

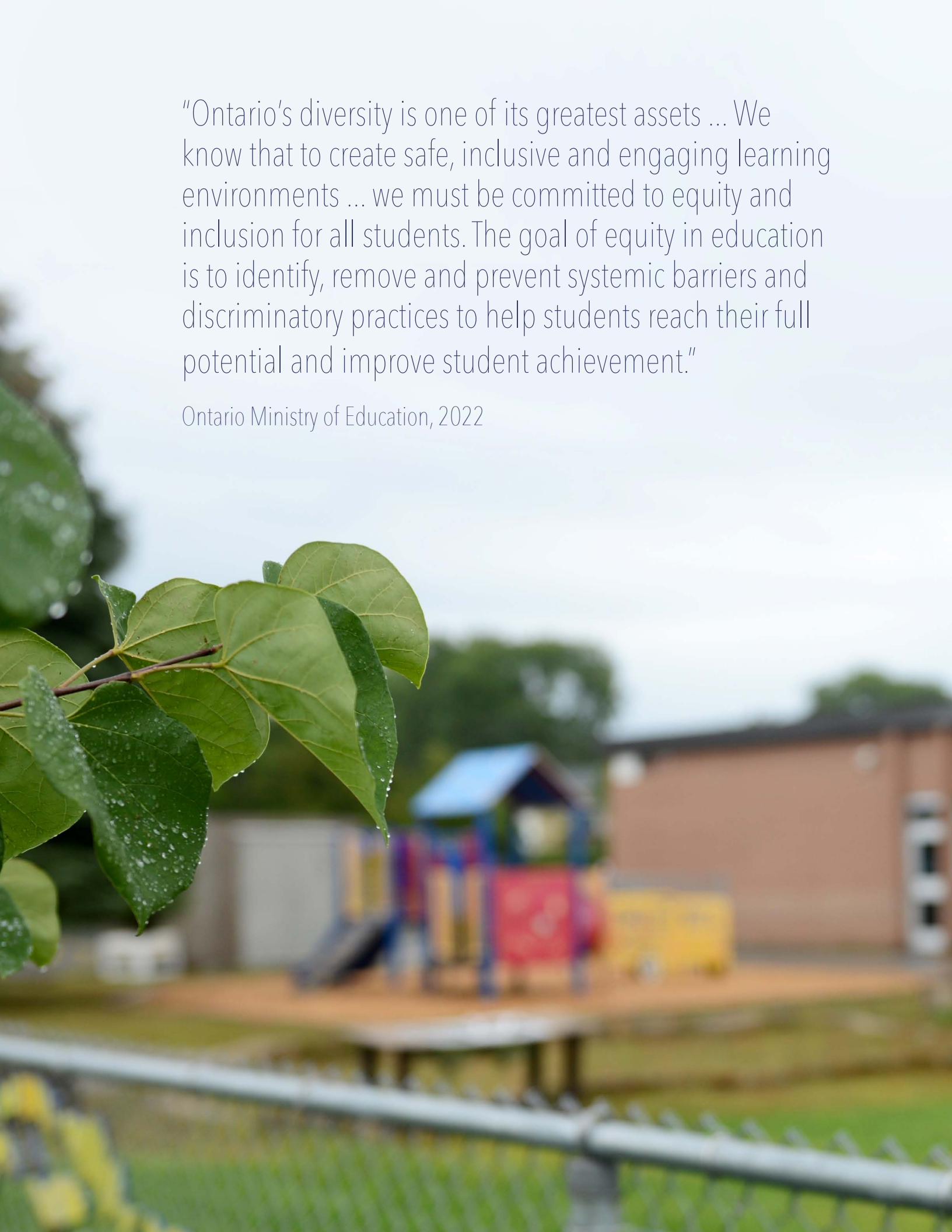


Thames Valley
District School Board

EQUITY

Equity Action Plan 2024





"Ontario's diversity is one of its greatest assets ... We know that to create safe, inclusive and engaging learning environments ... we must be committed to equity and inclusion for all students. The goal of equity in education is to identify, remove and prevent systemic barriers and discriminatory practices to help students reach their full potential and improve student achievement."

Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022

Introduction

It is the responsibility and moral imperative of the Thames Valley District School Board to act intentionally to enhance equity, inclusion, and respect for Indigenous peoples and human rights across its vast district, in all its schools, classrooms and communities.


TVDSB's Equity Action Plan builds on existing legal and policy frameworks that establish the role of school boards in ensuring equitable access to, and enjoyment of educational opportunities. It focuses on working towards the removal of discriminatory barriers to education for Indigenous, Black, and racialized students, students experiencing poverty, students who are new to Canada, who are members of marginalized religious and linguistic communities, students with disabilities or who have special education needs, and students who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, recognizing the intersectionality between and among these identities.

The plan reflects and affirms TVDSB's commitment to upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It identifies targeted actions based on the criteria outlined in Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (2017) and the Ontario Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum, Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (PPM 119).

TVDSB recognizes Indigenous Peoples and the need to create and foster a culturally safe environment for Indigenous students and staff. TVDSB acknowledges its longstanding relationships through Education Service Agreements with the Oneida Nation of the Thames, the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, and the Munsee-Delaware Nation, as well as with urban Indigenous communities. In continuing to develop this plan, TVDSB recognizes the need for ongoing collaboration with the TVDSB Indigenous Education Team and Indigenous communities, families, and students.

Thames Valley demographics continue to change, and as a board we are becoming increasingly diverse. We learned from our student identity survey results that almost every school in Thames Valley has a student who self-identifies as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit – approximately 5% of students. About 5% identify as Black, 12% as Muslim, and 15% as racialized. There are more than 250 ethnic and cultural origins, more than 100 languages, and over 50 religions, creeds, and spiritual affiliations represented among students. Approximately 1 in every 5 students in Grades 7-12 identify with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual and about 1 in every 11 students identify as having a disability. The voices of students, families, and community, gathered through extensive consultation and dialogue are the driving force in charting the path forward.

Although we recognize that many of the goals and objectives listed within this strategy are meant to be on-going work, it is the intent that the strategy will be fully implemented by June, 2027.



