



**DATE:** June 22, 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:** Second, third and final reading of Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity (replaces GGAB.BP Multicultural Education)

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

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF:** Youssra Badr, Marnie Beaudoin, Kelsey Duebel, 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](#)

---

**ISSUE**

The Policy Review Committee is presenting Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity to the Board of Trustees at public Board for second, third and final reading.

**BACKGROUND**

Edmonton Public Schools' Board of Trustees (the Board) is committed to welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environments.

To support the early 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 electronic feedback forms. Additionally, other educational institutions' anti-racism and equity policies were reviewed to help inform developing the updated direction of the first draft.

In June 2020, the Board issued a statement that acknowledged the existence of racism in the Division. The statement also committed to bring anti-racist education and practice into formal Board policy through an update to Board Policy GGAP.BP Multicultural Education. The first draft of the updated policy was read by the Board on January 26, 2021, and approved for further consultation and stakeholder feedback.

**RELATED FACTS**

Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity will serve as the foundation for the Division's on going work on anti-racism and equity. Engagement from students, family, staff and community members has been critical to the development of a policy that will serve to support an anti-racist public school system. While this policy is currently coded to the Curriculum and Instruction (G) section of Board policies, the updated policy will be coded to the Student (H) section of Board policies. This will signal the shift from a



curriculum and instruction policy, to a policy focused on addressing the collective and individual needs, academic success and well-being of students. This approach is consistent with other Division Board policies, such as Board Policy HAA.BP First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education, and aligns with a student-centered approach to policy that is responsive to students' life experiences.

Feedback to support the final development of this policy was provided through a variety of processes including:

- A public survey that was available for 60 days from February to March 2021. A total of 256 respondents completed the survey. Respondents were provided the first draft of the policy and invited to provide feedback on each area of the draft policy.
- A series of online Listening Circles in May 2021 with students, staff, parents and community agency partners who identify as Black, Indigenous or People of Colour. Approximately 150 individuals participated in the Listening Circles. The sessions were focused on understanding participants' lived experiences with, and perspectives on, belonging, equity, racism and anti-racism in Edmonton Public Schools.
- A review of feedback provided by the Equity Advisory Committee. Although this committee was largely focused on providing feedback on the collection and use of race-based data, relevant feedback was incorporated including the need for race-based evidence in decision making, the importance of relationships in the school community, as well as staff that represent the diversity of our students, and the need for on going anti-racism professional learning for Division staff.
- A review of the draft policy by the Board of Trustees' Caucus Committee

As a result of this feedback, changes have been made to update the policy. These revisions are focused on:

- Clarifying and strengthening language to be as direct, specific and action-focused as possible. This includes revising the definitions, with a particular focus on the terms of equity and racism, and including the delineation between individual, institutional and systemic racism.
- Acknowledging that racism can be perpetuated at the individual, institutional and systemic level and is rooted in historical oppression, white supremacy and colonialism.
- Strengthening emphasis on student lived experiences, culture and language and the need for staff to be responsive to students' lived experiences to support their success and sense of belonging in school.
- A strengthened emphasis on the responsibility of school staff to address and respond to racism and direction for the Division to support staff in carrying through with this responsibility, including the need for developing safe reporting of incidents of racism.
- Acknowledging the importance of compassion, empathy and on going learning as the Division strives to mitigate racism and work towards equity.
- Including a commitment to using race-based evidence and data to better understand how racism exists in Edmonton Public Schools.
- Including, where relevant, references to staff experiences, responsibilities and workplaces. While this policy is primarily focused on students, staff references are included in recognition that staff and student experiences are interrelated.

A significant amount of feedback was received regarding human resource practices. Feedback related to anti-racism and equity in human resources practices will be used to inform future anti-racism work focused on the area of Division Human Resources, including a review of Board Policy FA.BP Human Resources Framework and associated administrative regulations.



The feedback from students, staff, families and community that helped to inform the development of this policy also supported the Board's work on the recently passed early years policy, GGAJ.BP Early Years, and the annual work to revise HG.BP Student Behaviour and Conduct. The lens of anti-racism and equity will continue to be applied to the Board's work in support of policy review and development going forward.

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 HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity be read for a second time.
2. That Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity be read for a third and final time and be approved.

## OPTIONS

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

1. Support the recommendation to approve Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity.
2. Complete the second reading of the policy and direct the Policy Review Committee to adopt revisions to the policy and engage further with stakeholders prior to third reading.

## CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS

The draft policy being brought forward has been informed by the work of an advisory committee, stakeholder engagement and a review of other anti-racism and equity policies.

In the Policy Review Committee's work plan the intended timeline to have this policy work completed is the 2020-2021 school year. Approval on June 22, 2021, will align with this timeline.

## NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the recommendation, the updated policy will be posted to the Division website.

The Superintendent of Schools will implement this policy by assigning roles and responsibilities, reviewing and updating related policies and administrative regulations and, as applicable, developing new administrative regulations, processes and best practices.

## ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT I Board Policy HAAB.BP Anti-racism and Equity

BS:rf

**CODE:** HAAB.BP**EFFECTIVE DATE:** (09-06-2009)**TOPIC:** Anti-racism and Equity**ISSUE DATE:** (22-06-2021)**REVIEW YEAR:** (2028)

## PURPOSE

To affirm the Board of Trustees' (the Board) responsibility for providing a welcoming, inclusive, safe and healthy learning and working environment; one that respects diversity, commits to anti-racism and fosters a sense of belonging throughout the Division.

To affirm the Board's commitment to addressing individual, institutional and systemic racism and inequity in the public school system.

To promote an environment of anti-racism 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, families 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:** includes conscious and unconscious discriminatory or derogatory attitudes, microaggressions, comments or actions directed at marginalized groups relative to race or culture. It is based on assumptions, perceptions, social constructs, lack of knowledge or personal beliefs of superiority. Racism occurs in the context of a power and privilege imbalance and can be experienced at the individual, institutional or systemic level. In this context:

- **Individual racism** refers to an individual expressing racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours and is a form of racial discrimination, whether expressed overtly or covertly.
- **Institutional racism** occurs when institutions create or maintain racial inequity, often as a result of hidden biases in policies, practices and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others.
- **Systemic racism** occurs when racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours are reinforced by systems of power that perpetuate racial group inequity. Systemic racism involves dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed racial privileges and inequities to endure and adapt over time.

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

**Discrimination:** is negative differential treatment of a person or group on the basis of race, religious beliefs, ethnicity, language, 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:** is achieved in an educational institution when students with diverse backgrounds, lived experiences and needs are fully able to participate in the benefits of an education. Equity involves providing each learner with the type and amount of support needed to be successful, including culturally relevant and responsive environments and resources. Students are provided 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. 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.

**White Supremacy:** in this context, is the systematic marginalization of People of Colour based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges people who identify as white. It does not refer to extremist ideologies which believe that white people are genetically or culturally superior to non-whites.

## POLICY

All members of the school community have the right to learn and work in an environment free of discrimination 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 acknowledges that racism exists and the important role of public education in reflecting, influencing and driving positive systemic change. Racism can be perpetuated at the individual, institutional and systemic level and is rooted in historical oppression, white supremacy and colonialism. Proactive action is required to create anti-racist environments. The Board further acknowledges that individuals experiencing racism at any level encounter barriers to positive relationships, learning, academic success, personal fulfilment and well-being. The Board recognizes the complexity of how racism is experienced by students and commits to addressing incidents of racism through responsive and transparent processes.

The Board acknowledges that anti-racism and equity require continuous action, learning and improvement. The Board commits to using evidence and data to better understand issues of racism and equity in Edmonton Public Schools, to inform decision-making and action and to monitor progress and outcomes of this ongoing work.

The diversity of the students, staff and families of Edmonton Public schools is a strength. The Board recognizes that respect for diverse cultural perspectives, traditions, languages, beliefs and values enriches the learning and working environment for everyone and is important to student well-being and personal growth. The Board is committed to honouring cultural diversity, promoting intercultural understanding to enable reflection and growth and fostering a sense of belonging. The Board is committed to supporting systemic change and acknowledges that empathy, compassion and learning are critical for achieving anti-racism and equity.

**A. ANTI-RACISM AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

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

1. Developing processes and resources that enable safe reporting of incidents and healthy relationships to strengthen open, respectful and restorative dialogue supportive of an environment of anti-racism, compassion and empathy.
2. Providing professional development and capacity building for Division staff to better understand their responsibility to address racism when it occurs and their role in preventing and mitigating biases and barriers caused by racism and discrimination that affect students, staff and families in the school system.
3. Continuously and meaningfully engaging with members of the community who have experienced systemic and institutional racism and marginalization to help inform the Division's deliberate efforts to eradicate racism and discrimination within the school system.

**B. EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

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

1. Establishing and implementing an anti-racist environment that reflects the cultural diversity of the school and broader community and that is responsive to students' life experiences and cultural backgrounds.
2. Supporting staff through professional development that is focused on helping staff understand the diversity within their school and broader community and their responsibility to respect cultural diversity and promote intercultural understanding.
3. Actively establishing and maintaining community relationships that reflect the diversity of the school and broader community.

**C. STUDENT SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT**

The Board believes that every student can reach their full potential, and acknowledges that respect for, and responsiveness to, students' lived experience, culture and language is fundamental to their success. Deliberate and strategic efforts are required to ensure the success and achievement for all students. The Board commits to this through:

1. Supporting an environment where students' diverse histories, identities and lived experiences are valued and recognized as part of their success, engagement and belonging in schools.
2. Building staff capacity to review, identify and use resources and materials that represent the cultural diversity of the community.
3. Engaging with staff, family, educational institutions, community members and cultural groups to support student success and provide culturally meaningful opportunities to learn in a way that brings unique voices and lived experiences 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, including processes for safe reporting of incidents of racism.

## **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.AR 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