

# Exemplary Strategies/Programs/Practices to Support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights in School Boards



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

**School Board:** York Region District School Board

**Contact Person and Email Address:** Cecil Roach, [cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca](mailto:cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca) and Fawzia Durrani, [fawzia.durrani@yrdsb.ca](mailto:fawzia.durrani@yrdsb.ca)

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Inclusive School and Community Services (ISCS)

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/about-us/departments/inclusive-school-and-community-services>

## Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on exemplary strategies/programs that increase student confidence, achievement, engagement and retention and reduce systemic barriers. In the brief description below please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

YRDSB has an equity department, called ISCS which is led by an Associate Director of Education and supported by a centrally assigned principal. This 45 member department consists of Equity Teacher Facilitators, Teacher Liaisons, Community and Partnership Developers, a field researcher, and Reception Center staff. ISCS works collaboratively to:

- support schools to become more equitable, inclusive and transparent as they work to champion the achievement and well-being of all students;
- develop resilient students who are engaged in their learning and who feel a sense of belonging in their school communities;
- engage families and communities as supportive educational partners who enrich our schools as places of learning and growing for their children.

ISCS will achieve these goals by:

- framing its work by strengths and assets that students, families and communities offer;
- working with schools to build equitable and inclusive learning communities that foster student achievement and well-being;
- working with students to support developing resilient learners whose diversity serves to enrich our schools;
- working with parents, families and communities to build support partnerships that promote student achievement and well-being.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

YRDSB schools and workplaces now have a department to support them their journey to creating learning and working spaces that are welcoming, equitable, and inclusive places to learn and to work.

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**Contact Person and Email Address:** Cecil Roach, [cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca](mailto:cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca) and Darcie Sutherland [darcie.sutherland@yrdsb.ca](mailto:darcie.sutherland@yrdsb.ca)

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**  
<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/anti-black-racism/dismantling-anti-black-racism>

**Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy**

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YRDSB has developed a Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy. Supported by a principal, some actions include developing an anti-Black racism protocol, developing a clear guide to immediately interrupt and address acts of anti-Black racism, working with students to embark on a school-based anti-racism campaign, and development of racial literacy in all staff.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

The strategy is a 5 year strategy during which we'll be using data to assess our efforts to improve the educational trajectory for Black students.

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: Research Services [research.services@yrdsb.ca](mailto:research.services@yrdsb.ca)**

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Demographic Data Collection**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/every-student-counts-survey>

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YRDSB is in the process of analyzing data collected through the Every Student Counts Survey (ESCS) which is a survey aimed at better understanding our students' identities in relation to their schooling experiences. ESCS results will be used to Board and school improvement planning that aims to:

- identify and eliminate systemic barriers to student success
- create more equitable and inclusive school environments; and,
- improve student achievement and well-being.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

We are using the data from the Every Student Counts Survey to develop and implement programing to support our students who are not equally benefitting from our core business of student achievement and well-being.

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: Mark Loya [mark.loya@yrdsb.ca](mailto:mark.loya@yrdsb.ca)**

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Equity Audit and Employment System Review**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/about-us/human-rights-commissioners-office/resources/employment-equity>

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YRDSB engaged a consulting firm to conduct an equity audit and an employment system review. We now have a comprehensive plan with recommendations. The goal is to transform our Human Resource practices and to take intentional actions to diversify YRDSB staff.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

We are currently implementing the recommendations of the Equity Audit, and Employment Systems Review. Some of the results include training and changing interview teams, ensuring that immediate supervisors are not the sole determinants for candidates success in a selection process, and actively working to recruit staff that is more reflective of the demographics of our students.

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: Cecil Roach [cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca](mailto:cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca)**

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC)**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/equity-and-inclusivity-advisory-committee-eiac>

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The Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC) is an advisory committee which supports the YRDSB in its commitment to providing equitable and inclusive learning and working environments in all schools and workplaces. EIAC provides advice regarding the development and implementation of the Multi-year Strategic Plan, the Board's Equity and Inclusivity Strategy, policies and procedures and helps ensure that all dimensions of diversity are addressed.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

EIAC has had a tremendous impact on our equity work at YRDSB. They were at the forefront in ensuring that we collect students and staff demographic data (a journey that began before this was a Ministry requirement). Also, their subcommittee work on Anti-Black Racism, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Classism has resulted in recommendations that are impacting the work in our schools and workplaces.

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**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Equity Training

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

**Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy**

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YRDSB offers extensive professional learning to all staff. This include learning anti-racism, anti-Black racism, anti-oppression, antisemitism, anti-Islamophobia, ant-homophobia, anti-Asian racism and the impact of low SES on student achievement and well-being.

The goal of professional learning is to strengthen the competencies needed to fulfill our commitment to equity and inclusivity and examine and dismantle systemic barriers that are obstacles to our underserved and underperforming students. The objective is also to understand how power and privilege work and operate in our schools, workplaces and our society.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

YRDSB's ongoing professional learning on Anti-Black racism, Antisemitism, Disrupting Islamophobia, Anti-homophobia, and anti-oppression has resulted in schools and work sites where students and staff feel that their identities and included and valued.

