

## **RACE RELATIONS, CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN LEARNING**

### **POLICY**

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**Appendix A** - Relevant sections of the *Nova Scotia Education Act and Regulations*

### **1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Our school system has an essential role in helping students to succeed in school and their transitions to adult roles. Equity in the delivery of all the board's programs, services, and resources is critical to the achievement of successful outcomes for all students.

At the same time, the Board recognizes that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, physical or mental ability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, national or aboriginal origin, place of origin, religion, faith, sex or gender, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.

We recognize that the biases existing within our society are also present in our school system. We also believe that the school board and its schools, like all organizations in Canadian society, have an ongoing responsibility to understand and work toward eliminating all forms of discrimination. Therefore, we place a high priority on the effective implementation and monitoring of the board's Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) Policy Framework.

The board's commitment to positive Race Relations, Cultural Understandings, and Human Rights and Equity in Learning is grounded in our belief that we have shared responsibility for:

- Improving student achievement, supporting the development of lifelong learners, and promoting the rights, dignity and self-worth of every person who is served by our school system.
- Building inclusive learning environments that foster social, intellectual, physical, cultural, emotional, and moral development.
- Developing learning environments that value diversity and foster respect among all members of our school community.
- Creating a school system that is responsive to the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

- Working as advocates for social and educational change to improve equity, safety, and access to learning that supports the personal development and success of all students.
- Learning about bias, prejudice, stereotyping, harassment and discrimination.
- Actively working to identify and eliminate barriers that undermine the board's ability to reach its vision for student achievement and equity in learning.
- Building strong and inclusive school, home and community relations that support improved student achievement and the board's ability to eliminate barriers to the equitable participation of parents and community members in our schools and school system.

This commitment is also based on the board's specific duties under the *Nova Scotia Education Act* which state that all boards shall,

- (a) provide and implement programs and policies promoting Mi'kmaq and African-Canadian education; and
- (b) include in learning materials information respecting the history, language, heritage, culture, traditions and the contribution to society of the Mi'kmaq and African people. 1995-96, c. 1, s. 138 and 140.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

**Bias** is an opinion, preference, prejudice, or inclination formed without reasonable justification that then influences an individual's or group's ability to evaluate a particular situation objectively or accurately.

**Culture** is the totality of ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, perspectives, language and way of life a people who share a background based on history, experience, geography, or other factors. Expressions of culture include foods, celebrations, music, visual arts, laws, institutions, customs, and rituals. Culture is both a collective and individual lived experience and consequently may shift and may contain paradoxes, and even oppositional elements.

**Cross-Cultural Understanding** means recognizing individual differences while gaining an appreciation, respect and knowledge of other cultures different from one's own.

**Discrimination** is any unfair treatment of a person or group based on the grounds identified in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. Types of discrimination include, but are not limited to:

- a) **Direct Discrimination:** Any action from individuals, groups or organizations, whether intended or unintended, which differentiates between person based on their membership in a protected group as set out in the *Act*, other than special programs designed to address inequitable conditions of individuals or groups.
- b) **Indirect discrimination or condonation:** The act of overlooking or accepting discriminatory behaviours or practices.
- c) **Systemic discrimination:** Organizational policies, procedures, practices, and conduct which may not be discriminatory in their intent, but negatively impact individuals or groups protected under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*.
- d) **Failure to Accommodate:** Failure to reasonably accommodate a person short of undue hardship on any of the protected grounds defined in the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*.

- e) **Association:** Discrimination against individuals because of their relationship or association with a person or persons identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination under the *Act*.
- f) **Reprisal:** actions which may include threats, intimidation, denial of opportunity or undue negative focus on the rights of individuals or groups who claim and enforce their rights under the *Act*.

**Diversity in Education** means more than acknowledging, celebrating or accepting differences. It is a set of policies, programs and practices that involve:

- learning about and practicing respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own,
- understanding that diversity includes both words and actions,
- recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others,
- building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eliminate discrimination.

