



## EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

<b>Superintendent Responsible:</b> Superintendent of Education, Safe and Inclusive Schools	<b>Initial Effective Date:</b> 2021/05/31
<b>Last Updated:</b> 2023/05/30	<b>Next Review Date:</b> 2025/04/29

### Purpose:

To honour diversity within the Grand Erie District School Board (Grand Erie) and commit to the principles of equity and inclusive education.

### Guiding Principles:

The aim is to foster an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and inclusive culture in Grand Erie, where all students feel seen, heard, respected, and have all the support and resources they need to flourish.

#### 1.0 **Programs, Guidelines and Practices**

Programs, guidelines and practices of Grand Erie will serve students, employees and families in diverse communities by incorporating culturally relevant, responsive and sustainable pedagogy (CRRSP), in addition to the principles of equity and inclusive education, into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, procedures, guidelines, and practices, consistent with the principles of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, to ensure culturally safe spaces for students, families and employees.

#### 2.0 **Shared and Committed Leadership**

Grand Erie will foster development of leaders who demonstrate commitment to equity and inclusivity and will encourage employees who self-identify as members of equity-deserving communities in leadership opportunities.

#### 3.0 **Community Relationships**

Grand Erie will establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families, and employees are valued and reflected in Grand Erie.

#### 4.0 **Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices**

Grand Erie will implement CRRSP and will regularly review resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify, raise awareness of, and address discriminatory biases, and foster an anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and inclusive culture to reflect the diverse needs of all students and their learning pathways.

Grand Erie will ensure that resources and instructional practices are respectful of the protected grounds of the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

#### 5.0 **Religious and Creed-based Accommodation**

Grand Erie acknowledges each individual's right to follow, or not to follow, religious and creed-based practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious and creed-based accommodations to employees and students to ensure a culturally safe space for all. Grand Erie is committed to ensuring that appropriate accommodations for religious and creed-based requests are developed collaboratively in an environment founded in trust and mutual respect.

- 5.1. Religious and creed-based accommodations could include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Religious Holy Days and celebrations
  - Opening and closing exercises
  - Prayer
  - Dietary requirements
  - Fasting
  - Religious attire
  - Participation in daily activities and curriculum
  - Scheduling for religious/bereavement leaves
  - Recruitment, job applications, and succession planning
- 6.0 **School Climate and the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment**  
Grand Erie is committed to the principle that every person within a school community is entitled to a respectful, culturally safe and positive school climate and learning environment free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. Grand Erie will ensure that revisions to school codes of conduct and possible barriers to success at the individual, school, or system level include active consultation with diverse communities, and that school codes of conduct are reviewed annually, in addition to school census data and school climate data, to inform targeted strategies.
- 7.0 **Professional Learning**  
Grand Erie provides administrators, employees, students and other members of the school community, including families and those who support families, with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify, and raise awareness of, racism, anti-racism, anti-oppression, discriminatory biases and systemic barriers. Grand Erie supports professional development in the area of anti-racism, anti-oppression, social justice, equity and Indigenous education in an effort to dismantle systemic barriers. Grand Erie supports both employees and students in their own efforts to promote anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, social justice, Indigenous education and anti-discrimination in schools and classrooms.
- 8.0 **Accountability and Transparency**  
Grand Erie assesses, monitors and reports the progress in implementing the principles of equity and inclusion into all Grand Erie policies, programs, guidelines and practices, and communicates these results to the community. Grand Erie ensures that the principles of anti-racism, anti-oppression, cultural safety, equity and inclusive education are embedded in school improvement plans, with particular emphasis on identifying and removing barriers to student achievement.
- 9.0 **Communication and Outreach**  
Grand Erie will communicate its equity and inclusive strategies to parent(s)/caregiver(s), students, employees, and community members through various communication channels.

**Reference(s):**

- Equity and Inclusive Education Policy (SO-014)
- Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014)
- Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019-22
- Grand Erie Equity Action Plan
- [Ontario Education Equity Action Plan \(2017\)](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [The Accepting Schools Act \(2012\)](#)

**APPENDIX A**

**Anti-racism** refers to policies and practices of opposing racism through identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and promoting cultural safety

**Bias** is a tendency to affiliate with one side, showing a preference or choice. **Unconscious biases**, also known as implicit biases, are negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness, and individuals may not notice that they exist. Notably, implicit biases have been shown to trump individuals' stated commitments to equality and fairness, thereby producing behaviour that diverges from the explicit attitudes that many people profess.

**Cultural awareness** is the recognition that differences and similarities exist between cultures.

**Cultural competency** refers to an approach that focusses on attaining skills, knowledge, and attitudes to work in more effective and respectful ways with persons of different cultures.

