



# Protecting & Promoting Human Rights and Addressing Discrimination in our Schools

## Our commitment

The TDSB is committed to creating, maintaining and promoting a school system that is free from discrimination and harassment, where our community – students, staff, families and community partners – feel welcome, and are included and respected.

All students, staff, parents, caregivers, and community partners should be able to move through our school system knowing that their rights will be protected. The well-being and academic success of our students and success of our system as a whole depends on this.

The TDSB has outlined [Expected Practices for Understanding, Addressing and Preventing Discrimination](#) for school administrators and staff to help ensure we fulfill our professional, moral and legal obligations to create equitable, safe, respectful, and inclusive spaces for all students, parents, and staff.

This guide was developed to help support TDSB parents and students to know their rights and responsibilities, and how we will uphold these when dealing with incidents of discrimination and harassment in our schools.

## What is discrimination?

Discrimination is when people are treated unequally and unfairly because of their race, disability, sex, creed, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic (“ground”) protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Ontario Human Rights Code and the TDSB’s Human Rights Policy (PO31) prohibit any and all forms of discrimination in TDSB schools and workplaces.

Discrimination can include comments, actions or decisions that make people feel unwelcome or uncomfortable, based on their identity or ability (i.e. on the basis of a Code protected ground). It can also include policies, rules, and ways of doing things that knowingly or unknowingly disadvantage some groups of people, while privileging others. The unfair treatment does not have to be on purpose – it can happen when a person or organization does not mean or intend to discriminate against someone else.

Students can face discrimination inside or outside of the school classroom by:

- Students
- Teachers
- School staff
- Other adults (e.g., bus drivers, volunteers, parents)
- Other youth (not attending school)

All forms of discrimination **are unacceptable** in TDSB environments.

Sometimes, conduct outside the school or classroom can negatively impact the school environment, in ways requiring TDSB intervention.

The TDSB is continuing to take steps to:

- Raise awareness and understanding about human rights and discrimination
- Address discrimination
- Hold people who discriminate accountable
- Stop discrimination from happening again

## Did you know?

The TDSB has resources and staff (teachers, support staff, principals, superintendents and staff in Equity and Anti-Oppression, Caring and Safe Schools and the Human Rights Office, for example) to help schools respond to and prevent discrimination and make learning environments more inclusive and welcoming for everyone.

## What can you do if discrimination happens?

- **Tell us** - report the incident to your child's teacher or school principal. If the incident involves the principal, bring it forward to the superintendent. TDSB supervisors are required to share complaints against the school administration with the TDSB's Human Rights Office.
- **Learn more** - TDSB policies and procedures (Parent Concern Protocol, Caring and Safe Schools policy, and the Workplace Harassment Prevention and Human Rights procedure, for example) have more information about how to raise an issue or concern, and what the TDSB must do to address it.
- **Talk to your child** – remind your child that they have a right to learn without discrimination. Affirm their different identities and abilities. If you or your child needs support, reach out to your school or community for resources that are available to help you. Remind your child that they should not discriminate against anyone.
- **Work with the school** to find a resolution.

### Did you know?

The *Ontario Human Rights Code* protects people from reprisal. This means that students and parents cannot be treated badly or differently because they reported an incident of discrimination.

## What will the TDSB do if discrimination happens?

The TDSB takes incidents of discrimination very seriously.

The TDSB has clearly outlined what school administrators and staff must do to understand, address and prevent discrimination in our schools. All TDSB staff are expected to:

- Stop, interrupt, name and report discrimination
- Address discrimination by:
  - Providing support for affected individuals to ensure their safety and well-being (through, for example, guidance counsellors, social workers or other relevant school or community counselling services).
  - Holding people accountable for their discriminatory actions, including by documenting and reporting what happened, and taking appropriate and proportionate disciplinary and/or remedial action.
  - Examining and, where necessary, restoring the school climate, considering what else needs to be done at the school to prevent discrimination from happening again.

We all play an important role in building a culture of human rights at the TDSB. We all need to encourage and promote healthy relationships and appropriate student behaviour, so that our school communities may be free of discrimination.

Helping students, parents and staff understand and address discrimination is essential to preventing discrimination. Together, we can create safe, inclusive and respectful school environments where all students are welcome, treated fairly, and can grow and thrive.

### Did you know?

When inappropriate, discriminatory or harassing student behaviour occurs, schools will use a progressive discipline approach which combines early and ongoing interventions to promote positive student behaviour. Schools consider a range of options to determine the most appropriate way to respond to each situation and help students learn from their choices, while taking into account their individual circumstances. In some cases, a suspension or an expulsion may be necessary.