



SOVEREIGNTY AFFIRMING AND EQUITY COMPETENCIES

ABOUT THE WRDSB SOVEREIGNTY AFFIRMING AND EQUITY COMPETENCIES

As we continue the work of building an educational system that supports all students in reaching their full potential, we know that we need to prepare System Leaders by providing them with the skills and knowledge to lead the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) to the future. Importantly, this includes specifically identified competencies related to sovereignty affirmation and equity in public education.

The WRDSB Sovereignty Affirming and Equity Competencies are designed to complement the Ontario Leadership Framework. This is a living document, and will continue to shift as we learn and grow as leaders and as an educational institution. This work is not optional as we seek to be responsive to students, staff and communities.

System Leaders are expected to review and reflect on the competencies outlined here as they consider their own professional development. Differentiated learning opportunities will be provided to develop leader capacity for each competency.

A self-assessment component will be developed and provided to staff to assist them in applying these competencies to their work.

SCHOOL LEADERS AND SERVICE LEADERS

System Leaders includes those in positions of leadership at schools and those in positions of leadership in service departments at the Education Centre.

Under some sections, you will see that select competencies have been categorized as school-focused competencies, to assist you in understanding how these apply to your work.



SCHOOL LEADERS

School leaders include principals, vice-principals and central staff at the Education Centre in Learning Support Services who directly support the work of educating students and curriculum delivery.

SERVICE LEADERS

Service leaders include the managers, supervisors and officers at the Education Centre who lead the departments that serve the WRDSB system. For example, this would include those System Leaders in Financial Services or Information Technology Services.

We would like to acknowledge the following which served as supportive resources in the development of the WRDSB Sovereignty Affirming and Equity Competencies:

- [Peel District School Board \(PDSB\) Equity Leadership Competencies for Principals and Vice-Principals](#)
- [Toronto District School Board \(TDSB\) Equity Leadership Competencies](#)
- [York Region District School Board \(YRDSB\) Leadership Framework for School Administrators](#)

Additional resources

- [Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan](#)
- [First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission \(OHRC\)](#)



THREE NEW COMPETENCY DOMAINS

AFFIRMING SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty refers to the exercise of the inherent and constitutionally protected rights of Indigenous Nations. When we engage in sovereignty-affirming leadership, we express respect for and understanding of these rights through our obligation to engage in relationships with Indigenous peoples as partners. We understand the learning environments we support must respect and build understanding of the laws, language, cultures, and governance models of Indigenous communities.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

These practices relate to leading in ways that acknowledge the power imbalances that exist within systems and schools, and in ways that demonstrate an understanding of how trauma experienced from oppressive practices and systems negatively impacts individuals.

ACHIEVING EQUITY

Achieving Equity embodies continual critical reflection on identity and social location and the demonstration of skills related to the ability to lead and engage others in their work through equitable and sustainable approaches.



THREE NEW COMPETENCY DOMAINS

AFFIRMING SOVEREIGNTY

- Recognizes that Indigenous communities and practices are diverse and do not exist as a monolith
- Affirms an understanding of sovereignty through interactions with students, families, and community
- Affirms the interconnectedness of home, school, community and the land for Indigenous learners and staff
- Possesses knowledge and understanding of the issues, cultures, histories and realities faced by Indigenous peoples in education systems
- Intentionally creates space to bring Indigenous-led traditional teachings and ways of knowing into all learning and work environments
- Responds to the call for Reconciliation with purposeful actions that have meaning for all staff and students

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

- Leads with humility, vulnerability and critical self-reflection that invites increased accountability
- Understands the basis of colonial structures and the disproportionate impacts on underserved groups of people
- Understands the impact that identities, abilities and lived experiences can have on the creation of inclusive spaces or barriers to full inclusion
- Works to consistently ensure diversity is reflected and dismantles barriers to full inclusion
- Addresses fear, ignorance, oppressive behaviours and conflict avoidance, to promote an understanding that healthy discomfort is necessary for transformative change
- Understands the impact of social location (including race) and white supremacy in creating barriers for students and staff

ACHIEVING EQUITY

- Actively works to dismantle racist and oppressive school and system practices and structures so that social location and identity do not predict outcomes
- Engages in ongoing assessment of equity practices in creating and leading a team of diverse and intersecting identities
- Creates and supports equity goals that are driven by student and staff learning needs and outcomes
- With humility, critically self reflects, probes, and asks questions seeking diverse perspectives and opinions
- Effectively works to create, monitor and transparently communicate evidence-based equity goals that serve the needs of students, staff and communities
- Recognizes positionality in relation to colonial structures, systems of oppression, and the harmful practices existing within those structures



