2023-2025

Equity Action Plan

Waterloo Catholic District School Board
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education
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INTRODUCTION

Waterloo Catholic District School Board’s Land Acknowledgement

The schools in the Waterloo Catholic District School Board are situated on the Haldimand tract of land that is the traditional home of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Neutral People. We acknowledge the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws, and philosophies of the Indigenous Peoples with whom we share this land today.

We seek a new relationship with the Original People of this land, one based on honour and deep respect. We are grateful for the opportunity to learn here and reaffirm our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community. Please watch the video below or you can access the video on YouTube or scan the QR code.

Figure 1. Waterloo Catholic District School Board’s Land Acknowledgement
Land Acknowledgement and Introduction from the Director of Education

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have nurtured and cared for the land on which Waterloo Catholic District schools reside. For thousands of years, this land has been sustained by a diverse group of Indigenous Peoples, including the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, to Attawandaron Peoples whose rich, diverse histories, languages and cultural traditions were nearly destroyed through colonialism. As the Director of Waterloo Catholic District School Board, it is my obligation to lead this community as we address the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations for educational reform.

We commit to learning from, and with, the Indigenous communities, following the guidance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We promise to:

- Support the academic, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of Indigenous students
- Remove barriers that prevent Indigenous students from achieving their full academic and social potential
- Teach all students about the rich and diverse cultures and philosophies of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples
- Raise awareness and appreciation of Indigenous cultures among staff, families, and trustees
- Build strong and respectful partnerships with Indigenous families, communities, and organizations
- Work together to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, including our Indigenous students.

We recognize a land acknowledgement without a commitment to action is just an acknowledgement and nothing more. Our actions will speak to whether we are living up to our obligation and commitment to every student, including the Indigenous student, in creating a place for all and success for each.

Figure 2. St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic Elementary School in Kitchener (CTV Kitchener)
Land Acknowledgement and Introduction from the Senior Manager of Equity

I would like to begin by acknowledging the land on which our schools and workplaces are situated on is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee (that is the people of the long house), Anishnaabe (that is the people from whence lowered and the good humans), and Neutral People (who formed the Neutral Confederacy). I pay respect to the Indigenous Peoples past, present, and future and their continuing presence on this land.

These nations (except the Neutral People who were annihilated) and other Indigenous communities continue to experience ongoing colonization and displacement. As part of this land acknowledgement, I would like to take a moment to recognize the immigrants and refugees who are part of the diaspora whose lands and waters have also been destroyed by colonialism throughout the world. These people have chosen Canada for their new home. It is also important to acknowledge the descendants of the enslaved, the stolen people on stolen land, and the indentured servants who now live on these lands.

This makes our relationship with each other, and to this land complex. Ultimately, I am grateful to have been born here and able to live, work and learn here, and I honour the Nations who have cared for these lands and waters for thousands of years and continue to do so today.

I recognize these difficult histories persist in the present day with racial realities. I commit to dismantling racism and bigotry in our workspace and schools. I invite our communities to work beside me and my colleagues to create change.

Figure 3. Photo of WCDSB’s Catholic Education Centre
Prayer for Inclusion and Belonging

Lord, give us new strength so that we can build places of belonging:

To create a community for all to share their gifts,
To know that each of us is loved,
To help us see the light of Christ in all that we serve.

Let us remember that each of us is loved, each of us is willed and each of us is necessary.

May we balance mercy and justice so that we can achieve equity and access for all of Your children.

We do this in Your name.

Amen.

~Source: Andrew M. Greeley Center for Catholic Education (Loyola University)

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

~Galatians 3:23-29
ABOUT WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (WCDSB)

Brief History

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) is located in the Waterloo Region. Since the beginning with a one-room schoolhouse in 1836, this school board has protected and promoted a tradition of academic excellence. In 2023, WCDSB is the eighth largest Catholic school system in Ontario. This Board provides an outstanding educational experience to the following cities and townships: City of Cambridge, City of Kitchener, City of Waterloo, Township of Dumfries, Township of Wellesley, Township of Wilmot, and Township of Woolwich. We have 44 elementary schools (i.e., Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8), 5 secondary schools (i.e., Grade 9 to Grade 12), and 4 adult and continuing education campuses.

The Waterloo Region is a mid-sized growing community located in the heart of southwestern Ontario. The region is one of the fastest growing areas in the province, with more than 575,847 residents (Statistics Canada 2021 Census). The Ontario Growth Plan projects Waterloo Region’s population will reach 923,000 by 2051.

Mission

“As disciples of Christ, we educate and nurture hope in all learners to realize their full potential to transform God’s world.”

Vision

“Our Catholic Schools: heart of the community — success for each, a place for all.”

