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ABORIGINAL EDUCATION – VOLUNTARY, CONFIDENTIAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION

1. PURPOSE

The Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board promotes the principles of inclusivity, equity and diversity to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve to their highest potential. Fulfilling this commitment requires a particular focus on effective educational programs for Aboriginal students and strong partnerships with Aboriginal parents and communities.

The Ministry of Education has identified Aboriginal Education as one of its key priorities with a focus on meeting three primary goals:

- I. improve achievement among First Nation, Métis and Inuit students;
- II. close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the areas of literacy and numeracy, retention of students in school, graduation rates and advancement to post-secondary studies and/or to the workplace; and
- III. develop a high level of public confidence by increasing knowledge, awareness and appreciation of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal traditions, cultures and perspectives.

2. DEFINITIONS

Aboriginal peoples: The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America, Section 35(2) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, states: "In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada." These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.

Aggregate data: Refers to data which relate to broad classes, groups or categories so that it is not possible to distinguish the individuals within those classes, groups, or categories.

First Nation: A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian", which many found offensive. The term "First Nation" has been adopted to replace the word "band" in the names of communities.

Inuit: Aboriginal people in northern Canada, living mainly, but not only, in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador.

Métis: People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. The Métis history and culture draws on diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, Irish, French, Ojibwa, and Cree.

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3. PRINCIPLES

The board is committed to helping all students succeed in learning and life and will continue to enhance programs and services that ensure the unique strengths and needs of all students are met, including students with Aboriginal ancestry. In keeping with these principles the board will:

- 3.1 Increase the knowledge and awareness amongst all stakeholders about Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives.
- 3.2 Build partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations to maintain respectful, positive and effective working relationships.
- 3.3 Develop teaching strategies and resources to support Aboriginal student success.
- 3.4 Develop and share programs and resources that facilitate learning about contemporary and traditional Aboriginal cultures, histories and perspectives among all students.
- 3.5 Provide high quality learning opportunities that are responsive, flexible and accessible to Aboriginal students.
- 3.6 Collect aggregate data on Aboriginal students through a voluntary, confidential self-identification process respecting the privacy and dignity of all students.
- 3.7 Develop strategies that will contribute to an increase in the retention and graduation rate of Aboriginal students and ensure that Aboriginal students are prepared for participation in post secondary studies and the working world.

4. VOLUNTARY, CONFIDENTIAL ABORIGINAL STUDENT SELF-IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

- 4.1 Parents/guardians of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students 18 years of age or older will have the opportunity to voluntarily and confidentially self-identify as being of Aboriginal ancestry, including First Nation, Métis or Inuit.
- 4.2 Self-identification will include all Aboriginal peoples regardless of status.
- 4.3 No proof of ancestry is required.
- 4.4 Self-identification of Aboriginal ancestry by parents/guardians and students 18 years of age and older will be collected annually at the time of school registration on enrolment forms, through course selection forms, through student update forms or at any time that it is deemed beneficial using Form F137-1.
- 4.5 Parents/guardians of Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students 18 years of age or older shall have the opportunity to remove the Aboriginal identification at any time through a written request to the school principal.

5. DATA COLLECTION

Student achievement data will not be used or communicated in an individual form. Student achievement data related to the academic performance of Aboriginal students will be collected

and aggregated in order to determine whether programs currently delivered offer similar opportunities for success as for other students. Continued data collection will provide necessary information for future decision-making surrounding Aboriginal student success. Aggregate data will be collected for the purpose of developing and implementing supportive programs to:

- 5.1 assist schools in better understanding the demographics in the school population;
- 5.2 assist the board in assessing which schools require additional school programming, targeted initiatives, additional support and the involvement of family and the greater community;
- 5.3 measure the board's effectiveness;
- 5.4 identify groups of Aboriginal students who would benefit from additional support; and
- 5.5 direct targeted resources to Aboriginal education projects and initiatives that will provide high quality learning opportunities that directly address the needs of Aboriginal students to:
 - improve student achievement of Aboriginal students;
 - improve the retention rate of Aboriginal students; and
 - improve the graduation rate of Aboriginal students and help ensure entrance to post secondary education and the world of work.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY

- 6.1 Individual data will not be communicated.
- 6.2 All data will be securely stored to respect privacy and used only as a means to enhance Aboriginal programs and services.
- 6.3 The collection, use, disclosure and destruction of data will follow the protocol for Ontario Student Records data. All data are protected and governed by the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Education Act*.

7. COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The board will continue to:

- 7.1 work cooperatively and promote effective, inclusive, respectful working relationships and partnerships with First Nation, Métis and Inuit educators, parents, students and communities;
- 7.2 work with Aboriginal communities to provide a curriculum that reflects contemporary and traditional Aboriginal cultures, histories and perspectives;
- 7.3 increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal cultures, histories and perspectives through professional development for school board staff and trustees;

- 7.4 develop invitational strategies to engage parents of Aboriginal students in school activities and encourage them to participate in parent involvement committees such as school councils to support academic success; and
- 7.5 ensure that all hiring and promotional practices reflect inclusivity.

Legal References:

- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Education Act*
- Ontario Student Record

District References:

- Board Policy 1: Board Mission and Goals
- Administrative Procedures 135: Equity and Diversity
- Administrative Procedure 136 Multicultural/Multiracial Understanding
- Administrative Procedure 255: Character Development
- Form F137-1

Resources:

Ministry of Education, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework
Ministry of Education: Building Bridges to Success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit Students