

**AGENDA: 6:00 pm**

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement
2. O Canada
3. Meeting Roll Call
4. Approval of the Agenda
5. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
6. [Confirmation of the Minutes: March 9, 2026](#)
7. [Correspondence: Township of Rideau Lakes re: School Board Trustees in Ontario](#)

Reports from Trustee Special Committees:

8. [Governance – March 2, 2026](#)
9. [Policy – March 3, 2026](#)
10. [Audit – March 10, 2026](#)

Reports from Legislative Committees:

11. [Parent Involvement Committee – March 10, 2026](#)
12. [Special Education Advisory Committee – February 25, 2026](#)

Reports from Community Advisory Committees:

13. [French as a Second Language Advisory Committee – February 26, 2026](#)
14. [Human Rights & Equity Advisory Committee – February 26, 2026](#)

15. Resolution Into Committee of the Whole (Private Session) as per the Education Act, Section 207 (2)

- a) the security of the property of the board;
- b) the disclosure of intimate, personal or financial information in respect of a member of the board or committee, an employee or prospective employee of the board or a pupil or his or her parent or guardian;
- c) the acquisition or disposal of a school site;
- d) decisions in respect of negotiations with employees of the board; or
- e) litigation affecting the board. *R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2, s. 207 (2); 2021, c. 4, Sched. 11, s. 7 (1).*

***Meeting Resumes in Public Session***

16. Reports from

- A. [Standing Committee – March 9, 2026](#)
- B. Committee of the Whole (Private) – March 30, 2026

17. Oral Reports from:

- A. Student Trustees' and Shakowennakarátats
- B. Director's Report
- C. Chair's Report

18. Adjournment

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**Trustees:** Kathy Archer\*, Becky Buck, Sabreina Dahab, Dawn Danko, Amanda Fehrman, Maria Felix Miller, Graeme Noble, Paul Tut, Todd White, Elizabeth Wong<sup>(R)</sup>, Abby Zaitley. Student Trustees Sanad Bizanti, Evelyn Watson, and Shakowennakara:tats Daunte Hillen.

\*electronic participation, <sup>(R)</sup> regrets

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### 1. Call to Order

Chair Miller called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

**RESOLUTION #26-21:** Trustees Tut/Danko moved that Trustee Wong be approved as absent for the March 9, 2026, Board Meeting.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

### 2. Approval of the Agenda

**RESOLUTION #26-22:** Trustees Tut/Fehrman moved that the agenda be approved.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

### 3. Confirmation of the Minutes

**RESOLUTION #26-23:** Trustees Danko/Tut moved that the Minutes from February 23, 2026, be confirmed.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

### 4. Written Notice of Motion: Enhancing School-Area Traffic Safety for Students in Ward 4 (Trustee Zaitley)

Whereas student safety around schools in Hamilton's lower east city has become an increasing concern due to higher traffic volumes, narrow streets, and limited drop-off and pick-up space. In one survey, 78% of Ontario parents reported witnessing unsafe driving behaviours in school zones, and only 37% consider the roads around their child's school to be safe (CAA South Central Ontario, 2022).

Whereas families and school communities in Ward 4 have raised concerns regarding incidents involving vehicles and students, underscoring the need for proactive, collaborative approaches to school-area safety

Whereas the City of Hamilton and community partners such as the Daily School Route have experience and expertise in school-area traffic safety and active transportation initiatives (walking, biking, using a wheelchair, etc).

Following discussion by the Board of Trustees, the statement requesting staff report back was removed. The Chair of the Board also noted that the topic of enhancing road safety around schools will be requested as an agenda topic at an upcoming City-School Board Liaison Committee meeting.

**RESOLUTION #26-24:** Trustees Zaitley/Dahab moved that the Board initiate exploratory discussions with the Ward 4 City Councillor's office and the Daily School Routes Program Manager to identify opportunities for collaboration related to active transportation, and school-area traffic concerns for Ward 4 schools, with a view to the 2026/2027 school year using the existing ward 12 initiative as a framework.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

**5. DELEGATION(S):** Guiding Principles – Program Strategy Review, Equity of Access

The Chair welcomed the delegates to the meeting and thanked them for bringing forward their perspectives as briefly outlined below – the meeting [recording](#) can be reviewed to listen to the delegates remarks.