To learn more, click on the YouTube video below or scan the QR code.

Figure 4. Welcome to Waterloo Region’s Catholic Schools
THE FOUNDATIONS OF EQUITY AT WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (WCDSB)

Truth and Reconciliation

The Truth and Reconciliation Committee issued 94 Calls to Action to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.” The proposed actions call on all levels of government and other institutions to repair the harm caused by genocide, residential schools, and more than 150 years of inhumane child welfare policies (e.g., 60s Scoop; millennial Scoop) by engaging in the process of reconciliation. The calls to action were divided into the following categories:

- Legacy
- Child welfare
- Education
- Language and culture
- Health
- Justice
- Reconciliation

At WCDSB, we are committed to responding to the Calls to Action. Primarily we raise awareness of the history and creation of the residential school system and its devastating legacy. The K-12 Indigenous and Equity Consultant and the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Representatives offer teaching resources and educational curriculum in all schools. The Indigenous curriculum is mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Students are exposed to age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and contemporary and historical experiences of Indigenous peoples within Canada. Teachers integrate Indigenous knowledge, ways of thinking, and teaching methods in classrooms, including the Seven Grandfather Teachings. Click on the YouTube video or scan the QR code to learn more.

Figure 5. Grandfather Teachings in Action at WCDSB
The Seven Grandfather Teachings are a set of Anishinaabe guiding principles. They provide us with the tools for how to live a good life in peace. These principles have been passed down from generation to generation for thousands of years through stories and ceremonies. Below is a summary of the principles. Please note, you will see the Anishinaabemowin word “win” throughout the teachings. “Win” means “a way it is done.”

Figure 6. ‘Stand With Our Teachings’ by First Nations Mi’kmaq artist Loretta Gould

Zaagi’idiwin (Love): Love must be given freely and is unconditional. When we love freely, it comes back to us. It is mutual and reciprocal. It is between all of Creation, humans, and non-humans. Love is represented by the eagle, who can travel over great distances and carry love and all the teachings to the four directions of the Earth.

“Zaag” means “to emerge, come out or flow out” and “Idi” means “in a reciprocal way”.

Debwewin (Truth): Truth is speaking only about what you have lived or experienced. You should not deceive yourself or others. Truth is represented by the turtle, who was here during the creation of Earth and carries all of life’s teachings on his back. By living in a thoughtful and conscientious manner, the turtle knows the value of both the journey and the destination.

“Deb” means “to a certain extent” and “We” means “sound through speech”.

Nibwaakaawin (Wisdom): To live with vision. Wisdom is to be used for the good of all people. To cherish knowledge is to know wisdom. Wisdom is represented by the beaver, who uses its natural gifts of sharp teeth wisely to cut logs and branches to build dams.

“Ni” means “the soul within” and “Waa” means “pertaining to sight” and “Kaa” means “an abundance”.

Dabasendiziwin (Humility): Humility is to think lower of oneself in relation to all that sustains us. It is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation. You are equal to others, but you are not better. Humility is represented by the wolf, who are social animals that live in packs. They work in cooperation with each other and for the greater good of the pack.

“Dabas” means “low or lower” and “End” means “pertaining to thought” and “Izi” means “state or condition”.

Manaaaji’idiwin (Respect): Go easy on one another and all of Creation. Respect is mutual and reciprocal – in order to receive respect you must give respect. Respect is represented by the bison. The bison was at one time a significant resource for Anishinaabe people, giving every part of itself to sustain human life for food, clothing, and shelter.

“Manaaaji” means “to go easy on someone” and “Idi” means “in a reciprocal way”.

Zoongide’ewin (Courage): Courage is to face your foes with integrity and do what is right even when the consequences are unpleasant. Courage is represented by the bear. The mother bear has the courage and strength to face her fears and challenges while protecting her young.

“Zoongi” means “solid, strong” and “De’e” means “a form of heart”.

Gwayakwaadiziwin (Honesty): Be honest in your words and actions. Be honest first with yourself, and you will more easily be able to be Honest with others. Honesty is represented by the raven. The raven accepts himself for who he is and does not look to try to be like others.

“Gwayak” means “correctly, straightly, and rightly” and “Aadizi” mean “one lives”.

