

# Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan



2017

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## A Message from Minister Hunter

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October 2017

Ensuring equity is essential for improving student achievement and promoting student and staff well-being. This is why Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan is so important to the future of Ontario's students.

All students deserve to have every opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed personally and academically, with access to rich learning experiences that provide a strong foundation of confidence that continues throughout their lives. Schools should be safe and welcoming places where all students have the tools they need to achieve success and follow their chosen pathways to life after graduation including work, college, apprenticeship or university.

Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan is a clear and robust blueprint that outlines how we will identify and eliminate persistent inequities in the education system. Together with our renewed focus on achievement and well-being, Ontario's publicly funded education system will be fairer and more inclusive for all students, educators and staff, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or any other factor related to individual identity.

Ontario's path to equity has been supported by the contributions of thousands of remarkable educators, students and parents. It will continue to benefit from the passion and dedication of everyone in the publicly

funded education system. Our past experience has shown us that when we focus on a specific goal with deliberate intent, we have greater success in achieving our collective objectives.

I know our pursuit of equity and the protection of human rights is achievable, and I am pleased to work collaboratively with our education leaders to change the lives of Ontario's students for the better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MH', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

The Honourable Mitzie Hunter  
Minister of Education

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *Plan d'action ontarien pour l'équité en matière d'éducation, 2017.*

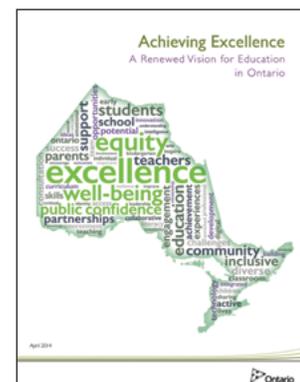
This publication is available on the Ministry of Education's website, at [ontario.ca/educationequity](http://ontario.ca/educationequity).





# Moving Forward: Fulfilling Our Renewed Vision for Education

Ensuring equity is a central goal of Ontario's publicly funded education system, as set out in *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014). It stems from a fundamental principle that every student should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically, regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances. While important in and of itself, equity is also necessary to realizing all other elements of our renewed vision, from achieving excellence, to promoting well-being, and enhancing public confidence in our education system. It is a critical component of our commitment to the success of every student and child in Ontario.



Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan is the province's roadmap to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and bias from schools and classrooms to support the potential for all students to succeed. This means working together with students, parents, educators, principals, board staff, trustees and community leaders to bring the action plan to life and create a learning environment that inspires every child and student to reach their full potential and to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

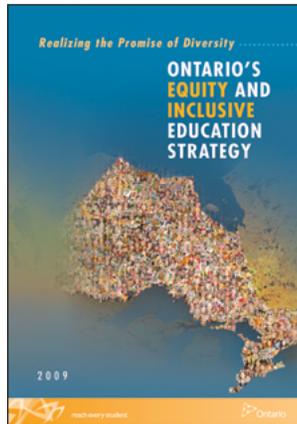
We live in one of the most diverse jurisdictions in the world, and the Ontario government recognizes that our diversity makes our society stronger and richer. As such, the success of our graduates necessitates building their confidence in who they are and their resilience in the face of adversity and ensuring they feel accepted and included. While many indicators of success for students have improved over the past two decades and Ontario's education system has been recognized internationally for this success, these improvements have not provided for equitable outcomes for all students.

Not only do persistent achievement gaps continue to exist, but even academically successful students do not always feel included in their school community or proud of who they are. This can have long-term negative impacts in other areas, such as health, well-being, economic self-sufficiency and participation in society. The consequences are wide-ranging, affect the individual, families, and communities, and can be seen across generations.

Our schools should be places where students not only learn about diversity but also experience it. Students should see themselves and their classmates reflected in their studies. Students and families should expect their interactions with their school community to leave them feeling accepted for who they are. All students should believe in their potential and know that they will be supported along the way from Kindergarten to Grade 12 and beyond, no matter what pathway they choose. The vision of equity and inclusion for all must also be extended to our teachers, principals and education workers, who together anchor the broader school community.

Many Ontario schools have already made great progress in creating equitable and inclusive environments, with teachers and education

workers at the forefront of this work, and with many existing provincial strategies contributing to the advancement of equity and inclusion. Our success in educating newcomer children, for example, has been recognized internationally. Indeed, Ontario's publicly funded education system is well positioned to go deeper and broader in the effort to remove systemic barriers that hold students back. As we have grown to better understand these issues, it has become clear that further action is required.



Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan will complement and build on the Ministry of Education's 2009 strategy, set out in *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*. For the better part of a decade, the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy has guided and supported the education community in identifying and working towards eliminating the biases, barriers and power dynamics that limit students' prospects for learning, growing and fully contributing to

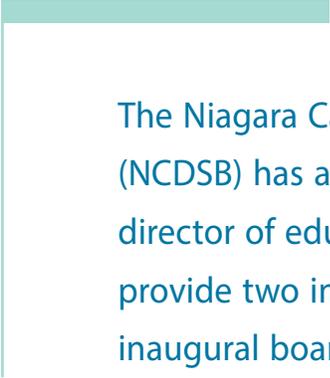
society. Under the strategy, all 72 school boards developed equity and inclusive education policies that include a religious accommodation guideline and procedures for students and staff to report incidents of discrimination and harassment. In addition, seven regional equity networks have been established to support schools and boards in the effective implementation of the strategy.

The ministry has also supported student conferences designed to empower youth to see themselves as leaders of social change, with programming that incorporates global citizenship. A number of organizations have partnered with the ministry to provide in-depth professional development for school board leaders on implicit biases and to build capacity and develop resources to support LGBTQ and Two-Spirited students and their families. We will continue to provide resources and support professional development to combat Islamophobia, antisemitism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. Among these resources are workshops for teachers on Islamophobia and its impacts on our schools and classrooms. Propelled by a culture of continuous improvement, the work of schools and boards to realize the goals of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is still ongoing today.

In addition to the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, the Ministry of Education continues to implement the actions outlined in *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples* (2016). In particular, the ministry's Indigenous Education Strategy supports learning and achievement for Indigenous students and promotes awareness about First Nation, Métis and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions in schools. It is an essential component of Ontario's work with Indigenous peoples, which focuses on improving student achievement and well-being among First Nation, Métis and Inuit students.

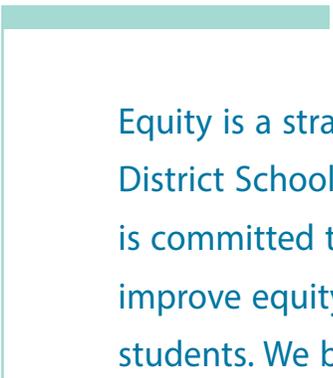
We are also working with other ministries and government agencies to develop a process for collaboratively producing programs that will better support Black youth in the future, such as those outlined in **Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan**, the **Ontario Black Youth Action Plan**, and **Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy**. Other programs and partnerships include collaboration with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to improve access to postsecondary education by helping to eliminate financial and non-financial barriers, and with the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario on developing an education accessibility standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and issues relating to employment for people with disabilities through **Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan** (2016).

Building on all of this, Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan opens up new fronts in our efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and systemic barriers in our school communities. It is not about a new direction, but rather about refocusing our work and bringing new resources to bear as a means of accelerating our progress towards meeting our goals.



The Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) has a best practice whereby the director of education and board legal counsel provide two information sessions prior to an inaugural board – one for prospective trustees, and one for new trustees – that outline good governance and responsibilities, finance, equity, student achievement and well-being.

– John Crocco, Director of Education, NCDSB



Equity is a strategic priority of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). Our school district is committed to reducing barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students. We believe that we can achieve this by identifying students and groups of students who face barriers to learning; differentiating resources and supports for students; ensuring effective use of funding; and improving graduation rates for all students including Indigenous students, students living in poverty, English language learners, and students with special education needs. Our success in improving equity of outcomes for all students is supported by our work with community partners.

– Jennifer Adams, Director of Education, OCDSB



## Objectives and Actions

Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan is designed to realize the goal of ensuring equity, as part of Ontario's renewed vision for education:

*"Ontario schools need to be places where everyone can succeed in a culture of high expectations. They need to be places where educators and students value diversity, respect each other, and see themselves reflected in their learning. It is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at risk of not succeeding. . . .*

*". . . The fundamental principle driving this work is that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors."*

*(Achieving Excellence, 2014, p. 8)*

The plan outlines the actions, policies and professional learning that will help us realize the vision of *Achieving Excellence*. It will meet its objectives through a set of actions designed to identify and eliminate embedded systemic barriers and discriminatory institutional and instructional practices that negatively impact the achievement and well-being of students and lead to inequitable outcomes.

Systemic barriers are caused by embedded biases in policies, practices and processes, and may result in differential treatment. Barriers can be unintentional – for example, learning materials that do not take into account the diversity of our communities – often these are the result of doing things the way they have always been done. Regardless of the reason for them, their impact can be detrimental to many. It is also important for us to recognize and address the additional barriers and unique experiences of discrimination that can arise for some students when factors such as race, class, gender identity, religion and physical or intellectual ability intersect.

To address these challenges, we must know who our students are and what strengths and experiences they bring. We must find ways to detect structures or patterns of behavior that may negatively impact student achievement and well-being in order to begin to identify barriers. With that knowledge, we can try new approaches and allocate resources effectively to address and eliminate those barriers. We are committed to sharing current, evidence-based practices, programs and pedagogies, exploring innovative program options and enacting policies that will help address all forms of discrimination.

The action plan will leverage and further support the work of education leaders to strengthen and reinvigorate the existing Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. To execute the action plan, the Ministry of Education has created the **Education Equity Secretariat**, which will bring new resources to bear on the identification and removal of systemic barriers in order to uphold and further the interests of Ontario's students, school staff and families, and to ensure their empowerment.