- A. Alex Johnstone – a former trustee of our Board, and a parent of a soon to be HWDSB kindergarten student, shared her family's experience entering the special education pathway and how proposed French Immersion changes—such as deferring entry to Grade 2 and offering English instruction for math and science—would improve accessibility for students like her daughter. She urged trustees to ensure that equity includes students from *all pathways* so that specialized programs remain viable options for children with diverse learning needs.
- B. Carolyn Proulx-Wootton – a parent of a child in the SAGE Quest program is advocating for change in the term 'equity' in the guiding principles. The term equity is being used as a rationale to potentially limit enrollment, or close programs. She urged the Board to adopt an equity approach that removes structural barriers and open more locations, for programs like SAGE, so more students can benefit.
- C. Dr. Jessica Braimoh – a parent of a child currently in the SAGE Quest program shared her experiences and comments on the guiding principles. She highlighted for the Board that equity should not mean reducing diversity of learning environments, but rather equity must consider the social role of choice. Research on school choice shows that choice systems produce both benefits and inequalities and that the SAGE program fosters belonging, identity development, and community for students like her child.

Motion by Trustees Noble/Fehrman that the Board take a 15-minute recess in observation of Ramadan.

**6. Correspondence: Avon Maitland DSB re: Potential Changes to English Public School Board Governance**

**RESOLUTION #26-25:** Trustees Danko/Buck moved that the correspondence from Avon Maitland District School Board regarding the potential changes to English Public School Board Governance be received.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

## **7. Program Committee**

The Board considered the Program Committee report from February 19, 2026, and suggested amendments to the Guiding Principles – Program Review Strategy.

### **1. Student Achievement and Well-Being**

Students will engage in dynamic, inclusive learning that fosters achievement, well-being, and joy in learning. All programs will support diverse pathways and enhance the overall student experience.

### **2. Continuous Improvement and Alignment with Student Outcomes**

Program offerings will directly support the [HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) and [Board Improvement Plan](#) priorities in literacy, numeracy, and future preparedness<sup>1</sup>. Programs will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect student voice, post-secondary options, and local workforce and community needs.

Future preparedness is defined as preparing every student with the skills, knowledge and experiences needed to thrive in a complex, and changing world. Future preparedness ensure we collaborate with students and families to ensure students have what they need to build their individual pathway.

### **3. Evidence-Informed Decision Making**

Program creation, expansion and closure decisions will be guided by evidence. We will use qualitative and quantitative data to monitor outcomes, inform improvements, and ensure resources are distributed equitably to meet the diverse needs of HWDSB students.

Ethical Indigenous education research will be conducted in partnership with local Indigenous communities, ensuring reciprocity, accountability, and full respect for Indigenous data sovereignty (OCAP).

### **4. Equity of Access**

Programs will be designed, reviewed and distributed to reduce barriers and inequities in access and participation. Geographic and demographic considerations will ensure all students have equitable access.

### **5. Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability**

All program decisions will be evaluated for long-term viability, fiscal sustainability, responsible and equitable use of resources. Programs with high costs or low enrolment will be reviewed regularly. New initiatives will be piloted with clear cost-benefit analysis.

### **6. Inclusive Community Engagement and Lived Experience**

Program decisions will promote inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environments where every student experiences belonging and meaningful opportunities.

Transparent engagement processes will ensure student, parent, staff, and community voices are sought to inform program creation, expansion, and closure.

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<sup>1</sup> Future preparedness is defined as preparing every student with the skills, knowledge and experiences needed to thrive in a complex, and changing world in collaboration with students and families to ensure students have what they need to build their individual pathway.

## 7. Phased and Communicated Implementation

Implementation will prioritize listening to voices that have not historically been centered and addressing barriers to engagement. Clear, accessible communication will keep families and staff informed about programs, processes, and changes.

