

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2022**

Public Session: 5:30 – Virtual Meeting

## **AGENDA**

**A. WELCOME**

**B. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**C. COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE – VERBAL UPDATE**

[S. Mitchell/K. Pisek](#)

**D. INCLUSION FRAMEWORK IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

[M. St. John/K. Pisek](#)

**E. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

[Z. Hamdani](#)

**F. SCHOOL INITIATIVES – VERBAL UPDATE**

[P. Burton](#)

**G. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 8, 2023 @ 5:30 pm

## **INCLUSION FRAMEWORK IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

December 14, 2022

### **BACKGROUND**

The Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism team works in partnership with all departments in the DSBN to support students, staff and school communities. The DSBN Special Education team is one of these partners. Students with special education needs can experience many barriers to education. As identified by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), they can be physical, technological, systemic, financial, or attitudinal, or they can arise from an education provider's failure to make available a needed accommodation in a timely manner. Specifically, the OHRC has identified accommodation process, lack of individualization, inadequate funding, ineffective dispute resolution mechanisms, negative attitudes and stereotypes, and physical inaccessibility as main barriers to educational service for students with disabilities. The DSBN is committed to removing barriers and supporting students in an inclusive, inviting and safe learning environment to maximize achievement and well-being in our schools.

### **REMOVING BARRIERS AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS**

#### ***Accommodation Process***

In partnership with school administrators and community agencies, Special Education Support Services staff work to provide accommodations in a timely and supportive manner that promotes inclusion and student success. School administrators work with their assigned Special Education Consultant in the implementation of resources to support students with special learning needs. Many of our central staff meet, alongside school staff and community agencies, with families to gather individualized information about each student. The DSBN values the importance of student dignity and recognizes that student information is confidential and only staff who support a student in their learning should have access. When it is determined that a DSBN student requires a professional assessment, they are promptly connected with appropriate internal staff and/or external partner agencies. The DSBN is committed to maximizing student independence and providing students with appropriate support and programming within their school community. When an IPRC placement supports a classroom or school move, the Special Education Department utilizes strategies, such as maintaining a surplus of regularly requested equipment, as a way to address student needs promptly.

### ***Lack of Individualization***

The DSBN is committed to knowing each learner and accessing all available resources to provide students with special education needs with individualized, supportive, creative, and inclusive learning strategies and programming. Together the Equity Team and the Special Education Team have collaborated on school-based resources that include Inclusive Language Guidelines, Considerations for Planning Activities with an Equity Lens, Cultivating Caring Classroom Conditions and the Knowing Each Learner Framework. These tools use asset based approaches to supporting all students in accessing curriculum and thriving in the school environment. The Special Education Team embedded the Knowing Each Learner framework into the InSchool Team (IST) process. This was to ensure that student needs were presented with asset based language, that inclusive strategies were developed for the classroom teacher to implement, and that all types of support were considered. In addition, the IST process includes regularly scheduled review meetings and access to multidisciplinary supports to maximize successful outcomes for our students, such as Speech and Language Pathologists, Social Workers, Youth Counsellors, Occupational Therapists, ABA Facilitators, and the Board Psychologist. Knowing each learner allows the DSBN to provide students with individualized supports while managing funding in a fiscally responsible manner.

### ***Ineffective Dispute Resolution Mechanisms***

Communication with students and their families is essential to providing an inclusive, supportive and successful learning environment. The DSBN values student and parent/guardian voice and gathers regular input through Parent Involvement Committee, Equity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism Community Advisory Committee, Student Trustee Senate, School Council, Parent-Teacher interviews, and the School Culture Survey to inform and improve programming and the school environment. The DSBN Special Education Advisory Committee represents parents and local associations who provide important advice on special education. The Special Education Team works closely with school administrators and staff to communicate with families about program and strategy recommendations for students to ensure that supports provided are informed by both student and parent/guardian input. Students and families are encouraged to share information or concerns with their classroom teacher and school administrators to facilitate collaborative resolutions.

### ***Negative Attitudes and Stereotypes***

The DSBN respects and upholds the importance of equity, inclusion, dignity and human rights in all learning and working environments so individuals from all social realities and lived experiences are valued. The Equity, Inclusion and Anti- Racism (EIAR) and Special Education teams regularly provide staff

## EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ANTI-RACISM TRUSTEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE



professional development and school support to help promote inclusion, identify and eliminate systemic barriers and discrimination to ensure equitable access to positive opportunities and outcomes for all. We are committed to challenging our staff and student communities to identify and take steps to overcome implicit biases and prejudiced thinking about a person's ability, race, gender, or age. Policies, procedures, and practices are regularly reviewed through an equity and inclusion lens to eliminate differential treatment. Though the DSBN offers a range of program placements, we aim to support students in the least restrictive environment while promoting social and emotional development with their peers. Recently, an Intensive Support Training Team has been established to provide support to identified schools. In these identified schools, students with complex needs and their community learn strategies and receive training and resources that promote inclusion, inspire connectedness and foster positive culture and beliefs within the school community.