The mandate of the Secretariat is to facilitate the strengthening of cultures of respect for equity in our schools, as places of learning and as places of work, with the assurance of intentionality, accountability, and equity

across the education system. The Secretariat will work with all education partners in a spirit of collaborative professionalism to advance this work across Ontario's publicly funded education system.

Our progress so far in promoting equity and inclusion in education tells us that when we focus on a small number of clear objectives and track our impact, we have better success in achieving them. Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan sets out the action items that will enable us, in consultation and collaboration with our education partners, students, parents and Ontario communities, to combat persistent systemic inequities and improve student well-being and achievement. The action plan builds on the goals of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy: shared and committed leadership; equity and inclusive policies and practices; and accountability and transparency.



The development of the Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan with measurable outcomes, is a demonstration of our commitment to evolve and to ensure that equitable and inclusive practices, policies and initiatives are implemented at all levels in the Durham District School Board (DDSB).

This is important work as we ensure accountability as system leaders. We set clear direction, ensure the engagement of stakeholders, and establish clear and measurable goals, implementation plans and expectations as part of our accountability measures to ensure that our Equity and Inclusive education initiatives demonstrate evidence of impact.

– Lisa Millar, Director of Education, DDSB



# Overview: Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan

This section provides a general overview of the key initiatives of Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan in four areas:

- School and Classroom Practices
- Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices
- Data Collection, Integration and Reporting
- Organizational Culture Change

## ► School and Classroom Practices

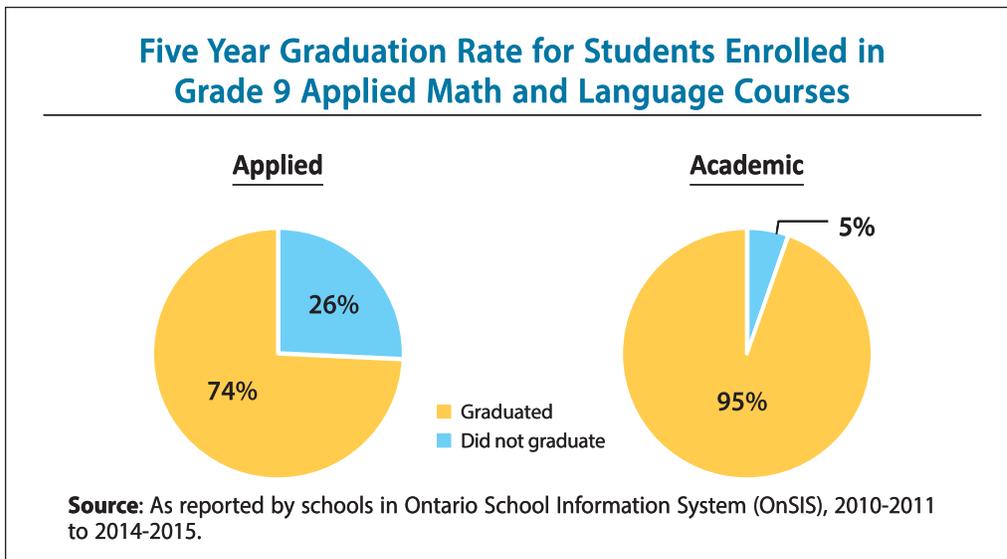
A key aspect of removing systemic barriers is to ensure that school and classroom practices reflect and respond to the diversity of students and staff.

Existing structures, policies, programs and practices may unintentionally disadvantage certain student populations, including racialized students, students experiencing poverty, Indigenous students,

newcomers to Canada, students who identify as LGBTQ or Two-Spirited, children and youth in care, religious minorities, French language minorities, students with disabilities, and students with special education needs. Our goal is to identify existing systemic barriers and remove them, and to guard against such barriers as we develop new policies and programs.

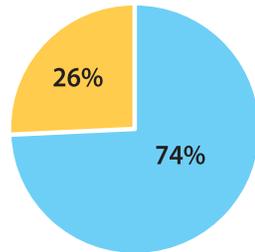
While we have achieved much for students, we continue to observe poorer outcomes for disproportionate numbers of students from low-income environments, racialized students, Indigenous students, students who identify as LGBTQ or Two-Spirited, children and youth in care, students with disabilities, and students with special education needs. The ministry will work with education partners, students, parents and communities to examine and address any systemic barriers built into our system so that more students can achieve and pursue their chosen pathways to work, college, apprenticeship or university.

For example, applied and academic courses in secondary schools were initially designed to accommodate diverse learning styles and keep future education and career pathways open. However, an unintended consequence is that a disproportionate number of students from low-income families, racialized students, Indigenous students and students with special education needs are enrolled in applied courses and are underrepresented among students who graduate and go on to pursue postsecondary education.

