

POLICY 15 – EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This policy supports the Saskatoon Board of Education’s commitment to the elimination of institutional discrimination and to promote equity, inclusion, anti-oppression and anti-racism in all its policies, procedures, programs, operations and practices.

All people enjoy certain fundamental rights and freedoms regardless of religion; creed; marital status; family status; sex; sexual orientation; disability; age; colour; ancestry; nationality; place of origin; race or perceived race; receipt of public assistance or gender identity and gender expression.

Accountability for equity and inclusive education is not the responsibility of a single department or individual, it is a collective and ongoing commitment that must be evident in every decision, policy and action across the division.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Saskatoon Board of Education upholds the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Constitution Act, 1982 and confirmed in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018.
- 1.2 The board upholds the fundamental principle that all people are equal in dignity and rights and that everyone has the right to education. The board recognizes that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are aspirational documents that have influenced and shaped legal documents related to human rights in Canada and Saskatchewan. Saskatoon Public Schools has a formal response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and continues to uphold these specific commitments within the division.
- 1.3 Within the context of the Treaty relationship in Canada, the board is committed to respecting diversity and to an equitable, inclusive and accessible education system that is affirming and upholds and reflects equity and inclusionary principles, which permeate all policies, programs, practices and operations.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1 **Board Policies, Programs, Guidelines and Practices:** The board is committed to serving its diverse populations of students, staff, caregivers and community partners by incorporating the principles of equity, inclusion, anti-oppression and anti-racism into the development and review of policies,

programs, practices and operations.

- 2.2 **School-Community Relationships:** The principle of equitable school-community relationships emphasizes the importance of consistent trust-based communication with families grounded in dignity, openness, respect and the recognition of everyone's unique identity. Regular consultation with members of diverse school communities helps to identify challenges and barriers experienced by students in schools.
- 2.3 **Shared and Committed Leadership:** All partners in education - including community members, staff, caregivers and students - are responsible for preparing students to thrive in a diverse society. To uphold the principle of shared and committed leadership, the board will support leadership development and learning opportunities focused on equity, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-oppression for system leaders, teachers, support staff and students.
- 2.4 **Religious Accommodations:** Everyone has the right to follow or not follow religious or creed beliefs and/or practices free from discrimination. Saskatoon Public Schools has a process to respond to religious and/or creed accommodations for both staff and students.
- 2.5 **School Climate and Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment:** The board is committed to a climate where all individuals feel a sense of belonging, are heard, accepted and valued. This includes creating environments that reflect the identities of all community members and uphold their dignity – free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. To support this commitment, the principles of equity, inclusion, anti-oppression and anti-racism will be embedded throughout all learning and working environments.
- 2.6 **Accountability and Transparency:** The board recognizes that meaningful equity and inclusion require clear accountability and transparent processes. To that end:
- An annual equity accountability report will be presented to the board in a regular meeting.
 - Equity and inclusion expectations will be embedded in leadership performance reviews and staff appraisal processes to reinforce shared responsibility.
 - All members of Saskatoon Public Schools—trustees, leaders, staff and partners—are accountable for advancing the intent and spirit of this policy.

3. Responsibilities

Trustees, division leadership and staff share the responsibility for creating supportive and inclusive environments and for adhering to their specific responsibilities.

3.1 These responsibilities include:

- Fostering a culture that embraces equity, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-oppression.
- Supporting and participating in education and professional development to enhance awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes that align with this policy.
- Modeling respect for diversity and respecting the right to have personal beliefs, provided those beliefs do not harm or negatively impact the rights of others who may or may not share those beliefs.

4. Definitions

Equity

Equity refers to the process of removing inequalities and disparities. Equity recognizes that some individuals, particularly those who have been historically marginalized, face barriers others do not, and it requires intentional, proactive efforts to remove biases and systemic barriers embedded in policies, practices, relationships, and structures.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education means “providing equitable treatment and appropriate, high-quality education to all students. It encompasses a blend of philosophical beliefs, practices and processes to create flexible support systems and learning environments based on students’ strengths, abilities, interests and needs.’ Ultimately, the goal of inclusive education is to presume the competence and strength of the learner, reduce exclusion by eliminating barriers to one’s school success and enhance participation and sense of belonging in one’s community. This includes anti-racist, anti-oppressive and equity practices.” (*Saskatchewan School Boards Association Adopted Position 2.5: Inclusive Education*)

Racism

An individualized understanding of racism would define it as thoughts and actions of a person working against another because of their race, the belief that some races are better than others and the mistreatment of a person based on these beliefs. However, racism can also exist within institutional structures, policies and procedures. Racism is more than just

individualized incidents of racism; rather, it impacts everything at all levels of society and is understood as systems of advantage, power and oppression based on race.

Oppression

Oppression can be understood as a prolonged system of domination that denies individuals' dignity, human rights, social resources and power. It is the imbalance and misuse of power by a dominant group towards an oppressed target group resulting in the mistreatment of some individuals and groups. This results in inequitable conditions as some individuals and target groups experience ongoing barriers accessing and receiving services such as education, housing, health care, etc. Conversely, individuals from dominant groups can receive unearned social advantages which enables barriers to equal access to remain largely invisible and ignored by dominant groups.

Legal References: The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018
 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
 The Constitution Act, 1982
 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights
 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
 Convention on the Rights of the Child
 Surrey District School Board, Policy 1200: Racial Equity

 SSBA Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Policy Advisory, 2023

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