

18.3

Board Meeting, January 26, 2022

Anti-Islamophobia Strategy Development Report

Strategic Alignment:
Directive 14

Decision(s) Required:
Receipt

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Content

Purpose: At the September 2021 meeting, the Board passed the motion for PDSB to commit to an anti-Islamophobia strategy and that staff report on its development, including actionable items and accountability measures. The purpose of this report is to provide the first update and an overview of the strategy development process.

Background:

Hate crimes against Muslims have been rising in Canada over the past few years. In June 2021, the murder of the Afzal family in London left the Muslim community in shock, and the Quebec City Mosque Shooting, January 2017, is not a forgotten memory.

Anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia are also prevalent in our schools. The Ministry Review of the Peel District School Board identified concerns of Islamophobia evidenced by curriculum materials that “conveyed blatant hostility to the Muslim community and an ignorance of the basic tenants of Islam,” (Ministry of Education, 2020, p. 5). The experience of Islamophobia at the systemic and interpersonal levels is endured by Muslim students, their families and/or staff at school and in their everyday lives who comprise approximately 22.4% of the PDSB secondary Muslim student community and the largest religious group within the PDSB community.

In response to these realities for PDSB students and staff who are Muslim, the Board passed a motion to commit the school board to the development of an anti-Islamophobia strategy in September 2021. In October 2021, the PDSB, the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) with the Urban Alliance on Race Relations announced the proposed co-development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy with a press conference.

Context:

The Ministry Review via Directive 14 required that the Peel District School Board address these systemic impediments through a Comprehensive four-year strategy and action plan (the Comprehensive Strategy).

Directive 14 of the Ministry Review stated that:

- The Board shall establish a comprehensive four-year strategy and action plan to address and eliminate statistically significant disproportionalities in enrolment, achievement, and outcomes of Black students, other racialized students, and Indigenous students in applied, academic, locally developed, Special Education, and Regional Choice pathways and programs.
- The Board’s plan shall:
 - i. include specific objectives tied to actions, measurable outcomes, and timelines for meeting those objectives;
 - ii. include actions and measurable outcomes to reduce the effects of implicit bias on the disproportionate outcomes of PDSB’s Black students, to encourage Black students to establish goals and achieve academically;
 - iii. identify an employee or employees who would have responsibility for working to achieve the objectives laid out in the plan;
 - iv. include provisions for engaging with parents; and
 - v. include provisions for public reporting on progress towards achieving outcomes in the strategy.

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- The Board shall require accountability for the action plan to address explicitly in the Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan, the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA), the Equity Action Plan, and in the performance appraisals of principals, supervisory officers, Associate Directors, and the Director of Education. This strategy and action plan should be a key component of the Annual Equity Accountability Report Card.

The development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy is being developed in collaboration with community and PDSB staff. The steering committee, whose role is to guide the development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy, has been established and is made up of the following members: Community organizations, PDSB staff (educators, school administrators and Equity Department members), Peel DSB trustees as well as representatives from the PDSB Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) are on the steering committee. The co-development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy is integral to Directive 14 and supports compliance with the requirements of the Ministry Directives.

Anti-Islamophobia Strategy Progress Update

Strategy Development – Action Plan

September 2021

- Board motion to commit to the development of an Anti-Islamophobia Strategy

October 2021

- Press conference announcing plans to develop an Anti-Islamophobia Strategy

October - November 2021

- Formation of the steering committee: The steering committee will be responsible for guidance on the development of the strategy, feedback on the goals, priorities and key actions, review of the draft strategy and final approval of the completed strategy.

November - December 2021

- Creation of the working group: A working group will include steering committee members along with students, parents, and school board staff. These individuals will be responsible for building the consultation plan, reviewing the data, and building the strategy.

December - March 2022

- Search process for project coordinator: The search for a consultant to coordinate the consultation plan is underway and will be completed by March 2022. The purpose of this role is to facilitate the identification of goals, objectives, indicators for success for the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy.
- It is intended that the consultation plan will examine the issues related to Islamophobia in Peel District School Board through public community consultations via a range of engagement mechanisms (e.g., community survey, staff and student survey, small group conversations and discussions with key informants, etc.) which will form the data from the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy will be based upon. Some of the internal stakeholders who will be consulted include:

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- Student Groups
 - Employee Resource Group
 - Parent Involvement Committee
 - Racialized Administrators
 - Senior Leadership

Along with the data that will be brought forward through consultation, anecdotally, the community has expressed the urgency for:

- mandatory (anti-Islamophobia) professional learning
- engagement for community, parent, and families
- student voice and engagement
- establishing, diversifying representation, and affirming lived experiences in the classroom curriculum, within school environments and workplaces through hiring practices.