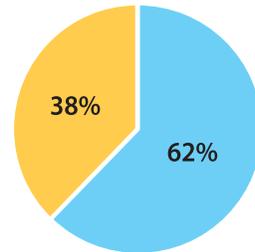


### Unintended Equity Outcomes: Percentage of Enrolment Records in Academic and Applied Grade 9 Mathematics Course

Schools in higher-income communities



Schools in lower-income communities



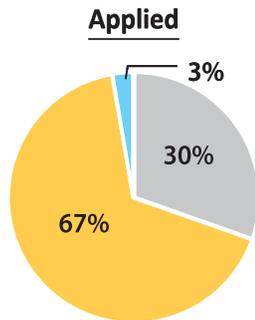
■ Academic  
■ Applied

**Source:** As reported by schools in Ontario School Information System (OnSIS), 2014-2015: Tax Filer (Statistics Canada TI Family File), 2013.

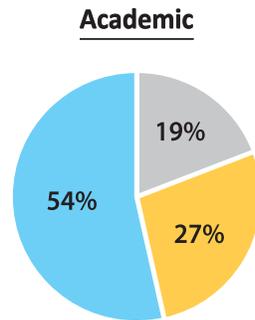
**Please note:** High-income and low-income schools are grouped based on the estimated LIM 50 (low-income measure aligned with Poverty Reduction Strategy indicators) for each school according to the upper and lower quartiles (i.e., the percentage of school community population below LIM 50 is 16.76% or less in high-income schools and 27.57% or more in low-income schools).

### Where do Students go After High School?

Percentage of Students who Enrolled in Grade 9 Applied Math and Language Courses and Registered Directly to College or University



Percentage of Students who Enrolled in Grade 9 Academic Math and Language Courses and Registered Directly to College or University



■ College  
■ University  
■ Other

**Source:** College and university registrations as reported by the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) and Ontario University Application Centre (OUAC), 2010-2011 to 2015-2016.

It is worth noting that Ontario is the only province in Canada that separates students into academic and applied courses in Grade 9, with most provinces beginning course selection in Grade 10. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also highlighted the equity challenges associated with early separation of students

and has recommended that education systems “avoid early tracking and defer student course selections until upper secondary.”<sup>1</sup>

Students must also experience teaching and learning that is reflective of their needs and of who they are. In order to ensure that all students feel safe, accepted and inspired to succeed, schools and classrooms must be responsive to culture, broadly defined. “Culturally responsive pedagogy” recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure and social or cultural identity. It goes beyond recognizing uniqueness to intentionally nurturing it in order to create and facilitate effective conditions for learning. School and classroom practices must be reflective of and responsive to the diversity of students and staff.

We also know that we need to take a critical look at student discipline, because racialized students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students with special education needs are overrepresented in the data on suspensions and expulsions. We will work with all school boards, together with students, parents and education partners, to develop interventions, preventive approaches and programs to address this issue, and we will assess the results of these efforts in order to inform best practices throughout the province.

The Education Equity Secretariat will work with boards and education partners, including providers of before- and after-school child care programs, on ways of addressing systemic barriers and discriminatory practices, with the support of the ministry. To that end, the action plan prioritizes:

- continuing the implementation of teaching practices and curriculum that reflect the needs and realities of all students;
- introducing a renewed approach to Grade 9 in which all students are supported in achieving their maximum potential and choosing appropriate pathways to work, college, apprenticeship, or university;
- collecting and analyzing data on suspensions, expulsions and exclusions and the groups affected; and
- increasing parent engagement in equity and inclusive education, particularly by identifying strategies to reach out to parents who may be disengaged from the education system.

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1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools* (2012), p. 56.

## ► Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the environment for both student and staff in the education system. The diversity of the students in Ontario schools should be reflected in the diversity of their education workers, teachers, and school and system leaders. Strengthening diversity in leadership and in the classroom helps not only to promote a sense of belonging among students, but also helps to bolster innovation and creativity in the school environment.

To create safe, inclusive and engaging learning and work environments, education leaders must be committed to equity and inclusion for all students and to upholding and promoting human rights. A necessary and foundational step to creating such learning and work environments is to ensure accountability at all levels of school boards for equity, inclusion and human rights. To support the implementation of this step, the action plan prioritizes:

- strengthening accountability for equity and human rights in performance appraisals for principals, supervisory officers, and directors of education and in directors' annual reports;
- establishing ongoing equity, inclusion and human rights training for staff and school and system leaders, including school board trustees;
- enhancing diversity in the recruitment, hiring and promotion of educators and school and system leaders; and
- working with school boards to establish formal structures to promote and enforce human rights and equity.

## ► Data Collection, Integration and Reporting

A critical step on the road to ensuring equity is to gain a clearer understanding of who our students are and of their school experience.

We know that collecting and analyzing voluntary demographic data and perceptual data can enable our school and system leaders to more precisely

address the barriers to student success. For example, comparing identity-based student data with data on program enrolment, suspensions and expulsions, and graduation rates may reveal more precisely how certain groups are being disadvantaged, how to identify and remove systemic barriers to success and, accordingly, where to target our resources. In the same way, indicators of well-being and student voice may help us understand the strengths and experiences that students bring to their education.