"Ontario schools need to be places where everyone can succeed in a culture of high expectations. They need to be places where educators and students value diversity, respect each other, and see themselves reflected in their learning. It is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at risk of not succeeding.

The fundamental principle driving this work is that every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other factors."

(Achieving Excellence, 2014, p. 8)



INDIAN
OCEAN

Glossary of Terms¹

Affinity Groups

Collectives within an organization that bring together employees with similar identities, backgrounds, experiences or interests, to provide members with connection and support, to offer a forum for the sharing of information and ideas, and to influence areas of work or the workplace. A place to connect with peers to address the impact of oppression, to interrupt experiences of internalized oppression, and to create a space for healing and working for individual and collective liberation.

Ally

A person who works to end a form of oppression that gives them privilege(s). Allies listen to, and are guided by, communities and individuals affected by oppression. Forms of oppression include ableism, ageism, audism, classism, biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, racism, sexism, and others.

Anti-Black Racism

Prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping or discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement and colonization. Anti-Black racism is deeply embedded in Canadian institutions, policies and practices, to the point that it becomes a part of our systems.

Anti-Colonial Approach

A conceptual framework and practice that disrupts the persistent centering of white/Eurocentric ways of knowing within culture and ideology as normative and supreme.

Anti-Indigenous 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-Racism

Anti-racism is a process, a systematic method of analysis, and a proactive course of action rooted in the recognition of the existence of racism, including systemic racism. Anti-racism actively seeks to identify, remove, prevent, and mitigate racially inequitable outcomes and power imbalances between groups and change the structures that sustain inequities.

Barriers

Systemic barriers are defined as attitudes, policies, practices or systems that result in individuals from certain population groups receiving unequal access to or being excluded from participation in employment, services or programs (e.g., through discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.).²

Bias-Free Progressive Discipline

Progressive Discipline is an approach to discipline through which principals determine appropriate consequences and/or supports to help students improve their behaviour, while taking into account individual circumstances, with the goal of ensuring that the inappropriate behaviour does not happen again. Accounting for “individual circumstances” in discipline decisions involves considering the student stage of growth and development; the nature and severity of the behaviour, and the impact of the behaviour on school climate. Bias-Free Progressive Discipline signifies an approach that, in practice, does not allow individual biases to influence discipline decisions, leading to disproportionate consequences for Indigenous, Black and minoritized students.



Colonialism

The practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people by another.³

Colonization

The enactment of or practice of colonialism. It is the process by which colonialism unfolds and is maintained. The three types of colonization are: settler colonialism, extractive colonialism, intellectual colonialism.⁴

Cultural Appropriation

The unauthorized use of another culture's dance, dress, music, language, folklore, cuisine, traditional medicine, religious symbols, etc. It's most likely to be harmful when the source community is a minority group that has been oppressed or exploited in other ways or when the object of appropriation is particularly sensitive, e.g. sacred objects.

Cultural Humility

The ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is oriented towards the perspective of another person. Involves conscious reflection on one's own perspective and biases as well as openness to another person's perspective in order to redress power imbalances and effectively communicate across difference.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP)⁵

An approach to teaching that intentionally nurtures the uniqueness of each student in background, language, family structure, and social and cultural identity, integrating the student's background and identity into curriculum and teaching to create effective conditions for learning.

CRRP has an institutional dimension, in the values demonstrated by administration and leadership in policy and procedure; a personal dimension, in the mindset of educators who are both self-aware and deeply knowledgeable of their students; and an instructional dimension, in the practices adopted by educators in a culturally responsive classroom.

Culture

The customs, beliefs, behaviours and/or achievements of a particular time and/or people; beyond ethnicity, race and/or faith, encompassing broad notions of similarity and difference reflected in multiple social identities.

Culturally Safe Learning

Environments

A culturally safe learning environment is one in which students feel comfortable about expressing their ideas, opinions, and needs and about responding authentically to topics that may be culturally sensitive

De-streamed

Curriculum content that is not differentiated as between two "types" of courses (academic and applied), but instead is suitable for all students at a particular grade level, regardless of their wishes or intentions for post-secondary education and training.

Disability

Under the medical model, this term refers to a limitation or loss of physiological abilities, whether apparent or not. These can be physical, cognitive, learning, and visual disabilities. Under the social model, disability is identified as a disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by systemic barriers, negative attitudes, and exclusion by society.

Disaggregated Data

Disaggregated data is broken down into component parts or smaller units of data for statistical analysis. In the context of race-based data, this means breaking down the composite (aggregate) "racialized" category into its component parts such as Black, South Asian, East/Southeast Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, White, etc.

Discrimination

Unfair treatment through either imposing a burden on a particular person or group, or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, citizenship, family status, disability, sex or other personal characteristics.

Diversity Kits

Collections of tools and resources to support the use of particular texts by classroom educators. Texts are selected to reflect the diversity of the TVDSB community and explore topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation, mental health and well-being, and racial diversity. All Diversity Kits also contain curriculum connections and instruction prompts for educators to use in their classes.

Dominant Group

A group that is considered more powerful and privileged in a particular society or context and that has power and influence over others.

Equity

A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. A distinct process of recognizing differences within groups of individuals and using this understanding to achieve substantive equality in all aspects of a person's life.

Equity-Deserving Groups

Equity-deserving groups are groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged and underrepresented.

Essential Conditions for Learning

Essential Conditions for Learning is TVDSB's Tier-1 evidence-informed and holistic framework. It centres the values of safety, relationships, compassion, and a strength-based approach in all learning environments. Caring and consistent relationships between students and staff act as the foundation when creating a classroom where students feel safe, connected, regulated, and are available to learn.

Ethnicity

A socially defined category or membership of people who may share a nationality, heritage, language, culture, and/or religion.

First Nations

Indigenous Peoples of Canada who are ethnically neither Inuit nor Métis. This term came into common usage in the 1970s and '80s and is usually used instead of the term "Indian".

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

Student-run collectives that bring together students who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ with allied students to build a community of support and organize around issues impacting them in their schools. Alliances are supported by a dedicated staff member.

