

## **ANTI-RACISM POLICY**

### **Rationale**

The Board acknowledges that racism exists in Canada. Racism can be perpetuated at the individual, institutional and systemic level and is rooted in historical oppression and colonialism. The Board also acknowledges that the Peace River School Division (the “Division”) plays an important role in influencing and driving positive systemic change. Proactive action is required to create anti-racist environments. The Board further acknowledges that individuals experiencing racism at any level encounter barriers to positive relationships, learning, academic success, personal fulfilment and well-being. The Board recognizes the complexity of how racism is experienced by trustees, employees, students, families, volunteers, contractors and visitors, (“Division community members”) and commits to addressing racism through responsive and transparent processes.

The Board is obligated to protect all Division community members from racism during the Division’s school related activities. The right to a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination is guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Education Act*. All Division community members must share in the responsibility of supporting anti-racism efforts. The Board prohibits racist behaviours and expects allegations of such behaviours to be investigated and addressed in a timely and respectful manner.

The cultural diversity of Division community members is a strength. The Board recognizes that respect for diverse cultural perspectives, traditions, languages, beliefs and values enriches the learning and working environment for everyone and is important to well-being and personal growth. The Board is committed to honouring cultural diversity, promoting intercultural understanding to enable reflection and growth, and fostering a sense of belonging.

The Board acknowledges that anti-racism requires continuous action, learning, and improvement. The Board is committed to supporting ongoing systemic change and acknowledges that empathy, compassion, and learning are critical for achieving an anti-racist culture.

### **Specifically, the Board affirms their commitment to anti-racism by:**

1. Developing positive relationships with all Division community members to work together in support of student success.
2. Addressing individual, institutional and systemic racism in the Division
3. Promoting a culture of anti-racism that recognizes and values diversity as a strength.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Board Policy 19: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment.

This Policy in no way diminishes the Board’s commitment to address all types of discrimination with equal determination as is reflected in the terms of this Policy and forms a part of the Board’s overall commitment to foster inclusion, diversity, and equity throughout the Division. In

implementing this Policy, the Board does not intend on creating a hierarchy of rights for the protected characteristics listed under human rights legislation.

## **1. Objectives**

1.1. This Policy aims to:

- 1.1.1. Establish an anti-discrimination, anti-oppression, and anti-racism framework and approach to education and employment in the Division;
- 1.1.2. Embed human rights, anti-oppression, anti-discrimination, inclusive design approaches and actions in all aspects of the Division's learning and working environments;
- 1.1.3. Foster and sustain a culture that recognizes and respects the worth of all Division community members, where Division community members have equal rights and opportunities, are welcome and included, are treated with dignity and respect and can fully participate in Division services and employment, without discrimination;
- 1.1.4. Intentionally address, all forms of racism through proactive action to create welcoming, safe, caring, and respectful learning and working environments and support of an accessible, safe, fair, and effective complaint resolution process; and
- 1.1.5. Value, affirm and reflect students', families', employees' and communities' diverse identities, family structures, lived realities and experiences, perspectives, strengths, abilities, talents, skills, cultures, histories and achievements, and honour and support the expression of their identities.

## **2. Application**

- 2.1. All Division policies and procedures shall be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with the terms of this Policy, as well as with Board Policy 19: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment, in order to prevent discriminatory structures, barriers, experiences and outcomes.
- 2.2. All Division processes, programs, practices, and initiatives shall comply and be consistent with this Policy.
- 2.3. Division community members shall:
  - 2.3.1. Familiarize themselves with key expectations and requirements from this Policy;
  - 2.3.2. Fully respect the identities and cultures represented in the Division and inform themselves of attitudes and behaviours known to convey disregard and disrespect;
  - 2.3.3. Report all incidents which involve racial discrimination i.e. slurs, jokes, microaggressions, insults, invalidations and/or assaults; and

