools are more likely to succeed academically. We believe that everyone in our publicly funded education system – regardless of background or personal circumstances – must be welcomed and accepted, and thereby enabled to reach their highest potential.

We have been clear, as a government, that we need all Ontarians to be at their best. We have invested in publicly funded education heavily and we will continue to do so because we know that a strong, publicly funded education system is the foundation of our province's future prosperity. Our schools need to help students develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, and caring citizens who can contribute to both a strong economy and a cohesive society.

If we are to succeed, we must draw on our experience and on research that tells us that student achievement will improve when barriers to inclusion are identified and removed and when all students are respected and see themselves reflected in their learning and their environment. Everyone in the school community benefits from a school environment that is safe, accepting, and respectful. As noted Canadian educator and antiracism and equity advocate George Dei (2006) explains,

Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone.

I want to acknowledge and thank all the individuals and groups who helped us develop this strategy, and all those committed educators, students, parents, and community partners who will provide the assistance and leadership needed to implement it on an ongoing basis. Though our differences may be many, our shared vision of an equitable, vibrant school system will help us build the inclusive, strong, and prosperous province and nation in which all can realize their full potential.



Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education



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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :
Comment tirer parti de la diversité : Stratégie ontarienne d'équité et d'éducation inclusive.

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at www.edu.gov.on.ca.

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, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

EQUITY: 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.

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





EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

IN *REACH EVERY STUDENT: ENERGIZING ONTARIO EDUCATION*, the Ontario Ministry of Education outlined its plan to create the best publicly funded education system in the world. The paper identified three core priorities:

1. High levels of student achievement
2. Reduced gaps in student achievement
3. Increased public confidence in publicly funded education

An equitable, inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving these priorities, and is recognized internationally as critical to delivering a high-quality education for all learners (UNESCO, 2008).

We believe that Ontario's diversity can be one of its greatest assets. To realize the promise of diversity, we must ensure that we respect and value the full range of our differences. Equitable, inclusive education is also central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that will secure Ontario's future prosperity.

Our government is committed both to raising the bar for student achievement and to reducing achievement gaps. Recent immigrants, children from low-income families, Aboriginal students, boys, and students with special education needs are just some of the groups that may be at risk of lower achievement. To improve outcomes for students at risk, all partners must work to identify and remove barriers and must actively seek to create the conditions needed for student success. In an increasingly diverse Ontario, that means ensuring that all of our students are engaged, included, and respected, and that they see themselves reflected in their learning environment.

Equity and excellence, therefore, go hand in hand.

Publicly funded education is a cornerstone of our democratic society. Ontarians share a belief in the need to develop students as learners and prepare them for their role in society as engaged, productive, and responsible citizens.

Education directly influences students' life chances – and life outcomes. Today's global, knowledge-based economy makes the ongoing work in our schools critical to our students' success in life and to Ontario's economic future. As an agent of change and social cohesion, our education system supports and reflects the democratic values of fairness, equity, and respect for all. The schools we create today will shape the society that we and our children share tomorrow.

“Inclusive education is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies. Inclusion is still thought of in some countries as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general educational settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners.”

(UNESCO, 2008, p. 5)



THE NEED FOR ACTION

CANADIANS EMBRACE multiculturalism, human rights, and diversity as fundamental values.

However, there are ongoing incidents of discrimination in our society that require our continuing attention. In fact, the Supreme Court of Canada in 2005 acknowledged that racial prejudice against visible minorities is so notorious and indisputable that its existence needs to be treated as a social fact (*R. v. Spence*, [2005] 3 S.C.R. 458, para. 5).

Homophobia has risen to the forefront of discussion. Cyberbullying and hate propaganda on the Internet were not issues ten years ago but now are major concerns for parents¹ and students. In recent years, there has been a documented increase in reported incidents of anti-Black racism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia in Canada.