**Exclusion** relates to discriminatory practices which work to constantly exclude, marginalize and disadvantage certain groups in society because of their race, age, colour, religion, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, health, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, income, or political belief, affiliation or activity.

**Equity** in education refers to the absence of systematic inequality in educational outcomes between social groups who have different levels of advantage or disadvantage because of their age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, health, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, income, or political belief, affiliation or activity.

**Harassment** refers to derogatory (e.g., critical, insulting, belittling) or vexatious (e.g., aggressive, angry, antagonistic) comments or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- any objectionable act, comment or display that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment, and any act of intimidation or threat
- conduct or comments involving any of the prohibited grounds of harassment and discrimination as defined in the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*.

**Human Rights** are the equal and absolute rights of every person to inherent dignity and equality. To protect these rights for all citizens in our province the Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination against an individual or class of individuals based on their age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, health, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, income, or political belief, affiliation or activity.

**Inclusion** is actions taken to ensure that students, staff, parents and school community members feel they belong, are engaged, and connected through their participation in classrooms, schools, and the school board.

**Oppression** is the unjust and systematic exercise of power against an identified group, such as Aboriginal peoples, Blacks or Visible Ethno-cultural communities, where laws and attitudes towards the group reinforce discrimination.

**Prejudice** is the act of pre-judging a person or group negatively, usually without adequate evidence or information. Frequently, prejudices are not recognized as false or unsound assumptions. Through repetition, prejudices come to be accepted as “common-sense notions” and, when backed up with power, result in acts of discrimination.

**Race Relations** are actions taken to promote positive race relations and racial equality by eliminating racism arising from prejudicial attitudes and systemic barriers.

**Stereotype** is the result of attributing unfounded characteristics of a whole group of people to all of its members. Stereotyping exaggerates the uniformity within a group and the differences among groups.

### **3. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

This policy replaces the board’s Race Relations, Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Policy (January, 2002).

This policy is part of the board’s RCH Policy Framework which includes an inter-related set of regional and provincial policies. Policies that will have a direct impact on the board’s ability to achieve the goals set out in this policy include,

- a. Halifax Regional School Board *Assessment and Evaluation Policy*
- b. Provincial and Halifax Regional School Board *Code of Conduct*
- c. Halifax Regional School Board *Harassment Policy*
- d. Halifax Regional School Board *Religious Education in Schools Policy*
- e. Halifax Regional School Board *Diversity Management Policy*
- f. Nova Scotia *Racial Equity Policy* (see Appendix A)
- g. Nova Scotia Department of Education, *Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program*
- h. Nova Scotia *Education Act*
- i. Nova Scotia *Human Rights Act*
- j. *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*
- k. *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

### **4. CURRICULUM MATERIALS**

Learning resources must constantly be evaluated to guarantee that students are engaging in an objective and equitable portrayal of persons, and groups, within our society.

Curriculum materials in our schools will provide opportunities for all students to:

- Understand and develop positive attitudes about diversity, including respect for race, culture, gender, religion, ability and sexual orientation.
- Understand the causes of inequity in society.
- Learn the skills and knowledge required to name, discuss, think critically about, and challenge inequitable practices in schools and society.

The board will support effective implementation of the provincial curriculum by selecting, developing and providing schools with learning resources that:

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Approved May 23, 2007

- Reflect the diversity of racial, cultural, national and Aboriginal backgrounds, gender roles, individual needs and backgrounds, as well as a range of occupations, income levels, abilities, ages, and sexual orientation.
- Highlight the positive historical and current contributions and values of individuals and groups who have experienced discrimination, including Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural peoples, and women.
- Promote perspectives on social justice related to any group victimized by genocide, unfair laws, and other world events, with particular emphasis on Mi'kmaq Peoples and African Nova Scotians.
- Emphasize learning strategies that involve a critical analysis of issues related to harassment and discrimination (e.g. anti-bias, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic education).

The Halifax Regional School Board will continue to develop and implement strategies to ensure that all curriculum, textbooks, audiovisual and other resource materials are free from bias and stereotyping of individuals and groups based on race, colour, age religion, creed, sex, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, health, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, socio-economic status, or political belief, affiliation or activity.