Catholic Social Teachings

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of our Catholic social teachings. Every person is precious, people are more important than things, and the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Life and Dignity of the Human Person</strong></td>
<td>The foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The Church, therefore, calls for Integral Human Development, which concerns the well-being of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual. The good Samaritan recognized the dignity in the other and cared for their life. ~Luke 10:25-37</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Call to Family, Community and Participation</strong></td>
<td>Human beings are social, and how we live together affects the dignity of the individual and the progress of society. All persons are entitled to participate in community, and in decisions that affect their lives, and cannot be excluded for any reason. We must all consider the good of others, and the good of the whole human family, in organizing our society—economically, politically, and legally. Human Dignity can only be realized and protected through our relationship with society-at-large. We must love our neighbour, locally and globally, and prioritize the good of the human family over commercial interests. Act justly, love kindness, walk humbly with God. ~Micah 6:6-8</td>
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<td><strong>Solidarity</strong></td>
<td>Each of us is part of the human family and we are all interconnected and interdependent. Loving our neighbour has global dimensions. We must see ourselves in others and collaborate towards solutions. Solidarity is a recognition that we are “all in this together,” and is a commitment to strengthen community and promote a just society. The love of God in us is witnessed to by our willingness to lay down our lives for others as Christ did for us. ~John 3:16-18</td>
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<td><strong>Preferential Option for the Poor and the Vulnerable</strong></td>
<td>The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable are treated. God’s love is universal, so this principle does not intend that we should focus on the poor to the exclusion of others, but rather that we are called to prioritize those who are in most need of our solidarity. True worship is to work for justice and care for the poor and oppressed. ~Isaiah 58:5-7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Care of God’s Creation</strong></td>
<td>The earth is sacred. Creation has its own intrinsic value. We have a responsibility to protect and to cherish the earth’s ecological diversity, beauty, and life-sustaining properties. Together, we must hold it in trust for future generations. Creation and all created things are inherently good because they are of the Lord. ~1 Corinthians 10:26</td>
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The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The state is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and develop the common good. Subsidiarity holds that such functions of government should be performed at the lowest level possible, as long as they can be performed adequately. When they cannot, higher levels of government must intervene. This principle goes hand-in-hand with Participation, the principle that all peoples have a right to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society, and in the decisions that affect their community.

A legitimate government upholds the rights of the poor and vulnerable. ~Jeremiah 22: 13-16

Rights & Responsibilities

We all have a right to those things which are required by Human Dignity. Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended us to. These are innately linked with our responsibility to ensure the rights of others—that we do not take more than is needed to fulfill our rights at the expense of another's. This includes access to food, shelter, education, healthcare, and employment. These rights are seen as essential to human flourishing.

Give from what you have received and do not turn away from the poor. ~Tobit 4:5-11

Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

The Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs) were developed to provide a framework to represent the distinctiveness and purpose of Catholic education in Ontario. Below are the images and summary of the expectations. For the OCSGEs handbook, access the Institute for Catholic Education website.

A discerning believer, formed in the Catholic Faith community, celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God’s presence through work, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection, and moral living.

An effective communicator speaks, writes, and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of gospel values.

A reflective, creative, and holistic thinker solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.

A self-directed responsible, lifelong learner develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.
A collaborative contributor finds meaning, dignity, and vocation in work which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.

A caring family member attends to family, school, parish, and the wider community.

A responsible citizen gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice, and the sacredness of human life.

“Catholic schools also help engage the world by promoting a dialogue between faith and reason. They promote what is good, true and beautiful while at the same time demonstrating that it is rational to believe. This too is part of Catholic identity. The more we foster and nurture Catholic identity, the more we promote the expression of that identity in service and witness to the world. Our faith calls us to be engaged with the world around us, to have hope, and to inspire it in others.”

~Renewing the Promise: A Pastoral Letter p. 11
EQUITY AT WATERLOO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (WCDSB)

Overview

At WCDSB, we recognize supporting diversity and engagement is the right thing to do for our students and communities. This commitment is woven throughout our values and vision; our schools are the hearts of their communities, providing success for each and a place for all. We know we are at our best when we embrace the full spectrum of humanity, regardless of what we look like, where we come from, or who we love.

All members of WCDSB—students, staff, parents, and guardians have a role to play in advancing this commitment. For some, it means summoning the courage to stand up and speak out, sharing opinions, or experiences. For others, it means listening with patience and empathy, creating an environment conducive to dialogue. For all, it means asking questions, respecting answers, being open to fresh perspectives, and most importantly, appreciating one another’s contributions. In doing so, we ensure we meet our mission; that is, as disciples of Christ, we educate and nurture hope in all learners to transform God’s world.

Figure 7. Vice Principal Discuss Her Experience at WCDSB

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

The Seven Grandfather Teachings, Catholic Social Teachings and the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations provide the foundation for all equity work at the Board. Further, the WCDSB Equity Action plan works in conjunction with the [2022-2025 Multi-Year Strategic Plan](https://www.wcdsb.on.ca/content/2022-2025-multi-year-strategic-plan), [2022-2025 Pastoral Plan](https://www.wcdsb.on.ca/content/2022-2025-pastoral-plan), and [2022-2023 Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP)](https://www.wcdsb.on.ca/content/2022-2023-board-improvement-and-equity-plan-biep)/2023-2024 Student Achievement Plan (SAP).