Racism, religious intolerance, homophobia, and gender-based violence are still evident in our communities and – unfortunately – in our schools. In 2007, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops noted that suicide rates among homosexual students are higher than among their heterosexual peers and called for positive action, reinforcing its earlier statement that “the right of each student to be free of harassment, violence or malice in speech or action is unequivocal and schools carry the clear obligation to provide a positive school environment for all students and staff” (Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004, p. 10).

1. In this document *parent(s)* refers to parent(s) and guardian(s).

THE CHANGING FACE OF ONTARIO

Language: Ontarians reported more than 200 languages, as “mother tongue”. The proportion of Ontarians reporting English or French as a mother tongue is declining. In 2006, 69.1% of Ontarians reported English as their mother tongue, and 4.2% of the population reported French as their mother tongue.

Aboriginal peoples: Between 2001 and 2006, Ontario’s Aboriginal population grew nearly five times faster than the non-Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal population is also younger than the non-Aboriginal population. More than a third (35.7%) of the Aboriginal population consists of children and teenagers aged 19 and under.

Families: Between 2001 and 2006, the number of lone-parent families increased by 11.2%.

Same-sex couples: Between 2001 and 2006, the number of self-identified same-sex couples increased by 40%.

Newcomers: Ontario continued to be the province of choice for more than half (52.3%) of the 1.1 million newcomers who arrived in Canada during the 2001–2006 period. More than half of these newcomers will settle in areas outside of Toronto.

Visible minorities: The 2006 Census enumerated an estimated 2.7 million Ontarians who identified themselves as members of the visible minority population, representing more than half of Canada’s total visible minorities. Between 2001 and 2006, Ontario’s visible minority population increased more than four times faster than the population as a whole (not counting those who self-identified as Aboriginal).

Religion: By 2017, about one-fifth of our population will be members of diverse faith communities including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism, in addition to a growing number of individuals without a religious affiliation.

(Sources: 2006 Census of Canada;
Statistics Canada, March 2005, p. 63)



Research findings about the effects of rejection and bullying on young people are clear and consistent. Rejection, exclusion, and estrangement are associated with behaviour problems in the classroom, lower interest in school, lower student achievement, and higher dropout rates (Osterman, 2000, pp. 323–367).

Ontario is Canada's most diverse province, and must find solutions to these concerns. We must also address the needs of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex society by ensuring that our policies evolve with changing societal needs.

To date only forty-three of Ontario's seventy-two school boards report that they currently have some form of equity policy in place. These policies range from a one-page statement to comprehensive documents accompanied by guidelines and resource materials. Although there are increasing numbers of students from various faith communities in our schools, only twelve boards report that they have policies or guidelines relating to religious accommodation, and only three of those could be considered comprehensive. In this context, we believe a system-wide approach is required.

“The significant new investments in education are not reaching many of the children who need the most help because long-identified barriers to learning are not being addressed.”

(McMurtry & Curling, 2008, p. 3)



OUR VISION:

An Inclusive Education System

We envision an inclusive education system in Ontario in which:

- all students, parents, and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected;
- every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning.

To achieve an equitable and inclusive school climate, school boards and schools will strive to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. We want all staff and students to value diversity and to demonstrate respect for others and a commitment to establishing a just, caring society.

In 2008, the Minister of Education called for the creation of an equity and inclusive education strategy for Ontario schools that will continue to advance our three core priorities of improving student achievement, reducing achievement gaps, and increasing public confidence in our education system. A team of educational leaders and specialists was formed to review research, reports, and existing policies and programs at school boards, and to consult with educators, parents, students, community members, and organizations across Ontario.

The resulting equity and inclusive education strategy calls for:

- the ministry to provide direction, support, and guidance to the education sector, so that every student has a positive learning environment in which to achieve his or her highest potential;
- each school board to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy and guidelines for the board and its schools; and
- each school to create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity.

The strategy recognizes our province's growing diversity as a strength. It aims to promote inclusive education, as well as to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit our students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. Systemic barriers may also impede fair practice with respect to hiring, mentoring, promotion, and succession planning. Barriers may be related to the following dimensions of diversity and/or their intersection: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical ability, intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and others. Our equity and inclusive education strategy reaffirms the values of fairness, equity, and respect as essential principles of our publicly funded education system.