## **5. INSTRUCTION**

5.1 The board will promote:

- 5.1.1 School and classroom environments that are free from bias, stereotypes, harassment and discrimination based on race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, physical or mental abilities, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, national or aboriginal origin, place of origin, religion, faith, sex or gender, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status.
- 5.1.2 Instruction on naming, discussing, thinking critically about, and challenging all forms of bias, stereotypes, harassment and discrimination.
- 5.1.3 Equitable instruction which includes,
  - interactive instruction that appeals to a wide variety of learning styles and individual differences, including differentiated support when required
  - the regular use of inclusive curriculum materials (see. Section 4, above)
  - regular evaluation of the learning environment to ensure that students are engaging in an inclusive and equitable portrayal of persons and groups within our society
  - equitable treatment of students
  - high expectations for all students
  - recognition and acceptance of the importance of diversity.
  - prevention and appropriate responses to bias, stereotyping, harassment and discrimination.

## **6. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

Classroom, school and board-level assessments will comply with the board's *Student Assessment and Evaluation Policy*, including ongoing use of *The Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (1993).

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## **7. GUIDANCE AND STUDENT SUPPORT**

- 7.1 The Nova Scotia Department of Education's *Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program* document (2002) establishes the expectation for all guidance counsellors and student support workers to:
- be aware of the negative impact of racial, gender, ethnocultural, and sexual-orientation stereotyping and discrimination; and
  - to protect the rights of students at all times.
- 7.2 By incorporating leadership, advocacy and collaboration, school guidance and student support staff will,
- promote equity and access to opportunities and rigorous educational experiences for all students
  - respond to the unique and special needs of all students
  - support a safe learning environment
  - work to safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community
  - include provisions for regular, systematic identification of student needs and priorities

## **8. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

- 8.1 The board values full and meaningful participation of all communities in the development, implementation and monitoring of race relations, cross cultural understanding and human rights educational strategies and policies.
- 8.2 The board supports the continuation and development of school and regional advisory committees as mechanisms to provide meaningful education and support for RCH initiatives.
- 8.3 The board will identify and implement a variety of strategies to support effective written communications and consultations with all communities.

## **9. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- 9.1 The board will provide opportunities for training of all staff, students, elected school board members and school advisory councils to develop their knowledge and skills in race relations, cross cultural understanding and human rights.
- 9.2 The board recognizes that RCH training may be offered by board employees or external individuals and agencies and encourages staff to seek available opportunities through external mechanisms.

## **10. RESEARCH**

10.1 The School Board will implement:

- A regular and voluntary data collection system to determine the numbers of Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural students enrolled in the board's elementary and secondary schools.
- Communication strategies and support systems to assist parents/guardians in completing self-identification surveys.
- Communication strategies to encourage parents/guardians and students to complete self-identification surveys by demonstrating the value of the data to student learning and school improvement.

10.2 Where the data collected under 10.1 is determined to be valid and reliable, it will be used to:

- Document the academic progress of Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural students on a number of measures (e.g. achievement, graduation rates) as compared to the larger student population.
- Set priorities for improvement.
- Evaluate the success of new or existing academic or other initiatives designed to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural students.

10.3 The board will adopt a research based approach to identifying and implementing effective classroom practices, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural learners.

## **RACE RELATIONS, CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN LEARNING**

### **PROCEDURES**

- 1. CURRICULUM MATERIALS**
- 2. INSTRUCTION**
- 3. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**
- 4. GUIDANCE**
- 5. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**
- 6. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**
- 7. RESEARCH**

#### **1. CURRICULUM MATERIALS**

Schools, with assistance from the Program Department will ensure that,

- 1.1. Staff are taught how to detect and respond to stereotypes and bias in curriculum materials.
- 1.2. Classroom and school library materials reflect the diversity of Canadian society.
- 1.3. Materials studied in the classroom include authors from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- 1.4. Images presented in school displays, assemblies, and other school events positively reflect the diversity of students in Canada, the school, and the community.

