



EQUITY ACTION PLAN

At the DSBN, equity matters.

We believe that each individual deserves:

- to have their identity and lived experiences honoured,
- to learn in a culture of respect, dignity, and acceptance, and
- to have access to education free from discrimination and barriers.

Building equitable and inclusive schools requires the work to be grounded in the Ontario Human Rights Code with intentional focus on:

- Student Voice
- Inclusive Spaces
- Culturally and Historically Responsive Curriculum
- Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Learning
- Community Partnership
- Identifying and Removing Systemic Barriers

Creating positive change within schools necessitates meaningful and intentional actions that result in a learning environment where every student feels valued, supported and empowered to succeed.

Through collaboration, ongoing review of policies and

practices, and collective commitments, we aim to create a more equitable and just school community that celebrates diversity and prioritizes the success of every student.

The Equity Action Plan reflects our commitment to students to ensure there is equity at all levels of the system and embodies our dedication to addressing systemic barriers, promoting fair, anti-racist and anti-oppressive policies and practices, and ensuring all students have equal opportunities to thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

The Plan outlines the priorities of the six focus areas and provides highlights of the work that has been done and the commitment to the work we will embark upon over the next three years. It is important to understand that much more work is happening at the system, school, and classroom levels that goes beyond what is highlighted in the Equity Action Plan and is further highlighted through the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Community Advisory Committee and the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Trustee Advisory Committee. To learn more, reach out to your school administrator.

Student Voice

Engaging and responding to student voice and agency

PRIORITIES:

- Empower, engage and equip students with the skills and tools to be critically conscious and active participants in promoting change in their spaces.
- Create the conditions to amplify, honour and center student voice so all students can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.
- Develop reciprocal relationships for sharing ownership for learning and having youth as partners and leaders in our schools and communities.

Highlights from Previous Year

- Established student equity and affinity groups at schools through DSBN Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Alliance for Students (IDEAS) collaboration
- Collaborated with Student Trustees and DSBN IDEAS to promote common goals to empower student voice
- Organized Annual Rise Up! Students Leading the Change: DSBN Student Equity Conference for secondary students

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Collaborate with community-based groups to provide mentorship programs for Black students, fostering their academic, personal, and professional growth through supportive and empowering relationships
- Host annual "Rise Up: Students Leading the Change" equity conference for secondary students, creating an inclusive platform to address and promote equity, diversity, and inclusion through workshops, discussions, and interactive activities
- Create opportunities for school-based affinity groups to network with other student groups in schools, fostering collaboration and working together to promote equity and inclusion at their schools
- Create opportunities for system-level and school-based student groups to collaborate and provide platforms for one another, enhancing mutual support and the sharing of diverse perspectives and initiatives

Inclusive Spaces

Creating brave spaces where everyone can bring their full self to actively listen, explore and learn together

PRIORITIES:

- Ensure everyone is valued, respected and knows they belong, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or ability.
- Create the conditions for voices to have a space to acknowledge, examine and allow for questioning for deeper understanding.
- Embed inclusive practices in all areas connected to school culture such as planning, programming and curriculum.
- Rework existing structures where all students are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the school life.

Highlights from Previous Year

- Collaborated with schools to apply the use of equity scans to review spaces and practices for equitable and inclusive practices
- Created a building belonging framework and shared it with administrators to enhance their equity perspective and share what the practice looks like
- Established listening campaigns to collect student perspectives on what constitutes inclusive spaces and be responsive to their needs

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Support the formation of student-initiated affinity/equity groups where students and their allies learn to engage in courageous and critical conversations and develop skills to be agents of change in their schools
- Collaborate with schools applying the Building Belonging framework to develop working plans aimed at building knowledge in actionable strategies for creating more inclusive spaces
- Carry out listening campaigns to collect student insights and co-create action plans regarding inclusivity and cultivating a sense of belonging

Culturally & Historically Responsive Curriculum

Designing instruction that honours the identities, cultural knowledge and genius of all students

PRIORITIES:

- Empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Recognize all students learn differently and that these differences may be connected to background, language, family structure and social or cultural identity.
- Empower teachers to cultivate the knowledge and skills that already exist in all learners to support achievement and well-being.
- Support teachers to create student-centered learning environments that affirm all student identities, elevate historically marginalized voices, and contribute to student engagement through cultivating critical thinking.