Human Rights

The fundamental, universal rights that all citizens of the world have agreed we are all entitled to. Human rights are intrinsic, meaning we are born with them, and they are the same for every person. They are captured by the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which define in all aspects a life of equality, dignity, and respect, and a life free from discrimination. Countries have human rights laws to make sure that people and governments are held accountable if rights are not respected. In Canada, human rights are protected by provincial, territorial, federal, and international laws.

Indigenous

Overarching term to describe the descendants of the original inhabitants of a country or a geographical region. Indigenous is the preferred term for the original people in Canada. It can include First Nations, Métis, or Inuit.

Inuit

Indigenous People in Northern Canada, with homelands in Nunavut, Northwest Territories,

Northern Quebec, and Northern Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language – Inuktitut.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the way in which people’s lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group, for example, creating additional barriers, opportunities, and/or power imbalances.

In the context of race and Indigenous identity, this means recognizing the ways in which people’s experiences of racism or privilege, including within any one group, may vary depending on the individual’s or group’s relationship to additional overlapping or intersecting social identities, like religion, ethnic origin, gender, age, disabilities or citizenship and immigration status.

Marginalized

Describing groups that become permanently confined to the fringes of society through a long-

term, structural process of systemic discrimination (“marginalization”) that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. The marginalized status of groups is perpetuated through various dimensions of exclusion, particularly in the labour market, from full and meaningful participation in society.

Métis⁶

The Métis Nation includes people that are descendants of a distinct group of people that came from early relationships between First Nation women and European men.

Minoritized

Used in place of the noun “minority” to highlight the social oppression that minoritizes individuals. Minoritized groups are those defined as minorities by the dominant group that is numerically larger. The label of “minority” suggests that a group is subordinate to the larger, dominant group. The term minoritized extends beyond race to include, for example, other identities and experiences of non-majority populations such as and not limited to: 2SLGBTQ+, newcomers to Canada, people affected by poverty, etc..



Oppression/Anti-oppression

The use of power to disempower, marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category often further empowering and/or privileging the oppressor. Anti-oppression is an active and consistent process of change to equalize power imbalances through the elimination of individual, institutional and systemic oppression and injustice.

Pathways

Describes the three types of programs available to secondary students in the Ontario curriculum: academic, applied and locally developed. Pathways are intended to connect students with particular post-secondary education options – academic programs prepare students for entry into university; applied programs prepare students for college or apprenticeship; locally developed programs support students with entry into the workforce.

Promoting Positive Behaviour Toolkit

A collection of resources, tip sheets and other tools, carefully selected to reflect strong research and evidence-based practices, to support staff to create positive, safe school climate. The Toolkit is intended to contain quick references to help staff understand student learning and social-emotional needs and assist staff in addressing behaviour concerns as they arise.

Racialized⁷

Racial meaning attributed to a person or group based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits, in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life.

Racism⁸

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal.

Restorative Practices

A set of strategies rooted in restorative justice that emphasize repairing the harm done to people and relationships through negative behavior or

conduct, rather than punishment of the perpetrator(s). Use of restorative practices in classrooms and schools supports social-emotional learning by all parties, student mental health, belonging and inclusion and therefore helps to build supportive learning environments for all students.

Safe and Inclusive School Plan (SISP)

The Safe and Inclusive School Plan is completed annually by every elementary and secondary school in the Thames Valley District School Board and is facilitated at the school-level by a school-based team. This team is composed of students, family members, teachers, support staff, community partners, and the principal and/or vice principal. The Safe and Inclusive School Team meets during the year to identify one local priority and create a plan to support the identified goal.

School Improvement and Equity Plan (SIEP)

A school-based plan that is developed to increase student achievement and well-being with a focus on addressing disproportionate outcomes for students who are historically and/or currently underserved. The School Improvement and Equity Plan is a cyclical process that identifies specific outcome goals, instructional strategies, implementation timelines, and methods of measuring the results.

Student Associations

Groups or networks of students within schools that bring together students who share a particular identity (e.g., Black Student Association, Gay-Straight Alliance, Indigenous Student Association, Muslim Student Association.)

Student Success Teacher (SST)

An educator in each secondary school who supports school-wide efforts to improve outcomes for students with a focus on knowing and tracking the progress of students at risk of not graduating in order to re-engage and provide direct support to those students. The SST forms part of the school's Student Success Team, together with the principal, a guidance counsellor and a special education teacher.

Systemic Racism

The existence of institutions or systems that create or maintain racial inequity, often as a result of hidden institutional biases in policies, practices

and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others.

Third Path/Third Path Toolkit

An approach to student well-being and achievement that focuses on a caring, intentional, and responsive educator/student relationship as essential for a student's learning and growth. More broadly, the Third Path encourages the establishment of eight conditions describing a hierarchical series of needs (e.g. belonging, engagement) that create an environment for all students to thrive. The TVDSB Toolkit is a collection of tools, training and resources that support educators, administrators and staff to develop their capacity to implement a Third Path approach.

Trauma-Sensitive Practice/Approach

Sometimes referred to as Trauma-Informed Practice, an approach to creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools that acknowledges the impact of prolonged stress created by neglect, abuse, and other forms of trauma, on students' well-being and their availability and capacity for learning. The approach focuses on creating learning environments that are calm, predictable and supportive, including through educator strategies that show empathy and healthy ways to handle emotions and relating to others.

Two-Spirit

An English umbrella term to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous People rather than, or in addition to identifying as 2SLGBTQ+.

Footnotes:

¹ If no specific source is provided, the definition represents a synthesis of multiple sources, tailored for the context of this document.

² Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

³ The Adaway Group

⁴ The Adaway Group

⁵ Ontario Ministry of Education

⁶ Métis Nation of Ontario

⁷ Canadian Race Relations Foundation

⁸ Ontario Human Rights Commission

Affirming Identities

Goal One:

Affirm and represent the intersectional identities of all students and staff in their academic, employment and social experiences, including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, and racialized; who are experiencing poverty; who are newcomers to Canada; who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+; students and staff who are members of marginalized religious or linguistic communities; students and staff with disabilities and students with special education needs; and children and youth in care.