Implementation plans will be phased, strategic, and responsive, prioritizing urgent equity and sustainability and viability needs while minimizing disruption to student learning.

**RESOLUTION #26-26:** Trustees White/Danko moved the following **amendments** to the Guiding Principles – Program Review Strategy:

- Guiding Principle 4. Equity of Access
  - Include timing considerations and “all students from diverse pathways”
  - Define the term Equity
- Guiding Principle 5. Fiscal Responsibility and Sustainability
  - Include staff resources or staff designations as part of the reference to resources
- Create a Guiding Principle related to Learning from current Programs that can be carried forward in cases where programs may need to be closed
- Create a Guiding Principle related to Removal of Barriers – Minimization of caps, waitlists, lotteries, and fees where possible.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

**RESOLUTION #26-27:** Trustees Fehrman/Buck moved that the remainder of the Program Committee report from February 19, 2026, be received.

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

NOTE: During discussions of the amendments, Trustees Dahab and Tut moved that the Guiding Principles and proposed amendments be referred back to the Program Committee for further review and discussion.

This motion **lost** on the following division:

In Favour (4): Trustees, Archer, Dahab, Tut, Zaitley.

Shakowennakara:tats Hillen

Opposed (6): Trustees Buck, Danko, Fehrman, Miller, Noble, White

Student Trustees Bizanti and Watson

## 8. Finance & Facilities Committee

**RESOLUTION #26-28:** Trustees Tut/Fehrman moved that the Finance & Facilities report from February 24, 2026, be approved including the following recommendations for the Binbrook II Boundary Review:

A. That the geographic area described below becomes the boundary for the new Binbrook Elementary School (ES) and is removed from the Bellmoore ES and Shannen Koostachin current attendance boundaries:

*Commencing at the northwest intersection of Binbrook Road and Trinity Church Road, running south on Trinity Church Road to include residents on the east side and ending at Lake Niapenco,*

*picking up again on the other side of Lake Niapenco to include both sides of Trinity Church Rd to Haldibrook Road, then east within the City of Hamilton municipal boundary on Haldibrook Road to include residents on the north side of Haldibrook Road until it ends, then a direct line to Short Road including residents on the north side until it ends, then a direct line to Irvine Road to include residents on the north side of Irvine Road up to Westbrook Road, then north on Westbrook Road to include residents on the west side of Westbrook Road up to Binbrook Road, then heading west on Binbrook Road to include residents on the south side up to Trinity Church Road.*

B. That the boundary change is effective upon the opening of the new Binbrook ES. At that time, all new JK to 8 students located within the new boundary will attend the new Binbrook ES.

C. That existing Bellmoore ES students living in the new Binbrook ES boundary have an option to remain at Bellmoore ES until graduation with no transportation provided. New elementary siblings of these students, not attending Bellmoore ES at the time of the new school opening, will be required to attend the new Binbrook ES.

D. That Shannen Koostachin ES students living in the new Binbrook ES boundary entering Grade 7&8, at the time of opening of the new Binbrook ES, will be given the option to remain at Shannen Koostachin ES with no transportation provided. Younger existing or new sibling registrations of these students will be required to attend the new Binbrook ES.

E. In accordance with the Ontario Education Act and all applicable Ministry of Education directives, should the Boundary Review transition planning process determine that viable grade programs cannot be established at the new Binbrook ES upon opening, these students will attend the new school. For the purposes of this recommendation, a viable program is defined as the ability to deliver the curriculum and required instructional components as intended by the Ministry of Education, including program organization, assessment, and reporting practices, and supports for student learning and transitions.

F. All student transportation will be provided in accordance with Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's [Transportation Policy No. 3.10](#).

G. That a Transition Committee for each of the affected schools currently operating is struck by the Superintendent of Equity and Student Achievement upon approval of the boundary change.

**CARRIED**

Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.  
Trustee Dahab was not present for this vote.

## **9. Parent Involvement Committee**

**RESOLUTION #26:29:** Trustees Fehrman/Zaitley moved that the Parent Involvement Committee report from February 10, 2026, be received.

