



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

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees
From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education
Date: March 27, 2023
Subject: **Board Advisory Groups**

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Trustees with information regarding advisory groups. As requested by motion of the Board on January 23, 2023, the report will specifically address the conditions that prompt the formation of an advisory group; the terms of reference and membership of advisory groups currently in existence in the Board. The report will also review the current process to bring forward Committee reports to the Board of Trustees and options that exist to enhance information sharing and communication going forward.

Background

In keeping with common and best practice for Boards across Ontario, the Durham Catholic District School Board has established various advisory groups for the purpose of consulting with parents/guardians/caregivers, students, community members and supporters of the Board on matters pertaining to its duty to provide educational services and promote a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils. Building relationships and engaging in dialogue with all members of the community is consistent with the moral perspective, tradition and fundamental mission of Catholic education to support faith development and student achievement. The legal mandate, authority and responsibility to establish and maintain such groups is primarily located in the Education Act, Regulations, Ministry of Education Policy and Program Memorandums (PPMs), Framework documents, approved Board policies and the Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

Responsibilities of the Board under Legislation and Regulation

Section 169.1 of the Education Act outlines the duties of Boards. Particular duties which support the need for advisory bodies are outlined below.

1) Every board shall,

- (a) promote student achievement and well-being;
 - (a.1) promote a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils, including pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability;
 - (a.2) promote the prevention of bullying;
- (c) deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils;
- (d) develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that,
 - (i) promote the goals referred to in clauses (a) to (c), and
 - (ii) encourage pupils to pursue their educational goals;
- (e) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board under clause (d) in achieving the board's goals and the efficiency of the implementation of those policies;
- (f) develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the goals referred to in clauses (a) to (c);

Additionally, section **218.1 of the Education Act** outlines the duties of Board members to:

218.1 (a) carry out his or her responsibilities in a manner that assists the board in fulfilling its duties under this Act, the regulations and the guidelines issued under this Act, including but not limited to the board's duties under section 169.1;

And to:

218.1 (c) consult with parents, students and supporters of the board on the board's multi-year plan under clause 169.1 (1) (f);

Formation of Advisory Groups

System level advisory groups in the Durham Catholic District School Board are variously formed in response to legislation, regulation, ministry direction, ministry frameworks, board policy and/or board motions. In all cases, advisory groups are intended as a forum to engage with parents/guardians/caregivers, students, and/or community partners to better serve local needs. In some cases, such as Parent

Involvement Committees and Special Education Advisory Committees, specific direction is provided through regulations which stipulate how Boards are to carry out these duties to provide programs in an inclusive environment and to consult with the community.

Parent Involvement Committees

[Regulation 612/00](#) (sections 28 and 33) establishes the mandate and composition for Parent Involvement Committees.

28. A parent involvement committee of a board shall,

(a) develop strategies and initiatives that the board and the board's director of education could use to effectively communicate with parents and to effectively engage parents in improving student achievement and well-being;

(b) advise the board and the board's director of education on ways to use the strategies and initiatives referred to in clause (a);

(c) communicate information from the Ministry to school councils of schools of the board and to parents of pupils of the board;

(d) work with school councils of schools of the board and, through the board's director of education, with employees of the board to,

(i) share effective practices to help engage parents, especially parents who may find engagement challenging, in their children's learning,

(ii) identify and reduce barriers to parent engagement,

(iii) help ensure that schools of the board create a welcoming environment for parents of its pupils, and

(iv) develop skills and acquire knowledge that will assist the parent involvement committee and school councils of the board with their work; and

(e) determine, in consultation with the board's director of education and in keeping with the board's policies, how funding, if any, provided under the *Education Act* for parent involvement as described in section 27 and clauses (a) to (d), is to be used. O. Reg. 330/10, s. 6.

33. (1) A parent involvement committee of a board shall include the following:

1. The number of parent members specified in the by-laws of the committee.
2. The director of education of the board.

3. One member of the board, appointed by the board.
4. The number of community representatives specified in the by-laws of the committee. O. Reg. 330/10, s. 6.

Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC)

Similarly, [Regulation 464/97](#) establishes the composition for Special Education Advisory Committees which every board must establish.