Objective 1

Ensure that learning opportunities, courses, resources, and school and work environments are reflective of student identities, including students from equity-deserving communities.

Tasks

Provide learning to support educator engagement in responsive instruction and assessment practices, and support staff from various employee groups in the use of tools and information sources that promote an understanding of each individual's interests, abilities, needs and identity.

Use the TVDSB Decision-Making Tool for Resource Selection and the TVDSB Decision-Making Tool for District and School Initiatives when selecting classroom resources and/or planning events to ensure responsiveness to a range of student and staff identities.

Update and maintain resources that affirm student and staff identities and provide representation of students and staff from equity-deserving communities, and communities in broader societies (e.g., Diversity Kits, Third Path Toolkit, Promoting Positive Behaviour Toolkit).

Offer First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses throughout TVDSB secondary schools, ensuring educators are well prepared to teach the courses through ongoing professional learning and support from the Indigenous Education team.

Expand the delivery of the "Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism in the Canadian and North American Context" course to all TVDSB secondary schools and support delivery through ongoing professional learning.

Ensure schools and other workspaces develop culturally responsive and identity affirming initiatives based on input from students, staff, and community members with relevant lived and living experiences.

Provide professional learning related to human rights, equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression and the impacts of colonialism to all TVDSB staff.

"Identity and mental health are inextricably linked. Who you are affects how you feel. When your identity is affirmed, reflected, and celebrated, you're more likely to feel a strong sense of positive mental health, well-being, and connection."

- Leading Mentally Healthy Schools (SMHO)

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

Student, staff, and community voice and feedback, such as the School Climate Survey and other student, staff, family, and community voice opportunities.

Professional learning feedback forms.

The use of tools, toolkits, and resources.

The availability of culturally relevant learning materials in libraries as tracked on library inventories.

The availability of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses and the "Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism in the Canadian and North American Context" course throughout TVDSB secondary schools and the number of students enrolled.

What this will tell us:

The number of professional learning opportunities and available resources provided to support educators' awareness of student identity, ability and lived as well as living experiences, and how these inform culturally relevant and responsive instruction and assessment.

What additional resources and learning opportunities are required to better represent and affirm student and staff identities and diverse identities in broader society.

The uptake of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies courses and the "Deconstructing Anti-Black Racism in the Canadian and North American Context" course on a system level, school level and student level, as well as strategies used by school guidance departments regarding the promotion of and access to these courses.



Affirming Identities

Goal One Continued:

Affirm and represent the intersectional identities of all students and staff in their academic, employment and social experiences, including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, and racialized; who are experiencing poverty; who are newcomers to Canada; who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+; students and staff who are members of marginalized religious or linguistic communities; students and staff with disabilities and students with special education needs; and children and youth in care.

Objective 2

Create physical and social environments that affirm the multiple and intersectional identities of students and staff from equity-deserving communities.

Tasks

Continue to ensure that students in all TVDSB schools have access to accessible all-gender washrooms and free menstrual products.

Develop a document with information and guidance for supporting Indigenous students and families and caregivers, in collaboration with Indigenous students, families, and caregivers, and community representatives.

Support use of the TVDSB Compendium of Action for Affirming Black Students and develop a Strategy for Combatting Anti-Black Racism.

Support use of the TVDSB Compendium of Action for Affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ Students and Staff.

Develop a document with information and guidance for supporting students, families, caregivers, and community representatives, specifically addressing antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism. The board is currently working on anti-hate, anti-Muslim racism, and anti-Black racism strategies.

Support schools to identify opportunities for dedicated spaces for Indigenous students in their buildings, with guidance from the Indigenous Education team and input from the Indigenous students and families.

TVDSB schools with an Oneida or Ojibwe language program have a dedicated classroom for Oneida or Ojibwe language learners.

Support schools to develop initiatives that affirm student identities based on input from staff, students, families, caregivers, and community representatives with relevant lived and living experiences. Ensure Safe and Inclusive Schools Plans and School Improvement and Equity Plans reflect these initiatives.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The number of schools with a dedicated space for Indigenous students and dedicated classrooms for Oneida or Ojibwe language programs.

The number of schools with all-gender washrooms.

The use of equity-related information and guidance documents by administrators, educators, and staff.

Student voice data from the School Climate Survey, student networks and student conferences.

What this will tell us:

The impact of the additional information, guidelines, and plans on the feelings of safety, inclusion and identity affirmation experienced by all students, including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, or from other equity-deserving communities.

The additional priority areas to be addressed through the development of information and guidance documents.

The additional accountability measures required to create safe physical and social environments that affirm students' multiple and intersectional identities.

Objective 3

Provide opportunities for students who are Indigenous, Black, and from other equity-deserving communities to connect to support well-being and achievement.

Tasks

Continue to support the established Indigenous Student Leadership Council.

Encourage schools to organize and support affinity groups for students from equity-deserving communities, such as Black Student Associations, Gay-Straight Alliances/Queer-Straight Alliances, Indigenous Student Associations, Jewish Student Associations, Muslim Student Associations, etc.

Offer conference opportunities for students who are from equity-deserving communities to connect in ways that celebrate and affirm their identities.

Maintain a Student Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee that is representative of diverse student identities to consult on student-related policies, programs, and initiatives.

Continue to support the Indigenous student senators and Indigenous student trustee at the Student Advisory Council.

Provide opportunities for students to connect in order to network and celebrate identities.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

Student participation in associations, alliances, conferences, and advisory committees.

Student voice feedback from association, alliance, conference, and committee participants.

