

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR ONTARIO'S EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION STRATEGY

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is designed to promote human rights as described in the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with which school boards are required to comply.

On September 1, 2012, the Accepting Schools Act, which amended the Education Act, came into force. This legislation builds on the successes of the Equity and Inclusive Education and Safe Schools Strategies. The Act is part of a multifaceted plan that focuses on a whole-school approach that involves all partners in order to bring about necessary systemic change that will foster safe, caring, inclusive, and accepting learning environments in which every student can succeed.

As outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" (April 22, 2013), all school boards are required by legislation to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy. Every board must also have a religious accommodation guideline in place.

Schools . . . change only when their leaders use equity as a lens to recognize the disparities that exist, and then intentionally develop, implement, and monitor clear, unambiguous action plans for producing the desired educational outcomes.

— Ontario Principals' Council (2011)

Equity and Inclusive Education Links

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf>

Quick Facts: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/EquityQuickFacts.pdf>

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2013)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/119.pdf>

Links to Additional Resources

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>

Aménagement Linguistique Policy for French-Language Education
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/linguistique/policyguide.pdf>

Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, K–12.
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/Caring_Safe_School.pdf

English Language Learners
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/esleldprograms/esleldprograms.pdf>

Finding Common Ground (Character Development)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/literacy/booklet2008.pdf>

Foundation for a Healthy School (Framework)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/foundations.pdf>

Growing Success
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growSuccess.pdf>

Learning for All, K–12
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/Learning-forAll2013.pdf>

Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/BullyingPreventPlan.pdf>

Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/aboriginal/fnmiFramework.pdf>

Ontario Human Rights Commission
<http://www.OHRC.on.ca>

Ontario Leadership Strategy
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/index.html>

Parent Engagement Policy
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/PE_Policy2010.pdf

Parent Information
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents>

Policy Statement and Guidelines on the Admission, Welcoming, and Support of Students in French-Language Schools in Ontario
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/Admission.pdf>

Promoting a Positive School Climate Resource
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/IntroDocEng.pdf>

Safe and Accepting Schools
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/ministry.html>

School Effectiveness Framework, K–12
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/SEF2013.pdf>

Stepping Stones: A Resource on Youth Development
<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/topics/youthopportunities/steppingstones/SteppingStones.pdf>

Student Voice Initiative
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html>

Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/SupportResGuide.pdf>

The Ontario Human Rights Code's prohibited grounds of discrimination include:

age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender identity and gender expression, marital status, place of origin, race, sex, and sexual orientation.



HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

A Reflective Tool for School and System Leaders on the Implementation of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

The Vision of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009 sets out a vision for an equitable and inclusive education system in which:

- all students, parents,¹ and 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 (p. 10).

Purpose of the Strategy

The strategy establishes a framework to help the education community identify and address discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to student achievement and well-being, honour diversity, and affirm respect for all in our schools. It recognizes that Ontario's diversity is one of our greatest assets. Parent engagement and character development are essential components of the strategy. Ontarians share a belief in the need to develop character and prepare students for their role in society as engaged, productive, and responsible citizens.

Guiding Principles of the Strategy

The following principles are to be embedded in all ministry, board, and school initiatives, policies, programs, and practices. 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.

Purpose of This Reflective Tool

This resource is designed to support school and system leaders in their ongoing reflection on how to strengthen implementation of Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy in their schools and boards. Leaders may use the resource to engage their students, staff, and communities in reflecting on the eight areas of focus that support the identification and elimination of barriers to student achievement and well-being at all levels. It is recommended that school and system leaders review the guiding principles above, the legislative and policy contexts, the updated *Equity and Inclusive Education Guidelines* (2014), and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2013), as well as the prohibited grounds identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code, before responding to the questions for reflection. Additional information may be found at the links provided.

