

EQUITY AS A LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

Equity¹ is a necessary competency to achieve high quality education for all children regardless of identity. Within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) equity is an expected core competency of all leaders. Being an equitable leader involves being able to understand, notice, name, and act, when injustices and acts of discrimination occur. It requires having the skills and competencies to address issues of oppression within the context of school-based interactions, decision-making processes and responses to students, families, staff, and communities. Engaging in equitable leadership requires an intentional focus on creating conditions for the success of students and staff, both within and outside of the organization.

In alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Education directives, and to build on TDSB's ongoing commitment to Equity leadership, the Equity as a Leadership Competency tool was developed to explicitly acknowledge the organization's obligation and accountability to building equitable leaders. This tool is grounded in literature that connects Equity and Anti-Oppressive frameworks to pedagogies centering on transformative leadership. It aims to reimagine leadership for newly hired teachers to managers and system leaders as they create conditions within their working environments that foster equitable experiences and outcomes for ALL stakeholders.

The Urban Indigenous Education Centre, guided by the Elders Council and the Urban Indigenous Community Advisory Committee is developing a document that will inform leadership roles and responsibilities in Decolonizing Education and Indigenous Education.

Equity as a Leadership Competency covers six areas of equitable leadership practice:

- i. Equity and Anti Oppressive Leadership,
- ii. Setting Directions,
- iii. Building Productive Relationships and Developing People,
- iv. Improving the Instructional Program,
- v. Developing the Organization to Support Desired Practices, and
- vi. Securing Accountability.

This tool was developed to maintain consistency with the provincial Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) and aligns to the same core competencies (ii-vi). In order to support the work within the TDSB of repaying "educational debt", the competency of "Equity and Anti-Oppression Leadership" was included.

These six areas ask key questions and identify specific competencies to provoke self-reflection and personal growth. Each question and competency is designed to provide guidance for leadership actions moving forward. This tool was designed recognizing that it does not cover all areas of equitable and anti-oppressive leadership, however, it provides entries into identifying specific actions tied to creating conditions and identifying areas for improvement for leaders within the organization.

ENGAGING IN SELF-ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION

Equity as a Leadership Competency is designed for leaders to monitor their progress overtime. Equity leaders should identify one or two areas of focus, on an ongoing basis, exploring strengths and areas of improvement as they identify specific areas for growth.

¹Equity: Ensures Equality of opportunities and outcomes for all by responding fair and proportionality to the needs of individuals. Equity is not the same as equal treatment because it recognizes a social-cultural Power Imbalance that unfairly Privilege some while oppressing others and therefore focuses on redressing Disparity - meeting individual needs to ensure fair access, outcomes and participation that results in Equality, acknowledging historical and present Systemic Discrimination against identified groups and removing Barriers, eliminating Discrimination and remedying the impact of past Discrimination and current Oppression. Equity practices ensure fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities and Intersectionality of multiple social identities, access to Privileges and impacts of Oppression. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/ groups. (TDSB. (2018). P037 Equity Policy. Toronto, ON: Author.)

EQUITY AND ANTI-OPPRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders advocate for and implement structural, curricular and procedural evidence-based actions through the school improvement process or department goals to provide high-quality education for all students, including those historically underserved by the school system.

Questions

- i. In what ways, do you model vulnerability, self-awareness, and self-reflection to improve anti-oppressive and anti-racist leadership practices?
- ii. In what ways, do you unlearn informal and formal oppressive practices and act on this knowledge in your daily leadership decision making?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/TEACHING & LEARNING