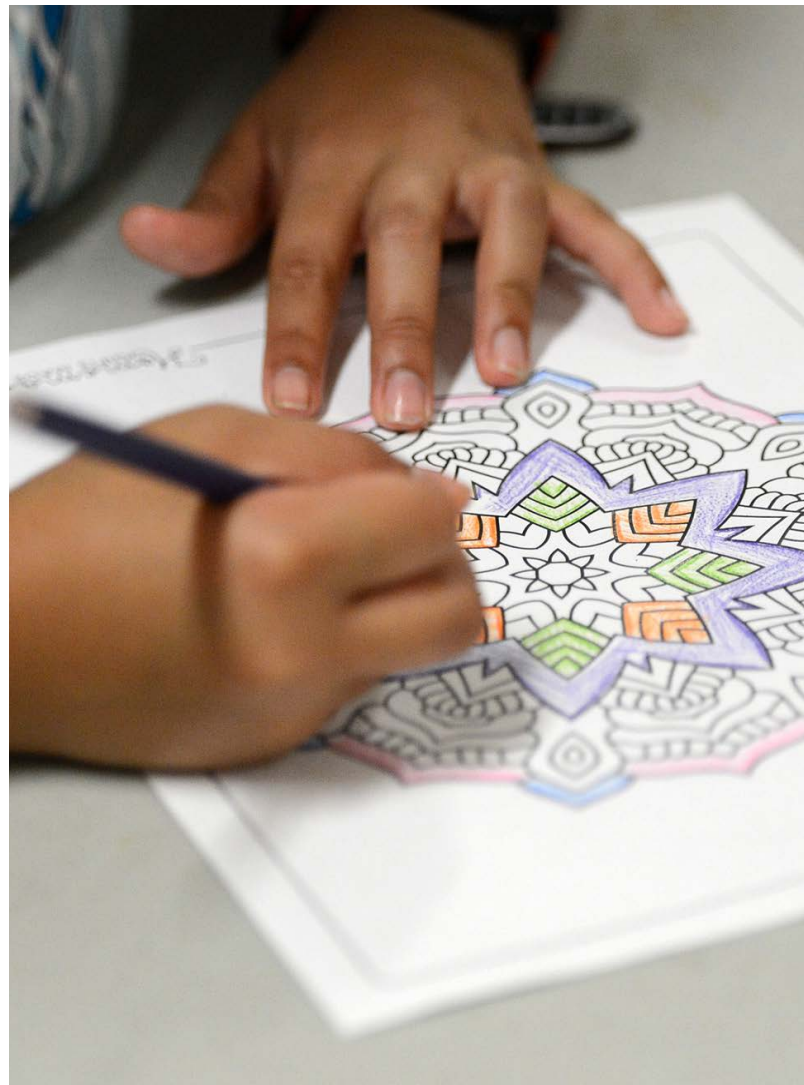
Feedback from staff advisors for networks and student alliances.

What this will tell us:

The number of student alliance groups, associations, and leadership opportunities for students who are Indigenous, Black and from other equity-deserving communities.

Student feedback on whether initiatives represent diverse identities, intersectionality, equity, and the degree to which initiatives lead to engagement.

What is going well for students who are Indigenous, Black and from other equity-deserving communities, as well as how these students continue to be underserved.



Staff Capacity

Goal Two:

Increase staff capacity to apply anti-racist and equitable practices to remove disproportionalities and disparities in outcomes for students who identify as Indigenous, Black, and racialized; who are experiencing poverty; who are newcomers to Canada; who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+; students who are members of marginalized religious or linguistic communities; students with disabilities and special education needs; and children and youth in care.

Objective 1

Increase staff capacity to understand colonialism, human rights, equity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and anti-colonial strategies.

Tasks

Continue to offer professional learning for all employees and trustees in the areas of colonialism, human rights, equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP).

Provide professional learning to administrators and educators in CRRP, cultural safety, cultural humility, trauma-sensitive approaches, and restorative practices.

Offer professional learning for system resources (e.g., educator resource guides, compendiums of action, Guidelines for the Non-use of Racial and Other Slurs and Epithets) to support understanding of equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and CRRP.

Collaborate with employee labour groups to prioritize learning related to Indigenous Peoples, equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all new Thames Valley employees.

Provide mandatory professional learning related to Indigenous Peoples, equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression for all new Thames Valley employees.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The number of professional learning opportunities related to Indigenous Peoples, equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression being offered to staff across the system.

Professional learning feedback forms.

The use of tools, toolkits, and resources through feedback forms.

The application of CRRP, trauma-sensitive practices, and restorative approaches through information gathered related to suspensions and attendance.

The participation of educators in professional learning related to Indigenous Peoples, equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression in the New Teacher Induction Program.

What this will tell us:

Levels of engagement in professional learning opportunities that support the effective implementation of strategies related to Indigenous Peoples, human rights, equity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and anti-colonialism.

Opportunities to further support staff related to the implementation of learning related to Indigenous Peoples, equity, human rights, anti-racism, and anti-oppression.

Objective 2

Identify, understand, and work to close gaps in student outcomes for Indigenous and Black students, and students from other equity-deserving communities.

Tasks

Increase staff capacity to address disproportionalities and disparities in outcomes for students who are Indigenous, Black and from other equity-deserving communities.

Administer student demographic surveys to collect identity-based data about the students in TVDSB.

Analyze student demographic data to identify and address disparities in outcomes, on a school and system level.

Build staff capacity to locate and utilize student demographic data and understand the gaps in outcomes of students from equity-deserving communities through professional learning opportunities.

Support Safe and Inclusive Schools Plan and School Improvement and Equity Plan teams to identify, understand, and make decisions based on data related to disparities for students from equity-deserving communities.

Identify strengths and successes evidenced by student demographic data to ensure continued support for best practices.

Identify, analyze, and address the strengths and gaps identified in the data of self-identified Indigenous students.

Develop a comprehensive learning plan for staff that builds their knowledge about Indigenous Peoples.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

Student and family participation in the student demographic survey.

Professional learning feedback forms.

What this will tell us:

Who the students are that we serve.

What the student outcome gaps are, and which students are experiencing these gaps.

How data is being utilized to address disproportionate outcomes for students who are Indigenous, Black, and from equity-deserving communities.

Objective 3

Staff across the system implement practices that prioritize cultural humility to address disproportionalities for students who are from equity-deserving communities.

Tasks

Continue to prioritize Grade 9 de-streamed Math and English to eliminate the disparities and disproportionate outcomes of students who are Indigenous, Black, and from equity-deserving communities.