- Acknowledges and affirms Treaty rights and obligations and embeds these into school and work culture
- Demonstrates a commitment to consult and collaborate with Indigenous peoples
- Participates in decolonizing and Indigenizing professional learning and provides opportunities for staff and student learning around the impact of colonization on Indigenous Peoples
- Affirms Indigenous identities by purposefully selecting resources that work to address Indigenous erasure
- Recognizes, understands and accepts decolonization as a guiding principle in helping education systems transform
- Centres and affirms Indigenous tenets of respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relationship in all interactions
- Moves beyond Indigenous histories, challenges, and barriers to focus on Indigenous brilliance, resilience, resurgence and current realities
- Enacts the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action 62-63
- Creates positive and culturally safe working and learning environments for Indigenous students and staff, using trauma-informed and culturally relevant practices

- Guides school and workplace learning about the impact of identity, marginalization, and psychological safety to remove barriers
- Leads compassionately through brave and supportive conversations to develop healthy, productive learning and working environments for all students and staff
- Responds to harm and conflict through a trauma-informed and restorative approach
- Solicits and acts upon the expertise of staff, particularly those with lived experience as well as those who challenge whiteness and white supremacy
- Acknowledges that social hierarchies and historically discriminatory practices exist

School Focused Competency

- Understands the connection between intergenerational trauma, systemic oppression and student behaviour and learning

- Acts to establish protective factors that mitigate the impacts of identity representation for some staff and/or students
- Ensures equity leadership practices are evident throughout all aspects of their leadership
- Through constant self-reflection, identifies and addresses their own emotional responses and guides others to do the same
- Intentionally names, challenges and addresses white supremacy, race and oppression, biases and systemic barriers
- Aligns budget and resources with a focus on addressing marginalization and underserved students and communities
- Demonstrates commitment to culturally responsive leadership in support of students, staff and families
- Engages in an ongoing reflective process of learning and responding to the needs of diverse social identities

School Focused Competencies

- Views culture and identity as an asset to support engagement and success for all students
- Engages families as partners in shaping and informing school priorities and instructional practices

- Follows principles and guidelines for respectful protocols when engaged with Indigenous ways of knowing, Elders and Knowledge-keepers
- Reviews and follows policies and procedures to ensure sovereignty is reflected and affirmed for Indigenous students, families and staff
- Is sensitive to data sovereignty and aware of Ownership, Control, Access, Possession (OCAP) principles.
- Understands the distinction between equity and sovereignty in working towards creating Indigenous affirming spaces

School Focused Competency

- Builds staff capacity to deliver Indigenous-focused curriculum to all students including opportunities that connect students to the land and water

- Provides supports that are culturally and linguistically responsive to students and their families
- Provides equitable access and opportunities to academic support using appropriate communication channels that meet family and community needs



BUILDING ON THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK (OLF)

The following competencies build on the domains outlined in the OLF:

SETTING DIRECTION

- Proactively works to prevent and address harm based on Ontario Human Rights Code protected grounds
- Supports the creation of school or system goals that address the achievement and well-being gaps for underserved students
- Collaborates with and seeks input from diverse internal and external stakeholders, particularly those who have been underserved
- Looks for patterns of success and/or failure based on identity characteristics and uses this to inform direction setting for the School Learning and Improvement Plan

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPING PEOPLE

- Recognizes, understands, and commits to ongoing learning about intersectionality in service of initiating, building and sustaining relationships with all stakeholders
- Understands that being in relationship with others includes naming harm so that students and staff can learn and do better
- Uses multiple methods to engage caregivers and community stakeholders as partners to meet the needs of underserved students
- Fosters a learning and working culture where staff are able to be vulnerable and accountable

DEVELOPING THE ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT DESIRED PRACTICES

- Leads the organizational transformation necessary to uphold and foster a culture anchored in Human Rights
- Engages staff in creating equity-focused structures that support all students and reflect commitments outlined in the WRDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the Board Improvement and Equity Plan
- Considers social identities and views diverse leadership styles as an asset when distributing school based responsibilities and leadership opportunities

IMPROVING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

- Creates opportunities for professional learning conversations for staff that centre intersecting forms of oppression as ways of improving instructional practice
- Supports the implementation of Anti-Oppressive, Anti-Racist, Decolonizing, and Culturally Relevant and Responsive pedagogies across curricular and co-curricular activities
- Ensures that the diversity of students and community is reflected in classrooms, resources, the school environment and the School Learning and Improvement Plan

SECURING ACCOUNTABILITY

- Develops a network of critical supports (friends, colleagues, mentors) to invite accountability and help unpack issues as they arise
- Seeks to understand, critically question, and effectively use demographic data in building a culture of continuous learning and improvement
- Takes responsibility for results, especially for those students with identities that have achievement and well-being gap

