

**DATE:** January 26, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Trustee Sherry Adams, Policy Review Committee  
Trustee Michael Janz, Policy Review Committee  
Trustee Bridget Stirling, Chair, Policy Review Committee

**SUBJECT:** Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education

**ORIGINATOR:** Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF:** Youssra Badr, Marnie Beaudoin, Rachel Foley, Amanda Lau, Ann Parker, Nancy Petersen, Elizabeth Shen, Jt Tehara, Munira Wazir, Gail Wilson

**REFERENCE:** Board Policy CH.BP – Framework for Policy Development and Review

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## ISSUE

The Policy Review Committee is bringing Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education to the Board of Trustees at public Board for first reading.

## BACKGROUND

Edmonton Public Schools' Board of Trustees is committed to high quality learning environments that are welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy. The Board values diversity in its schools, staff and communities and affirms its commitment to ensuring students have a sense of belonging and ability to participate fully in their learning and as members of a school community through Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education. This policy is currently up for review.

## RELATED FACTS

The revision of the policy reflects a significant shift in the tone and intent from the original document. The previous policy, which was very progressive in its day, was developed to focus more around teaching and learning and was located in the curriculum and instruction area of Board policies. The new draft being presented for first reading reflects a shift to a more holistic view and is intended to sit in section H of Board policies, reflecting students.

To support the work to review the policy, the Board invited community members to participate in a Policy Review Advisory Committee. The committee met several times throughout 2019 and 2020 to discuss the policy and refine its scope and intent. Members of the committee provided their perspectives through in person conversations, online meetings and feedback forms. Additionally, other educational institutions' anti-racism and equity policies were reviewed to help inform developing the updated direction of the first draft.

As a result of this work, there have been substantive changes to the first draft of the policy to more clearly reflect the Division's commitment to anti-racism and equity. This policy recognizes the important role of public education in reflecting, influencing and driving positive systemic change and understands school communities are critical to the development of students' personal and cultural identities. This

first draft of the policy clearly acknowledges that racism exists, both in schools and the broader community, that it can be perpetuated at the individual, institutional and systemic levels and affirms the Board's commitment to addressing racism.

After first reading of the policy, it is the intent of the Policy Review Committee to proceed with further stakeholder engagement to inform the work to finalize the final draft of the document. This engagement will include the traditional online survey as well as focus group type dialogue with parents, staff, students and community members.

This work by the Board of Trustees supports the following areas of the 2018-2022 District Strategic Plan:

- Priority 1 Goal 2: Success for every student.
- Priority 2: Provide welcoming, high quality learning and working environments.
- Priority 2 Goal 1: Our learning and working environments are welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education be introduced.
2. That Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education be read for the first time and approved for consultation for further stakeholder feedback.

## **OPTIONS**

Based on the information provided in this report, the following options are considered most appropriate:

1. Approve first reading of the policy.
2. Provide the Policy Review Committee with feedback to inform revision of the document to support approval of first reading at an upcoming Board meeting.

## **CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS**

Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education is up for review. The draft policy being presented for first reading has been informed by working with an advisory committee and a review of other public school and post-secondary anti-racism and equity policies.

After first reading, the Policy Review Committee will be embarking upon additional engagement with stakeholders to help inform final work on the policy prior to bringing it to the Board of Trustees for second, third and final reading.

In the Policy Review Committee's work plan the intended timeline to have this policy work completed is the 2020-2021 school year.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Policy Review Committee will take their next steps based on feedback from the Board of Trustees.

## **ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES**

ATTACHMENT I Draft Board Policy GGAB.BP Multicultural Education

BS:rf

**CODE:** GGAB.BP

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** (09-06-2009)

**TOPIC:** Anti-Racism and Equity

**ISSUE DATE:** (11-06-2009)

**REVIEW YEAR:** (2016)

## PURPOSE

To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) responsibility for providing a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environment throughout the Division that is respectful of and responsive to students' life experiences.

To affirm the Board of Trustees' commitment to addressing racism and inequity in the public school system.

To promote a division culture that recognizes diversity as a strength and values diversity in its schools, staff and communities.

To affirm the Board's commitment to developing positive relationships with staff, family and community members and working together in support of student success.

## DEFINITIONS

**Anti-racism** is the proactive and consistent process of identifying, challenging, preventing and eliminating racism. It uses direct action to acknowledge where privilege exists, raise awareness, advocate for change and challenge beliefs (such as prejudice, bias and stereotypes) at the personal and institutional level to create and implement action to fight racism for individuals and within an organization, workforce or group.

