



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Learning and Living in Faith*

## Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: May 23, 2023

Subject: **Equity in the Classroom**

Origin: Mariah O'Reilly, Superintendent of Education, Academic Services

### Purpose

This report is intended to provide a brief overview of strategies to incorporate equity into the classroom and review ongoing initiatives in the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB).

### Background

DCDSB is committed to addressing systemic discrimination and helping to break down barriers for Indigenous, Black, and racialized students, students from low-income households, and students with disabilities and other students with special education needs so that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, thrive, and reach their full potential<sup>1</sup>.

An essential part of this commitment is actively promoting equity in the classroom to help remove barriers so all of students can succeed. The Instructional Core, as defined by Richard Elmore, is composed of a **teacher** and **student** in the presence of **content**. The Instructional Core must be at the center of any equity efforts a board undertakes. In order for equity initiatives to have true impact, the student, teacher and curriculum must be transformed.

Historically, schools have planned for the average student, today we recognize that each student comes with their own unique biases, traumas, identities, experiences, assumptions, and backgrounds. Equity work involves recognizing the diversity of our students and shifting our focus to the margins.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP) are three frameworks that support equity in the classroom.

UDL - A teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials designed to meet special needs to enhance learning for all students, regardless of age, skills, or situation. Learning For All 2013

Differentiated Instruction - Differentiation is an organized yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning to meet kids where they are and help them to achieve maximum growth as learners. Carol Ann Tomlinson, 1999

CRRP - Teaching that recognizes that **all students** learn differently and that these differences may be connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity.

The attached presentation expands on the ideas above, shares practical strategies to incorporate equity into the classroom and reviews ongoing literacy, numeracy, and de-streaming initiatives in DCDSB.

As a Catholic school board, equity and inclusion are concepts rooted in our faith. Our core belief that all persons are created in God's image and our call to honour the dignity of each person animates all equity initiatives as we strive to live out our mission to be "an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education."

Attachment(s): Equity in the Classroom Presentation

TB:MO



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# Equity in the Classroom

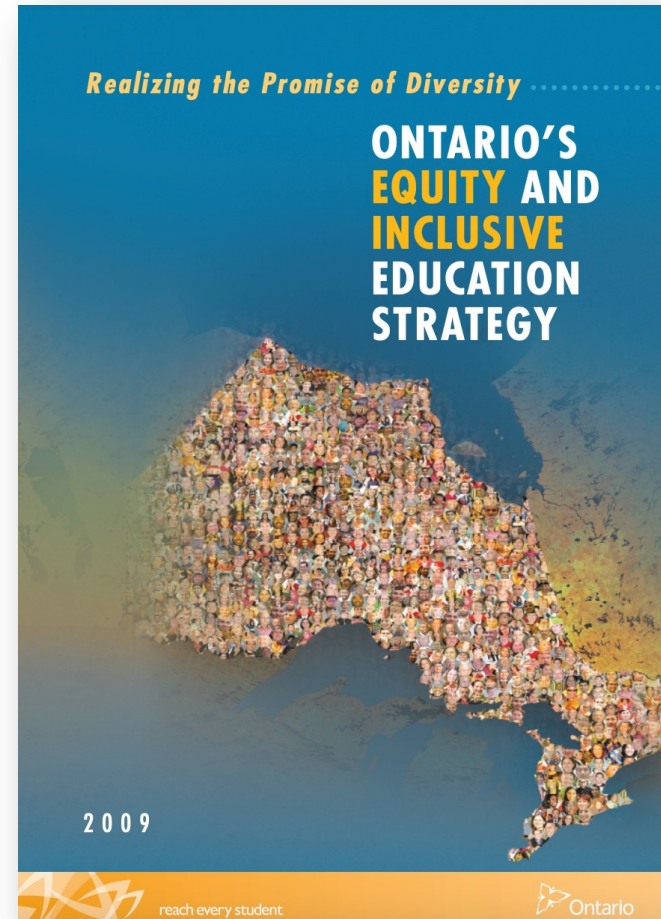
*Listening, Learning, and Living in Faith*