**Cultural humility** is a lifelong journey of self-reflection and learning that involves listening without judgement and being open to learning from and about others. It involves learning about our own culture and our biases. Cultural humility is a building block for cultural safety. It is an overarching principle that is threaded through our learning and acts as the process by which change can occur.

**Culturally responsive curriculum** accurately reflects and uses the variety of knowledge of all peoples as the basis for instruction; that acknowledges and respects the diverse social backgrounds, identities and experiences of all students, and places them at the centre of the learning environment. The curriculum provides opportunities for students to understand the similarities, differences and connections between people of diverse communities. The curriculum helps students to acquire the skills and knowledge that enable them to challenge unjust practices and to build positive human relationships among their peers and among all members of society.

**Culturally responsive pedagogy** refers to teaching that recognizes that all students learn differently and that these differences might be connected to background, language, family structure and social or cultural identity, including gender and sexual identities in all their forms

**Cultural safety** results when all people feel respected and safe when they interact with the education system. Culturally safe spaces are free of racism and discrimination. People are supported to draw strength from their identity, culture and community. People in culturally safe spaces are self-reflective and aware of their positions of power and the impacts of power in relation to their roles with students, families and employee(s). "Safety" is defined by those who receive the service, not those who provide it.

**Cultural sensitivity** refers to an attitude that recognizes the differences between cultures and that these differences are important to acknowledge.

**Culture** provides a history that describes who a collective is and, for each person, it reflects their own unique form of identity. It consists of the beliefs, behaviours, objects and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. Thus, culture includes many societal aspects, including language, customs, values, norms, mores, rules, tools, technologies, products, organizations and institutions.

**Discrimination** occurs when our prejudices are acted out, resulting in some form of negative treatment of disliked groups and their members or preferential treatment for one's own reference group. Discrimination, unlike prejudice, is more than an attitude or feeling; it is an action and intimately connected to a misuse of power.

Heteronormativity is the belief that heterosexuality is the default, preferred or normal mode of sexual orientation. It assumed the gender binary that there are only two distinct and opposite genders.

**Diversity** – Diversity refers to the presence of a wide range of social characteristics within a group, organization or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, race, colour, culture, creed, gender, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, gender identity, disability, citizenship, family status, marital status, gender expression, sex, place of origin, socioeconomic circumstance and ethnicity.

**Equity** – Equity refers to a condition of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity is a process, through cultural humility, to work to eliminate disproportionality and disparity. Equity is achieved when imbalances, barriers and gaps between different groups are removed. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.

**Inclusivity in Education** – Inclusivity in education 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.

**Intersectionality** – Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social identities, such as race, class and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage

**Marginalized** refers to a person or group that is treated as insignificant or peripheral.

**Microaggression** refers to a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudices attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority).

**Oppression** refers to how one group is dominated by another more powerful individual or group through physical, psychological, social, or economic threats or force.

**Prejudice** is a preconceived opinion, thought or feeling which is held despite the availability of contrary information and without any valid proof or supporting evidence.

**Privilege** exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups to which they belong, rather than because of anything they've done or failed to do. White Privilege refers to inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by inequity and injustice.

**Racism** refers to prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. It is the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.

**Stereotypes** are preconceived notions about groups of people. They often include strong tendencies to over-generalize about individuals solely on the basis of their membership in particular racial, ethnic, or religious groups, and an unwillingness to consider new information which might lead to alterations or revisions in one's opinions. **Cultural stereotyping** causes us to overlook individual characteristics which do not match our preconceived ideas. We must be

ready to revise and change these generalizations when dealing with individuals from a particular cultural group, as we gain more information about them. Keeping standardized pictures of people from other cultures will lead us to over-simplified opinions, attitudes or judgements. The pictures may be based upon real cultural differences, however, many individuals from these cultures may not fit these standard generalizations. Making assumptions can interfere with communications and prevent us from knowing the real person, who is unique as a human being.

**Systemic barriers** arise out of apparently neutral institutions, policies or practices, and are reinforced by institutional structures and power dynamics, and result in the differential and unequal treatment of members of certain groups.

**Values** are the core of one's beliefs and are manifested in all behaviours. Everyone has biases and prejudices based upon their values.

**White Supremacy** refers to beliefs, ideas and practices that promote the superiority of lighter skinned or white human races over other racial groups.

**Xenophobia** is the fear or hatred of foreigners, people from different cultures, or strangers.

Note: Definitions related to equity and inclusivity are constantly evolving; these reflect current thinking.