**Understanding the Isms and Phobias in Our Society**

WCDSB recognizes systemic discrimination and oppression exists in our society. Isms and phobias such as classism, sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia occurs on four levels. Specifically, these isms and phobias exist at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural level.

We often recognize and rebuke overt isms and phobias at the individual and interpersonal levels, such as a person uttering a homophobic slur or ignoring a person in a work setting because of their gender identity or a student being harassed because of their racial or ethnic origins. However, many of us are blind to covert isms and phobias and we are also blind to more systemic isms and phobias (i.e., institutional and structural) that are pervasive in our society. Isms and phobias do not develop in one person or one group without any cause or reason.

Isms and phobias stem from the history of our laws and the codification of individual, interpersonal, and institutional isms and phobias. Ultimately, the four levels of isms and phobias interact with each other. See below for a pictorial depiction of the interaction between the levels of racism.
Let’s explore the complexities of isms and phobias further. Overt isms and phobias are the most evident types of isms and phobias. They are relatively easy to identify. They are deliberate and intentional stereotyping, prejudice or discriminative language, actions, and policies/laws directed toward a marginalized group or members of a marginalized group.

However, covert isms and phobias are subtler and often difficult to observe and identify. Covert isms and phobias are often hidden in our society where the actions are passive or ambiguous. Further we can rationalize discriminatory behaviours with reasons that society is more willing to believe. These subtle actions often favour some groups while systematically restricting the rights of others. In other words, we provide privileges to some and oppress others.

Understanding Privilege and Oppression

Oppression is the combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (target groups) and benefits other groups (dominant groups). Examples of these systems are ableism, classism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and anti-Semitism. These systems often limit target groups’ access to reasonable and equitable resources and privileges such as healthcare, education, housing, and employment.

Dr. Stephanie Nixon, an associate professor of physical therapy at the University of Toronto, developed the coin model of privilege and critical allyship. Below is an image of the coin analogy of privilege and oppression (Nixon, 2019).
“Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.”

~Psalms 67:4

“Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.”

~Psalms 2:9-10

Equity Versus Equality

Two words that are used interchangeably are “Equity” and “equality”, but they have different meanings and produce different outcomes. Equality means providing the same resources or opportunities to everyone regardless of context or experience. When we engage in this process, we are assuming that everyone is at the same access point to reach the same outcome. In Figure 9, we can see the child on the right has unequal access to opportunities.

One response is to treat the children the same, or equally, even though we can see their circumstances are the same. This is depicted below in Figure 10.
Equity, however, recognizes that due to inequities in our society, some people and communities need individualized resources and tools to help them achieve the same outcomes. Equity acknowledges that everyone does not start from the same place in life. People and communities have been differentially impacted by a variety of circumstances, structures, and historical contexts that have intentionally advantaged some, while unjustly and intentionally disadvantaging others. As a result, those who have been disadvantaged require a differential allocation of resources and opportunities. In Figure 11, you will notice the child on the right receives a taller ladder, than the child on the left, in an effort to help the child on the right reach a similar outcome as the child on the left. When we engage in equity, we use custom tools to identify and address inequality.

It is clear from Figure 11 there is more work to be done for the child on the right to achieve equitable outcomes. Specifically, the child now can reach some fruit, but there is not much fruit to be had. There seems to be something amiss with the tree in the diagrams. This symbolizes that there is something wrong with the system. Whether we use equality or equity, we have not addressed the underlining issue, the flawed system. Thus, Figure 12 connotes we also need to fix systems that put up barriers and limit opportunities.
Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive. They support their students to reach their learning potential without introducing barriers or lowering expectations. Equity implies personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin and/or family composition or background are not obstacles to educational success and outcomes.

Equitable and just outcomes often require differential treatment and resource distribution to provide access to all individuals and communities. This requires recognizing and addressing barriers that lie within our school system and beyond.

Systemic equity is a complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits and outcomes. See Figure 13.

Figure 14: Equity in Schools

- Physical appearance
- Physical (dis)ability
- Neurodiversity
- Race
- Culture
- Gender
- Sex
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Citizenship and/or immigration status
- Socio-economic status
- Age
- Parental level of education
- Family composition
- Intersectionality

Equity means every child receives what one needs to develop to one’s full academic and social potential.
**Key Terms in Equity**

**Ableism (Ontario Human Rights Commission)**

Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability that contribute to a system of oppression. Usually of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness and/or disabilities.