**CARRIED**

Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

The Board moved into private session for discussions of items related to Section 207 (2) of the Education Act.

The meeting resumed in public session at 10:24 pm. Trustee Danko did not return to the public session.

**10. Report from Committee of the Whole (Private) – March 9, 2026**

**RESOLUTION #26-30:** Trustees Tut/Fehrman moved that Committee of the Whole report from March 9, 2026, be approved, including:

- That the Finance & Facilities Committee report from February 24, 2026, be received.
- That the local HWPC Terms and Conditions contract between the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Principals Council (HWPC) be amended to August 31, 2027.

**CARRIED**

**11. Notice of Motion: Letters to the Premier, Minister of Education & Ombudsman (Trustee Buck)**

WHEREAS the Minister of Education has stated that he is considering eliminating the role of democratically elected English Public School Board Trustees and has stated that French and Catholic Trustees may not be removed;

WHEREAS the removal of English Public School Boards of Trustees would result in the loss of legislated First Nation representation where it currently exists;

WHEREAS the removal of English Public School Boards of Trustees would also result in the loss of Student Trustees in those boards, which is the sole legislated role giving voice to Ontario students in English Public Schools;

WHEREAS there has been no formal public consultation on the proposal to remove the role of English Public School Board Trustees and polls have shown support for the role of Trustees and are skeptical that the proposed governance changes will improve public education;

WHEREAS the removal of democratically elected Trustees at supervised Boards has resulted in less open, public meetings which can result in less accountability;

WHEREAS the role of the Ontario Ombudsman is to examine the transparency, fairness and accountability of policies and government.

**RESOLUTION #26-31:** Trustees Buck/Fehrman moved that the Chair of the Board be directed to write a letter to the Minister of Education and Premier requesting that a formal provincial-wide consultation process be developed and implemented before making any governance changes or decisions that would result in the elimination of English Public School Board Trustees; and

Request that the government conduct research to support an evidence-based decision regarding the best governance model to support the public education system, while also promoting open dialogue and two-way conversations; and

That the Chair of the Board be directed to write a letter to the Ontario Ombudsman in support of recent letters from English public district school boards asking the Ombudsman's office to review the potential impacts of removing English Public School Board Trustees with respect to fairness, openness, transparency and accountability; and

That a copy of the letters be sent to the Premier and Minister of Education, and all MPPs, MPs, and OPSBA Member Boards.

**CARRIED**

Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

**RESOLUTION #26-32:** Motion by Trustees Noble/Buck to extend the Board meeting to 11:00 pm

**CARRIED**

Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

## **12. Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)**

Trustee Buck provided an update as follows:

- the Ontario Public Student Trustee Leadership Scholarship is open. The scholarship is to recognize outstanding achievement in a leadership role and provide financial support to a graduating public board student trustee to assist with their post-secondary education plans (University, College, or Apprenticeship). Two scholarships, in the amount of \$500 each, will be awarded. Information can be found [on the OPSBA website](#). The application deadline is May 15, 2026.
- Board of Director's meeting was held on February 28 and the discussion mainly centered on the proposed OPSBA governance restructuring.

## **13. Student Trustees Report**

Student Trustees Bizanti and Watson provided the following update:

- Student Senate held its first meeting of the month and included presentations on budget development processes from Finance and AI in education.
- Planning is underway for the Student Leadership Conference being held at 20 Education Court on April 17. Students from each high school within HWDSB have been invited to be on the panel.
- Student trustees attended OSTA-AECO Education Action Conference gaining training in governance, policy navigation, Indigenous partnership building and student well-being leadership.

Shakowennakara:tats Hillen provided the following update:

- District schools engaged in Black History Month learning and celebrations, highlighting Black excellence and strengthening culturally responsive and identity-affirming programming.
- HWDSB students and staff participated in the Reverend John C. Holland Awards, reinforcing the Board's commitment to celebrating student leadership and community contributions.
- Recognition of student leadership – including the **Unity Award** and the **Sankofa Pro Scholarship/Bursary**.
- Participated in a keynote panel with People for Education at McMaster University on the role of public schools in social mobility and economic inclusion, providing district-level student representation in provincial dialogue.

