

Student Learning, Well-Being & Equity Committee Meeting, June 8, 2022

Equity Department - Structural Revisioning Report

Strategic Alignment:

Ministry Directives - Directive 10

Report Type:

Information

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Overview

Recommendation or Objective:

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the Peel District School Board Equity department.

Highlights:

Ministry Directives - Directive 10

Department reorganization

System transformation: Envisioning the future

Background:

The commitment to create learning and working environments that are safe, caring, and inclusive, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity has been the focus of the Peel District School Board (PDSB) since the release of the Ministry Review in 2020 (Chadha et al., 2020). The District also recognizes that an approach that recognizes the intersectionality of identities must be taken when addressing systemic inequities and disproportionate outcomes through the process of system transformation. Specific to this process is intentionally interrogating systems and structures to dismantle systemic discrimination and manifestations of anti-Black racism.

To achieve these ends, the 2020 Ministry Review required the creation of the equity office (Directive 10) to facilitate and lead aspects of the system change through the implementation of many of the Directives.

[Directive 10](#) states:

PDSB hire a Superintendent of Equity who is accountable for the Equity Office and the implementation of the Equity Action Plan described within this recommendation, and reports to the Associate Director responsible for equity. PDSB establish a new, robust Equity Office within six months. This Office must amalgamate the current Equity and Climate portfolios and – in collaboration with the PDSB Human Rights Commissioner – be responsible for establishing and implementing a comprehensive, strategic, annual Equity Action Plan to address systemic inequities experienced by both students and staff. The annual Equity Action Plan should:

- set specific objectives to reduce and eliminate inequities within the PDSB and those objectives be tied to actions and measurable outcomes;
- include the use of student and workplace census data to inform decisions related to policies, protocols, programming and other student-centered initiatives; and
- be made publicly available to the PDSB community by November of each year.

Further, the Equity Office include an Outreach Officer who is responsible for developing a comprehensive outreach plan to rebuild and maintain trust and credibility with the PDSB community, particularly with Black communities. The Outreach Officer should be

responsible for leading implementation, assessment and reporting on the outreach plan, which should set specific objectives that are tied to actions and measurable outcomes.

The Equity department has evolved since the amalgamation of the Climate and Equity teams, and the hire of the Superintendent of Equity in October 2020. As a result of a system re-organization in December 2021, the oversight for the department is now split between two superintendents who supervise two important focus areas: community engagement, leadership and partnerships; and school/student engagement.

School/student engagement is fulfilled through the coordinated actions of three teams: the Indigenous Education team, the Black Student Success Team and the Equity team all who report to the Superintendent – Equity, Indigenous Education, Anti-racism, Anti-oppression and School Engagements. The teams are comprised of resource teachers, an instructional coordinator and a principal dedicated to

- supporting schools as they transform learning environments into spaces that sustain equitable and inclusive practices to favor the success and well-being of all students with particular focus on students who experience marginalizations;
- developing resilient students who are engaged in their learning and who feel a sense of belonging in their school communities;
- work cross-functionally with departments and other work environments to proactively address system concerns about intentional and unintentional misrepresentation in the workplace;
- engage families and communities as educational partners who support schools as places of learning and growing for their children and youth

The Indigenous Education and the Black Student Success teams are each staffed with identity-specific student advisors and coaches respectively. The role of these team members is to co-develop programs that lead to increased graduation rates for Indigenous and Black students by co-creating wellbeing and learning opportunities, meeting with students to ensure learning plans lead to credit accumulation, collaborate with the school administration and other support staff (e.g., guidance counsellors, student success educators, homeroom teachers) and maintain ongoing collaboration with community members who serve as supportive advisors to the growth of the program and the students' access to these culturally relevant resources. The coaches, advisors, resource teachers and instructional coordinators of each team report to their principals who supervise their work.

The Superintendent of Equity - Community engagement, leadership and partnership supervises the Welcome Centers and the team of Community liaisons along with the Supervisor of Community Outreach. The Liaisons are the community and school conduit. this team provides schools access to resources, organizations in the community intended to meet the specific needs of students and their families. Hiring to ensure that the Liaisons are community-specific in their representation will support relationship-building, trust and engagement. The Welcome Centers are a joint project with CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada), since 2009, to help allow a smooth transition for the entire newly emigrated family to the PDSB process and into Canada.

A coordinator supports each of the center programs along with the Multicultural Settlement and Education Partnership program facilitator who oversees the settlement workers and the orientation workshops the Centers provide to newly registered families. There is one receptionist, an assistant to the coordinator and the MSEP facilitator and a budget secretary. Each of these roles are funded by the Ministry of Immigration and Citizenship, Canada, or Fund 3.

The importance of this 'side' of the Equity department is to model high levels of responsiveness to community voice that is taken not only as data but as actions that lead to the improvement of the learning and experiences of racialized students, Black and Indigenous students. Innovative engagements with stakeholders who bring 'funds of knowledge', a range of experiences and leadership when in partnership with staff broadens significantly the possibilities for impactful systemic transformation and tangible outcomes for racialized, Black and Indigenous students.

It is essential that the community and school teams are interactive, supportive and complementary in their actions and outputs to advance anti-racism, anti-oppression and anti-colonial principles and practices throughout the district. No other Equity department in the province is staffed in this way.