We know that collecting data and sensitive information can raise concerns about privacy and stigmatization, particularly among people who experience discrimination. For example, the Ministry of Education has been working to build trust with Indigenous partners, recognizing the importance of principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) for First Nation peoples in particular. We have established voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification policies within the provincially funded school system, and these continue to be a key priority for the ministry. The data gathered is used to enable the ministry, school boards and schools to understand the demographics of First Nation, Métis and Inuit learners and to implement targeted strategies to build on the strengths and meet the specific needs of those students, to support their broader success and well-being.

The analysis of identity data about staff at all levels, coupled with the identification and removal of systemic barriers, will also help change recruitment, hiring, promotion and professional development strategies. As with the collection of student data, all data will be collected on a voluntary basis and in accordance with laws governing privacy and confidentiality.

Enhanced data collection and outcome measurement will support evidence-based decision making at the school board and ministry level. Data gathering at the board level will be tailored to meet the needs of local communities that may be facing, for example, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination affecting people with disabilities.

The ministry will develop, in consultation with education partners, consistent processes for collecting, analyzing and publicly reporting on

disaggregated identity-based data. In addition to Indigenous self-identification, some student identity data is already collected province-wide, such as exceptionalities, immigration status and language first spoken. How this data is used and mobilized to close equity gaps varies across the province. In addition, only one school board in Ontario collects broader identity data, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and parental socio-economic status.

A consistent approach to collecting and analyzing voluntarily provided identity-based data will help local school boards identify where systemic barriers exist, and will help determine how to eliminate discriminatory biases in order to support equity and student achievement and well-being through training and targeted programs and supports. This work will support the mandate of Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate and will align with data standards developed by the Directorate.

The immediate steps in the action plan include:

- working with school boards to develop a consistent approach to the collection of voluntarily provided identity-based student data;
- working with Indigenous partners to co-develop indicators of Indigenous student success and well-being;
- providing support to school boards on sharing knowledge and best practices when applying student-identity data; and
- supporting school boards and labour partners in undertaking workforce data collection and analysis to ensure representative, equitable and healthy work and learning environments.

## ► **Organizational Culture Change**

The Ministry of Education must lead by example. By applying an equity lens to internal ministry structures, policies, programs and practices, we will work to ensure an authentic and vibrant organizational culture. This shift in culture will be a model of diversity, equity, inclusion, and commitment to upholding and promoting human rights.

The removal of systemic barriers calls for a systemic culture change driven by our core values and respect for principles of equity and

inclusion. An equitable and inclusive education system is a necessary condition to enable all Ontario students to feel included, respected and able to succeed. Together with our education partners, we are invested in working towards that goal in the spirit and culture of collaborative professionalism, including consultations and co-development with our Indigenous partners.

Applying an equity, inclusion and human rights perspective to internal organizational structures, policies, programs and practices will help to identify, model, frame discussions about and work to support an inclusive and diverse education sector. The action plan will facilitate this organizational change and support the shift in culture by prioritizing:

- collecting and analyzing identity-based data on the Ministry of Education's workforce to ensure, equitable and healthy work environments that represent Ontario's diversity;
- providing human rights compliance training to Ministry of Education senior management;
- reviewing the appointment process for Ministry of Education advisory committees to ensure appropriate and diverse representation; and
- establishing an expert equity community advisory group to serve as a resource for the Education Equity Secretariat and school board communities.

# In Detail: The Three-Year Action Plan

Responsibility and accountability for completing the action items rests with the Ministry of Education and its component divisions, branches and offices, including the Education Equity Secretariat, as appropriate for each item and activity. The ministry will work closely in collaboration with education partners, students, parents and communities to accomplish the action items and achieve the outcomes indicated for each year of the action plan.

## ► School and Classroom Practices

### Action Items

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#### **1. Strengthening inclusive and culturally responsive and relevant teaching, curriculum, assessment and resources**

- Enhance the Ontario curriculum review process to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences are reflected in the curriculum.
- Implement revisions to the Ontario curriculum to include mandatory learning about the history of residential schools, treaties and the legacy of colonialism.
- Further support boards in implementing teaching practices, curriculum and assessment that are culturally reflective of and responsive to the students they teach, so that all students see themselves, and their own and their classmates' lived experience, reflected in what and how they are learning.
- Provide resources and professional development supports to teachers and school leaders to combat Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia and transphobia.
- Support boards in assessing learning resources (both traditional and electronic), including resources in library collections, to ensure that they are accessible and that they reflect diversity.

#### **2. Supporting student pathway choices**

- Work with education partners, students, parents and communities to examine and address systemic barriers that limit students' ability to achieve and to pursue their chosen pathways after graduation.
- In collaboration with education partners, introduce a renewed approach to Grade 9 in which all students are supported in achieving their maximum potential and choosing appropriate pathways to work, college, apprenticeship, or university.