# Equity in the Classroom.

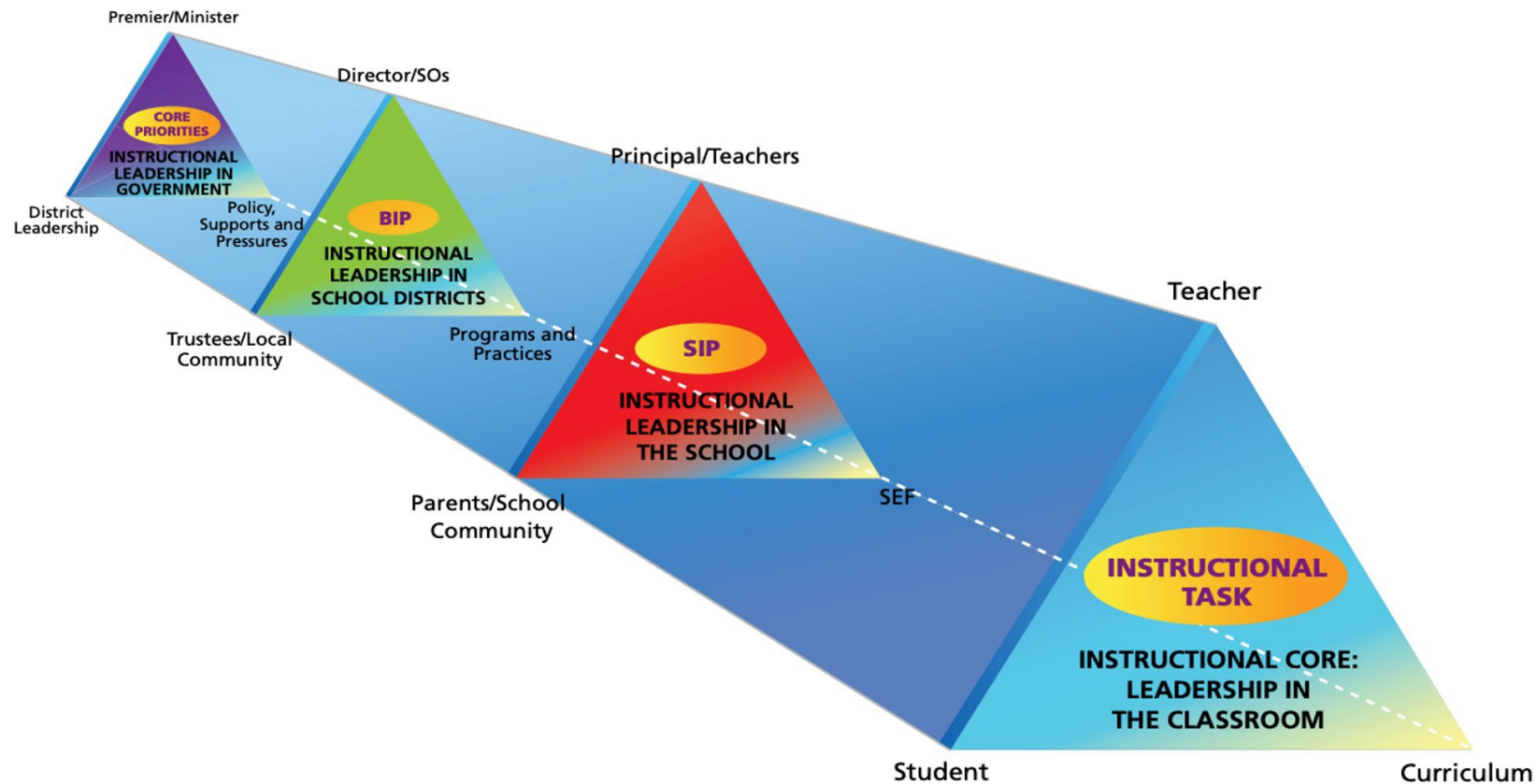
An equitable classroom is one where all students are supported to learn rigorous academics and where teachers leverage the material and practices needed to support positive academic outcomes for all students.