Impact Analysis

Equity & Human Rights Review:

The external-facing (community engagement) and internal-facing (school/student engagement) infrastructure of the Equity department position the team members within it to address with greater efficiency and effect the Ministry Directives to be implemented through the Equity department. For instance, addressing the actions and measurable outcomes to reduce the effects of implicit bias on the disproportionate outcomes of PDSB's Black students so that Black students can establish goals and achieve academically (i.e., requirements of the Equity Action Plan) is integral to the substance of the Black Student Strategy. Actioning the goals and priorities within it will be a focus for the members of the Black Student Success Team, Community specialists and the other Equity department teams. The Equity team members, although centrally assigned, bring professional learning, anti-racism/anti-oppression/anti-colonial content and resources to schools so that the practice of utilizing school-based data to set goals that lead to improved outcomes for Black, Indigenous and racialized students within the intersectionality of their identities is ongoing for educators and school leaders. Ensuring the human rights and dignity of all PDSB students, particularly those students who have experienced the greatest exclusions is a priority for the Equity department.

The department is in the early stages of developing a department mission and mandate through a visioning process. The purpose of this exercise is to create focus for the department, coherence among the teams and clarity to the PDSB system and stakeholders regarding the commitments and functions of the Equity department. An unveiling of the Equity department planned for the next school year will be an opportunity to communicate the aims, personnel and operations of the department.

Board or Ministry Policy Alignment:

Review of the Peel District School Board

Ministerial Directives

- Anti-racism Policy - interim (?) - Directive 16
- Community Engagement Framework - Directive 10

Human Rights Policy 51

Equity and Inclusivity Policy 54

Resource/Financial Implications:

Careful and ongoing review of the staffing and resources that support the functions and goals of the Equity department is crucial. Given the high expectations of the department to both facilitate and lead the implementation of key Ministry Directives, it is necessary that there are no impediments to actualizing system and department goals in alignment with the Board Improvement and Equity Plan.

Next Steps

Action Required:

Equity department staffing

- continue with hiring to build-out teams
- ensure ongoing professional learning to sustain the capacities and wellbeing of team members

Visioning

- engage a process that ensures the input of Equity department teams
- ensure the mission and mandates that are co-developed are the basis of a department plan and work plans that align with the Board Improvement and Equity Plan

Communications:

The launch of the Equity department is planned for this coming Fall. The department will collaborate with the Communication department to establish a critical action plan.

Success Measures:

Directive 10 - Equity Office

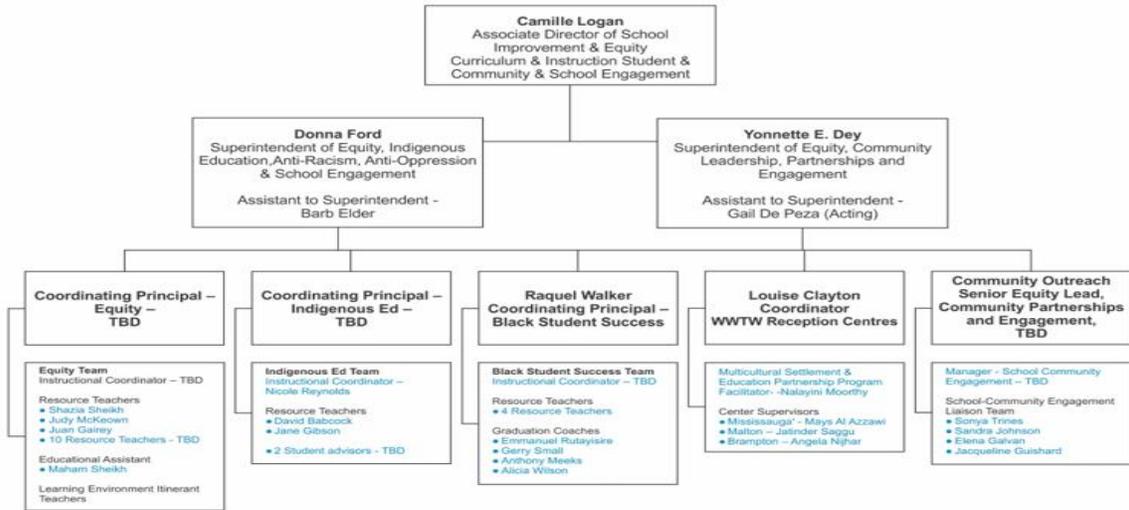
This Directive requires that performance goals, measures and indicators are confirmed. These elements will function as accountability metrics to ensure implementation of the

- Equity Action Plan
- Community Engagement Framework

These metrics also identify opportunities for collaboration with central departments to ensure addressing systemic disparities and disproportionalities is ongoing throughout the organization. The coordinated efforts among central departments, namely Research and Innovation, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Leadership & Capacity Building, Special education, Caring and Safe schools, Communications and the Human Rights Office will be necessary to ensure that augmented representation and access to programs and pathways by Black and Indigenous students; and their improved wellbeing, engagement and success is fortified by anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices, programs, structures, policies and procedures in Peel schools in response to the Equity Accountability Report Card.

Appendices

Equity Department - organizational chart



The Equity Office is committed to student and staff engagement and well-being. Our office works in partnership with various communities and families to ensure equitable and inclusive learning environments for African, Black, Afro-Caribbean students and those from other equity-seeking groups. We are also committed to improved outcomes for sovereignty-seeking First Nation, Metis, Inuit students and families in response to the TRC Calls to Action.