2. (1) Every district school board shall establish a special education advisory committee that shall consist of,
 - (a) subject to subsections (2) and (3), one representative from each of the local associations that operates locally within the area of jurisdiction of the board, as nominated by the local association and appointed by the board;
 - (b) one alternate for each representative appointed under clause (a), as nominated by the local association and appointed by the board;
 - (c) such number of members from among the board's own members as is determined under subsection (4), as appointed by the board;
 - (d) where the number of members appointed under clause (c) is less than three, one alternate, as appointed by the board from among its own members, for each member appointed under clause (c);
 - (e) one or two persons to represent the interests of Indian pupils, as provided by section 4; and
 - (f) one or more additional members appointed under subsection (5).

The regulation also outlines the expected activities of the SEAC:

11. (1) A special education advisory committee of a board may make recommendations to the board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board.
- (2) Before making a decision on a recommendation of the committee, the board shall provide an opportunity for the committee to be heard before the board and before any other committee of the board to which the recommendation is referred. O. Reg. 464/97, s. 11.

12. (1) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to participate in the board's annual review, under Regulation 306 of the Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1990, of its special education plan.

(2) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to participate in the board's annual budget process under section 231 of the Act, as that process relates to special education.

(3) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to review the financial statements of the board, prepared under section 252 of the Act, as those statements relate to special education. O. Reg. 464/97, s. 12.

Indigenous Education Councils (IECs)

Supports for learners and expectations of Boards related to Indigenous Education are outlined in the *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, that was released in 2007. Information about direction on these matters can be found on the Ministry of Education [website](#). As noted on this webpage "All school boards must have formal structures such as IECs to support Indigenous Education in school boards. In Durham Catholic this is our Indigenous Education Circle (IEC).

Equity-based Advisory Committees

The above noted groups are examples of specific formal structures that have been mandated by the Ministry of Education under particular regulations or frameworks. These groups represent best practice as a means for Boards to engage with parents/guardians/caregivers, students and community members and become informed about the needs particular to the community they serve.

When it comes to the establishment of advisory committees for equity deserving groups, one must look to direction provided by Ministry Program Policy Memorandums (PPMs) and Board policy. On matters of Equity, PPM 119 - Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools states:

When reviewing or developing their equity and inclusive education policy, boards are expected to consult widely with students, parents, principals, teachers and other staff, school councils, their Special Education Advisory Committee, their Parent Involvement Committee and other committees (e.g., Diversity Committee; First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Advisory Committee), federations and unions, service organizations, and community partners in order to reflect the diversity of the community.

Boards have flexibility to adapt their equity and inclusive education policy to take into account local needs and circumstances.

PPM 119 also gives direction regarding Board leadership and school-community relationships:

Shared and committed leadership

Board and school leaders must be responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario's communities. Leadership is second only to teaching in its impact on student outcomes. School boards and schools are expected to provide leadership that is committed to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to learning.

In accordance with the principles of the ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy, effective board and school leaders promote the development of collaborative environments in which participants share a commitment to equity and inclusive education principles and practices. This collaborative approach includes and supports the active engagement of students, parents, federations and unions, colleges and universities, service organizations, and other community partners.

School–community relationships

Schools and boards will continue building their capacity – with the active engagement of parents and school community partners – to create and sustain a positive school climate that supports student achievement and well-being. Each board and its schools should review the structures of existing committees and partnerships to help ensure that they reflect the principles of equity and inclusive education. Boards should expand upon their outreach efforts in order to foster new partnerships that engage a cross-section of diverse students, parents, staff, community members, and various organizations, including business groups (e.g., business education councils). Boards are encouraged to draw upon the expertise of their partners to explore innovative ways of sharing resources that can help them meet the diverse needs of their students and provide new and relevant learning opportunities. Strong, positive, and respectful relationships are necessary to effect real change so that all students can reach their potential regardless of personal circumstances.

Durham Catholic District School Board Policy also supports the establishment of equity based advisory groups.

PO 200 Anti-Racism

The Board is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and biases from our schools, and seeks to create spaces

where all racialized persons are seen, heard, respected and supported to succeed as fully contributing members of the DCDSB community. This is congruent with the protection afforded in the Code, the Constitution Act, 1982 and confirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

5.3 The Board supports the establishment and maintenance of relationships with all members of our diverse partner community so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, families and employees are recognized and their needs are met.