Guiding Principles of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Equity and inclusive education:

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

In order to achieve equity and inclusive education in Ontario schools, we must pursue the following three goals, which are rooted in our three core education priorities:

- 1. Shared and committed leadership** by the ministry, boards, and schools will play a critical role in eliminating discrimination through the identification and removal of bias and barriers. Achieving equity is a shared responsibility; establishing an equitable and inclusive education system requires commitment from all education partners.
- 2. Equity and inclusive education policies and practices** will support positive learning environments so that all students can feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by the teachers and staff from whom they are learning, and welcome in the environment in which they are learning. Students, teachers, and staff learn and work in an environment that is respectful, supportive, and welcoming to all.
- 3. Accountability and transparency** will be demonstrated through the use of clear measures of success (based on established indicators) and through communication to the public of our progress towards achieving equity for all students. Accountability is necessary to maintain and enhance public confidence in the education system.

There is an increasing body of research showing that students who feel connected to school – to teachers, to other students, and to the school itself – do better academically.

(See, for example, Blum, McNealey, & Rinehart, 2002, and Schargel, Thacker, & Bell, 2007.)



LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

ONTARIO'S EQUITY and inclusive education strategy is designed to promote fundamental human rights as described in the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with which school boards are already required to comply. In addition, boards and schools must continue to uphold the standards set out in the provincial Code of Conduct, in which respect for all is the overarching principle.

The strategy is to be implemented within the context of the Education Act, which affirms the constitutional rights of Catholic² and French-language³ rights holders in Ontario. The strategy also respects Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized by the Constitution Act, 1982.⁴

The strategy is in line with the principles outlined in Ontario's Aménagement linguistique policy for French-language education, in particular the principle that "French-language education promotes respect for human rights and the rights of minority francophones, as well as for democracy, equality, justice, and dignity" (Ontario, Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 6).

The strategy also reflects the values outlined in the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations. These respect and affirm the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures as well as the history, cultural heritage, and pluralism of our society.

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2. Section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* gives the provinces the exclusive right to govern education, subject to the preservation of denominational education rights.
 3. Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* enshrines minority language education rights, subject to certain limitations.
 4. Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

THE EQUITY and inclusive education strategy builds on successful government, ministry, school board, and school initiatives that have already helped Ontario become a more fair and equitable society.

In 2005, the government convened the Hate Crimes Community Working Group in response to a rise in hate crimes, and in 2007 the ministry revised the provincial Code of Conduct to address hate propaganda. In late 2008, a report on the roots of youth violence, commissioned by the Ontario government, and the government's poverty reduction strategy were released, identifying long-standing systemic issues and proposing constructive, sustainable solutions (McMurtry & Curling, 2008; Ontario, Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction, 2008).

The Ministry of Education acknowledges and values the diversity in our schools. Every student is a unique individual and learns in different ways. Training and resources focusing on differentiated instruction, our Aboriginal education strategy, and the Aménagement linguistique policy for French-language education are just a few of the ways in which the ministry is helping educators enhance learning by taking account of students' particular learning styles and circumstances.

Evidence consistently shows that some groups of students tend to face barriers to learning. A variety of targeted initiatives are under way to help reduce achievement gaps for these groups of students. Boys, for example, often lag behind girls in reading, and the ministry has funded teacher inquiry and research and provided teacher training and resources to help boost boys' reading skills. Students with special education needs also have

complex and unique educational requirements. While most students with special education needs are integrated into regular classrooms, provincial and demonstration schools offer specialized programs for others. Whatever the setting, our efforts are focused on improving outcomes for every individual student.

Our schools should be places where students not only learn about diversity but experience it. We know that when students see themselves reflected in their studies, they are more likely to stay engaged and find school relevant. Revised curriculum documents now contain a section on antidiscrimination education and examples that help teachers better connect with the reality of students' lives. Schools must also be safe, respectful places for students and staff. Our Safe Schools strategy will help ensure that issues such as gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are discussed and addressed in our schools and classrooms.