Continue to develop professional learning, resources, and system supports to successfully implement de-streamed Grade 9 Math across schools in TVDSB.

Provide professional learning related to Bias-free Progressive Discipline and Restorative Practices to address the disparity and disproportionality of suspensions received by students who are Indigenous, Black, and from equity-deserving communities.

Provide professional learning to all staff on intersectionality and the lived and living experiences of students from diverse backgrounds.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

Feedback from Grade 9 de-streamed Math and English courses.

Grade 9 achievement data and grade 10 course selections.

Professional learning attendance and feedback forms.

Suspension data for students who are Indigenous, Black, and from equity-deserving communities.

What this will tell us:

The supports required by students and families to make informed decisions related to pathway choices.

What resources/supports administrators and educators need to implement Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy when planning, delivering, and assessing Grade 9 de-streamed Math and English.

The rate of suspensions for students who are Indigenous, Black, and from equity-deserving communities.

Connectedness

Goal Three:

Build purposeful and collaborative relationships with students, staff, caregivers, and community partners that promote equity and create communities of belonging for students and staff who identify as Indigenous, Black, and racialized; who are experiencing poverty; who are newcomers to Canada; who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+; students who are members of marginalized religious and/or linguistic communities; students with disabilities and special education needs; and children and youth in care.

Objective 1

Intentionally develop collaborative relationships with students, staff, families, and caregivers through community engagement opportunities.

Tasks

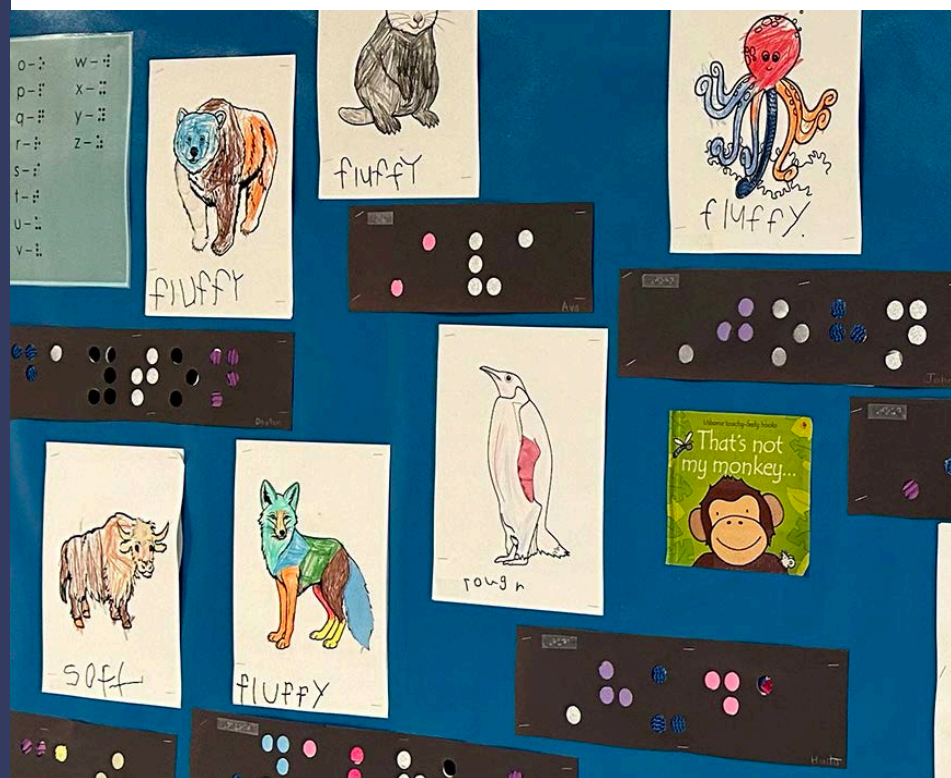
Continue to collaborate with the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Student Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee to amplify community voice and diverse perspectives on the development of system-wide initiatives to promote equity.

Provide professional learning to administrators, educators, and staff about equitable approaches to parent, family, and caregiver engagement.

Share the Essential Conditions for Learning with educators and administrators to support the use of restorative approaches that prioritize relationships and repair when engaging families and caregivers in progressive discipline conversations.

Provide professional learning on restorative approaches to staff that focuses on relationships and repair.

Include the TVDSB Indigenous Education team when developing approaches to engage with Indigenous students, families, caregivers, staff, and communities.



Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

Participation, engagement, and feedback from Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee members.

Professional learning attendance and feedback forms.

The use of and feedback on engagement tools, toolkits and resources related to community engagement, restorative approaches, and the Essential Conditions of Learning.⁹

What this will tell us:

Relationships and trust are strengthened amongst the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee members to support further collaboration.

Opportunities for further learning and sharing within the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

Educators, staff, and administrators are using tools, toolkits, resources, and training to develop equitable parent, family, and caregiver engagement strategies.

Successful strategies are utilized for supporting students and families from Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving communities.

⁹ See *Community Engagement: What We Heard* in the Appendix.

Objective 2

Develop and provide equitable and inclusive opportunities for staff to engage in networks of support and well-being.

Tasks

Continue to provide opportunities for equity-deserving staff members to connect and network through the establishment of affinity groups.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The number of affinity groups established to represent staff from equity-deserving communities and number of staff participants.

The number of meetings held by affinity groups.

