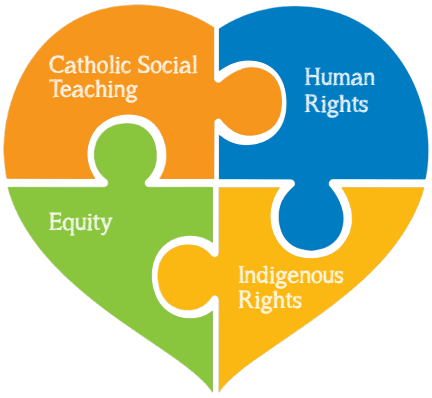
# Racism & Discrimination: Responding with Faith, Hope & Love

*"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."*

– Micah 6:8




At the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB), we are committed to creating safe, inclusive and welcoming learning environments that support student achievement and well-being in our Catholic schools.

Human Rights and Equity are guiding values that are consistent both with Catholic Social Teaching, reaffirming the dignity of every individual, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code, which safeguards students and staff from discrimination based on the protected grounds.

Our commitment to provide ongoing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to identify and eliminate discriminatory systemic barriers under the Code, is embedded in our Equity and Inclusive Education Policy.

As a model learning community that is distinctly Catholic, we support all students to Achieve, Believe, and Belong in accordance with the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching, equitable outcomes for all, the Ontario Human Rights Code and a commitment to upholding Indigenous Rights and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities.

## Why Do We Need To Address Incidents of Racism and Discrimination?

HCDSB aspires to uphold that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, and as such dignity is inherent in all. (Genesis: 1:27)

We are a Christ-centered environment, dedicated to providing learning and work spaces free of discrimination, harassment and violence for all students, staff, and members of our HCDSB community.

Harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, condoned or ignored at HCDSB.

## What is Discrimination?

Discrimination is when individuals are treated unfairly or unequally based on their race, gender identity, gender expression, disability, sex, sexual orientation, creed, age, or any other ground protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code. It may be intentional or unintentional. While racial discrimination is sometimes displayed overtly, it is recognized that in many instances racial discrimination takes on more subtle and covert forms.

*Examples of Discrimination*

- Epithets, remarks, jokes or innuendos related to a person's race, gender identity, gender expression, disability, sex, sexual orientation, creed, age, or any other ground.
- Posting or circulating offensive pictures, graffiti or materials, whether in print form, via e-mail or other electronic means.
- Singling out a person by humiliating, demeaning, "teasing" or humor because they are a member of a Code-protected group.
- Comments ridiculing a person because of characteristics that are related to a ground of discrimination. For example, this could include comments about a person's dress, speech or other practices that may be related to their sex, race, gender identity or creed.

If a person does not explicitly object to harassing behaviour, or appears to be going along with it, this does not mean that the behaviour is okay. The behaviour could still be considered harassment under the Code.

## What to Do When You Witness Harmful Language or Behaviour?

*Four Steps to Responding to Discrimination*

### DISRUPT & NAME

- Stop the discriminatory language or behaviour.
- Identify the infringement on human dignity and name the behaviour.
- Be specific (e.g. that language sounds racist).
- Ensure that all partners who witnessed the incident hear you disrupting and naming it.

### DOCUMENT & ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

- Record details of the incident.
- Meet all parties of the incident.
- Report to your Supervisor.
- Refer to the Code of Conduct for HCDSB to ensure accountability.

### EXPLAIN & SUPPORT

- We all have a right to those things which are required by human dignity.
- Recognize and explain why the language is harmful in the context of Catholic Teaching and the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Support the student or staff who has experienced the discriminatory comment or behaviour.
- Ask the student or staff what they need to feel supported.

### REFLECT & RESTORE

- Identify factors and systemic barriers to promote equity and justice.
- Prioritize the common good and restore community.
- Provide ongoing capacity building and education.

# *Glossary of Key Terms*

**Ableism –** A belief system that sees persons with disabilities as being less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and participate, or of less inherent value than others.

**Anti-Black Racism –** Policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of African descent.

**Anti-Indigenous Racism –** Ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish and perpetuate inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada. Systemic anti-Indigenous racism is evident in discriminatory federal policies such as the Indian Act and the residential school system, overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in provincial criminal justice and child welfare systems, as well as inequitable outcomes in education, well-being, and health.

**Anti-Racism –** An active and consistent process of change to eliminate individual, institutional and systemic racism.

**Anti-Racist Education –** Education that is based in the notion of race and racial discrimination as being embedded within the policies and practices of institutional structures. Its goal is to aid students to understand the nature and characteristics of these discriminatory barriers, and to develop work to dismantle them.

**Antisemitism –** Latent or overt hostility, or hatred directed towards, or discrimination against, individual Jewish people or the Jewish people for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity, and their cultural, historical, intellectual, and religious heritage.

**Colonialism –** The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. In the late 15th century, the British and French explored, fought over, and colonized places within North America which constitutes present day Canada.

**Duty to Accommodate –** Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, people identified by Code grounds are entitled to the same opportunities and benefits as everybody else. In some cases, they may need special arrangements or "accommodations" to take part equally in the social areas the Code covers, such as education.

**Equity –** 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.

**Homophobia –** The irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as "homosexual".

**Indigenous Knowledge –** Local and Indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and Indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life.

**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.

**Islamophobia –** Islamophobia includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.

# *Glossary of Key Terms*

**Ontario Human Rights Code –** The Ontario Human Rights Code is a provincial law that gives everybody equal rights and opportunities without discrimination in areas such as jobs, housing and education. The Code's goal is to prevent discrimination and harassment because of race, sex, disability and age, to name a few of the 17 grounds. All other Ontario laws must agree with the Code.

- **Separate School Rights:** Under section 93 of the Charter, Catholics in Ontario have a constitutionally protected right to religious education, which is also preserved in section 19 of the Ontario Human Rights Code. Court decisions confirm public funding of Catholic education, Catholic moral and religious instruction and hiring regulations for Catholic teachers.

- **Ontario Human Rights Code:** protections extend to all students in publicly funded education – school boards are required to deal with complaints and incidents of discrimination or harassment they become aware of, whether or not there is a complaint.

**Racialized –** People who are seen as having a race, perceived in racial terms.

**Racism –** Racism includes ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another. Racism exists at a number of levels, including individual, institutional or systemic, and societal.

**Racial Discrimination –** Racial discrimination is a legally prohibited act. It happens when any distinction, conduct or action, whether intentional or not, is based on a person's race and has the effect of imposing burdens not imposed upon others. Racial discrimination could happen when someone acts on racist beliefs and attitudes in areas covered by the Ontario Human Rights Code, such as employment, services, and housing.

**Systemic Barriers –** Institutional and instructional practices that negatively impact the achievement and well-being of students and lead to inequitable outcomes. Systemic barriers are caused by embedded biases in policies, practices and processes, and may result in differential treatment.

**Transphobia –** The aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of transgender people and communities. Like other prejudices, it is based on stereotypes and misconceptions that are used to justify discrimination, harassment and violence toward transgender people.

**White –** People whose ancestry is or is perceived to be from Europe.

**Whiteness –** The academic term used to capture the all-encompassing dimensions of white privilege, dominance and assumed superiority in society.

Sources: Definitions were adapted from resources from the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation: 'Is Everyone Really Equal?' by Sensoy and DiAngelo, and the Ontario Ministry of Education.