These and many other initiatives that are focused on both student learning and professional development for educators are intended to reinforce one another. This work has laid strong foundations for our equity and inclusive education strategy – establishing conditions that recognize diversity, promote inclusive education, and support equity in our schools. (See the appendix for a full list of initiatives.)

Here are some examples to illustrate the kind of equity-related work that is currently under way in school boards and schools across the province:

- The **Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario** provides programs in schools to parents and preschool-aged children who are new to Canada and come from a French-speaking country. These programs focus on helping children learn to play, work in groups, acquire classroom routines, and develop early vocabulary and reading skills. In addition, the programs offer parents important information on local community services and resources that promote integration and a sense of belonging.
- The **Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario** provides sensitivity training to school staff so they can support Grade 7 to 12 students who are at risk of suicide. With this training, staff are better able to identify and support these students when they experience

harassment and discrimination and connect them with appropriate school and community partners who can provide the help they need.

- The **Greater Essex County District School Board** has developed a comprehensive diversity training program called “Diversity Matters” as part of its New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). This mandatory one-day workshop consists of four modules specifically designed to help teachers meaningfully address the changing needs of our increasingly diverse classrooms.
- The **Keewatin-Patricia District School Board** encourages its teachers to incorporate into classroom lessons the Aboriginal communities’ Seven Grandfather Teachings of honesty, bravery, responsibility, wisdom, respect, humility, and kindness. The teachings help to re-engage Aboriginal students and give all students a better understanding of Aboriginal culture.
- The **Ottawa-Carleton District School Board** has established a partnership with community agencies to form the Rainbow Coalition, which provides lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, trans-identified, and straight students with a safe space to socialize, support each other, and discuss concerns. Teachers and other adults facilitate conversations about key issues raised by students, highlighted by a one-day Rainbow Forum.
- The **Peel District School Board** annually offers Grade 5 students the opportunity to study racism, sexism, ableism, and other “isms” as they enhance their literacy skills through song writing, drama, visual art, and social studies. The six-month project concludes with student performances at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga.
- The **St. Clair Catholic District School Board** offers Rhythmic Souls at Ursuline College Secondary School, where students with disabilities are paired with students without disabilities for dance activities. The choreography is inclusive and clearly designed with both manual and power wheelchairs in mind. The dance team Rhythmic Souls performs for dance shows, open houses, masses, and prayer services.
- The **Toronto District School Board**’s policies embed the principles of fairness, equity, and inclusive education and include comprehensive guidelines for religious accommodation designed to ensure that students and staff can observe the tenets of their faith free from harassment or discrimination. Staff attend workshops and seminars that focus on social

justice and human rights issues. Many events that support diversity, such as Aboriginal Education Month, African Heritage Month, Asian Heritage Month, and the Pride Parade, are celebrated, and resources that promote equitable and inclusive schools are developed and used in schools throughout the system. The TDSB is also the recipient of the 2008 Carl Bertelsmann Prize: Integration through Education – Fairness for All.

- The **York Region Catholic District School Board** has conducted training for teachers using the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) workshop "Building Inclusive Communities in Catholic Schools". The workshop is described as follows: "Building inclusive classrooms and schools is at the heart of the Church's teachings on social justice. The workshop focuses on diversity as an instructional strategy and the resources available to create caring and inclusive spaces. Special attention is given to issues related to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) students." Several other Catholic school boards, including Halton and Niagara, are also using this training workshop.

"In a truly equitable system, factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic status do not prevent students from achieving ambitious outcomes. Our experience shows that barriers can be removed when all education partners create the conditions needed for success."

(Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 8)



ACTION ITEMS

WHILE MUCH good work has been done – and continues to be done – in boards and schools across the province, we need to work collectively on further actions to realize our vision of an equitable and inclusive education system. The following action items – rooted in the guiding principles and the three goals identified on pages 11 and 12, respectively – provide a clear direction to help the Ontario education community identify and remove discriminatory barriers to student achievement, honour diversity, and affirm respect for all in our schools. These actions will make Ontario a global leader in building and sustaining an equitable and inclusive education system.