- Holds ongoing space for brave conversations about identity, bias, power, privilege, barriers and marginalization with students, staff, and families and understands when these conversations are required.
- Uses brave conversations to remove barriers for students, staff and families.
- Demonstrates self-awareness to learn about anti-oppressive education and demonstrates application regarding how they are applying their learning in service of underserved students and school communities.
- Continues to probe and ask questions (e.g., “Who is missing from the conversation? How do we learn what we don’t yet know?”) and uses the answers to these questions to inform school improvement planning and instruction.
- Unpacks/understands the impact of power and privilege and uses professional learning structures to form strong partnerships with staff.
- Continuously challenges power and privilege in efforts to reduce the harm and trauma that underserved students experience within school and beyond.
- Supports staff, school leaders, and the community to ask questions to determine the actions which need to be taken to improve conditions for underserved students.
- Engages community members (e.g., mentors, community support workers, family members) on an ongoing basis to contribute to school improvement planning
- Identifies and immediately responds to hate, bias, and racism (as per PR728), directed towards underserved groups; works to identify strategies to disrupt inequitable school/department practices.
- Ensures that school funding/project priorities are aligned with the TDSB commitment to equity and anti-oppressive systems.

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Holds brave conversations about identity, bias, power, privilege, barriers, and marginalization.
- Creates initiatives, structures, policies, and processes to remove barriers for underserved students, staff, and community.
- Supports ongoing mentorship for diverse future leaders.
- Demonstrates self-awareness, continues to learn about anti-oppressive and anti-racist education.
- Continues to probe and ask questions e.g., “Who is missing from the conversation? How do we learn what we don’t yet know?” To determine which actions, need to be taken.
- Supports the creation and implementation of board-wide professional learning to help all staff continuously challenge power and privilege and respond appropriately.
- Identifies hate, bias, and racism and creates innovative policies, and practices based on input from key stakeholders to improve outcomes for all.
- Develops a network with diverse perspectives and consults diverse resources to better understand complex equity issues that negatively impact staff and the stakeholders we serve.
- Identifies hate, bias, and racism incidents and works towards disrupting inequitable practices.
- Develop support systems for staff who have been harmed by hate, bias, or racism.
- Ensures that the current funding is aligned with the TDSB’s commitment to equity and anti-oppressive systems by regularly advocating for re-assessment of funding to re-distribute, allocate and/or increase funding to improve the well-being of all.

SETTING DIRECTION

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders identify and address issues of oppression in all interactions, decision-making processes, and responses to students, families, staff, and communities through the school improvement process or development of department goals.

Questions

- i. Who are the most vulnerable populations that you serve? How do you know?
- ii. In what ways do you centre the voices of historically marginalized and racialized individuals in the curriculum or in your work?
- iii. What does your staff/team need to learn to better understand and address systemic oppression?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/TEACHING & LEARNING

- Anchors the school's vision in a deep understanding of anti-oppression discourse to inform classroom practices, school culture and system direction.
- Understands the school improvement process as well as collaborative inquiry, and how it works to challenge teacher practice.
- Knowledgeable of current assessment data to ensure that assessment drives instruction.
- Regularly monitors achievement goals to determine the impact on underserved populations.
- Demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose and impact of anti-oppressive leadership directions and its ability to influence the classroom practices, school culture and system direction.
- Views system, provincial and political direction with a critical equity lens.
- Understands and utilizes a variety of data effectively to determine most underserved populations in classrooms, school and the broader system.
- Creates school improvement goals, school learning plans and professional learning opportunities to challenge the underachievement data of the identified underserved population(s).
- Demonstrates a clear understanding of issues related to social identities and power dynamics.
- Demonstrates awareness of and uses culturally relevant leadership approaches to support students, staff and families.
- Understands the importance of engaging and affirming social identities in classroom practices, school culture and the broader system.
- Intentionally addresses the following: power and privilege, race and oppression, biases and systemic barriers through school improvement, classroom practices, school culture and the broader system
- Aligns budget and resources with a focus on addressing marginalization and underserved students and communities
- Develops strategic directions aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan that centers student and parent voice and agency.