# Equity and Inclusive Education (2009)

In reaffirming the values of fairness, equity, and respect as essential principles of our publicly funded education system, the Ontario government's equity and inclusive education strategy helps to ensure that **all students have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.**



# School Effectiveness Framework



language

reading

memory

vocabulary

knowledge

preferences

cognitive

curiosity

interests

perceptual



# The Shift

1

Designing to  
the average

2

Designing to  
the edges



# Universal Design for Learning

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Equity

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Activating Prior Knowledge

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Assessment

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Materials and Resources

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Setting the Learning Environment

# Antiracism and UDL Begin with Honour

Students are more important than the systems we serve

Students are more important than our personal preferences

Students are important and we will honour them with instruction that holds them accountable and empowers them to take ownership of their own learning

Students are more important than how the content is packaged

We are willing to learn about the students to help them reach their life goals

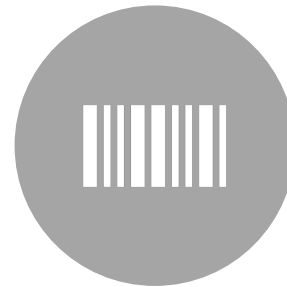


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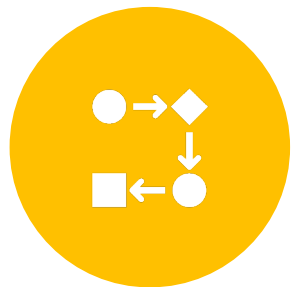
# Differentiated Instruction



Learning Environment



Product



Process



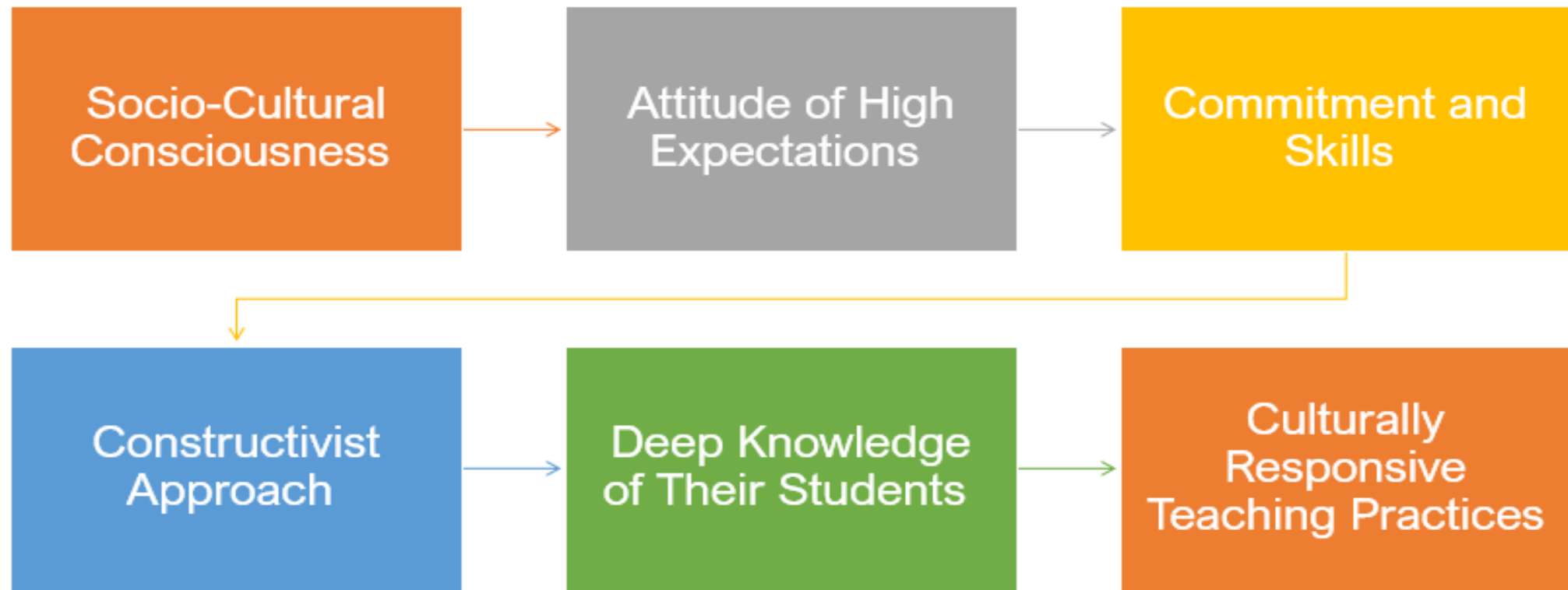
Assessment

# Defining Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP)

- “teaching that recognizes that all students learn differently and that these differences may be connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity.”
- CRRP teachers provide student-focused practice where students’ cultural needs and identity are fostered to promote student success (Lynch, 2012)

# Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy

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**Challenge the normalization of failure**