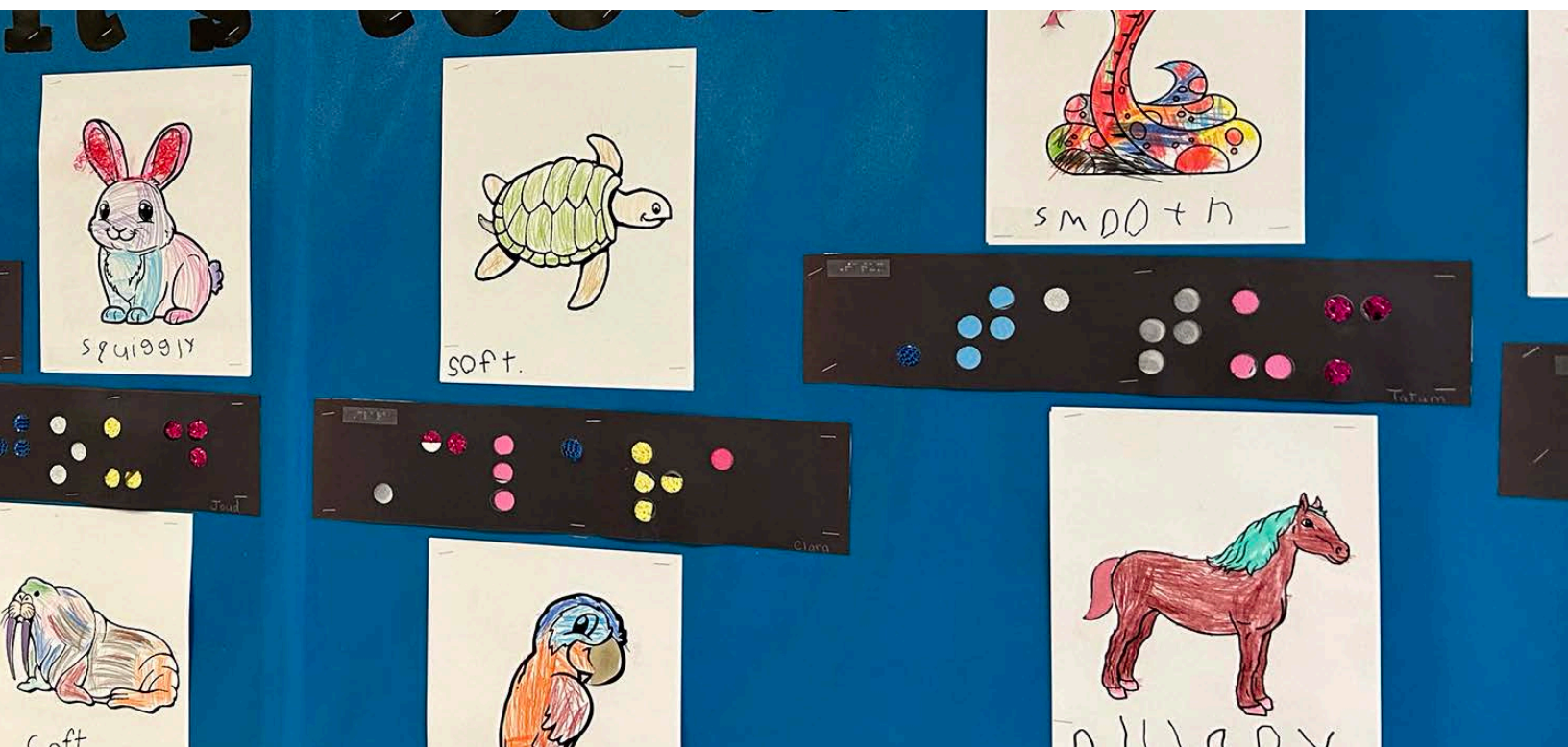
The feedback from affinity group members.

What this will tell us:

Feelings of staff from equity-deserving groups when engaging in staff affinity groups.

Increase in engagement among members of staff affinity groups.

Degree to which relationships with equity-deserving staff members have been strengthened.



Representation

Goal Four:

Cultivate a TVDSB workforce and foster leadership that is reflective of the diversity of students across the Thames Valley District School Board and the broader community.

Objective 1

Diversify applicants for TVDSB staff positions.

Tasks

Continue to implement an equitable recruitment strategy to increase representation of staff from equity-deserving communities at all levels of the organization.

Enhance existing community connections to identify new opportunities for outreach and recruitment activities in underrepresented communities.

Participate in job fairs and other recruitment activities to intentionally attract applicants with underrepresented identities and backgrounds.

Expand and diversify the TVDSB workforce by advertising on websites and social media with an intentional focus on underrepresented communities.

Collect and analyze voluntary identity data from all new TVDSB employees.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The number of staff hired, retained, and promoted representing equity-deserving groups from staff census and new hire data.

The number of outreach and recruitment activities held in underrepresented communities.

What this will tell us:

The representation of staff from equity-deserving communities at all levels of the organization will increase.

Community connections to support recruitment of underrepresented communities will increase.



Objective 2

Ensure equitable access to employment by removing barriers and biases in the hiring process.

Tasks

Review employment assessment guidelines, scoring rubrics, and other documentation requirements in the selection process to identify gaps in consistency and transparency.

Create assessment tools to support diversity and equity in staff hiring.

Expand bias-aware training program to all individuals involved in the hiring process.

Ensure shortlisting and selection decisions are made by at least two hiring committee members.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The regular reviews of job competitions.

The existence of assessment guidelines, scoring rubrics, and other documentation to support transparent decision-making in the hiring process.

The number of participants in bias-aware training.

What this will tell us:

The degree to which candidates experience a consistent and transparent hiring process.

Staff involved in hiring will have tools and strategies to acknowledge and examine personal bias and its impact.

Objective 3

Develop equitable promotional practices and procedures to increase staff diversity in leadership roles.

Tasks

Review Vice Principal and Principal application packages and interview questions to ensure that all candidates are required to provide evidence of equity work in their current role.

Review hiring and onboarding practices with new external Vice Principals and Principals to understand their experiences and identify any barriers in the process.

Ensure that leadership opportunities are provided to all employees and employee groups, including those from underrepresented communities, through the Lead program.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The frequency of review of application and interview questions.

The number of successful Vice Principal and Principal candidates from equity-deserving communities.

The identified gaps in hiring and onboarding process.

The staff census data to measure staff diversity in leadership roles.

What this will tell us:

The representation of staff from equity-deserving communities in leadership roles.

Identified hiring gaps and barriers.

Representation of underrepresented staff aspiring to be leaders in TVDSB.

"Diversity in leadership, human rights and equity focused professional development will increase fairness in the hiring and promotion of staff and educators by removing barriers for underrepresented communities. Research shows that when students see themselves reflected in their learning environment, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and well-being. School leaders and educators will better reflect Ontario's diverse student population."