#### **2. INSTRUCTION**

Schools, with assistance from the Program Department, will identify and address the principles of equity when planning and implementing curriculum. This includes,

- 2.1 Implementing instructional practices that are informed by knowledge of student's diverse backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and learning styles.
- 2.2 Actively selecting and introducing inclusive curriculum materials.
- 2.3 Stressing the positive contributions of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds to Canadian society.
- 2.4 Incorporating the principles of anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic education in the classroom.
- 2.5 Teaching students to detect and think critically about bias, stereotypes, harassment and discrimination based on race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, physical or mental abilities, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, national or aboriginal origin, place of origin, religion, faith, sex or gender, sexual orientation, family status, and marital status
- 2.6 Teaching students to detect and think critically about discriminatory language.
- 2.7 Providing students with skills, tools, and opportunities to create work that positively values the diversity of their own experiences and Canadian society.



### **3. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

Classroom, school and board-level assessments will comply with section four the board's *Student Assessment and Evaluation Policy*, including ongoing use of *The Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (1993).

### **4. GUIDANCE AND STUDENT SUPPORT**

- 4.1 All guidance, counselling and student support services will reflect and advance equity in schools.
- 4.2 As they follow the annual planning and implementation cycle of the provincial Comprehensive Guidance Program, schools will:
  - 4.2.1 Develop a formal procedure for identifying and prioritizing the needs of students from marginalized communities, with particular emphasis on Aboriginal, Black and Visible Ethno-cultural students.
  - 4.2.2 Implement initiatives as allowable with available resources, to address priorities identified in 4.1.1
  - 4.2.3 Ensure students are provided with information and assistance to participate in special programs such as scholarships, bursaries, and other initiatives.
  - 4.2.4 Encourage all students to consider a wide variety of program options, where available, recognizing that some students may face a variety of barriers to participation in these programs.

### **5. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

- 5.1 The board will implement:
  - 5.1.1 mechanisms to achieve effective school-community partnerships that include and address the perspectives, experiences, and needs of the diverse communities served by our school system
  - 5.1.2 ongoing programs to ensure that all communities become full participants in the schools' and system's race relations, cross cultural understanding and human rights implementation process with the purpose of eradicating all forms of discrimination within our school system.
- 5.2 The Halifax Regional School Board shall, through a process of continuing consultation, encourage and assist all communities to:
  - 5.2.1 provide input and share concerns on matters relating to race relations, cross cultural understanding and human rights
  - 5.2.2 participate equitably in all areas of school board's activities such as membership on committees and access to programs and services.

## **6. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Through ongoing staff development on all aspects of the board's RCH Policy Framework, the board will seek to ensure that schools, in their day-to-day operations, have the tools and resources to:

- 6.1 Develop and/or identify bias free learning resources.
- 6.2 Create opportunities for students to learn about the positive contributions of individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds to Canadian society.
- 6.3 Gain confidence in teaching from an anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic perspective.
- 6.4 Identify and respond to all forms stereotypes, bias, harassment and discrimination.
- 6.5 Think critically and respond to discriminatory language and visual representations.
- 6.6 Identify and eliminate policies and practices that, whether intentionally or not, are discriminatory.

## **7. RESEARCH**

- 7.1 The Student Identification Form will be included in the annual school registration process for new grade primary students and new students in grades 1 to 12.
  - 7.1.1 Schools will forward completed Student Identification Forms to the Diversity Management Coordinator.
  - 7.1.2 Data will be entered into the board's Student Information System annually and extracted as required to generate reports related to the participation and achievement of students designated on the form.
- 7.2 Data will be collected and published each year through the board's Planning for Improvement survey to document student, staff and parent opinions about learning and school culture as they relate to the board's goals for RCH in learning and parent involvement in schools.
- 7.3 Information collected through research on effective or best practices in diversity and equity education will be used to inform board and school practices in instruction, assessment and evaluation, guidance and student support.