**Speak up for equity**



**Embrace immigrant students and their culture**



**Provide students clear guidance on what it takes to succeed**



**Build partnerships with parents based on shared interests**



**Align discipline practices to educational goals**



**Rethink remediation, focus on acceleration**



**Implement evidence-based practices and evaluate for effectiveness**



**Build partnerships with community to address student needs**



**Teach the way students learn rather than expecting them to learn the way we teach**

**Source: Dr. Pedro Noguera, professor of education at UCLA**



# Asset-Based Approach

An asset-based approach focuses on strengths. It views diversity in thought, culture, and traits as positive assets. Teachers and students alike are valued for what they bring to the classroom rather than being characterized by what they may need to work on or lack.

([Association of College & Research Libraries, 2018](#))

## Asset Vs Deficit

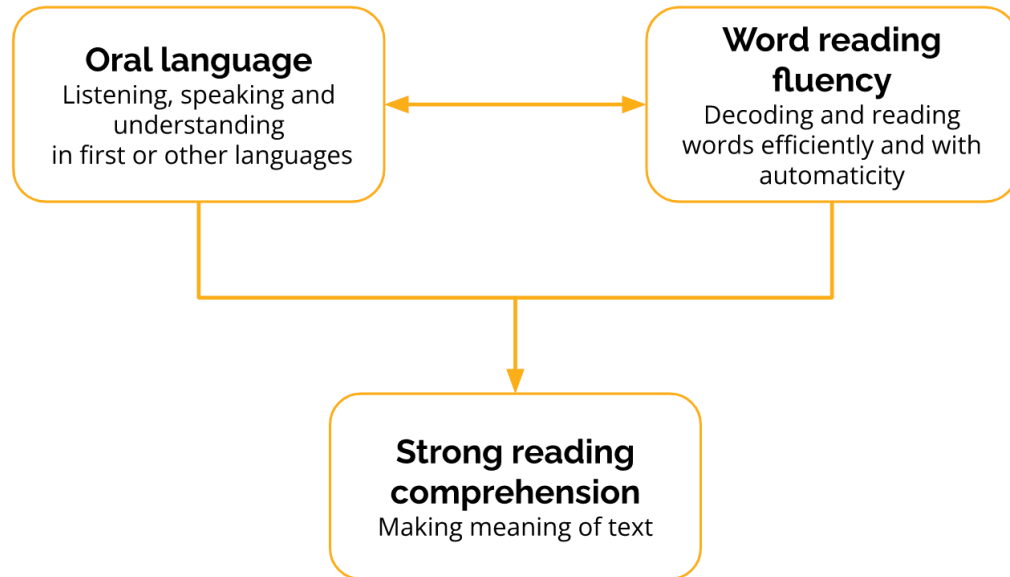
“The knowledge children bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning. To overlook this resource is to deny children access to the knowledge construction process.” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 25)

# Promoting Equity In the Classroom

- Use random response strategies
- Ask challenging questions equitably of all students
- Use multiple ways of assessing student understanding
- Create classroom rules collaboratively and enforce them fairly
- Seek multiple perspectives and different answers to questions
- Show students the *why* behind how things are done when possible
- Acknowledge every student's comment or response, even if it's incorrect
- Teach appropriate language around asking questions about other students' cultures.
- Accommodate different learning styles



# Equity in Reading Instruction



- Science of Reading
- Effective assessment and evaluation
- Small group instruction
- Diverse teaching materials
- Utilize high impact teaching strategies

# Mathematics

## Equity in Math Instruction



Know your students and adapt to their differences



High expectations for all students



Understand the cultures of your school and students



Affirming students' identities



Drawing on multiple resources of knowledge

## Thinking Classrooms

- Visibly random groups
- Vertical non-permanent surfaces
- Oral instructions
- De fronting the classroom

