



Equity Action Plan 2020-2023



Limestone
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Message from the Director and Chair

The Limestone District School Board is committed to an equitable and inclusive school climate that ensures all students, staff and members of the broader school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. We want everyone who learns, works or volunteers in Limestone to value diversity, demonstrate respect for others, and commit to establishing a just, caring society. We know that diversity enriches the educational and employment experience of everyone.

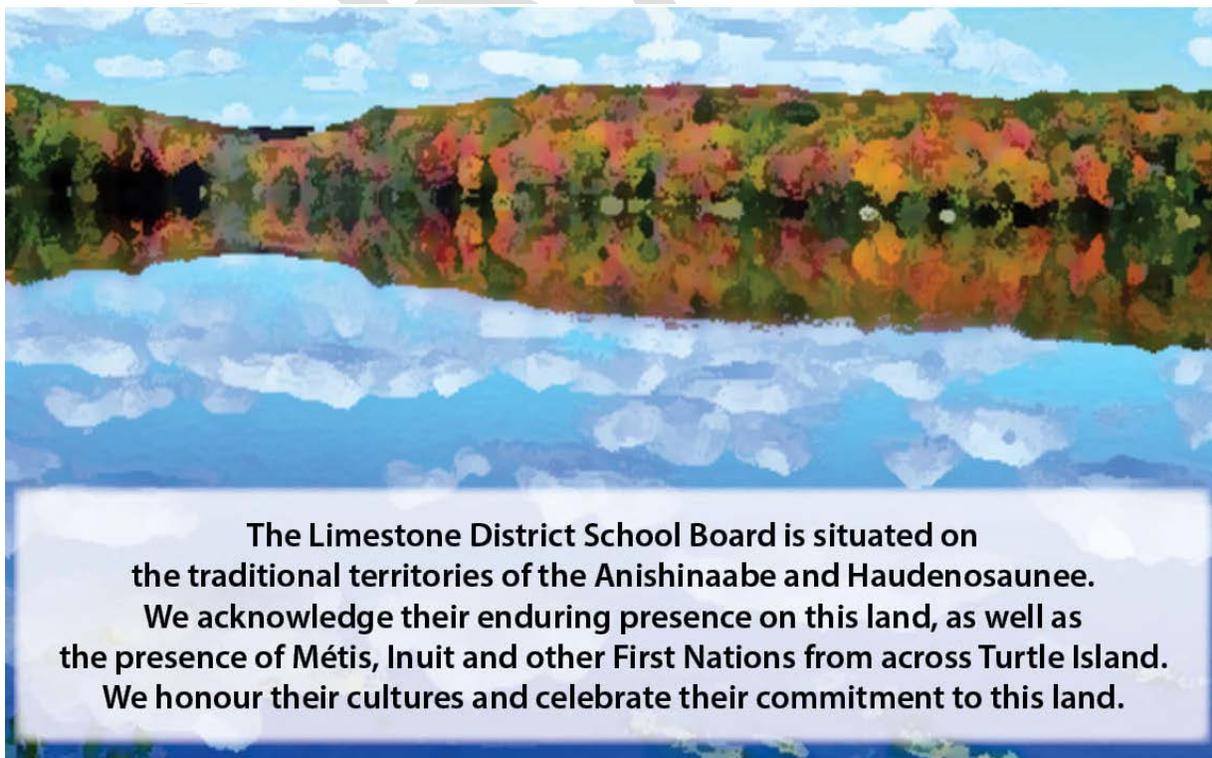
Our three-year *Equity Action Plan* demonstrates our commitment to ensure equity at all levels of our system, as we work together to embrace and foster engaging and innovative learning where everyone achieves success and well-being. The plan is modeled on Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (2017)* and encompasses school and classroom, leadership and governance, and human resource practices, data collection integration and reporting, and organizational culture change in our school communities.

Schools and classrooms must be places where everyone values diversity, respects each other, and where students' lived experiences are valued and celebrated. We must foster safe, welcoming and inclusive environments where students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their learning and their school environment. Schools must engage and serve all students and staff, and reflect the diversity of everyone.