**RESOLUTION #26-33:** Moved by Trustees Buck/Noble that the Board Meeting be extended to 11:30 pm.

**CARRIED**

Trustees Bizanti, Watson and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

## **14. Director's Report**

Director Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini provided her [monthly update](#) and highlighted key system priorities, ongoing initiatives, and recent progress aligned with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. The oral report emphasized current achievements across student learning, well-being, equity, and operational effectiveness, and outlined upcoming areas of focus for the remainder of the school year. The Director also shared relevant provincial updates, departmental highlights, and next steps in major board-wide strategies.

## **15. Chair's Report**

Chair Miller reflected on the meeting's themes of student voice, community engagement, and partnership, highlighting delegations, program review dialogue, and ongoing work supporting safety and community collaboration.

Chair Miller emphasized the importance of democratic governance structures, noting concern about potential impacts should elected trustees be removed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Reference: [Agenda Package](#) and [Recording](#), [Recording2](#)



# Rideau Lakes

**Minister Paul Calandra**  
Ministry of Education  
Government of Ontario  
900 Bay Street, 22nd Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

**MPP Steve Clark**  
Kingston and the Islands  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park, Room 440  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A8

Dear Minister Calandra and MPP Clark,

I am writing on behalf of the Township of Rideau Lakes Council to express deep concern over the recent actions by the Ministry of Education that have significantly impacted our resident's democratic rights, particularly the right to vote for school trustees. In recent months, we have witnessed the Ministry take control of various school boards, effectively removing the critical link between parents, students, and their elected representatives.

While the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) is currently positioned to avoid direct intervention, we are alarmed by the fact that this fall, we may not have the opportunity to elect new trustees. The potential removal of trustees from the decision-making process would greatly diminish the voice of our community in shaping the future of our public education system.

I respectfully urge MPP Steve Clark to raise this issue in the legislature and argue against the Ministry's attempt to remove elected trustees. Additionally, I ask Minister Paul Calandra to consider the severe impact this action will have on public education.

It is true that some trustees have fallen short of their responsibilities. However, for the most part, trustees play an invaluable role in supporting students and families, especially those with special needs. When all other avenues fail, trustees often become the one person parents can turn to for assistance, advocacy, and resolution. To potentially lose this critical resource—and the right to vote for those who represent us—would be an egregious misstep by the Ministry of Education.

We stand firmly in support of our trustees and believe that our right to elect them is fundamental to the integrity of our education system. We urge you to take swift action to ensure that our voices are not silenced.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response and action to preserve the democratic rights of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arie Hoogenboom', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mayor Arie Hoogenboom

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

Presented to: Board

Date of Meeting: March 2, 2026

From: Governance Committee

Date of Meeting: March 30, 2026

The committee held a hybrid meeting on March 2, 2026, at 6:03 pm.

Members: Trustees Becky Buck, Dawn Danko<sup>(R)</sup>, Amanda Fehrman, Maria Felix Miller\*, Paul Tut\* and Todd White.

\*electronic participation, <sup>(R)</sup>regrets

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**MONITORING ITEMS(S):**

**A. Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation – Survey Results**

Staff presented the results of the Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation, noting that the 27% participation rate limits data reliability but still offers meaningful insights into recurring themes such as role clarity, collaboration, and relational dynamics among trustees. Staff highlighted that trustees generally assessed themselves within the “Building Capacity” stage of the governance maturity model, indicating steady progress in foundational governance practices. Key strengths shared with the Committee included trustees’ commitment to supporting staff and their openness in discussing governance challenges, while areas for development centred on internal conflict, meeting culture, and clearer role expectations.

