



Matthews Hall

Established 1918

EQUITY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

Matthews Hall (the “School”)’s mission is to enable each and every student to learn effectively, and to improve learning outcomes for all, 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 disability.

The School upholds the principles of respect for human rights enshrined in the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (the “Code”). The School recognizes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to the full range of programs, delivery of services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful educational and social outcomes.

The School strives to provide an education which will equip students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live in an increasingly diverse world. This involves a commitment to inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases and systemic barriers, whether overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional that may limit students’ learning, growth and contribution to society. The principles of equity and inclusive education are embedded in all aspects of the School’s operations.

The School is therefore committed to an equitable education program that upholds and reflects the principles of fair and inclusive education which should permeate all policies, procedures and practices.

For the purpose of this policy:

- Equity is defined as “A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences.”
- Inclusive education is defined as “Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.”
- Diversity is defined as “The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.”

AREAS OF POLICY FOCUS:

Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation, Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2013 and Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2013) "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools" identify eight areas of focus for implementing equity and inclusive education.

Each area of focus will be introduced and anchored by a preamble and a policy statement which will serve to guide the actions of the School, in honouring its commitments to equity and inclusive education policy development, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

1. SCHOOL POLICIES, PROGRAMS, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

Preamble:

The School will be guided by the principles set out in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 in all of the School's policies, programs, procedures, and practices. Respect for the diverse perspectives of the entire school community will be reflected in all areas of the teaching, learning and administrative culture. Every effort will be made to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit the opportunities of individuals from diverse communities for employment, mentoring, retention, promotion, and succession planning at the School. The goal is to ensure that the School is inclusive and reflects the makeup of its diverse community.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Serve staff, students and families in diverse communities by incorporating the principles of equity and inclusive education into all aspects of its operations, structures, policies, programs, guidelines, and practices; and to make efforts to identify and remove discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that may limit the opportunities of individuals from diverse communities.

2. SHARED AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

Preamble:

The School subscribes to an informed leadership philosophy that inspires, empowers, and supports all stakeholders to join together to implement institutional practices and behaviours that cultivate equity and inclusive education.

The School recognizes the critical connection between student leadership and improved student achievement and will strive to include the student voice in the implementation of equity and inclusive education.

Effective school leaders will encourage and promote a collaborative approach to all dimensions of equity and inclusive education, which ensures the participation of students, parents, service organizations and other diverse community partners.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students are recognized to help meet their needs.

3. SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Preamble:

The School values and encourages the active involvement of parents and family members to create and sustain a positive school climate that supports all student achievement. The School invites, and will draw upon the expertise of the parent body and community partners to explore ways of sharing resources that can help meet the diverse needs of our students and provide new and relevant learning opportunities.

The School is committed to ongoing, constructive and open dialogue in partnership with racial, ethno-cultural and faith communities to increase co-operation and collaboration among home, school and the community at large.

The School recognizes that the effective review, development, implementation and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies and practices requires the involvement of all members of the school community.

The School values the assets that all stakeholders can bring to enable each and every student to learn effectively and enhance educational opportunities for all.

The School is committed to the maintenance, development, and expansion of partnerships with parents and diverse communities that support school improvement.

The School will undertake to identify, examine, and remove barriers that exist which may prevent fully participatory school-community relations.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with diverse communities so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families and employees are recognized and addressed.

4. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Preamble:

Curriculum is defined as the total learning environment, including physical environment, learning materials, pedagogical practices, assessment instruments, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

At the School, students must feel engaged in and empowered by what they learn, supported by teachers, and welcomed in their learning environment. This is achieved through effective instructional strategies, and inclusive curriculum and assessment practices that reflect the diverse needs of all students and their learning pathways.

Students will be provided with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures and perspectives. Students should see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs and culture of the School.

The School will draw upon teaching strategies that have been shown to support student success, including reviewing resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluating practices to identify and eliminate stereotypes, discriminatory biases, and systemic barriers.

Providing opportunities for formative assessment (assessment for learning) is an essential component of an inclusive curriculum. Multiple opportunities for assessment allow for student learning and accuracy of instruction and assessment, differentiated instruction and multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate learning. Effective evaluation includes researched best practices that reflect the current level of achievement of the student.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Implement an inclusive curriculum and to review resources, instruction, and assessment and evaluation practices in order to identify and address discriminatory biases so that each student may maximize her or his learning potential.

5. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Preamble:

The School recognizes and values the religious diversity within its community and is committed to providing a safe, respectful and equitable environment for all, free from all forms of discriminatory or harassing behaviour, including those based on religion.

Freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. The School and the community it serves must work together to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects religious freedom for all individuals. While the School and its staff will take all reasonable steps to ensure freedom of religion and religious practices, it is expected that students and their families will help the School to understand their religious needs

and will work with the School to determine appropriate and reasonable accommodations. This commitment is explicitly described in the Religious Accommodation Guideline attached hereto as Appendix “A”.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Acknowledge each individual’s right to follow or not to follow religious beliefs and practices free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodation to staff and students.

6. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

Preamble:

The School’s policies are designed to foster a positive and inclusive school climate that is free from discriminatory or harassing behaviour. A positive and inclusive school climate is one where all members of the school community feel safe, included, welcomed and accepted. Racial and ethnocultural harassment is demeaning treatment and is a form of discrimination that is prohibited under the Code.

The principles of equity and inclusive education support a whole-school approach to foster positive student behaviour. When relationships are founded on mutual respect, a culture of respect becomes the norm. The School will ensure that students and staff can report incidents of discrimination and harassment safely and that will enable school personnel to respond in a timely manner.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Commit to the principle that every person within the school community is entitled to a respectful, positive school climate and learning environment, free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

7. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Preamble:

Professional learning activities must be ongoing, evidence-based and focused on positive outcomes. The School will therefore provide opportunities for teachers and staff to participate in training on equity and inclusive education topics. The School will draw on existing expertise within its organization and its community partners and agencies.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Provide administrators, staff, students and other members of the School community with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory biases and systemic barriers under the Code.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Preamble:

The School acknowledges and assumes the responsibility for its policies, actions, and decisions. In the pursuit of greater transparency and accountability, the School, in respectful collaboration and communication with the school community, will report on its goals and progress in the areas of policy review and school improvement planning.

It is the Policy of the School to:

Assess and monitor School progress in implementing equity and inclusive education principles into all school policies, programs, guidelines and practices; and to communicate these results to the School community.