



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework



The Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) is the voluntary, professional association representing practising principals and vice-principals in Ontario's publicly funded schools. The goal of the OPC is to offer Members the professional services and supports they need to provide exemplary leadership in public education. The 5,400 Members of the OPC represent elementary and secondary school leaders from across Ontario and operate within the ethical guidelines of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The OPC is dedicated to advancing human rights within the education system, fostering a culture of inclusivity, equity and respect for all individuals. We strive to create an environment that promotes the well-being and success of every student and works towards building a more just and inclusive society. These principles are also the obligation of school boards and the Ministry of Education

As schools and school boards have engaged in the difficult work of anti-oppression and human rights, there have been many challenges and barriers to learning and to change. Collectively, we must navigate the tensions inherent to participating in an educational system built on colonial thinking while working to embed anti-oppressive practices.

Public education has not resulted in equal access or equal outcomes for all students. Patterns of disproportionality in opportunity, outcome and achievement can be matched to different aspects of identity such as race and ethnicity, socio-economic disparity and special education designation. The purpose of anti-oppressive work must remain focussed on students and eliminating the disproportionate outcomes that have been identified. As changes are made, their impact must be reviewed and monitored to ensure that students are benefitting in the way that is intended.

As systems, schools and administrators have been developing their knowledge, skill and practice, they have also encountered many problems and challenges. Efforts to promote inclusion and steps forward that have seemed long since resolved have been met with resistance and push-back that serves to undermine the fundamental goals of honouring human rights and valuing diverse identities. As well, school boards have struggled with the challenge of balancing reasonable accountability with fostering a culture that allows for learning and the expectations of students, parents and community. At the same time, administrators and other school staff often have their own identities attacked without receiving appropriate protection or support. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has clearly stated that there is an obligation for protection for those who are working to advance and implement human rights in education.

This framework is intended to provide guidance and recommendations to school boards as they engage in anti-oppressive work and address systemic barriers and practices that continue to exist in schools and systems. Developing consistency in practice and clarity of foundational knowledge can help systems be responsive to their unique communities.



In the absence of a clear provincial mandate, school boards will need to maintain their focus on dismantling the barriers faced by the most under-represented and under-served students, families and staff. There must be a recognition and commitment to the collection and interpretation of multiple sources of data, professional learning and building systems of responsibility and accountability.

To develop this framework document, the OPC accessed the knowledge and perspectives of Members with diverse roles, lived experiences and geographic locations. We recognize that we also play an important role in supporting Members and public education in improving the conditions and outcomes for all students. The OPC is also on a learning journey and we continue to modify and improve our practices to include more voices, integrate multiple perspectives and better serve the diversity of our Members and students. Examples of how we as an organization are changing our own practice are also included in this framework. We anticipate that this document will grow and change as we continue to listen and learn.

Key Aspects of a System Plan



Purpose

Clarity of purpose with an acknowledgement of existing systemic issues

- A focus on human rights including the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples
- Responsive to the needs of the community but also to diverse global identities
- Connection to student learning and achievement



What does it look like?

- System action plans or calls to action
- Integration with board priorities, system goals and SIPSA, ministry priorities
- School based goals
- Regular review of impact – are initiatives having the intended impact for students?

At the OPC...

- Development of a **statement on Human Rights** as a guiding principle for engagement in anti-oppression and anti-racism work
- Inclusion in strategic plan
- Structural and governance changes such as advisory committees and EDI reps on local executives



Shared Responsibility

Develop a culture of shared responsibility

- Applies to all departments and categories of board employees as well as students, family and community
- Patterns of accountability that focused on learning rather than punishment



What does it look like?

- Collective purpose that is accessible and easy to understand
- All employees should be able to see the connection between their roles and statements related to anti-oppression and human rights
- Community members have opportunities to voice concerns and to contribute to the development of shared principles

At the OPC...

We are working to integrate anti-oppressive practices into all aspects of the organization – both operationally and in the functioning of Provincial Council

- development of collaborative committees
- continual review and revision of all policies and practices
- engagement in organizational and governance reviews



Collection and Use of Data

Identification of local priorities based on historical patterns, current data and voices of community

- Collection and examination of identity-based achievement, opportunity and outcome data
- Regular and multiple opportunities for student, parent and community voice and consultation



What does it look like?