To do this important work, we must better understand backgrounds, experiences and needs of the school community so that we can identify potential barriers or gaps and determine how to eliminate discriminatory biases in classes and schools. Equity must be the lens through which we embrace and manage cultural change in our school communities. Our goal remains for everyone to see themselves in Limestone.

Krishna Burra
Director of Education

Suzanne Ruttan
Chair, Board of Trustees



Introduction

The Board upholds the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, *the Constitution Act (1982)*, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and as outlined in Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) and the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009). The Board and its staff are committed to the elimination of all types of discrimination and discriminatory barriers that may exist whether because of commission or omission. The Board recognizes that equity of opportunity and equity of access to the full range of programs, the delivery of services, and resources are critical to the achievement of successful educational and social outcomes for those served by the school system as well as those who serve the system.

The *Limestone District School Board's Equity Action Plan* continues to build on the work begun through *Ontario's Equity Action Plan (2017)*. The Plan focuses on the four key priority areas identified in *Ontario's Equity Action Plan*:

- School and Classroom Practices
- Leadership, Governance and Human Resource Practices
- Positive Culture and Well-being
- Data Collection, Integration and Reporting

The Actions proposed in this plan have emerged from the following data:

- Qualitative data collected 2018 to spring 2020 (ex. Student Voice Days, Census Focus Groups)
- Equity Advisory Committee feedback
- Staff and administrator survey data
- Our school climate data
- Community feedback and correspondence
- Trustee feedback

Expected Outcomes:

- Identify and eliminate biases, systemic barriers, and discriminatory practices
- Support positive learning and workplace environments where all students and staff feel safe, supported and accepted
- Ensure inclusive community partnerships and engagement
- Ensure accountability regarding the Board's commitment to equity and communicating results to the public

The Guiding Principles for equity and inclusive education are based on Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) and include:

- Building upon a foundation of excellence
- Meeting individual needs
- Identifying and eliminating barriers
- Promoting a sense of belonging
- Involving the broader community
- Building on and enhancing previous and existing initiatives

- Demonstrating commitment and follow through throughout the system

School and Classroom Practices

The Limestone District School Board is committed to removing systemic barriers to ensure that school and classroom practices reflect and respond to the diversity of students and staff. We will continue to review existing structures, policies, programs and practices that may unintentionally disadvantage certain student populations, including racialized students, students experiencing poverty, Indigenous students, newcomers to Canada, students who identify as LGBTQ+ or Two-Spirited, children and youth in care, religious minorities, students with disabilities, and students with special education needs.

Actions

- To support ongoing learning for staff and students regarding gender identity by updating *Limestone's Guideline to Supporting Transgender-Spectrum and/or Gender Non-Conforming Students*
- To develop and implement a Text Selection Guide to support staff in reviewing, auditing, and selecting texts for classroom, school and online libraries using an anti-racism and equity lens; specifically, a lens of anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism
- To create an Inclusive Language Guide that informs and supports staff and students in identifying and using language that is anti-racist and equity focused
- To review and critically analyze the selection of literature used in secondary courses to include an increased number of racialized authors
- To require each school to establish an Equity and Well-being Goal in their School Learning Plan that addresses anti-racism
- To provide professional learning and resources to staff to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented in the curriculum, especially issues of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism
- To de-stream the Grade 9 Mathematics course as per Ministry of Education direction
- To support staff in understanding, developing, and implementing a Universal Design for Learning approach



Leadership and Governance

The Limestone District School Board is committed to creating safe, inclusive, and engaging learning and work environments for all staff and students. The Board is committed to equity and inclusion for all and to upholding and promoting human rights. We will continue to review existing structures, policies, programs, and practices that may unintentionally disadvantage certain groups within our organization.

Actions:

- Provide staff training on anti-racism across all departments in Limestone

- Provide training for elementary and secondary administrators on issues of anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism by dedicating time at each administrator meeting
- Provide training for Trustees on issues of anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism
- Provide resources to elementary and secondary administrators (ex. reading resources, professional development resources) for their own learning and use with staff
- Establish dedicated time at each school staff meeting for anti-racism learning
- Develop an Administrative Procedure that provides staff, students, and families with information about how the Board supports transgender and gender non-conforming students and staff
- Review policies and procedures for the language of equity (ex. gender neutral) and with an anti-racism lens
- Review communication to address language that may be inherently biased
- Create and distribute a monthly electronic Limestone newsletter that focuses on anti-racism education for all staff across the district
- Establish a Wellness & Equity Champion at each school who would be responsible for disseminating information to staff as well as supporting leadership in leading the learning and work of equity and anti-racism at the school
- Hire an Elementary Equity Consultant to support curriculum and staff development in incorporating anti-racism learning in the arts, social studies, history and geography
- Create a leadership development and succession planning process that is equity focused
- Update the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement to include a greater focus and actionable items related to equity