Data from the Equity Accountability Report Card (Part 1) - Directive 9 explored the equity gap by faith/spirituality. Through focus groups with students representing six secondary schools conducted in June 2021 the report showed wellbeing and a sense of belonging as themes that surfaced for Muslim students. From the perspective of the Muslim students interviewed, wellbeing, defined by notions of acceptance, a sense of belonging and “fitting in,” was compromised by lack and/or misunderstanding of Islam (reinforced by media stereotypes), the absence of identity-affirming spaces and representation in the curricular programming, and learning resources. Accountability measures and the role of Human Rights Office (HRO) in supporting families/students are also to be included in the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy.

February – May 2022

- Identification of actions within the accountability structure.

June 2022

- Draft strategy completed for review.

The Anti-Islamophobia Strategy Framework is appended to this report.

Impact Analysis

Equity & Human Rights Review

The Anti-Islamophobia Strategy will:

- recognize the 20+ year onslaught of Islamophobia on the Canadian-Muslim identity and the negative impact on Muslim students' engagement in school, social-emotional development, and their ability to support other marginalized identities
- serve to help the PDSB and its stakeholders to recognize creed as an identity. Too often creed-based identities are overlooked or forgotten in favor of a Christian-dominant hegemony which is foundational to the Ontario Education Act
- Eliminate Islamophobia is from all schools regardless of the size of the student population to ensure Muslim students feel welcome in all Peel schools
- inform school administrators and educators of creed-based accommodations for Muslim students and remove the stigma associated with accommodations
- ensure PDSB stakeholders continue to center all student identities within the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC) and provide equitable outcomes for all students, including Black, Indigenous and Muslim students.

The Anti-Islamophobia Strategy will be collaboratively created, and its impact monitored through the Comprehensive Four-year Equity Strategy - Directive 14. The anti-Islamophobia Strategy is a component of the Four-year Equity Strategy and will contribute to ensuring achievement and wellbeing outcomes for Muslim students, their families, and staff through actions to affirm Muslim identities and address Islamophobia system wide. Further, the anti-Islamophobia Strategy serves to extend and embed opportunities to affirm Muslim identities through the PDSB.

Board or Ministry Policy Alignment

Human Rights - Interim Procedure 51

Equity and Inclusivity Policy 54

Directive 14

Resource Implications

There will be ongoing human resources needed to support the development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy. This may require various types of support ranging from human and financial such as staff writing teams to develop resources, access to external third-party consultants (i.e to coordinate consultation processes) etc.

Community Impact

The Anti-Islamophobia strategy will support Muslim and Non-Muslim students, alike. Non-Muslim students are victims of indirect Islamophobia and [Sikh-phobia](#). This strategy will ensure that educators and the education system see Muslim-identifying students within the community of learners, to ensure they are included in the instructional, assessment and transitions practices. The Anti-Islamophobia Strategy potentially provides agency to Muslim parents within the school system to support all learners at home and in school.

The Anti-Islamophobia Strategy provides a pathway for sustained community, family, parent, and student engagement in the system transformation process.

Next Steps

Action Required:

Engage the timeline of actions for the development of the Anti-Islamophobia Strategy which include:

- Developing a work plan for the development of the strategy
- Initiating the search process to identify an external consultant who will coordinate the consultations
- Co-develop the consultation plan with the external consultant and staff

Appendix

ANTI-ISLAMOPHOBIA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK Five-year plan (September 2022-June 2027)	
Proposed Topics	Proposed Content
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Resource guides for students that align with the Ontario curriculum● Affirming Muslim experiences through the curriculum
Student Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student engagement● Mental health resources and support
Training	Developing parental agency through existing structures such as Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and school councils that encourage the augmented engagement of racialized parents who are Muslim <ul style="list-style-type: none">● For students, staff at all levels of the PDSB organization, and parent groups (i.e., School Councils and PIC)
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Classroom● School● System