### 3. Addressing suspension, expulsion, and exclusion rates

- Facilitate boards' efforts in gathering data on suspensions, expulsions and exclusions and on the groups affected.
- Assist boards in identifying ways to address disparities that may be revealed by the data.

### 4. Increasing parent engagement in equity and inclusive education

- Enhance the focus on equity and inclusive education, making it a theme for the 2018–19 Parent Reaching Out grants.
- Identify more intentional strategies for reaching out and ensuring representation of diverse communities on PICs and school councils.
- Work with school boards and Indigenous partners to strengthen Indigenous Education Advisory Committees.
- Identify strategies for reaching out to parents who are disengaged from the education system for a variety of reasons.

## Outcomes/Performance Measures

### 1. Strengthening inclusive and culturally responsive and relevant teaching, curriculum, assessment and resources

*Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- School boards and EQAO demonstrate commitment to inclusive/universal design and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy through their strategic plans, and demonstrate how inclusive design has been implemented in schools and classrooms. Examples of these are reflected in school and system leaders' performance appraisals as evidence of meeting equity goals.
- Students, parents and community members are engaged in the process of assessing school library holdings and advising on guiding principles for augmenting collections.

*Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Inclusive/universal design and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy are fundamental to school and classroom planning.
- Schools and classrooms are more inclusive, safe and welcoming for all students.
- Students have access to rich and diverse library resources.

**2. Supporting student pathway choices**

*Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Consider the outcomes of the current approach to academic and applied course selection and pursue opportunities, in collaboration with partners, to ensure that all students are supported in achieving their maximum potential and choosing appropriate pathways to work, college, apprenticeship, or university.

*Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Monitor and report on the outcomes of the renewed approach, such as graduation and post-secondary education transition rates, using identity-based data.

**3. Addressing suspension, expulsion and exclusion rates**

*Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Positive preventive measures are used more often to address student behaviour.
- Data reflects fewer incidents of human rights violations.
- Boards analyse suspension, expulsion and exclusion data in the context of student identity data to identify and address systemic disparities.
- A province-wide conference is organized to showcase effective practices in addressing student behavioural concerns.

*Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Students report feeling safe and accepted in school climate surveys.
- Schools report fewer suspensions, expulsions and exclusions.
- Educators and relevant staff receive training on established positive preventive measures for addressing student behaviour.
- Local board and school strategies reflecting best practices are deployed to reduce/eliminate overrepresentations in student discipline data.

**4. Increasing parent engagement in equity and inclusive education**

*Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- School leaders, educators and staff actively and intentionally encourage the engagement of parents who have not previously been active in the school community.
- Parents/guardians and other community members are valued as important resources in creating and maintaining inclusive and equitable school communities.

*Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Sustained and intentional engagement of parents from diverse populations, and of diverse communities, in the board is supported through Parents Reaching Out grants.

## ► Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices

### Action Items

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#### 1. Accountability for equity and human rights

- Enhance accountability for equity and human rights in principal, vice-principal, and supervisory officer performance appraisals by including equity goals in performance plans.
- Promote equity and human rights criteria in director performance appraisals.
- Have directors report on progress in meeting equity goals in their annual reports, including indicators such as:
  - measurable increases in diversity on school board leadership teams;
  - the inclusion of reachable human rights and equity goals in school board strategic plans;
  - measurable evidence of diversity in secondments to faculties of education and the Ministry of Education.
- Support an increased role for existing board-led regional equity networks in implementing equity initiatives linked to School Improvement Plans for Student Achievement and Well-Being (SIPSAs) and Board Improvement Plans for Student Achievement and Well-Being (BIPSAs) through renewed mandates and enhanced funding.

#### 2. Enhanced diversity in hiring and promotion – Educators

- Identify opportunities to promote the teaching profession and remove barriers to entry for underrepresented communities.
  - Identify opportunities for collecting and analyzing additional demographic data related to the teaching profession. Where designated groups are found to be underrepresented, work with partners to develop and implement outreach in undergraduate programs. Where underrepresentation is not evident,

support representative promotion of teachers to principal-qualification programs.

- Incorporate human rights and equity content into the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP).
- Support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous teacher education candidates, with a particular focus on northern communities and Indigenous languages.
- Identify opportunities to better prepare candidates in teacher education programs to work with students with disabilities and students with special education needs.
- Work with school boards to establish a focus on diversity in teacher and Early Childhood Educator (ECE) recruitment and hiring processes.

### **3. Enhanced diversity in hiring and promotion – School and system leaders**

- Establish and strengthen leadership development programs for teachers and principals such as fellowship and mentorship programs, with the objective of enhancing diversity in the pool of candidates for supervisory officers and principals.
- Work with providers of the principal qualification and supervisory officer qualification programs to ensure the inclusion of an equity, inclusion and human rights curriculum.

