

2020-2021

NURTURING INCLUSIVITY

Catholic Board Council of OSTA-AECO

ABOUT OSTA-AECO

OSTA-AECO is the largest official student stakeholder group in Ontario advocating for approximately 2 million students. For over 20 years, OSTA-AECO has acted as a strong, effective, and positive voice for students across the province. The association is comprised of the Public and Catholic Board Councils who strive to empower students and student trustees to improve education across the province. In addition to advocacy work, OSTA-AECO provides rich professional development for Ontario's student trustees.

The Catholic Board Council is comprised of Catholic student trustees who advocate for publicly funded Catholic education and provide a voice for approximately 600,000 Catholic students in Ontario. This academic year, the Catholic Board Council is advocating for inclusivity in the areas such as race.



FOREWORD

Recent events in the church, this province, and the world have sparked discussions within community groups, companies, and organizations regarding their state of equity and systemic racism. Issues such as these are not unique, nor are they new. However, as these crucial topics come into the light, it is necessary that the resources built around them be intentionally reviewed and updated. Discussions regarding these topics are needed so that change can be made.

RATIONALE

Our faith challenges us to open our hearts to our neighbours. Guided by the Catholic Church's teachings, the Catholic Board Council is advocating for an increased focus on inclusivity for our first pillar, Student Well-Being. By following in Jesus' footsteps, we hope to advocate for any inequities identified in the school boards across the province.

**“I GIVE YOU A NEW
COMMANDMENT: LOVE
ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE
LOVED YOU, SO YOU ALSO
SHOULD LOVE ONE
ANOTHER”**

JOHN 13:34

Catholicism, by nature, has an inclusive message, calling us to love unconditionally. To live this commandment in abundance is to embrace the differences among us and ensure that every human being feels welcomed.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the recommendations in this document, the Catholic Board Council hopes to aid in fostering a more inclusive school and learning environment for students. The following recommendations are centered around providing a medium for students to voice their concerns at a board level and improve the state of inclusivity at their board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Advisory Committees

For additional work and decisions to be made at school boards, committees are established to oversee specific areas of education. An example of this would be a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). Board committees can be comprised of staff, trustees, students and parents. These committees are a crucial part to the functioning of a school board and make positive changes in their community. An effective method of directly involving student voice is to form Student Advisory Committees focused on topics such as anti-racism. These committees would provide a space for students and staff to discuss relevant topics specific to their area of focus, as well as plan advocacy initiatives.

Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee

Similar to forming Student Advisory Committees, creating an Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee would also serve the same purpose. An example of this would be the Ottawa Carleton DSB's Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE). This committee can work to address forms of inequity within the educational environment for various areas of focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Leadership Group

Many boards have a Student Senate or a student leadership group established, one example being that of the Halton Catholic DSB's Student Senate. This outlet for student voice provides direct communication from the board to its students and vice versa. An alternate way to facilitate discussion from student voices on the topic of equity and inclusivity would be through this student leadership group.

Student Position on Existing Advisory Committees

If committees such as those previously mentioned already exist at a board, the incorporation of student voice on said committee would be a crucial component and addition to its endeavors to advocate for equity. Establishing a permanent student position on these committees would further promote the importance and involvement of student voice.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Catholic Board Council of OSTA-AECO recommends that school boards implement the aforementioned forms of student representation to ensure that students continue to remain at the forefront of discussions pertaining to equity in their education.

CONCLUSION

The Catholic Board Council of OSTA-AECO strives to use faith as a guiding principle and advocate for the inequities found in Catholic Education across the province. The aforementioned recommendations are intended to further promote student voice at the school board level in discussions about inclusivity to continue to create positive change within the school environment.

**“YOUR EVERY ACT SHOULD BE
DONE WITH LOVE.”**
1 CORINTHIANS 16:14

Every human being equally deserves to be loved and have their voices heard. Inspired by the life of Christ, we are called to make the world a more inclusive place.

APPENDIX

Student Senate Example: Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

(https://ocdsb.ca/about_us/departments/equity_and_diversity/advisory_committee_on_equity_a_c_e) is linked as an example.

Student Senate Example: Halton Catholic District School Board

(<https://www.hcdsb.org/Students/Senate/Pages/Student-Senate.aspx>) is linked as an example.

END NOTES

John 13:34 (NABRE), The New American Bible Revised Edition. (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 1970).

1 Corinthians 16:14 (NABRE), The New American Bible Revised Edition. (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corporation, 1970).