**Anti-Asian Racism (Addressing Anti-Asian Racism)**

Anti-Asian racism refers to historical and ongoing discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian origin, based on others’ assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality. Peoples of Asian origin are subjected to specific overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at individual and systemic levels, which lead to their ongoing social, economic, political and cultural marginalization, disadvantage and unequal treatment.

**Anti-Indigenous Racism (Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism)**

Anti-Indigenous racism is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous Peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain, and perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada.

**Anti-Black Racism (Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism)**

Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping, and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and its legacy. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in Canadian institutions, policies, and practices, to the extent that it is either functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger White society.

**Anti-Oppression (CCR Anti-Oppression Policy)**

Strategies, theories, actions, and practices that actively challenge systems of oppression on an ongoing basis in one’s daily life and in social justice/change work. Certain people in our society face oppressive experiences because of individual and systemic unequal power related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, language or faith or other forms of conscientiously held beliefs, sex, gender (including gender identity and expression), sexuality (including sexual orientation), family status (including marital status), and residency/migratory status in Canada. Anti-Oppression work seeks to recognize the oppression that exists in our society and attempts to mitigate its effects and eventually equalize the power imbalance in our communities.

**Anti-Racism (Ontario Human Rights Commission- Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination)**

An action-oriented approach to identifying and countering the production and reproduction of all forms of racism. It addresses the issues of racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression.
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Barrier</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>Anything that prevents a person from fully taking part in all aspects of society, including physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, economic, and technological barriers, as well as policies and practices.</td>
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<td><strong>Bias</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>A predisposition, prejudice, or generalization about a group of persons based on personal characteristics or stereotypes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colonialism</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism</a>)</td>
<td>The historical practices of European expansion into territories already inhabited by Indigenous peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. This expansion is rooted in the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples’ governance, legal, language, and social cultures.</td>
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<td><strong>Discrimination</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>Treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them, or denying them a privilege, benefit, or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, citizenship, family status, disability, sex, or other personal characteristics.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within an individual, group, or organization. Diversity includes such factors as age, sex, race, ethnicity, physical and intellectual ability, religion, sexual orientation, educational background and expertise.</td>
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<td><strong>Harassment</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>Engaging in a course of comments or actions that are known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome. It can be embarrassing, humiliating, demeaning, or unwelcome.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homophobia</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>Homophobia is often defined as the irrational aversion to, or fear or hatred of gay, lesbian or bisexual people and communities, or to behaviours stereotyped as “homosexual.” It is commonly used to signify a hostile psychological state in the context of overt discrimination, harassment, or violence against gay, lesbian or bisexual people.</td>
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<td><strong>Human Rights</strong> (<a href="link">Canadian Human Rights Commission</a>)</td>
<td>Everyone in the world is entitled to the same fundamental human rights. There are 30 of them. They are the universal human rights that we, as citizens of this world, have agreed we are all entitled to. They include the right to live free from torture, the right to live free from slavery, the right to own property, and the right to equality and dignity, and to live free from all forms of discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intergenerational Trauma</strong> (<a href="link">Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism</a>)</td>
<td>Historic and contemporary trauma that has compounded over time and been passed from one generation to the next. The negative effects can impact individuals, families, communities, and entire populations, resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, and economic disparities that persist across generations.</td>
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Intersectionality (Women and Gender Equality Canada)

It is essential to recognize that people have multiple and diverse factors that intersect to shape their perspectives, ideologies, and experiences. The concept of intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.

Islamophobia (Ontario Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism)

Islamophobia is racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear, or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a security threat on an institutional, systemic, and societal level.

Ontario Human Rights Code (Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan)

A provincial law that gives everyone equitable rights and opportunities, with discrimination, in specific areas such as education, jobs, housing, and services. The goal of the Ontario Human Rights Code is to address and prevent discrimination and harassment.

Racism (Ontario Human Rights Commission—Policy and Guidelines on Racism and Racial Discrimination)

Any distinction, conduct or actions, whether intentional or not, but based on a person’s race, which has the effect of imposing burdens on an individual or group, not imposed upon others which withholds or limits access to benefits available to other members of society.

Transphobia (Ontario Human Rights Commission)

Trans people and other gender non-conforming individuals are often judged by their physical appearance for not fitting and conforming to stereotypical norms about what it means to be a “man” or a “woman.” They experience stigmatization, prejudice, bias and fear on a daily basis. While some may see trans people as inferior, others may lack awareness and understanding about what it means to be trans.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations: Human Rights)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages. The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels (all containing references to it in their preambles).
## ACTION PLAN

### Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership, Governance, and Human Resources</th>
<th>Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan (2017) Statement</th>
<th>Waterloo Catholic District School Board’s Vision</th>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>We wish to ensure the diversity of teachers, staff, and school system leaders at Waterloo Catholic reflect the diversity of the student and families who choose our school board.</td>
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| School and Classroom Practices | In order to ensure all students feel safe, accepted, and inspired to succeed, school and classrooms must be responsive to cultural, broadly defined. “Culturally responsive pedagogy” recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure and social and 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 diversity of students and staff. | We wish to ensure our school and classroom practices reflect and respond to the diversity of all students and staff. |

| Organizational Culture Change | An equitable and inclusive education system is a necessary condition to enable all Ontario students to feel included, respected and able to succeed. | We wish to ensure our school leaders, educators, staff, and students remain committed to creating and sustaining environments that support an equitable and inclusive education system. |

| 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 wish to ensure we collect meaningful data to provide a clear picture of who are students and staff are. We will use the data to make data-driven decisions to precisely address the barriers to student success. |
Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices

Individual
- Supervisory leaders conduct self-assessments on equity knowledge
- Supervisory leaders access professional development opportunities on equity pertaining to leadership and hiring
  - Implicit Bias Training
  - Anti-Racism Training
  - Power
  - Privilege

Institutional
- HIRINGS panels: at least 2 employees; when possible, include people who identify as part of an equity-seeking group
- Diversify leadership throughout the organization when possible
- Require mandatory departmental equity training every year and at point of hire

Interpersonal
- Colleagues throughout the board name and address interpersonal conflicts in the workplace based on race, gender, sexual orientation and religion
- Colleagues report incidences of incivility and discrimination to employee group representative and/or HR (following the processes already in place)

Structural
- Work with Bishops/Priests to help potential colleagues to earn pastoral references
- Work with faculty of educations and other professional organizations to diversify their student body
- Work with community partners (e.g., police, cultural organizations, mental healthcare agencies, etc.)

School and Classroom Practices

Individual
- School staff and administrators conduct self-assessments:
  - Cultural humility
  - Implicit Bias
- School staff and administrators access professional development opportunities on equity
  - Implicit Bias Training
  - Anti-Racism Training

Institutional
- Have representation of diverse identities throughout the school (e.g., books, photos, pictures, employees, etc.)
- Each school staff meeting has a minimum of 15 minutes devoted to equity training
- Physical equity audits of the school conducted every 2-3 years to assess representation

Interpersonal
- Develop cultural humility and competence skills
- Engage in case studies to practice equity knowledge as we build capacity
- Publicly commit to equity through the equity statements created by the school community including, students, parents and staff so all feel welcome

Structural
- Review and update the curriculum and pedagogy to including culturally relevant, accurate, and responsive material, including accurate history
- Engage in culturally responsive parent/family engagement
- Invite community partners to school events, including Priests and other community leaders
Data Collection, Integration, and Reporting

Individual
- Teachers, Consultants, Administrators, and Board Leaders access professional development to build data/research capacity
  - Data literacy, both qualitative and quantitative
  - Knowledge mobilization and transfer

Institutional
- Student Census every 3 years
- Guarding Minds at Work—Workforce Collection every year
- All school and board data collections disaggregated by race, gender, and socio-economic status when possible

Equity Actions

Interpersonal
- Use disaggregated school and board data to make data-informed decisions
- Use “street” data or qualitative data based on people’s lived experience to make data-driven decisions

Structural
- Publicly post the data associated the Multi-Year Strategic Plan on board website
- Share research strategies with other boards
- Share summarized data with colleagues at other boards
- Share our census data with community groups

Organizational Culture Change

Individual
- Employees access professional development opportunities to build equity knowledge
  - FNMI and Equity resources made available on D2L to all employees on equity issues
  - Book clubs
  - FNMI and Equity Newsletter
  - Lunch and Learns
  - Tuesday Talk and Treats

Institutional
- Internal media campaigns (e.g., posters, videos, etc.) to help employees understand barriers in education
  - Microaggression
  - Anti-racism opportunities
- Mandatory 45-minute equity training as a new employee

Equity Actions

Interpersonal
- Cross-cultural exchanges as part of our social events (i.e., international foods, fashion shows, etc.)
- Acknowledgement and celebration of Canadian commemorative days and months (e.g., Tamil Heritage Month, Irish Heritage Month, Canadian Multicultural Day)

Structural
- Continue working with religious leaders, community cultural leaders, and Indigenous leaders to integrate equity and religion throughout our school board
- Participate in community activities and events with staff, students, and families
2023-2024: Strengthen Our Commitment to Black Students and their Families

The term “Anti-Black racism” was coined by Dr. Akua Benjamin, a Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly, Ryerson University) professor. The use of this term seeks to highlight the unique nature of systemic racism on Black-Canadians and the history as well as experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black-African descent in Canada. Anti-Black racism is micro (i.e., as seen in day-to-day interactions) and it is macro or structural (i.e., customs, regulations, and policies).