Securing Accountability

Goal Five:

Prioritize Indigenous Peoples, human rights, anti-oppression and equity in all structures, policies, practices, and decision-making.

"Education is the lifeblood for building—and sustaining—a culture of human rights. Schools are the best places for human rights learning to begin, and we know the earlier the better."

- Ontario Human Rights Commission
Annual Report, 2020-21"

(Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.25)

Objective 1

Build staff understanding of principles of Indigenous Peoples, human rights, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and equity as outlined in plans, policies, practices, and guidelines.

Tasks

Provide professional learning and resources to all staff in the areas of Indigenous Peoples, human rights, equity, anti-oppression, anti-racism, and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy.

Develop accountability measures so that equity and anti-racism is a job-embedded expectation across roles.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The professional learning feedback forms.

The number of times that the process for human rights complaints is used.

The trends in complaints and support requests related to the implementation of plans, policies, practices, guidelines.

The development of policies and guidelines related to Human Rights in schools and classrooms.

What this will tell us:

Staff capacity to respond to issues related to equity, human rights, Indigenous Peoples, anti-oppression, and anti-racism.

Learning opportunities provided respond to gaps in staff learning.

"The knowledge children bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning."

(Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p.25)



Objective 2

Embed human rights principles, practices to uphold Indigenous Peoples, anti-racism, anti-oppression strategies, and equity practices in all system and school-level planning, classroom practices, guidelines, and policies.

Tasks

Prioritize principles of Indigenous Peoples, equity, inclusion, and human rights in all TVDSB policies and procedures under review.

Develop, in consultation with relevant duty holders, new policies and procedures to guide equitable practices in all workspaces and in community.

Create a consistent process for human rights complaints from students, families, caregivers, and staff.

Support schools to use relevant data when monitoring and measuring the impact of School Improvement and Equity Plans.

Provide system-wide direction and support on human rights issues in schools and classrooms (e.g., prohibition of the use of racial and other slurs and epithets).

Develop a consistent process for responding to classroom practices that cause harm or create negative experiences for students that supports staff understanding of culturally safe learning environments.

Develop a system document/guideline to support the use of cultural safety that includes professional learning for staff and support in communication of wrongdoing to students and families.

Effectively communicate TVDSB Human Rights complaints process to students, staff, parents, and caregivers.

Key Indicators

What we will monitor and measure:

The number of policies and procedures reviewed through the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy Review Committee process.

The number of existing policies and procedures adapted and created to support goals related to equity and inclusion.

School Improvement and Equity Plans to ensure equity-focused monitors and measures.

What this will tell us:

How effective available tools are for guiding the conduct and practice of staff in relation to equity and human rights.

Whether the expectations for the conduct and practice of all TVDSB employees and community partners are clear and transparent.





"Every student should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically, regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances."

– Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017

Appendix

Community Engagement: What We Heard

Purpose

Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) is committed to creating equitable and inclusive schools. As part of this commitment, TVDSB organized a series of community engagement sessions during the 2022–2023 school year that provided opportunities for community members to build relationships and share their input and experiences in TVDSB. Results from each session have been summarized in individual reports. This report is a summary of all results across these engagement sessions.

Data Collection

Members of equity-deserving groups including the Muslim community, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, Black community, Sikh community, Jewish community and Low German Mennonite community were invited to attend individual engagement sessions. The purpose of these voluntary sessions was to make connections, enjoy a meal together and gather feedback from community members. Participants in the sessions gave consent for staff at TVDSB to record notes on conversations that took place. The following discussion questions were used to frame the conversations during each engagement session:

1. What has gone well this year?
2. What has your child or what have you been most excited about this school year as a learner?
3. Are you as a parent/caregiver involved in your school? If yes, please describe your involvement. If not, how can your school support you to feel welcome to engage?
4. What additional things can your school do to affirm _____ identities?
5. Are there events taking place in the _____ community that you would like to see school or board representatives attend, if possible?
6. How can your school support your child's mental health and well-being?
7. What are your hopes and dreams for your child or for yourself as a learner in TVDSB?
8. Do you have any additional ideas for how we can work together and/or is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

Common Themes we Heard Across Engagement Sessions

It is important to recognize that differences in experiences, supports, and hopes for the future exist both within and between communities. Some of these differences are provided in the individual summaries that have been produced based on the sessions with each individual community. However, many common experiences also exist across equity-deserving communities. The sections below provide an overview of the themes that were identified across all or most communities who participated in the engagements.

Representation and visibility. Community members from all communities who participated in the engagement sessions reported a need for more representation and visibility in their child's school. Some communities specified that seeing staff in the school who reflect the diverse student population is important. Documenting and acknowledging dates of significance, displaying flags, posters, and other such materials celebrating different communities was also mentioned.

Discrimination and racism. Another experience that was heard across all communities was the occurrence of discrimination and racism. Students are experiencing discrimination and being bullied in Thames Valley schools, and families feel there are often no consequences, or insufficient consequences. Families want their children to feel safe and included.

Education and professional learning.

Community members reported that students and staff at TVDSB schools would benefit from more learning about diverse backgrounds, cultures and living experiences. Education on topics surrounding inclusivity would benefit both students and staff and serve to combat ignorance and promote diversity and inclusion.

Culturally responsive assessment and instruction. Schools have made efforts to acknowledge various cultures and celebrations, however, there are still communities who do not feel included in the classroom. Several communities want to see culturally relevant and affirming topics integrated into the curriculum. Accommodations related to community needs are appreciated and should be expanded.

Family engagement. Parents and caregivers value opportunities to be involved at the school. A stronger emphasis on engaging families (e.g., by improving and increasing communication) would be appreciated.

These community engagement sessions are ongoing. During the 2023–24 school year, TVDSB also had the opportunity to connect with the Chinese community, Hindu community, First Nations communities, Métis community, and Inuit community.





For more information, contact us at:

Thames Valley District School Board
1250 Dundas Street
London, ON N5W 5P2

www.tvdsb.ca/Equity