The ministry will continue to undertake the following actions on an ongoing basis:

- consult with diverse stakeholders on the strategy's implementation;
- work with education and equity organizations to create innovative partnerships for supporting and implementing the strategy through training, resources, and other activities;
- incorporate equity and inclusive education principles reflective of Ontario's diversity in all curriculum and assessment policy documents and all learning resource documents as appropriate;
- implement the OPS [Ontario Public Service] Diversity Strategic Plan for a diverse and equitable workplace;
- review, conduct, and disseminate research on promising practices;
- work with all partners to implement the Ontario leadership strategy, to attract and develop school and system leaders who reflect Ontario's diversity;

- encourage all leaders to draw on effective practices and competencies from the Ontario leadership framework for school leaders and supervisory officers (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2008) to identify and implement goals related to equity and inclusive education in their school and board improvement plans.

“We are building a culture of diversity. Respect, inclusiveness, and fairness must be part of everything we do – how we treat the public and how we treat each other.”

(Shelly Jamieson, Secretary of Cabinet, as quoted in the OPS Diversity Framework, 2008)

The action items outlined in the following sections will be implemented over the next four years.

YEAR 1: 2008-09

The Ministry of Education will:

- support the development, implementation, and monitoring of equitable and inclusive education policies, programs, and practices in the ministry, school boards, and schools through the Inclusive Education Branch;
- provide \$4 million to school boards to support and promote equity and inclusive education and school safety, and to address harassment in schools;
- issue a Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) to provide direction to boards on the development, implementation, and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies. This memorandum will focus on board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices, as well as on shared and committed leadership, inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, school–community relationships, religious accommodation, school climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment, professional learning, and accountability and transparency;
- release guidelines to assist boards in the development, implementation, and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies, with a focus on addressing gaps in student achievement;

- expand the school climate surveys for students, parents, and school staff on the ministry website to help identify issues and inform actions to promote equity and inclusive education;
- develop courses related to equity and inclusive education as part of the revision to the social sciences and humanities curriculum;
- promote the involvement and engagement of parents with their boards and schools to encourage them to share their ideas and provide advice on enhancing equity and inclusive education (e.g., through parent involvement committees, special education advisory committees, school councils);
- work with faculties of education and the Ontario College of Teachers to incorporate content pertaining to equity and inclusive education in preservice and in-service teacher education programs and to increase access for members of underrepresented groups;
- encourage and empower students to share their ideas, get involved, and take part in activities and groups that honour diversity and promote equity and inclusive education, such as student-led projects, the Minister's Student Advisory Council, and regional student forums.

School boards will:

- review existing equity and inclusive education policies and/or develop or extend such policies;
- identify a contact person to liaise with the ministry and other boards to share challenges, promising practices, and resources;
- report on progress in the Director of Education's annual report.

YEAR 2: 2009-10

The Ministry of Education will:

- work with stakeholders to facilitate the sharing of resources by a variety of methods, including a website and e-network;
- support professional learning on equity and inclusive education for staff working in schools, boards, and the ministry;
- support school board implementation of equity and inclusive education strategies through initiatives, such as Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA), that produce data to help inform policies, programs, and planning;
- incorporate the principles of equity and inclusive education in the Parents Reaching Out grant program;
- communicate progress to educators, parents, and the public.

School boards will:

- develop or revise policies on equity and inclusive education for implementation by September 2010;
- review existing community partnerships to support the principles of equity and inclusive education and to reflect the diversity of the broader community;
- 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;
- have religious accommodation guidelines in place, and communicate these guidelines to the school community;
- review student assessment and evaluation policies and practices to identify and address systemic bias that may exist in the way students' work is assessed and evaluated;
- put procedures in place that will enable students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will also enable boards to respond in a timely manner.