June 27th, 2023, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its report, *Anti-Black Racism in Education Roundtables: What We Heard Report*, on issues of anti-Black racism in education. OHRC unequivocally recognized the systemic anti-Black racism in Ontario schools which inhibits Black communities from thriving generation after generation. The Commission has studied, investigated, and litigated matters involving systemic anti-Black racism in education for decades. Recent studies show anti-Black racism persists today. It is embedded in our institutions, policies, and practices. According to the OHRC, “Anti-Black racism has plagued Ontario’s publicly-funded education system for over 170 years. Despite Black communities voicing concerns and offering recommendations, meaningfully addressing systemic anti-Black racism has been slow, arduous, and limited (https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/tackling-anti-black-racism-education, 2023).”

In March 2023, Statistics Canada reported hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity increase by 6% in 2021 after rising 83% in 2020. While the hate crimes targeting the Black population did drop in 2021, this is following a 96% increase in 2020. The Black population continues to be the most targeted group in Canada.

Based on anecdotal evidence, it appears anti-Black incidences in schools may have increased over the last couple of years with school staff and administrators having to deal with the prevalence of the N-word and other anti-Black language and behaviour (e.g., anti-Black graffiti). As we move away from anecdotal evidence and look at the EQAO data we see racial disparities with Black students performing disproportionately lower than other students.

The purpose of focusing on anti-Black racism is to acknowledge the experiences Black children have in school can permanently impact their life’s trajectory. Schools are a space where children and staff should feel safe bringing their full selves. However, we know that the experiences of Indigenous, Black and racialized Canadians continue to indicate that systemic barriers and racism impact their outcomes at school, at work, in leisure, and across all systems. Creating space to examine our preconceived notions about Black communities in Canada and expand our knowledge of anti-Black racism and oppression is an opportunity to help WCDSB better understand the experiences of racialized students and staff, identify barriers that may be contributing to challenging environments and identify areas of growth and promising practices to ensure all community members are able to thrive.

As WCDSB looks toward its Catholic Faith and Catholic Social Teachings as the foundation of our teaching, learning, and growing, it is fitting that our equity action plan mirrors our 2022-2025 Pastoral Plan. The board’s commitment to these guiding principles is embedded in everything we do. Our faith is not merely a part of our identity; it is the very essence that shapes our actions, decisions, and interactions within our educational community.
For the 2023-2024 school year, our Pastoral Plan’s theme is STRENGTHEN. It is anchored in St. Paul’s exhortation to the burgeoning Christian community at Philippi. The Waterloo Catholic District School Board community proclaims in faith: “I can do all things through the One who strengthens me” (Phil. 4.13), because we are the People of God, listening and responding, STRENGTHENED to share the Gospel.

We are listening and responding to the OHRC. We are listening and responding to Statistics Canada. We are listening and responding to experiences happening in our schools.

The Ontario Education Act states, “a strong public education system is the foundation of a prosperous, caring, and civil society...the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens.” WCDSB is compelled to strengthen its commitment to our Black students and their families, so each student can prosper and reach one’s full potential. Below are the specific actions we will take to support Black students and their families at WCDSB.

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**CREATE AN ANTI-BLACK ADVISORY COUNCIL**

This council would consist of the director of education, senior manager of equity services, one administrator, one teacher, two students, and two community members. This council will meet four times a year. The purpose of this council is to advise the director on issues that affect Black students and their families.

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**CREATE AND SUSTAIN BLACK AFFINITY GROUPS AND SPACES**

Encourage all schools to create Black affinity groups and safe spaces for students who identify as Black. Allow the students to design the purpose of the group (e.g., social group or academic support).

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**ANTI-BLACK RACISM COUNTER TRAINING**

Senior staff, senior managers, administrators, chaplains, and social workers will participate in intensive anti-Black racism counter training with external facilitators. It will be followed with more Internal training.

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**INCREASE CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM**

Create resources and learning materials which accurately provide knowledge and understanding of Black people (i.e., history, heritage, culture, traditions, and contributions to Canadian and world society) must be an integral part of the curriculum.

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“Despite Canada’s reputation for promoting multiculturalism and diversity...Canada’s history of enslavement, racial segregation, and marginalization, has had a deleterious impact on people of African descent which must be addressed in partnership with communities.”