# Scarborough's Reading Rope

## Language Comprehension **LC**

**Background Knowledge**  
facts, concepts, etc.

**Vocabulary**  
breadth, precision, links, etc.

**Language Structures**  
syntax, semantics, etc.

**Verbal Reasoning**  
inference, metaphor, etc.

**Literacy Knowledge**  
print concepts, genres, etc.

## Word Recognition **D**

**Phonological Awareness**  
syllables, phonemes, etc.

**Decoding**  
alphabetic principle,  
letter-sound correspondences

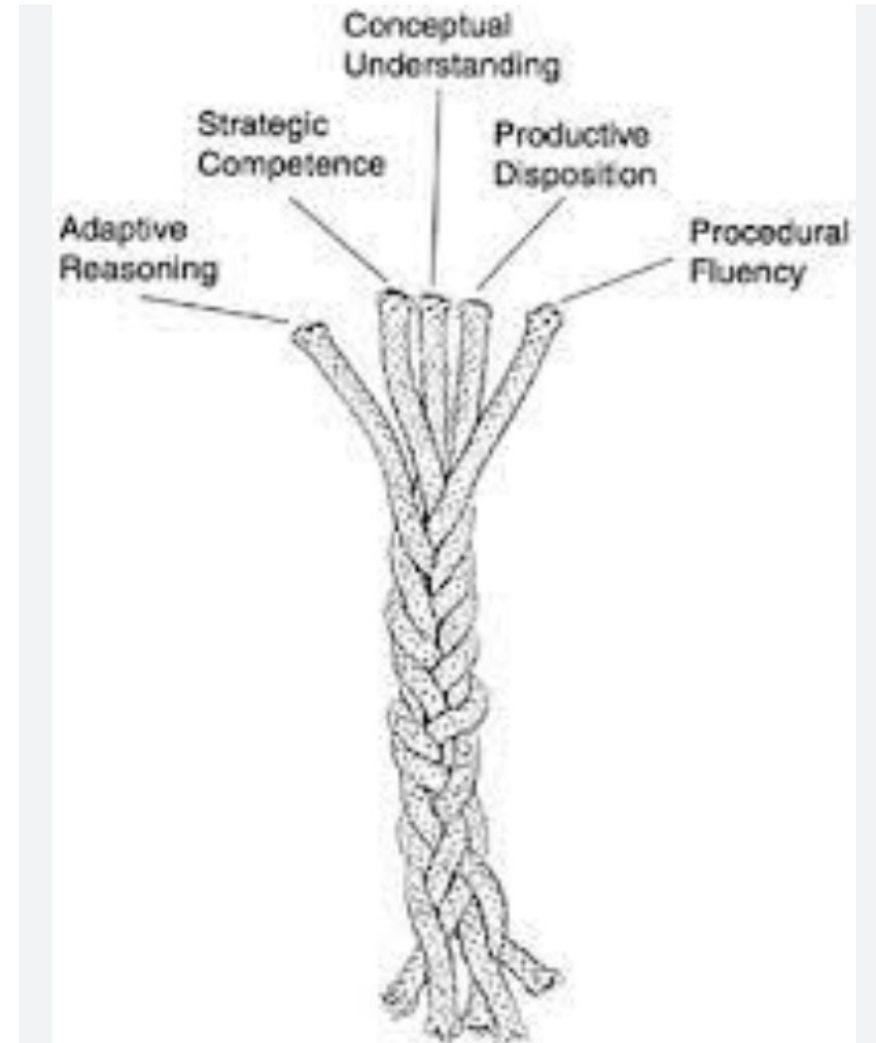
**Sight Recognition**  
of familiar words

INCREASINGLY STRATEGIC

Skilled Reading **RC**

INCREASINGLY AUTOMATIC

**LC** × **D** = **RC** Fluent word recognition and comprehension.



# Why De-Streaming

- In Ontario, Academic and Applied course types or “streams” have been in place for decades. The original intention behind Applied courses was to provide a different pedagogical approach to learning. However, over time, the Applied course type has become perceived as less academically rigorous. **Data shows that the students most likely to be streamed into this course type are students who are Indigenous, Black, from low-income households, and/or have disabilities or other special education needs. Students in the Applied course type stream are limited in the courses they can take in later grades, which in turn limits their access to post-secondary pathways.**

Grade 9  
De-  
Streamed  
Courses

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ENGLISH

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MATH

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SCIENCE

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GEOGRAPHY

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FRENCH

# Equity as Encounter and Accompaniment



***Renewing The Promise***  
**A Pastoral Letter  
for Catholic Education**

- We encounter Christ in our students, in all their diversity (Lord, when did I see you...)
- We are Christ for our students when we recognize their inherent dignity, remove barriers, and give to each what they need
- “We practice the art of accompaniment when we take the time to walk alongside one another, to listen and to teach, and in so doing, to transform.”



# Our Calling

## Our Mission

- To be an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education.