Schools will:

- develop and implement strategies to engage students, parents, and the broader community actively in the review, development, and implementation of initiatives to support and promote equity and inclusive education;
- implement strategies to review existing community partnerships so that they reflect the diversity of the broader community;
- work towards representation of diverse groups on school committees;
- report progress annually to the school board.

YEAR 3: 2010-11

School boards will:

- implement equity and inclusive education policies;
- embed equity and inclusive education principles in board and school improvement plans;
- support the schools' review of classroom strategies that promote school-wide equity and inclusive education policies and practices;
- provide information about equity and inclusive education policies, 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.

Schools will:

- develop school improvement plans that are aligned with Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy;
- review classroom strategies and revise them as needed to ensure they are aligned with and reflect school-wide equity and inclusive education policies.

YEAR 4: 2011-12

School boards will:

- implement positive employment practices that support equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning;
- provide opportunities for students, administrators, teachers, support staff, and trustees to participate in equity and inclusive education training and leadership initiatives;
- establish processes that include performance indicators to monitor progress and assess the effectiveness of policies, programs, and procedures.

Schools will:

- implement board equity and inclusive education policies, programs, and action plans that reflect the needs of their diverse school communities;
- review and establish self-assessment processes to determine the effectiveness of the school's equity and inclusive education plans and procedures.



A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

COMMITMENT to our students' well-being is the driving force behind everything we do in education. Parents want our schools to bring out the very best in their children and help them reach their full potential. Everyone who works in education – administrators, teachers, support workers, and the government – shares that same firm commitment.

We are taking important steps forward together. Although different school boards and schools may be starting at different places when it comes to equity and inclusive education policy and program development, it is our expectation that all boards and schools will demonstrate continuous progress towards meeting the needs of our diverse student population and our ever-changing society. We need to strive to achieve a truly equitable and inclusive publicly funded education system, in keeping with our values of human rights and social justice.

We are confident that Ontario will rise to the challenge of realizing the promise of diversity. It will take time. It will take focus and determination. But it can be done.

Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. Every Ontarian deserves to live in a strong community and to have a bright future.



Appendix

Ministry Programs and Initiatives Related to Equity and Inclusive Education

Ministry programs and initiatives that are directly related to the equity and inclusive education strategy include the following:

- ***Aménagement linguistique Policy for French-Language Education*** – This policy supports increasing the capacity of French-language school boards and schools to create teaching and learning conditions that foster the development of the French language and culture, in order to ensure high levels of achievement for all students. French-language school boards develop and implement local Aménagement linguistique policies in collaboration with parents and representatives from the wider community.
- ***Curriculum and Courses*** – Revised curriculum policy documents contain a section on antidiscrimination education that encourages teachers to recognize the diversity of students' backgrounds, interests, and experiences, and to incorporate a variety of viewpoints and perspectives in learning activities. New courses are also being created that focus on gender studies, equity studies, and world cultures.
- ***English Language Learners Policy*** – This policy sets standards to help students in all grades who speak English as an additional language; the majority of these are recent immigrants or students from Aboriginal communities.
- ***Finding Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K–12*** – This initiative is designed to help school boards create school communities that are respectful, caring, and inclusive.