Human Resource Practices

The Limestone District School Board is committed to promoting and building working and learning environments that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive. Recruitment, selection and promotion processes must therefore ensure fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, identifying and eliminating barriers that prevent full participation of some groups. A commitment to diversity and equity can be achieved through concerted efforts to ensure the inclusion of diverse and underrepresented populations, valuing, respecting and equally supporting all individuals through the recruitment process.

It is further recognized that a diverse work force is beneficial from many perspectives, increasing the effectiveness and success of organizations. As a public board of education, it is important that recruitment efforts reach a broad, diversified applicant pool in order that our employee demographics mirror our student and community populations to the extent possible. It is equally important that our efforts are sustained post recruitment so that we may retain highly qualified, engaged, and diversified employees who together help to achieve the strategic direction of the Board.

Recruitment and Selection

In order to determine what actions are necessary to promote a recruitment strategy that supports and advances equity, diversity and inclusion, a review of existing recruitment procedures and practices has been initiated with a view to ensuring that any unintended systemic barriers are identified and addressed.

Actions

- Review Administrative Procedure 400 – Recruitment and Selection
- Review interview processes and practices to identify elements that (may) create barriers and potential next steps to facilitate the identification and implementation of equitable and inclusive practices
- Create a standard job posting template with an implicit Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement that is unique and reflective of the Limestone District School Board
- Review all postings and procedures to ensure the use of neutral language
- Add a voluntary ability to self-identify on Apply to Education (ATE), which is the main platform for accepting applications
- Ensure that at least one equity, diversity and inclusion question is asked as part of all interview processes
- Explore whether the Board’s website can be used as a mechanism to accept applications and if so, include voluntary self-identification as part of the application process
- Explore ways to increase the number of racially diverse applicants selected for interviews through diverse job boards and other means to attract a diversified applicant pool
- Conduct/analyze census surveys of staff and with the goal of working toward fostering representative staff and student populations
- Provide education, awareness and training to Human Resources staff and system leaders
- Build linkages between wellness, equity, diversity and inclusion

Retention

To actively engage and retain a diverse workforce that feels valued, respected and included, it is prudent to understand how all current employees feel and whether they truly “see themselves in Limestone.” This can be accomplished through the staff census survey scheduled to be completed in the next year or two, or through a separate staff satisfaction/EDI survey.

Actions

- Complete a review of all Human Resources procedures and communication through an equity, diversity and inclusion lens to identify systemic barriers and/or bias
- Engage in education, awareness and training for all Limestone staff, including Education Centre and other support staff across the district
- Develop and/or source appropriate equity, diversity and inclusion training for Education Centre managers, supervisors and frontline staff.
- In collaboration with Program Team, build equity, diversity and inclusion into all new employee orientations
- Conduct exit interviews with all employees who voluntarily leave the organization. Such interviews must include questions that assess Limestone’s efforts to promote and address equity, diversity and inclusion
- Work with Employee Assistance Program providers to promote diversity among counsellors



Data Collection, Integration and Reporting

Data collection is critical in helping us to understand who the students and staff of Limestone are; their identity, lived experience, and ability. Collecting and analyzing voluntary demographic data and perceptual data can support our school and system leaders to more precisely address the barriers to student success and inform our recruitment, hiring, promotion and professional development strategies. “For example, comparing identity-based student data with data on program enrolment, suspensions and expulsions, and graduation rates may reveal more precisely how certain groups are being disadvantaged, how to identify and remove systemic barriers to success and, accordingly, where to target our resources.” (*Ontario’s Education Equity Action Plan, 2017, p. 18*).