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

HOW DO WE KNOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE? *Reflective Tool for School and System Leaders: Areas of Focus of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education (EIE) Strategy*

Focus	Questions for Reflection	Focus	Questions for Reflection
<p>1. Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices</p> <p><i>The board is committed to serving students in diverse communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education (EIE) into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, procedures, guidelines, and practices.</i></p>	<p>1.1 How do we know that EIE principles are being embedded in school policies, guidelines, programs, and classroom practices to support student achievement and well-being?</p> <p>1.2 How do we identify and address systemic barriers and discriminatory biases within system and school structures and organization, policies, programs, and practices?</p> <p>1.3 How effective are our employment practices at supporting equitable hiring, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning?</p> <p>1.4 In what ways do our board and school improvement plans and review processes demonstrate a commitment to the eight EIE areas of focus?</p> <p>1.5 What are we doing to support the successful implementation of the EIE strategy and build system capacity (e.g., by addressing assumptions about diversity and student learning)?</p> <p>1.6 How well do the practices of the board and school (e.g., practices related to classroom and wall displays, instruction and assessment, communications, school events/speakers, contents of the library, parent engagement, and student discipline) convey support for EIE principles?</p>	<p>2. Shared and committed leadership</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to providing effective leadership to improve student achievement and to close achievement gaps for students by identifying, addressing, and removing all forms of discrimination.</i></p>	<p>2.1 How effectively do we value all voices and reach out to and work with all parents and community groups?</p> <p>2.2 How effectively do we identify and address barriers to fostering parents' engagement in their children's learning at home and at school?</p> <p>2.3 How do we foster open and safe spaces where students, staff, and parents can engage in meaningful conversations about equity, diversity, and inclusive education?</p> <p>2.4 How do we provide all students with a voice and leadership opportunities to help ensure that their perspectives are reflected in the school's EIE initiatives?</p> <p>2.5 How effectively do we make use of the expertise of the board/school EIE contact person and EIE networks?</p> <p>2.6 In what ways are EIE principles, strategies, and initiatives reflected in board teams, school committees, and student activities and clubs?</p> <p>2.7 How are we building leadership capacity to foster shared responsibility for safe, inclusive, and accepting schools across our schools and board?</p>
<p>3. School-community relationships</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized and their needs are met.</i></p>	<p>3.1 Are we effectively using a whole-school approach to enhance student engagement and learning? What are we doing to ensure that the perspectives of various individuals and groups in the school community and the broader community are included?</p> <p>3.2 In what ways is our school supporting the board's strategy for parent engagement?</p> <p>3.3 What strategies do we use to create a welcoming environment where parents, visitors, and community members are respected and valued?</p> <p>3.4 How do we know which outreach initiatives are effective in building school-parent-community partnerships to support children's learning at home and at school?</p> <p>3.5 To what degree has representation across diverse groups increased on board and school committees?</p> <p>3.6 How can we work more effectively with our school committees and clubs, school council, and the board's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to support EIE principles and implementation of the board's EIE policy?</p>	<p>4. Inclusive curriculum and assessment practices</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to implementing an inclusive curriculum and to reviewing resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases and maximize students' learning potential.</i></p>	<p>4.1 In what ways are the voices, stories, cultures, and histories of our students, families, and communities included in our classrooms, curriculum, learning materials, groupings, displays, and resources?</p> <p>4.2 Do we review our assessment and evaluation policies and practices regularly, using an EIE lens, to help us address any biases that may limit student success?</p> <p>4.3 How effectively do we identify and address barriers that prevent some students from fully participating in class or school activities, or from completing class assignments (e.g., Are we regularly assessing the need for accommodations and modifications)?</p> <p>4.4 Do we effectively consider our school's diversity in the planning of co-curricular and extracurricular activities?</p> <p>4.5 How do we know that we have created a culture of high expectations to support the achievement and well-being of all students and to reduce gaps in student achievement?</p> <p>4.6 How do we foster a learning environment that gives students a sense of safety and belonging so that they are empowered to take risks, explore new ideas, and take responsibility for their learning?</p>