### **4. Professional development focused on equity, inclusion and human rights**

- Establish regularized equity, inclusion and human rights training for school board staff in alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code and related legislation, with an early emphasis on staff with responsibility for overseeing complaint processes and staff with supervisory responsibilities.
- Support professional development opportunities and resources for education workers, teachers, and school and system leaders, including principals, superintendents and directors of education.
- In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's calls to action, enhance educator capacity and knowledge related to Indigenous histories and ways of knowing.

- Leverage the Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) to encourage a focus on equity and inclusion in alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code and related legislation.
- Establish equity and inclusion training and professional development opportunities for all school board trustees.

## **5. School board structures to promote and enforce human rights and equity**

- Work to establish formal structures to promote and ensure compliance with principles of human rights and equity in every school board, to enable the building of a culture of respect for those principles. This will also support the identification and removal of inequities in local structures, policies, programs and practices, and ensure alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code and related legislation.
- Work with school boards to review their policies and ensure procedurally fair and locally sensitive complaints processes to address human rights matters.

## **Outcomes/Performance Measures**

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### **1. Accountability for equity and human rights**

#### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- The Principal Performance Appraisal regulation is revised.
- The Supervisory Officer Appraisal Guideline is revised.
- Attention to equity, inclusion and human rights is increased across school boards.

#### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Plans outlining human rights and equity-related policies, programs and practices are included in board multi-year strategic plans, BIPSAs and SIPSAs.
- Explicit equity goals are included in Board Leadership Development Strategies.

- There is evidence of increased attention to the principles of equity, inclusion and human rights throughout the education system.

## **2. Enhanced diversity in hiring and promotion – Educators**

### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- A concerted effort is made to recruit, hire and retain a diverse, qualified teaching profession.
- There is an enhanced focus on the recruitment of First Nation, Metis and Inuit candidates to the teaching profession.

### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- There is increased diversity at faculties of education and among teacher candidates, registered Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), educators, and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs).
- Principals are engaged in a process to create diverse pools of teacher candidates.

## **3. Enhanced diversity in hiring and promotion – School and system leaders**

### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Leadership development programs for teachers and principals are established.
- Content of executive programs reflects diverse perspectives and pays explicit attention to upholding and promoting human rights.

### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- There is increased diversity among school and system leaders.

#### **4. Professional development focused on equity, inclusion and human rights**

##### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Professional development opportunities and resources are expanded.
- School board trustees have a greater understanding of equity and their role as governors of the board.

##### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Schools and school boards are places where diverse voices, talents and skills are recognized, resulting in a broader and more diverse spectrum of ideas, knowledge and perspectives.
- School board trustees have a comprehensive understanding of the importance of holding directors of education accountable for equity, inclusion and human rights compliance, of the mechanisms to do so and effective strategies to respond to and eliminate systemic barriers and individual discriminatory biases.

#### **5. School board structures to promote and enforce human rights and equity**

##### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Stakeholders are engaged in reviewing and strengthening school board structures and identified policies, programs, and practices that promote and enforce equity and human rights across the public education system.

##### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Progress is made towards building a culture of respect for human rights, evidenced in part by a significant reduction in the number of human rights matters that are resolved at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

## ► Data Collection, Integration and Reporting

### Action Items

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- 1. Developing a consistent approach to the collection and application of voluntarily provided student identity data**
  - Develop statement of principles and objectives for the collection of identity-based student data and support boards in undertaking student identity data collection and analysis that will inform policies and practices.
  - Collect, analyze and report the following disaggregated data:
    - race
    - ethnicity
    - religion
    - disability
    - sexual orientation
    - gender identity
    - indicators of parental socio-economic status
  - Continue to collect:
    - exceptionalities
    - immigration status
    - language first spoken
  - Align data collection across the sector and support school board analysis and use of data to inform local decision making.
  
- 2. Mobilizing the knowledge of school boards, labour partners and the ministry with respect to school board employee identity data**
  - Support boards in undertaking workforce data collection and analysis that will inform a review of systems, policies and practices.
  - Support boards in identifying and establishing timelines to eliminate barriers, and measurable goals to achieve equity in hiring and promotion.

## Outcomes/Performance Measures

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### **1. Developing a consistent approach to the collection and application of voluntarily provided student identity data**

#### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- A statement of principles to guide the collection of identity-based student data and a collaboratively developed action plan are in place.
- School boards engage in dialogue with parents, students, staff and community partners to promote the view that supporting equity requires evidence-informed decision making and better understandings of local communities.
- Indicators of Indigenous student success and well-being are co-developed with partners.
- Province-wide collection of voluntarily provided data on key identity-based data points for students is launched.

#### *Year 3 and beyond (2019-20+)*

- Multi-year strategic plans, Board Improvement Plans for Student Achievement and School Improvement Plans for Student Achievement reflect and are informed by student identity-based data and achievement data.
- There is evidence of closing gaps in achievement and well-being.
- School boards report on data collection of disaggregated identity-based data for students.