Actions

- Develop and implement an online voluntary student identity-based data collection survey for Kindergarten to Grade 12
- Share results of the student identity-based data collection with all stakeholders
- Collect school climate data using the Ministry of Education’s school climate survey
- Develop and implement an online voluntary staff identity-based data collection survey
- Monitor, analyze and review school incident reports for acts of racism
- Collect ongoing feedback through staff surveys and advisory groups

Organizational Culture Change

Creating organizational culture change requires input at every level of an organization. With the goal of creating a more equitable, safe, and inclusive learning and work environment, it is important to have the voices and input of stakeholders.

Actions

- Establish a racialized student advisory group to represent the student voice in Limestone
- Establish a racialized staff advisory group from across departments in Limestone
- Establish a racialized family and community advisory group

Conclusion

Equity and inclusive education aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society as well as staff’s sense of being valued, respected, and included. Barriers may be related to sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnic origin, religion, socio-economic background, physical or mental ability, or other factors. Several factors may intersect to create additional barriers for some students and staff. These barriers and biases, whether overt or subtle, intentional, or unintentional, need to be identified and addressed so that every student and staff member can ‘see themselves in Limestone’. (Adapted: *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools, 2014, p. 6*)

Action Timeline

Area of Focus	Timeline	How will we know will we know we are making a difference? (Data sets)
School and Classroom Practices		
Text Guide to support text selection	2020-21 (Guide) 2020-2023 (library audits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rates • Pathway data • Course Credit accumulation
Gender Guideline Updates	Fall 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQAO
Inclusive Language Guide	2020-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book lists/ Course Texts
Resource development to ensure multiple perspectives in curriculum	2020-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Learning Plans • Agendas; Meeting notes
English course literature review	2020-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff survey data
Equity & Well-being Goal in School Learning Plan	2020-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrator survey data • School Climate data
De-stream Grade 9 Math	2020-2023	
Staff development in Universal Design for Learning	2020-2023	
Leadership, Governance, and Human Resources		
Trustee training on anti-racism	2020-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Minutes • Resource / Presentation notes
Staff training on anti-racism through staff meetings	2020-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas; Meeting notes • School Visits
Administrator training on anti-racism at monthly meetings	2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas; Meeting notes • School Visits
Professional learning resources for administrators and staff	2020-2022	
Leadership development and succession planning process that is equity focused	2020-2023	
Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement includes greater focus on equity	2020-2023	
Administrative Procedure review for language of equity	2020-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APs will be identified as reviewed
Administrative Procedure development	2020-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AP: Transgender & Gender Non-Conforming • AP: Anti-Racism
Develop and Implement system monthly staff newsletter for anti-racism learning	2020-2021	
Establish Equity Champion at each school	2020-2022	
Hire Elementary Equity Consultant	Fall 2020	

Review AP 400	Fall 2020	Recruitment processes that promote EDI
Area of Focus	2020 – 2023	How will we know we are making a difference? (Data Sets)
Standardize job posting templates with an equity lens	Fall 2020	Recruitment processes that promote EDI
Review interview processes with equity lens: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group interview process • ensure one equity question 	2020-2021	All candidates feel comfortable and respected part of the process EDI highlighted as priority
Adding voluntary ability to self-identify to Apply to Education	Fall 2020	Increase in diversity of applicant pool
Increase the number of Black, Indigenous & People of Colour applicants selected for interviews	Ongoing	Increase in BIPOC applicants considered for positions with expectations of more diverse hiring outcomes
Equity orientation training for all new employees	2020-2021	All employees trained and educated on EDI
Exit interviews to assess Limestone’s efforts to address equity	2020-2021	Ability to learn from employee experiences and address concerns as required
Advisory Committee	2020-2021	
Data Collection, Integration and Reporting		
Develop and implement K-Gr 12 Student Identity-based Data Collection	Fall 2020	
Reporting of data collection results	2021-2022	
Collect school climate data Gr. 4 – 12	2021-2022	
Develop and implement staff identity-based data collection	2021-2023	
Track and analyze incident reports for acts of racism	2020-2023	
Collect ongoing feedback from advisory groups and staff surveys	2020-2023	
Organizational Culture Change		
Establish racialized student advisory group	2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative membership from across secondary schools
Establish racialized staff advisory group	2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative membership from across departments in the district
Establish racialized community advisory group	2020-2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of community partners