~ United Nations’ Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

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Waterloo Catholic District School Board–Equity Action Plan 2023-2025
2024-2025: Ignite the Hope of Equity for our 2SLGBTQIA+ Students and Staff

In 2017, Canada added protection for Trans and non-binary people in the Criminal Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) acknowledges that individuals from the Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional sexually and diverse (2SLGBTQIA+) peoples and communities in Canada experience minority stress. Minority stress is one of the effects experienced by members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities resulting from discrimination and stigma. It is a form of stress experienced uniquely by minority groups, in addition to everyday life stressors that affect 2SLGBTQIA+ and non 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

The OHRC (September, 2023) issued a strong statement encouraging school boards to recognize there is no room for hate in our schools. It is a school board’s duty to actively and intentionally work to, “end the scourges of hate and violence in our education systems and communities”. The commission cites the rise in hate and its severe impact on student mental health and well-being. It specifically highlights that 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, Black and other racialized students face the brunt hatred. Across Canada, police-reported hate crime continues to increase, rising 7% overall from 2021 to 2022. Black, Jewish, and 2SLGBTQIA+ are the most frequently targeted communities. 2SLGBTQIA+ communities have experienced a 12% increase in hate crimes since 2021.

Egale is one of Canada’s leading organizations for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, communities, and issues. This organization works to improve and save lives through research, education, awareness and advocating for human rights. In 2021, Egale published its report on the climate in Canadian schools. This report was aptly titled Still in Every Class and Every School. Thirty percent of 2SLGBTQIA+ participants (i.e., Canadian students in grades 8-12) had been the victims of cyberbullying compared to their cisgender, heterosexual participants. Further, 57% of trans participants had been targets of cyberbullying, including rumours or lies. Overall, 62% of 2SLGBTQIA+ participants felt unsafe at school compared to 11% of cisgender, heterosexual counterparts.

Canada stands for the protection and promotion of the human rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples at home and globally. The human rights of all people are universal and indivisible. We know everyone should enjoy the same fundamental human rights, regardless of their sexual orientation and their gender identity and expression. We also know that August 28th, 2022, the Federal government launched their first action plan to advance the rights and equality for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional sexually and diverse (2SLGBTQIA+) peoples and communities in Canada because the fundamental human rights for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons has yet to be realized in this country.

It is incumbent on WCDSB to explicitly include the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities who are equity-seeking in our action plan. Thus, in concert with the 2022-2025 Pastoral Plan, WCDSB will ignite the hope of equity for our 2SLGBTQIA+ students (and their families) and our staff. Ezekiel 20:47 states, “Thus says the Lord God, I will ignite a fire in you.” At WCDSB, we are the People of God, discerning out mission to serve, ignited to be pilgrims of hope. We hope all people and communities in God’s world will achieve equality and be harassment free, including members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.
We have staff, students and community members who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ and they deserve a safe space to work, learn, and thrive. Below are the specific actions we will take to support the students who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and their families as well as our 2SLGBTQIA+ staff.

**PROVIDE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

WCDSB will provide staff with the opportunity to learn about the intersectional identities of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and the impacts of individual and systemic discrimination by recognizing how cis-heteronormativity shows up in our learning and working environments. Develop learning modules for the staff to build collective understanding on a variety of topics.

**CREATE AND SUSTAIN AFFINITY GROUPS AND SPACES FOR 2SLGBTQIA+ STAFF**

2SLGBTQIA+ students and their families deserve to see representation in our schools. To achieve that, in part, we need to create safe spaces for staff to bring their authentic selves to work. We will create 2SLGBTQIA+ affinity group for our staff.

**DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WITH 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY LEADERS**

We will develop partnerships with community agencies to identify, understand, and address 2SLGBTQIA+ issues within our diverse community in the hope to support our students, families, and staff identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

**INTEGRATE 2SLGBTQIA+ IDENTITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS INTO THE CURRICULUM**

Starting with the Family Life curriculum (Fully Allive), ratified by Ontario Bishops, we will provide age-appropriate curriculum that explores the contributions of 2SLGTQIA+ people to Canadian society. We will also support the months of recognition and the days of significance acknowledging the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

This is important: to get to know people, listen, expand the circle of ideas. The world is crisscrossed by roads that come closer together and move apart, but the important thing is that they lead towards the Good."

"Openness to God makes us open towards the marginalized of this world, and gives us the courage to leave the confines of our own security and comfort to become bruised, hurting and dirty as we joyfully approach the suffering other in a spirit of solidarity."

Even in the developed world, the effects of unjust structures and actions are all too apparent. Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples."

~ Pope Francis on the Marginalized
CONCLUSION

At the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, we are cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually committed to lifelong learning and the equity work that needs to be done. Over the next two years, we will focus on combating anti-Black racism and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment, but we will not be distracted from tackling other types of hate that persist in our society. Our equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging work will remain comprehensive and wide-reaching to ensure each student fills one’s God-given potential. Our commitment to promoting equity, inclusion, and belonging for all will be deeply informed and guided by our Catholic Social Teachings.
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