

Strategies to build inclusion

Discussions around issues of Islamophobia should be made in the context of all other isms. Islamophobic comments are the same level of inexcusability as all others isms and violate the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Consider developing strategies in a participatory manner with staff, students and parents

➔ *Ask them for ways to build inclusion and for their support and involvement. There is more engagement when we make decisions with people rather than doing things to/for them.*

Acknowledge and promote an appreciation of group differences

➔ *Be aware that “shining the light” on differences can unintentionally “other” the people who identify with that difference. Empathize safety, care and respect.*

Use community circles to build inclusion for staff and students

Intrapersonal circles, where all voices are heard, build empathy and understanding.

➔ *Hold community circles. While sitting in a circle, ask participants to share one thing others may not know about them or ask them to share one thing they are proud of. Use simple sentence starts like “I like, I wish, I feel.”*

Increase exposure to “counter-stereotype” individuals (that contradict the social stereotype)

➔ *This helps “unlearn” implicit bias.*

Encourage a cooperative environment that embraces inclusion and common goals

➔ *Start social action projects with the entire school (e.g. create a video to educate others about Islamophobia).*

Focus on embedding Peel Character Attributes into curriculum mapping and school/classroom rules

➔ *Co-construct the Peel Character Attributes as a school community, including parents/guardians. Ask the questions: How do we demonstrate respect here? What does it look like and sound like?*

Enhance student democracy

➔ *Encourage diversity in membership of student councils or youth parliaments. By having diversity in these positions of representation and influence, the groups can help represent student views and provide an avenue for inclusion of students with different faith and cultural backgrounds.*

Activities to promote reflection and critical thinking

Stereotypes, misunderstandings and fears with regard to any difference are typical symptoms of a widespread lack of adequate knowledge.

➔ *Develop critical literacy and media skills. Educate using diverse art, artists and theatre. Examine varied oral histories and case studies.*