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Develops a team culture that values service excellence and continuous improvement by working with various employee groups to better understand their needs.
- Demonstrates a good understanding of anti-oppression to inform the development of department procedures and practices.
- Regularly monitors department goals to determine the impact on underserved staff and students.
- Demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose and impact of anti-oppressive leadership directions and its ability to close the persistent underachievement of particular populations.
- Views system, provincial and political direction with a critical equity lens.
- Understands and utilizes a variety of data effectively to determine the most underserved student populations.
- Creates departmental workplans aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan that centre diverse voices.
- Considers social identities and power dynamics in all forms of communication.
- Aligns budget and resources with a focus on addressing marginalization and underserved students and communities.
- Demonstrates awareness of and uses culturally-relevant leadership approaches to support staff.

BUILDING PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders use an asset-based lens to cultivate sustainable, strong and authentic relationships with diverse stakeholders in an effort to support and develop people.

Questions

- i. Who will you build relationships with to cultivate and enhance equitable and inclusive learning and leadership opportunities for staff? Which staff do you select for leadership opportunities and why?
- ii. Do key relationships inside and outside of the TDSB support, reflect and model your commitment to equitable and anti-oppressive learning environments?
- iii. How do you build trust with individuals and what informs your abilities to build trust?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/ TEACHING & LEARNING

- Builds authentic relationships and partnerships with diverse community organizations, advocates, families, student leaders and staff representing historically underserved communities to improve the learning and well-being of students.
- Communicates effectively and meaningfully with students' parents/guardians/elders, and team members as valued stakeholders.
- Builds a deeper understanding of language to dismantle anti-oppression and provide spaces for students and staff to discuss issues of injustice.
- Names and interrupts barriers faced by students, staff and families.
- Engages the stakeholders within and beyond already established organizations (e.g., School Advisory Council, Student Council, staff meetings etc.) in order to include voices for school improvement planning.
- Utilizes culturally responsive professional development structures to develop school/department improvement plans and divisional actions to address barriers.
- Ensures all stakeholders understand departmental action plans with ongoing opportunities to provide feedback.

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Builds equitable and trusting relationships with staff, students, and stakeholders to hear diverse voices and accepts constructive feedback to inform change.
- Recognizes systems of oppression within TDSB and takes corrective action within one's own team or department and advocates for organizational change.
- Demonstrates an understanding of how power and privilege can create specific barriers for various social identities within our organization and develops anti-oppressive actions and practices.
- Engages students, staff, and parents as partners using multiple strategies such as already-established channels e.g., Ward Meetings, School Advisory Council, Student Council, staff meetings etc., in order to hear from diverse voices.

IMPROVING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders think deeply about what is required to improve the instructional program of all learners using high yield strategies, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical literacy, and other critical pedagogies.

Questions

- i. How can we ensure that programming is authentic, self-affirming, critical and reflects the lived experiences and abilities of students?
- ii. How can the learning that occurs in classrooms and schools build the collective capacity and leadership of our students, staff, and community?
- iii. How do we respectfully draw on the voices and realities of our students to make responsive programming decisions?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/ TEACHING & LEARNING

- Possesses a strong knowledge of educational pedagogies (e.g., Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Racist Pedagogies, Critical Consciousness, dis/ability discourse and other Critical Theories) and is able to apply these pedagogies in daily interactions, decision making and practice.
- Understands Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy and how it is tied to curriculum, school culture, system leadership and service excellence.
- Understands and engages student identities, abilities, lived experiences, individual learning styles and modes of learning in classroom instruction; utilizes this learning to create equitable and inclusive learning spaces.
- Leverages knowledge of social identities to shape instruction extra-curricular programming, learning and working environments that upholds the Human Rights codes.
- Builds staff capacity to create authentic learning tasks through inquiry, reflective of students' identities.
- Identifies and purchases resources which support authentic learning opportunities that are reflective of students' identities and communities.
- Regularly engages in school walkthroughs to determine the school climate, culture and teaching practices as data to support staff.
- Utilizes student culture, through classroom instruction anchored in culturally relevant pedagogy, to support engagement and success for all students.
- Affirms student social identities in classroom practices, hallways, school culture and data.