### **2. Mobilizing the knowledge of school boards, labour partners and the ministry with respect to school board employee identity data**

#### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

- Discussions with boards have resulted in a statement of a common vision and purpose for an employment systems review of school boards.

***Year 3 and beyond (2019-20+)***

- All school boards are working to update human resource management systems to collect identity-based data as laid out in the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- School boards have collected workplace data to inform a systems review.
- School boards review their student demographic data annually to support reflection on hiring and onboarding practices for school and board staff.
- School boards implement the equity and inclusive education practices outlined in their system and school improvement plans, while being responsive to shifts in student demographics and the communities they serve.

## ► **Organizational Culture Change**

### **Action Items**

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#### **1. Organizational culture change at the Ministry of Education**

- Conduct a review to identify and address any inequities in ministry structures, policies, programs and practices.
- Implement training and engagement focused on alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code and related legislation.
- Make accountability for equity and human rights explicit in the performance plans of the deputy minister, assistant deputy ministers, directors, and managers.
- Review the appointment process for Ministry of Education advisory committees.

- Review the effectiveness of the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) with respect to furthering equity, inclusion and human rights in school boards.
- Establish an Equity Knowledge Network through the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research to facilitate knowledge mobilization processes to improve education and leadership conditions and supports needed to advance equity.
- Establish an expert equity community advisory group to serve as a resource for the Education Equity Secretariat and the school board community.

## Outcomes/Performance Measures

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### **1. Organizational culture change at the Ministry of Education**

#### *Years 1 and 2 (2017–18 to 2018–19)*

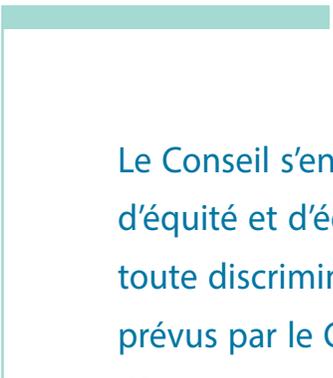
- Employee policies and practices are amended and augmented as needed.
- Mechanisms are developed to monitor and publicly report on ministry participation in human rights compliance and equity training.
- Human rights compliance and equity efforts are explicitly reported in senior management performance appraisals.
- Guidelines for an inclusive appointments process are developed.
- Partnerships are established to support knowledge mobilization of equity research and practice across the sector.

#### *Year 3 and beyond (2019–20+)*

- Ministry policies and procedures are used as a model for the education sector and for other ministries.
- Individual and group capacity is being developed to understand the impacts of structural inequity, and ministry staff are building

the confidence and skills to counter systemic barriers and discriminatory practices.

- Effective practices for identifying and removing systemic barriers and biases in our daily work have been identified.
- Human Resources has implemented a continuous cycle of assessment to detect discriminatory biases in ministry policies and practices.
- The ministry demonstrates by example that a fair and equitable workplace must be at the core of workplace culture.
- Advisory groups and committees are inclusive and diverse.
- The culture of the Ministry of Education is recognized as one that upholds and promotes human rights and equity.
- Criteria are developed to assess the impact of the Learning Opportunities Grant from an equity perspective.
- An expert equity community advisory group is created to provide advice to the Education Equity Secretariat and school boards on the implementation of Education Equity Action Plan initiatives.
- There is evidence of greater impact of the Learning Opportunities Grant in addressing disparities in student achievement and well-being.
- There is more cross-sector buy-in of equity initiatives, as a result of the work of the expert equity community advisory group.



Le Conseil s'engage à respecter les principes d'équité et d'éducation inclusive et à contrer toute discrimination fondée sur les motifs illicites prévus par le Code des droits de la personne de l'Ontario, soit la race, l'ascendance, le lieu d'origine, la couleur, l'origine ethnique, la citoyenneté, la croyance, le sexe, l'orientation sexuelle, l'âge, l'état matrimonial, l'état familial ou le handicap.

The board is committed to respecting equity and inclusive education principles and to opposing all discrimination based on prohibited grounds as determined by the Ontario Human Rights Code, whether it is race, ancestry, birthplace, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, or disability.

– Statement from from the Conseil Scolaire Viamonde



## Conclusion

The desire for equity is an aspiration that drives our collective and continuous pursuit of fairness and respect for human rights in all that we do. Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan links equity more explicitly to its roots in fundamental human rights.

Ontario's path to equity has been and will continue to be supported by the contributions of thousands of remarkable educators, students and parents. While we have made great strides together, we must now redouble our efforts. Rooted in the core priorities of the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, we must continue to strive towards positive, equitable learning and working environments, identifying and eliminating sources of systemic discrimination, and accountability with respect to reporting results to the public.

Ensuring equity is a necessary foundation for improving student achievement, promoting student and staff well-being, and enhancing confidence in the publicly funded school system. *Achieving Excellence* is an ambitious vision that challenges the education system to go beyond simply graduating successful students to developing resilient and engaged citizens. Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan will help us get there.





[ontario.ca/educationequity](https://ontario.ca/educationequity)

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