6.5 The Board will seek opportunities to expand upon its outreach efforts in order to foster new partnerships with underserved and underrepresented groups, including to intentionally engage diverse students, parents/guardians, staff, community members, and various organizations, including business groups (e.g., business education councils).

PO 216 – Equity and Inclusive Education

The Durham Catholic District School Board recognizes that an equitable, inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving its strategic priorities. Equity and Inclusive Education aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limits students' prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. The Board is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and bias from our schools and classrooms to support the potential for all students to succeed. The Board recognizes that any form of discrimination or bias is not compatible with Catholic values and is in violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

5.1.2 the establishment and maintenance of partnerships with diverse members of our community is encouraged so that the perspectives and experiences of all students, staff and families are recognized, understood and honoured.

6.4 In accordance with the principles of the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy, the Board and school leaders will promote the development of collaborative environments in which participants share a commitment to equity and inclusive education principles and practices. This collaborative approach includes and supports the active engagement of students, parents/guardians, parish priests, federations and unions, colleges and universities, professional associations, service organizations, and other community partners.

Information/Analysis/Research

Durham Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (DCPIC)

The Durham Catholic Parent Involvement Committee was established during the 1998-1999 school year, twelve years prior to the release of Regulation 612/00 which mandated Parent Involvement Committees in all school boards.

A full outline of the history, mandate and membership of the DCPIC which includes Trustee representation, can be found at: <https://www.dcpic.ca/en/our-committee/committee-information.aspx#Membership>

Communications between the Board and DCPIC: The Trustee representative(s) to the DCPIC brings information from the Board to the members of the Committee at their meetings. Minutes of the DCPIC meetings are included in the agendas of the Regular Board meetings.

Durham Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Online archived minutes of the Durham Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) date back to 2015-2016. Based on the requirements of Regulation 464/97 it is presumed that the Committee was first established in 1997-1998.

Information about SEAC, its meetings and membership, which includes Trustee representation, can be found at <https://www.dcdsb.ca/en/parents/Special-Education-Advisory-Committee.aspx>

Communications between the Board and SEAC: The Trustee representative(s) to the SEAC brings information from the Board to the members of the Committee at their meetings. Minutes of the SEAC meetings are included in the agendas of the Regular Board meetings.

DCDSB Indigenous Education Circle

The Durham Catholic Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) has been in existence for approximately 10+ years. This group has evolved over time as a common understanding of the role of the IEC in supporting our vibrant Indigenous Education programs and initiatives has developed through conversation and collaboration. During this time an Indigenous Student Circle (ISC) to assist in providing authentic student voice in planning and learning processes has also been established.

In past years, there has been voluntary participation in the Board's IEC by a former trustee.

The Indigenous Education Circle makes recommendations that focus on creating an environment of respect, while promoting the values of Indigenous history, culture, world views, language, and spirituality in our schools.

Information about the membership of our Indigenous Education Circle can be found at:

<https://www.dcdsb.ca/en/programs-services/indigenous-education-circle.aspx>

Communications between the Board and IEC: Currently there is no Trustee representative to the IEC. Information regarding activities of the IEC and the work they contribute to is highlighted in the Weekly Buzz and through periodic reports/presentations to Board.

Anti-Black Racism and Black Excellence Committee (ABR & BE)

The Anti-Black Racism and Black Excellence Committee was formed as part of our Board's Annual Equity Action Plan in response to system wide consultations with students/parents regarding Anti-Black Racism which took place in the fall of 2020. The call for members originally went out to parents and guardians on February 26, 2021.

The Committee met three times between Feb 2021-June 2021 and had five meetings in 2021-2022. Following the conversations arising from the Anti-Racism Policy, it was decided that it would be good to re-examine the structure and mandate of the committee. A meeting was held with the Director, HREA and the executive members (7 parents) on November 29, 2022. On February 21, 2023 a hybrid meeting of members (parents/guardians/caregivers, community partners and staff) of the committee was held. Fourteen people attended in person and 16 people joined electronically. Three additional meetings have been scheduled for March 21, April 26 and May 24.

