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EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY | 1020

1. Rationale

Lakehead District School Board (LDSB) is committed to equity and inclusive education. It includes promoting equitable and inclusive learning and working environments. Lakehead District School Board values equity, inclusion and respect for all. This policy upholds human rights, in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and 7030 Human Rights and Workplace Harassment Policy. It is in compliance with the Education Act, and the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools".

Guiding Principles of Equity and Inclusive Education:

- is a foundation of excellence - in a diverse society, equity is a fundamental requirement for educational excellence and high standards of student achievement;
- meets individual needs - equity does not mean treating all students in the same way but rather, responding to the individual needs of each student and providing the conditions and interventions needed to help him or her succeed;
- identifies and eliminates barriers - all students are supported equitably through the identification and removal of discriminatory barriers that limit their ability to achieve to their full potential;
- promotes a sense of belonging - equity and inclusive education contribute to every student's sense of well-being;
- involves the broader community - effective and meaningful school-community partnerships are an essential component of an equitable and inclusive education system;
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives - sound research and analysis of successful policies and practices form the basis for the development and sharing of resources; and
- is demonstrated throughout the system – Lakehead District School Board will incorporate equity and inclusive education throughout policies, procedures and practices.

2. Policy

It is the policy of LDSB to promote equity and inclusive education in accordance with the seven guiding principles.

Lakehead District School Board is committed to:

- equity of access and equity of outcomes so that students can achieve their potential;
- fostering a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the benefit of diverse student, staff and communities; and
- identifying and addressing individual or systemic discrimination because of race**,** ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression age and disability as well as promoting inclusion for students experiencing barriers due to socio-economic status.

This policy recognizes that its shared responsibility with all LDSB community members to advance equity and inclusive education. This policy establishes the following eight areas of focus for this endeavour.

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Policies, Guidelines, Practices, and Initiatives

Lakehead District School Board structures, policies, procedures, programs, guidelines, and practices shall reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education as well as LDSB Values: Integrity, Acceptance, Respect, Responsibility and Empathy. Lakehead District School Board will review this commitment as part of the development and regular review of structures, policies, procedures, programs, guidelines, and practices. This area of focus establishes the framework for policy development and implementation in all the other areas of focus below.

Lakehead District School Board will endeavour to promote equity of access and outcomes for student achievement and well-being. The Board aims to identify and address barriers that may limit the opportunities of diverse individuals for employment, retention and promotion. All data collection, research, surveys, and census shall be developed, collected, utilized, maintained and delivered using a critical equity lens, ensuring accessibility and respect of individual privacy rights.

3.2 Shared and Committed Leadership

The principle of shared and committed leadership recognizes that all partners in education, including community partners, parents, and students, are responsible for preparing students to live in a diverse society. The Board recognizes that bringing change to instructional practices and the learning culture requires strong, focused leadership from, in particular, school board trustees, director of education, superintendents, principals, and teachers. The Board and schools will provide leadership that is responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario's communities and committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to learning.

3.3 School-Community Relationships

Lakehead District School Board shall meet the needs of diverse communities and workplaces through active involvement, input and participation of students, parents/guardians, staff and communities, to understand all perspectives about all students so that their needs can be met. Collaboration will be based on respect, open dialogue and partnerships with students, parents/guardians, staff, committees and other community groups and agencies. Lakehead District School Board will draw upon the expertise of their partners to explore innovative ways of sharing resources that can help them meet the diverse needs of students and provide new and relevant learning opportunities.

3.4 Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices

Students need to feel engaged by what they are learning, supported by staff and welcome in the learning environment. The Ministry of Education provides curriculum to all board in Ontario. The Board will review resources, instruction, and assessment/evaluation practices to ensure they are in accordance with the guiding principles.

The Board is committed to identifying and implementing inclusive curriculum processes supported by resources, instructional strategies and assessment and evaluation practices that reflect and respond to the diverse needs and abilities of diverse learners. Lakehead District School Board will provide students and staff with opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Students should be able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, culture and staff of the school. Lakehead District School Board will affirm and value students' first languages.

3.5 Religious Accommodation

Lakehead District School Board upholds the Ontario Human Rights Code that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed (includes religion) and establishes the duty to accommodate. Lakehead District School Board will take all reasonable steps to provide creed **(**religious) accommodation for students and staff (see Appendix A). Lakehead District School Board acknowledges an individual's right to follow or not to follow creed (religious) beliefs.

3.6 School and Workplace Climate and the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination

Lakehead District School Board will foster a positive school climate in which all members of the school community feel safe, welcome, accepted, and supports positive behaviours and interactions. Lakehead District School Board recognizes that harassment, discrimination and workplace harassment can negatively affect working relationships, the learning process and personal well-being, as well as school climate. Lakehead District School Board has established policies and procedures that enable students and staff to safely report incidents of harassment, discrimination and workplace harassment and that will enable the Board to respond in a timely manner. Regular monitoring of school climate is essential. All schools will administer school climate surveys at least once every two years and use survey data to inform school improvement planning.

3.7 Professional Learning

Lakehead District School Board will provide professional learning opportunities for staff, administrators and trustees to deepen awareness and build capacity to promote a climate of understanding and mutual respect that is conducive for equity and inclusive education. Professional learning activities with LDSB will be ongoing, evidence-based and focused on positive outcomes, including topics such as anti-racism, anti-discrimination, anti-homophobia, antisemitism, anti-Muslim discrimination**,** and gender-based violence. Lakehead District School Board will provide opportunities for staff and trustees to participate in training and will provide information for students and parents to increase their knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusive education.

3.8 Accountability and Transparency

Lakehead District School Board will continuously assess and monitor progress in reviewing policies, programs, guidelines, and practices and in implementing this policy. Equity and inclusive education principles are to be embedded in the Board's multi-year strategic plan. Lakehead District School Board and School Improvement Plans, within the context of the Board's multi-year plan, will take into consideration the Board's 1020 Equity and Inclusive Education Policy. The plans should focus on identifying and removing any barriers to student learning in order to reduce gaps in achievement and provide a respectful and responsive school climate. Lakehead District School Board will provide ongoing and open communication to keep all stakeholders informed of the Board's goals and progress as they relate to equity and inclusive education.

4. Review

This policy shall be reviewed in accordance with 2010 Policy Development and Review Policy.

Cross Reference	**Date Approved**	**Legal Reference**
7020 Equitable Employment 7030 Human Rights and Workplace Harassment 8070 Safe Schools – System Expectations 8071 Bullying Prevention and Intervention	April 4, 1995 **Date Revised** June 24, 2008 September 28, 2010 May 28, 2013 November 24, 2020	Ontario Human Rights Code Education Act Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools