

ROAD TO INCLUSIVITY – THE STATUS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN ONTARIO

Background

The Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association promotes public education as a fundamental right of all students in the Province of Ontario. In doing so,

OPSOA MEMBERS ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:

- Reflect the global community
- Embrace diversity, equity and inclusivity

Hence, it is incumbent upon OPSOA to consider matters of diversity, equity and inclusivity.

Issue

Ontario is a caring and increasingly diverse society. As leaders in Ontario's English public district school boards, OPSOA members lead and respond to the richness of such diversity – as well as the opportunities and challenges that this diversity presents. Supervisory officials are responsible for establishing and overseeing policies and practices that support the provision of positive learning and working environments in our classrooms, schools and offices. In addition, supervisory officials provide leadership in addressing issues related to harassment and human rights in keeping with provincial and federal legislation including the Ontario Human Rights Code.

To better understand and respond to diversity and equity issues, extensive data collection is required for the purpose of improving instruction, addressing the needs of all students and providing appropriate working environments for all staff. Across Ontario, supervisory officials in district school boards are increasingly collecting local, regional, provincial, national and global data in order to make wise decisions about programs, resources, staffing and human resource management. Data is being collected in areas such as immigration patterns, first language, English as a Second Language and achievement results relative to specific groups of students. Supervisory officials also lead in turning this data into effective decisions and actions.

How are Supervisory Officials Addressing Diversity?

In the early 90's, Provincial Policy Memorandum 119 "Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation for Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards" was developed. This brought significant activity and change. Memorandum 119 remains in place and most Boards have retained their anti-racism and ethnocultural equity policies, procedures and guidelines. A few Boards continued their Race Relations Advisory Committees made up of trustees, members of the public, staff and students.

Most boards have continued to support an intricate infrastructure to ensure that academic, social, emotional and developmental needs of its diverse populations are met. Typically supervisory officials in these Boards have established offices and personnel to perform such duties as translations, interpretation, cultural liaisons, community development, reception and document appraisals of new students and data management. As well, conferences and committees may have been established to examine, address and engage discourse on key issues such as anti-racism, poverty, classism, homophobia, heterosexism, hate crimes, equity in hiring, gender issues and accessibility. Numerous action research projects (large, small, individual and independent) have been supported by supervisory officials on such issues as multiliteracies, ESL, inclusivity, race issues, gender accessibility for disabled persons.

Looking across the Province, many districts do not have the resources required to provide the leadership infrastructure to address these matters. Standards of practice need to be established and the appropriate resources provided to ensure all boards are in a position to effectively address diversity, equity and inclusivity issues.

Recommendations

OPSOA IS PREPARED TO WORK WITH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO:

1. Provide the support needed for all Boards in Ontario, regardless of geographic location, to examine policies, procedures and guidelines in order to ensure that inclusivity rights are in place for all groups identified in the Ontario and Canadian Human Rights codes and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
2. Provide the supports needed to ensure diversity, equity and inclusivity issues are addressed in all board programs, facilities, personnel, professional development, hiring and promotion.
3. Implement programs to meet the inclusivity mandate of boards, for the maintenance of appropriate levels of ESL programs as well as the provision of programs and services for Aboriginal students.

OPSOA, through its Mission, Vision and Values Statements, promotes diversity, equity and inclusivity. OPSOA is committed to improving communication among its members on these matters and OPSOA will work to increase diversity in membership.

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