<p>5. Religious accommodation</p> <p><i>The board and schools acknowledge each individual's right to follow or not follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and are committed to adhering to the board's religious accommodation guidelines.</i></p>	<p>5.1 How effectively do the board and our school communicate the board's religious accommodation policy and procedures to students, staff, parents, and the community?</p> <p>5.2 What kinds of religious accommodations are we providing for students in response to requests related to daily routines, programs, scheduling, meetings, assessments, instruction, and extracurricular activities?</p> <p>5.3 How can our school and board improve processes for gathering input and providing open dialogue with our diverse faith communities, as well as communities without religious beliefs and observances, to inform learning opportunities for students, staff, and parents?</p> <p>5.4 Are we making appropriate use of community resources to provide staff, as well as students and parents, with information about faith practices and about individual requests for accommodations?</p> <p>5.5 What evidence indicates that board and school procedures are working well for students and parents who have asked for accommodations?</p> <p>5.6 Are requests considered on an individual basis, and are reasonable steps taken to accommodate, in keeping with the religious accommodation guidelines?</p>	<p>6. School climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive school climate and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.</i></p>	<p>6.1 How do the board and school's EIE policy, bullying prevention and intervention plan, and code of conduct promote a safe, caring, inclusive, and accepting environment for students, staff, parents, and the community?</p> <p>6.2 How do we use the results of our school climate surveys of students, staff, and parents to inform the school's EIE practices?</p> <p>6.3 What learning opportunities exist to help students, staff, parents, and the community understand, identify, and address issues of equity, racism, and discrimination?</p> <p>6.4 What are we doing to embed character development more deeply in our school and board programs and practices, so that students are supported in reaching their full potential as productive, responsible, and caring citizens?</p> <p>6.5 How are staff, students, and parents responding to incidents of discrimination, bullying, or harassment?</p> <p>6.6 How do we know that incidents of discrimination, bullying, or harassment are being reported and investigated and that the outcome of the investigations is being communicated in a timely manner?</p> <p>6.7 How do we foster among all members of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and community members, a sense of shared responsibility to create a respectful, positive school climate?</p>
<p>7. Professional learning</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to providing the school community, including students, with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers.</i></p>	<p>7.1 How do we assess the effectiveness of strategies and learning opportunities in building capacity among students, staff, and parents to support EIE principles?</p> <p>7.2 In what ways do our school and board foster reflection and dialogue among staff to help them challenge their own biases and stereotypes and to support their professional learning?</p> <p>7.3 How can we better support student engagement in initiatives that promote healthy relationships and help to develop productive, caring, and responsible citizens?</p> <p>7.4 How do our school and board provide staff with learning opportunities that foster safe, caring, inclusive, and accepting schools?</p> <p>7.5 What evidence-informed resources are our school and board developing and/or acquiring to inform professional learning?</p> <p>7.6 How do we know that these resources are being shared with and used by staff, students, and parents?</p>	<p>8. Accountability and transparency</p> <p><i>The board and schools are committed to assessing and monitoring their progress in implementing an equity and inclusive education policy; to embedding the principles into all board/school policies, programs, guidelines, and practices; and to communicating these results to the community.</i></p>	<p>8.1 What processes do we use to assess, monitor, and communicate implementation of our EIE policies and principles in our schools and board to all partners (e.g., students, staff, parents, community)?</p> <p>8.2 What key indicators do we use to assess the impact of EIE on student learning and well-being?</p> <p>8.3 How does the school seek and use a full range of information and data (e.g., quantitative or qualitative data; data on trends in student population, learning needs, or student profiles) to help identify barriers and biases and adapt to the needs of students?</p> <p>8.4 How do we know that EIE principles are embedded as part of the board's multi-year strategic plan – in the school effectiveness review process, in board (BIPSA) and school (SIPSA) improvement plans, and in classroom practices?</p> <p>8.5 How can our school better engage staff in the continuous improvement of instructional and operational practices to embed EIE principles and foster a positive school climate in support of student achievement and well-being?</p>