Centering students and community

- Regular and multiple opportunities for student, parent and community voice and consultation
- Are students benefitting from the actions and initiatives?
- Development of targets measured through the regular collection of data created and reviewed from an anti-oppressive perspective

At the OPC...

- During the 2023-2024 school year, the OPC collected the second round of demographic data of Members; the first survey (in 2020) led to a series of recommendations that have been guiding our practice since then
- OPC staff will have the opportunity to participate in an employee experience survey



Leadership

- System and school leadership must be focused and committed to the dismantling of systemic barriers
- Policies and decision-making need to be grounded in upholding human rights and improved student experience and outcomes
 - Commitment through the dedication of human, financial and physical resources
- School leaders should have a plan for each school year on how they will support professional learning for their staff and also respond to student voice



What does it look like?

- Ongoing training for all staff at all levels
- Mentoring and coaching for system and school leaders centering identities and grounded in anti-oppressive theory and practice (equity coach model)
- Dedicated and committed funding

At the OPC...

- OPC Senior Staff and Executive, as well as Provincial Council, regularly engage in ongoing anti-oppression/anti-racism training, as well as exercises designed to challenge traditional thinking and practices
- Decision making is centered around the needs of the most under-represented and under-served
- Funding for EDI work is dedicated and sustained



Professional Learning

Key areas of foundational learning

- Identity and its connection to power, privilege and systemic discrimination
- Specific learning related to historically and currently marginalized groups
- Unconscious bias and how it is connected to current practices in education
- Microaggressions and how they are related to the experiences of students and staff
- Anti-oppressive pedagogical practices
- Culturally responsive discipline practices



What does it look like?

Professional Learning for all staff should

- be ongoing, layered and mandatory (not isolated events)
- focus on learning and unlearning to develop critical consciousness
- provide practical applications connected to pedagogy and operationalization of policy
- allow regular opportunities for conversation and reflection
- utilize a range of resources including diverse representation in authors and facilitators
- foster a culture of support and calling in rather than fear and calling out
- be grounded in empathy and humility
- be responsive to the needs of the system, schools and individuals
- be delivered by carefully vetted practitioners with knowledge and expertise in education

At the OPC...

- Staff regularly engage in ongoing anti-oppression/anti-racism training and are supported in their learning financially and personally
- The Professional Learning department continues to integrate anti-oppression/anti-racism principles into all PL sessions.
- Professional learning is centered on anti-oppressive leadership to local districts



Human Capital

- Building the capacity of the organizational staff
- Staff is reflective of the diversity of society



What does it look like?

- Identity based employee resource group or affinity spaces are offered to foster a sense of belonging
- Bias awareness training for HR staff and others in the position to hire
- Hiring initiatives targeted at under-represented groups
- Investigation and discipline procedures and practices that honour individual and professional dignity
- Discrete staff or department that is responsible for leading professional learning for system staff as well as providing ongoing mentoring and coaching to staff; department should include a principal/vice-principal to support the learning of P/VPs and senior team

At the OPC...

- We have a very diverse complement of staff at all levels of the organization and considers aspects of identity in our hiring decisions
- We support the diverse identities of Members through the creation of EDI based committees, professional networks and identity-based affinity groups
- We have a dedicated staff responsible for guiding EDI work and accessing diverse perspectives through advisory groups and contractors



Curriculum and Pedagogical Connections

- Anti-oppressive approach grounded in a student-centered lesson design
- Resources that reflect a diverse range of global identities
- Programs or courses that are responsive to local needs



What does it look like?

- Reconsideration of existing resources with an examination of language and representation
- Programs and courses that centre the traditionally marginalized or under-represented and dismantle colonial perspectives (i.e NBE course centering Indigenous voices replacing traditional ENG courses; Afro-centric courses; land-based learning programs)
- Ongoing professional learning for staff supported with instructional coaches

At the OPC...

- The Professional Learning department is assisted by Members with diverse lived experiences to undergo regular reviews of our courses and materials and in the development of new materials
- Training grounded in anti-oppression/anti-racism principles is provided to course facilitators
- All participants engage in self-directed EDI modules at the beginning of all courses