**Racism** occurs in the context of a power imbalance and is prejudice based on social constructs, lack of knowledge or personal beliefs of superiority resulting in advantage of one race over another. Racism can be experienced at the individual, institutional or systemic level. It includes conscious and unconscious discriminatory or derogatory attitudes, comments or actions derived from assumptions and perceptions relative to race or culture.

**Cultural diversity** refers to the presence of all diverse groups in an organization and acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences and their cultural expressions and contributions within the organization.

**Discrimination** is negative differential treatment of a person or group on the basis of race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender identity and/or gender expression or sexual orientation.

**Diversity** refers to the uniqueness of human differences. It includes ways of being, doing and knowing.

**Equity** in an educational institution is achieved when students are fully able to participate in the benefits of an education, including the opportunity to experience success and human dignity while developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute as citizens in society.

**Implicit bias** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner.

**Inclusive** An inclusive education system is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates acceptance of, and belonging for, all students - regardless of their backgrounds, needs or abilities. It is founded on the belief that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources. An inclusive education system supports every student to be included and feel represented within their greater school community.

**Intercultural understanding**, learning from and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that support commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

## **POLICY**

All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice and racism. This right is guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Alberta Human Rights Act* and *Education Act*. The Board confirms its commitment and role in achieving racism-free Division schools and recognizes that working toward this vision is for the benefit of all students, staff and the community at large.

The Board recognizes the important role of public education in reflecting, influencing and driving positive systemic change and understands school communities are critical to the development of students' personal and cultural identity.

The diversity of students, staff and their families is a strength of Edmonton Public Schools. The Board recognizes that respect for diverse cultural perspectives, traditions, languages, beliefs and values enriches the learning and working environment for everyone. The Board is committed to honouring cultural diversity, promoting intercultural understanding to enable reflection and growth and fostering a sense of belonging.

The Board recognizes that racism exists and can be perpetuated at the individual, institutional and systemic level. The Board further recognizes that individuals experiencing racism at any level encounter barriers to positive relationships, learning, academic success and personal fulfilment. The Board acknowledges the complexity of how racism may be experienced by students-and commits to openly and immediately addressing incidents of racism.

### **A. EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

The Board understands that a sense of belonging for students enriches the learning environment for all students. The Board commits to equity and inclusion through:

- a. Establishing and implementing an environment that reflects the cultural diversity of the school community and that is responsive to students' life experiences and cultural backgrounds.

- b. Supporting staff through professional development that is focused on helping staff understand the diversity within their school, in their responsibility to respect cultural diversity and promote intercultural understanding.
- c. Actively establishing community relationships that reflect the diversity of the school and broader community.

## B. ANTI-RACISM AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Board recognizes that racism exists in the education system and the broader community and that the efforts to eradicate racism and discrimination from our learning environments is an ongoing and collective responsibility. The Board commits to this through:

- a. Developing healthy relationships that strengthen open and respectful dialogue to resolve racial inequity, conflicts and misunderstanding rooted in unknowing, implicit bias, prejudice and/or racism.
- b. Providing professional development and capacity building for Division staff to better understand their role in mitigating biases and barriers caused by racism and discrimination that affect students and families in the school system.
- c. Engaging with members of the community who have experienced systemic and institutional racism and marginalisation to help inform the Divisions deliberate efforts to eradicate racism and discrimination within the school system.

## C. STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Board believes that every student can reach their full potential, and acknowledges that deliberate and strategic efforts are required to ensure the success and achievement for all students. The Board commits to this through:

- a. Using evidence and data to inform decision making that enables equity of access to educational opportunities.
- b. Supporting schools to identify and use resources that represent the cultural diversity of the school community.
- c. Engaging with staff, family, educational institutions, community members and cultural groups to support student success and provide opportunities to learn in a way that brings the unique voice and lived experience to the curriculum and their learning.

## EXPECTATIONS

The Superintendent of Schools will implement this policy by assigning roles and responsibilities, and developing administrative regulations, processes and best practices.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

The Superintendent will provide an annual update to the Board around progress made in support of student success and achievement within a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy environment.

The Division will identify goals and strategies that support the diversity of our school communities, including English Language Learners, through the Three Year Education Plan and will provide an annual update on progress and priority strategies through the Annual Education Results Report to Alberta Education.

## REFERENCES

ACB.BP National Anthem and Flag  
FA.BP Human Resources Framework  
FBCA.BP Respectful Working Environments  
GI.AR Teaching and Learning Resources  
GGAB.AR Multicultural Education  
HAA.BP First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education  
HEGD.AR Exemption of Pupil from Instruction on Religious Grounds  
HF.BP Safe, Caring and Respectful Learning Environments  
Teaching Quality Standard  
Leadership Quality Standard

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