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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION – VOLUNTARY CONFIDENTIAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION

1) PURPOSE

The Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board affirms and commits to supporting the work of reconciliation with Indigenous people and communities and to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential. Fulfilling this commitment requires a multi-faceted approach with effective educational programs for Indigenous students and strong partnerships with Indigenous families' and communities.

The Ministry of Education continues to identify Indigenous Education as one of its key priorities with a focus on meeting two primary goals;

- i. Improve achievement among First Nation, Metis and Inuit students;
- ii. Close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

When students and families choose to self-identify, it provides the board with vital information that allows for specific initiatives and strategies to be developed and implemented to address the two primary goals identified above.

2) DEFINITIONS

Indigenous: Originating naturally in a particular place. “Indigenous people” then relates to originating in a particular place as the known inhabitants. Within this document, Indigenous is used as a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. According to the Constitution Act of 1982, Indigenous people were identified as Aboriginal people representing three distinct groups, First Nations, Métis and Inuit. These three distinct peoples have unique worldviews, histories, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Aggregate data: Refers to data which relate to broad classes, groups or categories so that it is not possible to distinguish the individuals within those classes, groups, or categories.

First Nations: Is a term to describe Indigenous people who are not Métis or Inuit. First Nations people are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada, and are part of a distinct group such as Mohawk, Algonquin, Cree, Haida, etc.

First Nation: The term “First Nation” refers to a distinct Nation, ie., Mohawk, Haida, Algonquin, Cree, etc. It has also been adopted by many communities to replace the word “band” in the names of communities, ie., Curve Lake First Nation.

Inuit: Are the people who live in the circumpolar region in northern Canada, predominantly in the regions of Nunavik, Inuvialuit, and Nunatsiavut.

Métis: A person who self identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, that is, a mix of European and First Nations ancestry which is distinct from First Nations and Inuit, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

3) PRINCIPLES

The board is committed to a culture of high expectations that ignites and fosters hope in all students and puts all students first. Further, the board is committed to promoting innovative practices that lead to closing achievement gaps for all students, including students with Indigenous ancestry. In keeping with these principles, the board will:

- a) Continue to build and increase the knowledge and awareness of Educators and all employees of the board with regard to Indigenous histories, perspectives, and realities.
- b) Enhance partnerships with Indigenous communities and organizations as part of the on-going efforts of reconciliation to enable full participation in the education of Indigenous students and to maintain respectful, positive and effective working relationships.
- c) Continue to develop and implement teaching strategies, and resources to support Indigenous student success.
- d) Continue to share programs, strategies, and resources that facilitate learning about Indigenous worldview, including cultures, histories and perspectives, and realities among all students.
- e) Provide high quality learning opportunities that are, relevant, responsive, flexible and accessible to Indigenous students.
- f) Collect aggregate data on Indigenous students through a voluntary, confidential self-identification process respecting the privacy and dignity of all students.
- g) Continue to refine strategies that will contribute to increased retention and graduation rates of Indigenous students to ensure that Indigenous students are prepared for successful participation in post-secondary studies, the working world, and society as a whole.

4) VOLUNTARY, CONFIDENTIAL INDIGENOUS STUDENT SELF-IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

- a) Parents/guardians of Indigenous students and Indigenous students 18 years of age or older will have the opportunity to voluntarily and confidentially self-identify as being of Indigenous ancestry, as: First Nation, Métis, or Inuit.
- b) Self-identification will include all Indigenous peoples regardless of status.
- c) No proof of ancestry is required.
- d) Parents/guardians of Indigenous students and Indigenous students 18 years of age or older shall have the opportunity to remove the Indigenous identification at any time through a written request to the school principal.

5) DATA COLLECTION

Student achievement data will not be used or communicated in an individual form. Student achievement data related to the academic performance of Indigenous students will be collected and aggregated in order to intentionally make program and resource decisions to:

- a) Assist schools in better understanding the demographics in the school population.
- b) Assist the board in assessing which schools require additional school programming, targeted initiatives, additional support and the involvement of family and the greater community.
- c) Measure the board's effectiveness.
- d) Identify groups of Indigenous students who would benefit from additional support, and
- e) Directly target resources to support Indigenous education strategies and programs that will provide high quality learning opportunities that directly address the needs of Indigenous students to:
 - i) Improve student achievement among First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students.
 - ii) Close the achievement gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

6) CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

- a) Individual data will not be communicated.
- b) All data will be securely stored to respect privacy and used only as a means to enhance Indigenous programs and services.
- c) The collection, use, disclosure and destruction of data will follow the protocol for Ontario Student Records data. All data are protected and governed by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Education Act*.

7) COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The board will continue to:

- a) Work cooperatively and promote effective, inclusive, respectful, reciprocal working relationships and partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit educators, parents, students and communities.
- b) Work with Indigenous communities to provide a curriculum and pedagogical approaches that reflects contemporary Indigenous cultures, histories, realities, and perspectives.

- c) Increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of Indigenous cultures, histories, realities and perspectives through professional development for school board staff and trustees.
- d) Engage the Indigenous community and parents in school activities and encourage them to participate in parent involvement committees such as school councils or the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee to support academic success; and
- e) Ensure that all recruiting, hiring, retention and promotional practices reflect diversity and inclusion.

Legal references

- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Education Act*
- Ontario Student Record

District references

- Board Policy 1: Board Mission and Goals
- Administrative Procedure 135: Equity and Inclusivity Education
- Form F137-1

Resources

- Ministry of Education, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2007)
- Ministry of Education: Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students (2007)
- Ministry of Education: Strengthening Our Learning (2018)