**School Board:** York Region District School Board

**Contact Person and Email Address:** Cecil Roach [cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca](mailto:cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca),

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Discriminatory Slurs and Statements Protocol

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/yrdsb-discriminatory-slurs-and-statements-protocol-guidance-staff-learning-and-working-environments>

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This document affirms York Region District School Board’s commitment to fostering safe, respectful and identity-affirming learning and working environments for all students, staff and community. It does so by clarifying the Board’s position on the use of hate speech, racial and discriminatory slurs, epithets, statements and/or representations (e.g., the n-word), pejorative terms used to describe Indigenous peoples, racial, ethnic, religious, sex, gender, sexual orientation or disability attributes. This Protocol collectively refers to these as “discriminatory slurs and/or statements.” It is in keeping with the Board’s legal, professional and moral obligations to support the well-being of all our students and staff and protect them from harassment and discrimination. It also confirms YRDSB’s commitment to Championing Equity and Inclusivity through the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and Director’s Action Plan.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

Students and staff will now learn and work in a school district where the expectations regarding slurs and statements are very clear.



**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address:** Cecil Roach [cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca](mailto:cecil.roach@yrdsb.ca),

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Equity Strategy Steering and Action Committee (ESSAC)

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

**Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy**

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YRDSBs Equity Strategy Steering and Action Committee (ESSAC) is a group of identified staff who provides leadership and guidance to the school district planning processes pertaining to the implementation of equity and inclusivity. ESSAC serves as advisory committee to provide direction as it pertains to the implementation of the board's equity and inclusivity policy and procedures #261. ESSAC has core member as well as 8 sub-committees:

- Diversity Data
- Equity and Mental Health
- Human Resources
- Policy and Procedures
- Positive Spaces
- Professional Learning
- Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes
- Student and Community Outreach

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

The work of ESSAC, done through its subcommittees has had a tremendous impact on students' learning and staff working experience. Every policy that is being either developed or reviewed is now also reviewed by the Policy and Procedures subcommittee. The development and implementation of our Every Student Counts Survey largely resulted from the work of the Diversity Data subcommittee. Much of our work to support our 2SLGBTQI+ students and staff has resulted from the work of our Positive Space subcommittee. YRDSB has an exemplary Faith Accommodations Guidelines largely because of the work of our Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes Subcommittee. YRDSB's Equity Audit and Employment System Review is working with the Human Resources Subcommittee to implement the 60 recommendations that resulted from the Audit and Review.

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: [human.rights@yrdsb.ca](mailto:human.rights@yrdsb.ca)**

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Human Rights training**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**  
<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/about-us/human-rights-commissioners-office>

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Through our Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO) Human Rights training is offered to all YRDSB staff. The HRCO also offers anti-bias training to staff involved in all levels of hiring for the board.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: Leadership Development and Engagement,**  
[leadership.development.engagement@yrdsb.ca](mailto:leadership.development.engagement@yrdsb.ca)

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Regional Parent Symposium**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**  
<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/schools-programs/school-councils/peac-regional-symposium>

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Parent Voice Matters is an annual conference for our parent community. This conference is supported by a regional PRO grant.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

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**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Religious Accommodations System Implementation

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**  
<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/request-religious-accommodations>

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YRDSB has an exemplary Religious Accommodations Guidelines. Called Program Accommodations for Faith Purposes, document provides guidelines and procedures for religious accommodations in YRDSB.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

Our schools and workplaces are more inclusive to the diverse faiths of our staff, students, and communities.

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**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Holiday and Observances Calendar

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/significant-faith-days>

<https://www.multifaithcalendar.org/cal/index.php>

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Since 1993, YRDSBs Holiday and Observances Calendar has served as an exemplary document to support schools and workplaces serve the faith diversity that exist in York Region.

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

**School Board: York Region District School Board**

**Contact Person and Email Address: Fawzia Durrani [fawzia.durrani@yrdsb.ca](mailto:fawzia.durrani@yrdsb.ca)**

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Affinity Groups**

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www2.yrdsb.ca/student-support/equity-and-inclusive-education/significant-faith-days>

<https://www.multifaithcalendar.org/cal/index.php>

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Through ISCS, YRDSB supports 10 Affinity Groups - Alliance of Educators for Black Students (AEBS), Alliance of Educators for Muslim Students (AEMS), Educators for students of South Asian Heritage (ESSAH), Educators for Tamil Students Success (ETSS), 2SLGBTQ Resource Group, Network of Educators for Korean Students (NEKS), Supporting East Asian Students (SEAS), and Network of Educators Supporting Jewish Learners (NESJL).

**What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.**

These Affinity Groups work with ISCS to identify agency partners who will develop professional learning for staff around antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, etc. These are in addition to our internally developed professional learning opportunities.