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Please revise the competencies in order to make it relevant for the work within your department or sphere of influence.

DEVELOPING THE ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT DESIRED PRACTICES

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders are reflective about School/ Board structures, policies and operational procedures through mutual respect, trust, understanding, collaboration and distributive leadership.

Questions

- i. In what ways do you ensure staff representation and equitable service to all stakeholders?
- ii. In what ways do you ensure equity through the implementation of policies and procedures?
- iii. How are you able to identify and have brave conversations about equity-focused structures that support ALL students and reflect commitments outlined in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/ TEACHING & LEARNING

- Addresses equity of access to technology and other school resources in classrooms and/ or school.
- Able to identify and address biases and systemic barriers while managing their own emotional responses and guiding others to do the same.
- Able to diversify resources to ensure inclusive and equitable programming.
- Instructional facilitators are reflective of the diversity of staff and engages in co-construction of the learning experience.
- Develops and establishes transparent communication plans to share best practices and next steps.
- Upholds a commitment to Human Rights.
- Creates a culture of learning and leadership.
- Fosters a school culture that centres the success of underserved students and staff.
- Operationalizes board commitments by demonstrating the ability to create conditions for student achievement and well-being.

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Recognizes inequities of access and designs solutions to address them.
- Ensures inclusion and diversity when choosing resources, providers, and partnership.
- Ensures professional learning is delivered in an Equitable, Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Racist ways that explicitly addresses power, privilege, issues of racism, anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, and all forms of oppression.
- Identifies and addresses biases and systemic barriers while managing one's own emotional responses and guiding others to do the same.
- Ensures new hires are reflective of the diverse community we serve and intentionally considers peoples' social identities and leadership styles as an asset.
- Develops and establishes transparent communication plans.
- Upholds a commitment to stakeholders and engages in organizational transformation necessary to uphold Human Rights for all.
- Creates a culture of learning and leadership where staff are able to be vulnerable and accountable.
- Ensures that issues of power and privilege are explicitly addressed through learning opportunities and approaches
- Models leadership that demonstrates vulnerability (e.g., models their own learning from mistakes) as a way to become a better leader.
- Operationalizes board commitments by demonstrating the ability to set optimal conditions for student achievement and staff well-being.

SECURING ACCOUNTABILITY

Equitable and anti-oppressive leaders intentionally focus on creating conditions for the success of all students and staff, both within and outside of the organization.

Questions

- i. How intentional are you in identifying bias, power and privilege when considering the development of accountability benchmarks in the learning environment? Are your processes focused on inclusivity, diversity and anti-oppressive practices?
- ii. How are you ensuring that your School Improvement or Service Improvement processes are transparent, understood, and accessible to all community stakeholders?

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT/ TEACHING & LEARNING

- Centres the most underserved when developing the School Improvement Plan while ensuring all stakeholder voices are captured in the process.
- Holds and engages conversations about race, grounded in student achievement and well-being and works with staff and community to develop best practices.
- Utilizes research-based practices to support school improvement planning and deep learning for educators and students.
- Analyzes data through an anti-oppressive stance to ensure transparency and equitable distribution of resources.
- Engages in informed decision-making practices based on building understanding, engaging in critical questions, and utilizing demographic data.
- Identifies patterns of success and/or failure, acknowledges responsibilities and interprets findings in a transparent manner.
- Actively engages partners and system supports in a transparent manner to ensure that the needs of underserved students are met.
- Creates a system involving the school community to inform decision-making processes.
- Actively and transparently monitors and measures student achievement and well-being

BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT

- Identifies and addresses biases and systemic barriers while recognizing and addressing one's own emotional responses and guiding others to do the same.
- Demonstrates an ability to articulate personal privilege and how it may shape or influence decisions.
- Centres the most underserved when developing department plans, while ensuring all stakeholder voices are captured in the process
- Seeks to understand and critically questions inequity.
- Looks for patterns of success and/or failure among marginalized groups, interprets findings in a transparent manner, and commits to improvements.

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