Current Mandate (under review):

The Advisory Committee will support practices and processes throughout the Board's curriculum and organizational initiatives that identify and address anti-Black racism through evidence-based and asset-based consultation. Working with key stakeholders (including students, employees, organizational partners, parents, guardians, caregivers and volunteers), the Advisory Committee will help promote a DCDSB community that is free of discrimination and harassment based on race and other intersectional identification markers. It will also provide a breadth of knowledge and advice regarding strategies for boosting Black talent, scholarship and advancement.

The Advisory Committee provides feedback on gaps, needs and impacts, and ensures on-going engagement with key stakeholder communities. Feedback from the committee will be used to inform Board actions and initiatives around areas of need for, and impact to, the Black community, Black learners and Black professionals working within the DCDSB.

Communications between the Board and the ABR & BE Committee: Currently there is no Trustee representative to the ABR & BE Committee. Information regarding activities of the ABR & BE Committee and the work they contribute to is highlighted in the Weekly Buzz and through periodic reports/presentations to Board.

2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee

In May 2021 the Durham Catholic District School Board passed the following motion:

“THAT a multi-disciplinary working group be established by the Director to act as an advisory body to ensure staff have resources and training to provide for the ongoing support of 2SLGBTQ+ students and staff in our Catholic Schools.”

This Committee is still in the early stages of development. During the 2021-2022 school year, discussions were initiated through the Faith Department about the structure and potential membership of the committee and terms of reference were developed in draft form. Key staff from various departments were identified along with the Chaplains, and employee group reps and some initial meetings were held. The issue of authentic representation from individuals who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ has been considered. Student voice is also a priority.

Senior Administration Portfolio changes in 2022-2023 have taken place. Superintendent Stevenson who currently resources the group has reviewed the work to date and convened a meeting of the committee on March 7, 2023 to review the membership and share data from the most recent school climate surveys. A second meeting is scheduled in April.

Communications between the Board and the 2SLGBTQ+ Committee: Currently there is no Trustee representative to the 2SLGBTQ+ Committee. Information regarding activities related to work that is informed by the 2SLGBTQ+ Committee is included in the Weekly Buzz and through periodic reports/presentations to Board.

Next Steps

[Renewing the Promise – A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education](#), written in 2018 by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario speaks to the important role of Trustees:

“You share responsibility with the other partners in the Catholic education community. Parents, clergy, pastoral teams, teachers and staff all work in the service of the same mission, and all voices need to be heard, and all persons need to be recognized and respected for their inherent dignity and goodness.” (p. 20)

Additionally, Inspire 2026, the Board's new Multi-Year Strategic plan has identified listening, learning and living in faith as foundational processes that will be utilized in the coming years. Specifically, the plan indicates that:

We will build better understanding of the needs of each member of our community by creating spaces and establishing intentional practices to listen with the ear of the heart, to all voices.

Additionally, through Inspire 2026, advancing human rights and equity has been identified as one of three strategic priorities. The plan indicates that the board will:

Listen to the voices of our diverse communities and address disparities to cultivate a community that is focused on human rights, equity, anti-racism and inclusion.

These core processes and strategic priorities are fully aligned with our mission to be an inclusive Catholic learning community that inspires every student to achieve their full potential through faith and education.

What options exist to enhance information sharing and communication going forward?

Based upon experience, the inclusion and participation of Trustee representative(s) on important system-wide advisory groups (e.g., DCPIC, SEAC, Student Senate) has effectively served the function of supporting two-way communication and information sharing between the committees and the Board. The Trustee representatives report to the membership on the activities of the Board and the minutes of meetings that have Trustee representation are shared with the full Board in the agendas for the Regular Board Meetings.

While Trustee representation for DCPIC and SEAC is mandated by the Ministry, this practice has been extended in other Boards (e.g., Toronto Catholic) to all of their advisory committees and is recommended as a best practice conducive to building respectful relationships, fostering trust and enhancing communication. Should the Board of Trustees wish to explore enhanced involvement with the Indigenous Education Circle, Anti-Black Racism and Black Excellence Committee and the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, staff can initiate discussions with the group membership to facilitate that potential representation.

TB/eb