- **Literacy and Numeracy Strategy** – This is a key strategy designed to promote equity of outcomes for all elementary students and to support improvement in reading, writing, and mathematics, particularly in low-income or remote communities.
- **New Teacher Induction Program** – This program helps new teachers develop the skills they need to create an inclusive learning environment for students. It addresses topics such as equity, gender, race, and culture.
- **Ontario's Aboriginal Education Strategy** – This strategy, launched with the release of the *Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, will help support learning and achievement for Aboriginal students and raise awareness in schools about the cultures, histories, and perspectives of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples.
- **Ontario Leadership Strategy** – This strategy focuses on attracting and developing school and system leaders, including those who reflect Ontario's diversity. System leaders will identify equity goals for eliminating discriminatory barriers to student achievement.
- **Parent Engagement Policy** – This policy supports student learning and public confidence by involving parents in the implementation of the equity and inclusive education strategy. Through school councils and parent involvement committees, parents are encouraged to provide advice to educators on how to support and promote equity and inclusive education.
- **Policy Statement and Guidelines on the Admission, Welcoming, and Support of Students in French-Language Schools in Ontario** – The focus of the policy is on the inclusion and support of all students, with particular attention to newcomers and to students from families in which French is not the language spoken at home.
- **Safe Schools Strategy** – This strategy includes revising the curriculum to ensure that gender-based violence, homophobia, sexual harassment, and inappropriate sexual behaviour are discussed and addressed in the classroom. It also includes the use of sample school climate surveys to help principals assess perceptions of safety by students, parents, and school staff to inform prevention and intervention plans.
- **Special Education Programs** – Most programs are designed to support the integration of students with special needs into regular classrooms. There are also provincial schools and demonstration schools that offer specialized programs.
- **Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategy** – Equity and inclusiveness are at the core of this strategy, which benefits all students in Grades 7 to 12 by providing more choices for innovative, engaging, and high-quality learning opportunities within a respectful and responsive school environment.

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Minister's Ad Hoc Equity Roundtable

Co-chairs

Avis Glaze, formerly Ontario's Education Commissioner and Senior Advisor to the Minister of Education

Karen Mock, Senior Policy Advisor on Equity and Diversity to the Minister of Education; former Executive Director, Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Members

Ali Abdi, Principal, Albion Heights Junior Middle School, Toronto District School Board

Elham Ali, student, North Albion Collegiate Institute, Toronto District School Board

Patty Barclay, former Coordinator, Triangle Program, Toronto District School Board

Marie-Josée Berger, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Harold Brathwaite, Executive Director, Retired Teachers of Ontario; former Director of Education, Peel District School Board

Jenny Clement, Chair of several Disability Advocacy Committees in the Greater Toronto Area

- Chris d'Souza, Equity and Diversity Officer, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board; Chair, Equity Summit Group; on secondment to the Faculty of Education, York University
- Hilary Edelstein, Master of Education student, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto
- José Fernandes, Administrator of Community and Cultural Services Unit, York Region District School Board
- Margaret Gee, Past President, Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario (FWTAO); Incoming President of Rendez-vous (1st Club of Women Educators)
- Ian Jacobsen, Education Policy Analyst, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
- Raja Khouri, Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC); member, Hate Crimes Community Working Group; Past President, Canadian Arab Federation (CAF)
- Peter Lipman, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) (Retired); Facilitator: Connecting Communities, Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)
- Camille Logan, Principal, York Region District School Board; on secondment to Faculty of Education, York University
- Vandra Masemann, Adjunct Associate Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto; Consultant, Comparative and Multicultural Education
- Rabea Murtaza, Research Coordinator, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Stella Ng, formerly with Status of Women Canada; volunteers on the Toronto District School Board Equity Policy Advisory Committee
- Rachel Olivero, Diversity Officer, Greater Essex County District School Board
- Aarti Patel, Principal, King Edward Public School, Toronto District School Board
- Bev Salmon, former Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC); Metro Toronto Councillor (Retired); Black Educators' Working Group
- André Samson, Professor, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa
- Mary Samuel, Staff Development Officer, Equity, Peel District School Board; Chair, Equity Working Group, Antiracist Multicultural Education Network of Ontario (AMENO)
- Dhawal Selarka, student, North Albion Collegiate, Toronto District School Board
- Annemarie Shrouder, Consultant, Diversity and Inclusion; President, Building Equitable Environments
- Zubeda Vahed, Consultant, diversityworX; former Equity Officer, Race Relations, Peel District School Board; former President, Federation of Muslim Women

Organizations

Antiracist Multicultural Education Network of Ontario (AMENO)
Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACEPO)
Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne (AGÉFO)
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Council of Directors of Education (CODE)
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
Equity Summit Group
Institute for Catholic Education (ICE)
Institute for Education Leadership (IEL)
Ontario Catholic Schools Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
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Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)/Fédération des enseignantes-enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario (FEESO)
Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA)
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