- 2.3.4. Fully engage in the effort to resolve any issue or complaints that may involve the member as a participant or witness.
- 2.4. Division community members shall not engage in any form of discrimination. Unacceptable and prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:
- 2.5. This Policy is generally not intended to be punitive. It is anticipated that consequences for policy violations will typically engage corrective and remedial measures to prevent recurrences and to support education/learning. While specifics as to consequences are operational and are left to the Superintendent of Schools to address in procedures, protocols and practices, responses to policy violations may include a range of remedial, responsive, restorative and corrective measures including discipline up to and including termination of employment (for employees) or expulsion (for students), subject to the principles of progressive discipline.
- 2.6. Nothing in this Policy precludes Division community members from asserting their rights or seeking redress through other statutory or contractual avenues, including via grievance under a collective agreement or complaint to the Alberta Human Rights Commission.
- 2.7. Except as may be permitted or required by law, the confidentiality and privacy of personal information related to human rights issues, incidents, complaints and accommodation requests shall be maintained.

## DEFINITIONS

**Anti-oppression:** an approach that recognizes the power imbalance within society that attributes benefits to some groups and excludes others. This approach seeks to develop strategies to create an environment free from oppression, racism and other forms of discrimination.

**Anti-racism:** the proactive and consistent process of identifying, challenging, preventing, and eliminating racism by advocating for changes that promote racial equity in society. It uses direct action to acknowledge where privilege exists, raise awareness, and challenge beliefs (such as prejudice, bias and stereotypes) at the personal and institutional level.

**Cultural diversity:** acknowledging and valuing the presence of diverse groups in organizations and communities including their socio-cultural differences, cultural expressions and contributions.

**Discrimination:** an action or a decision that results in the unfair or negative treatment of a person or group because of factors including, but not limited to, race, age, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, marital status, source of income, or family status. Some types of discrimination are illegal under federal and provincial human rights laws.

**Diversity:** the inclusion of different and varied ways of being, doing and knowing.

**Division community members:** comprised of trustees, employees, students, families, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

**Equity:** the state achieved in an education system when Division community members with diverse backgrounds, lived experiences and needs, are treated with dignity. Equity does not mean treating everyone the same. It creates the conditions of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment through which everyone may have equal access to resources and equal opportunity to thrive (for example, identifying and removing barriers that impact specific groups of people).

**Inclusive design:** taking into account differences among individuals and groups when designing something, to avoid creating barriers. Inclusive design can apply to systems, facilities, programs, policies, services, education, etc.

**Intercultural understanding:** learning from and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that support commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect.

**Microaggression:** a subtle discriminatory statement or action often unconscious or unintentional toward a member of a marginalized group.

**Racial discrimination:** the differential treatment of a person or group on the basis of race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, language, accent, name, cultural practices, and/or other attributes related to the foregoing. This includes any actions or inactions against a person or group.

**Racism:** arises from a conscious or unconscious belief that one group is superior or inferior to others based on their race, colour, place of origin, ancestry, language, accent, name, cultural practices, and/or other attributes related to the foregoing. Racism can be openly displayed in racial “jokes”, slurs, exclusionary practices, microaggressions, or hate crimes. Racism can also be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, ignorance, and stereotypes, which have evolved over time and become a part of systems and institutions. Racism occurs in the context of a power and privilege imbalance that perpetuates the dominance of one group over another. Racism may be experienced at an individual, institutional, or systemic level.

**Individual racism:** refers to an individual intentionally or unintentionally expressing racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours and is a form of racial discrimination, whether expressed overtly or covertly.

**Institutional racism:** occurs when institutions create or maintain racial inequity, often as a result of hidden biases in policies, practices and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others.

**Systemic racism:** occurs when racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours are reinforced by systems of power that perpetuate racial group inequity. Systemic racism involves dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed racial privileges and inequities to endure and adapt over time.

Adopted/Revised/Reviewed: JUN 2024

Policy Reference:

Board Policy 19: Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environment

Legal Reference:

Education Act, ss. 11, 16, 31, 32, 33, 35.1

Alberta Bill of Rights

Alberta Human Rights Act

Occupational Health and Safety Act  
Teaching Profession Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Criminal Code  
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)