### ***Physical Inaccessibility***

Staff receive regular training to ensure awareness and responsiveness to the needs of persons with disabilities. The DSBN continues to ensure that renovated and newly built schools are accessible for all. Also, in response to student need our Facilities Team work in schools to remove barriers to learning. In addition, under the Transportation Standards, students with disabilities have individual transportation plans to support their access to education.

## **CONCLUSION**

As outlined in the Commission's Consultation Report entitled, "The opportunity to succeed: Achieving barrier-free access for students with disabilities", education is a human right essential to the life of an individual and to a community as a whole. The accommodation of students with disabilities is a shared responsibility. The DSBN acknowledges our commitment to continue our learning about disability and how to best support student needs. We must challenge deficit constructions of ability, be open to learning from others, be prepared to shift practice and normalize difference so that students with disabilities have access to learning environments where it is safe to express and respond to difference. The Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism and Special Education teams will continue to work in partnership with all departments in the DSBN to ensure equal access to education and inclusive school communities for students with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,  
Michael St. John, Superintendent of Special Education & Mental Health and Well-Being  
Kelly Pisek, Superintendent of Education

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

December 14, 2022

### **BACKGROUND**

The DSBN is committed to embedding equity in all aspects of the education system, starting from training and building capacity through the development of an equity lens. The Professional Development opportunities offered to staff are based on the Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Learning tenant: Developing a critical lens to disrupt oppressive practices to improve outcomes for all students, staff and school communities. Professional development includes but is not limited to co-planning and co-teaching in classrooms, book studies, partnerships with community partners offering after school and evening opportunities to our staff, prepared staff meeting sessions and PA Day offerings.

### **ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS COURSES**

DSBN also offers educators the opportunity to take additional qualification courses to support their learning. Additional Qualifications courses allow staff to expand their knowledge and skills within the divisions and subjects in which they are already qualified or to acquire knowledge in new subject areas. The Ontario College of Teachers mandates that all AQ courses are required to have 100 hours of coursework plus an additional 25 hours of non-monitored instruction.

DSBN has offered the following three equity-themed courses to educators:

#### **1. Equitable and Inclusive Schools, Part 1**

This introductory course explores the theoretical foundations, development of learners, program planning and implementation, assessment, the inclusive learning environment and ethical considerations related to teaching and learning with inclusion in mind. Candidates will participate in an adult learning model, where they will create support networks, receive feedback from colleagues and instructors, and share the products of their learning with others. This course will be of interest for teachers interested in issues of equity, social justice, classism and racism through the lens of an inclusive classroom environment.

#### **2. Equitable and Inclusive Schools, Part 2**

This Part 2 course will continue to explore and extend the theoretical foundations, development of learners, program planning and implementation, assessment, the inclusive learning environment and ethical considerations related to teaching and learning with inclusion in mind. Candidates will participate in an adult learning model, where they will create support networks, receive feedback from colleagues and instructors, and share the products of their learning with others. This course will be of interest for teachers interested in issues of equity, social justice, sexism, classism and racism through the lens of an inclusive classroom environment.

To support the work that Equity Champions and educators are doing at the school level, the Equity Team has continued the partnership with the ETFO local for elementary educators to offer the Additional Qualifications Equitable and Inclusive Schools Course Part 1 & 2 without any cost to staff. The Secondary Central Support Team partnered with Queen's University to offer the same course at no cost. To date close to 100 educators have completed the course.

### **3. Addressing Anti-Black Racism to Change Pedagogy and Practice, Part 1**

This introductory course seeks to challenge candidates' current understanding of pedagogy and practice by centering Black/Africentric ways of knowing and amplifying the lived experiences of Black students, families, and community members. Through collaborative activities and deep reflective practices, this course employs Critical Race Theory, concepts of Blackness and Africentricity to support candidates to be immersed in ways of knowing that will support them in the work to address anti-Black racism in education.

In partnership with Lakehead University, the Addressing Anti-Black Racism course was offered to Equity Champions in the Fall of 2022. The course filled up quickly with thirty educators signed up for the course, including all five members of the Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EIAR) team. Due to high interest, the course was then offered to administrators for the Winter term. With 52 principals and vice principals registered, two cohorts will be running at the same time. To remove all barriers, there will be no cost to participants as DSBN will cover the cost.

Although the course is online, the instructor offers optional synchronous sessions for participants to consolidate their learning in person and to answer questions they may have. In addition, the EIAR team hosted three in-person study sessions to engage in discussion about the learning and how to move this new learning into practice. These synchronous and in-person sessions will continue to be offered to the upcoming administrator sessions.

Respectfully submitted,

Pratima Burton, Student Achievement Leader: Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Education (K-12)

Zakia Hamdani, Consultant: Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Education (K-12)

Kelly Pisek, Superintendent of Education