Highlights from Previous Year

- Collaborated with Curriculum Support Services and K-Grade 1 teachers to support inclusive representation in the classroom through staff learning and resource development
- Continued to implement the Cultivating Caring Conditions Framework (Knowing Each Learner, Identity, Culture/Family, Skills/Gifts, Joy) to address and support the social, emotional and academic needs of each learner
- Continued to offer Additional Qualifications courses (Addressing Anti-Black Racism, Teaching LGBTQ Students, and Equitable & Inclusive Schools) to all educators

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Facilitating staff learning and developing resources to support the integration of inclusive representation in the classroom through texts
- Design, deliver, and support participation in differentiated staff learning experiences that strengthen knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning environments
- Collaborate with curriculum support services teams to create and support resources that integrate culturally and historically responsive practices.

Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism & Anti-Oppression Learning

Developing a critical lens to disrupt oppressive practices to improve outcomes for all students, staff and school communities

PRIORITIES:

- Build knowledge and awareness of the principles of anti-bias, anti-racism, anti-oppression.
- Develop an equity lens to support classroom, school and system decision making.
- Apply an equity lens to planning, teaching and assessment and evaluation.
- Apply an equity lens to school and system policies and guidelines.
- Eliminate biased, racist and oppressive practices that cause harm

Highlights from Previous Year

- Provided professional training to administrators and educators in building their knowledge in anti-bias, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices which included Learning Conversations, Restorative Culture and 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusive Practices
- Developed and implemented a Learning Series for educators through Equity Cafés focusing on building inclusive classroom practices
- Collaborated with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights education team for student and staff learning on human rights

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Offer professional development to administrators and educators, deepening their understanding of anti-bias, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices, and expanding these initiatives to include groups such as NTIP and teacher/administrator learning networks
- Build staff capacity through Equity Cafés Learning Series, aimed at fostering inclusive, culturally responsive classroom practices
- Enhance educator understanding and practical application of OCT's Anti-Black Racism Advisory

Community Partnership

Engaging families and community members and organizations

PRIORITIES:

- Build cultural bridges between families and schools to learn about one another and appreciate differences.
- Nurture and grow the relationships between families, schools and the community in the best interest of students.
- Implement a collective and collaborative approach to benefit the achievement and well-being of all students.
- Engage in authentic educational experiences to affect communities in positive ways.
- Develop partnerships with community organizations in the best interest of Niagara.

Highlights from Previous Year

- Launched Community Connections on DSBN equity website to support families seeking community supports and advocacy
- Collaborated with Brock University, Future Black Female, Harmony Movement, and other community organizations to support and enhance student initiatives

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Develop new initiatives that invite families and communities as partners in supporting student academic success and well-being
- Identify the barriers to participation and engage in collaborative problem-solving with school councils and community groups that honours voices and experiences
- Collaborate with community organizations to empower and enhance the skills of equity-deserving students

Identifying & Removing Systemic Barriers

Eliminating disproportionality and disparity

PRIORITIES:

- Uphold the Ontario Human Rights Code that protects marginalized groups from discrimination and harassment.
- Collect, analyze and disaggregate data to identify and remove systemic barriers.
- Review and revise policies and procedures with an equity lens to eliminate differential treatment and outcomes for marginalized groups.
- Disrupt and remove barriers within systems and policies that perpetuate racism, oppression and exclusion.

Highlights from Previous Year

- Created new Black Youth Engagement Coach position to support students in secondary schools by addressing their unique needs, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting academic and personal success
- Implemented Human Rights Policy and provided training at the system and school level

2024–2027 Commitments:

- Continue mentoring Black students to assist in setting and achieving academic and personal goals, and addressing issues related to racial identity
- Develop guidelines to address discriminatory language at the system and school level
- Work alongside schools to provide equity-deserving plans to remove barriers experienced by equity-deserving groups.
- Collection of identity-based data through the student census to analyze student achievement and well-being indicators (e.g., credit accumulation and attendance) for diverse student populations
- Revise and implement school culture survey to gather feedback from students, parents, and staff members, with the aim of identifying areas of strength and improvement in creating a positive and inclusive school environment. Utilize the data gathered to inform targeted initiatives and strategies that promote a safe and inclusive school