The committee asked that future Trustee Self-Evaluation Surveys:

- Aim for higher participation by exploring alternative or additional feedback methods
  - Members noted that some trustees may prefer alternative formats for providing feedback and recommended exploring a hybrid approach that maintains the value of the anonymous survey while supplementing it with options such as interviews, one-on-one conversations, or facilitated discussions to capture deeper insights
  
- Evolve the Survey Format
  - The Committee suggested that the survey tool itself may need to evolve in future board terms to better capture trustee perspectives, both collectively and individually, by revising questions and breaking topics into clearer subsections

Staff confirmed for the Committee that the survey continues to provide valuable insights through the open-ended feedback questions that guide the planning for future Trustee Professional Development sessions and that a plan will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Trustee Buck, Chair of the Committee

Reference: [Committee Package](#), [Recording](#)

## COMMITTEE REPORT

Presented to: Board

Date of Meeting: March 30, 2026

From: Policy Committee

Date of Meeting: March 3, 2026

The committee held a hybrid meeting on March 3, 2026, at 6:30 pm with Trustee Maria Felix Miller presiding.

Members: Trustees Sabreina Dahab<sup>(R)</sup>, Maria Felix Miller, Graeme Noble\*, Elizabeth Wong\*, and Abby Zaitley. Also in attendance: Trustee Todd White and Shakowennakara:tats Daunte Hillen

\* electronic participation, <sup>(R)</sup>regrets

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### ACTION ITEM(S):

#### A. Indigenous Education

The Indigenous Education Policy, approved by the Board in May 2024, was scheduled for review after its first year to incorporate refinements. Following this review, staff have made targeted updates to strengthen the reconciliation focus within the Guiding Principles, emphasize relationships with learners, families, kinship networks, and Treaty Partners, and align the policy framework with the Two Row Relational Accountability Framework and Ethical Space of Engagement.

The committee noted that, given the size and significance of the revised Indigenous Education Policy, it would be valuable to schedule a check-in after its first year of implementation to understand how well it is working in practice. They emphasized that this would be an update, not a full policy review during the 2026–2027 school year, after which the policy would revert to the regular four-year review cycle unless otherwise needed earlier.

Trustee Zaitley moved that HWDSB welcome space for the Indigenous Education Policy to return in the 2026–2027 school year for an update at the discretion of the Indigenous Education Circle (IEC), which received unanimous consent from members of the Policy Committee.

On the motion from Trustee Zaitley, the Policy Committee **recommends that the Indigenous Education Policy be approved as amended in peace, friendship and mutual respect.**

**CARRIED**

#### B. Educational Excursions

Staff have reviewed the policy as part of the policy review cycle. Staff have made minor updates to language throughout the policy based on feedback from the committee last year.

The Committee requested further edits and additions to language under Terminology to include inside school buildings. They also requested a sentence be added to Action Required that address the opportunity to gather feedback from staff.

On the motion from Trustee Noble, the Policy Committee **recommends that the Educational Excursions Policy be recommended for approval as amended.**

The motion **CARRIED** on the following division:

In Favour (3): Trustees Miller, Noble, Wong

Opposed (1): Trustee Zaitley

#### C. Staff Engagement

Staff have reviewed the policy as part of the review cycle, with updates made to language throughout the policy including the purpose, guiding principles, responsibility and terminology.

On the motion from Trustee Noble, the Policy Committee **recommends that the Staff Engagement Policy be recommended for approval.**

**CARRIED**

Respectfully submitted,  
Maria Felix Miller, Interim Chair of the Committee

	<b>POLICY NO: 6.6</b>
Adopted	XXXX
Projected Review Date	XXXX
Revisions	XXXX

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION POLICY 2026

**ABSTRACT**

“We come from truth holders and truth tellers. We carry history. We come from the ancients, from the villages of our Ancestors. We represent the new village. As we walk forward to a brighter future knowing our collective potential, we know that we can do anything. We will find the protection of Peace at the base of that white pine tree. Our homes will be strengthened and protected. Our minds will be straight, like smoke that rises. We are still here. We will always be here.”

- Elizabeth Doxtater (2023) to CC:ROSE Learners. “Betts”, from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, is Auntie and Ístha to the Indigenous Education Department, and a Critical Friend of HWDSB.

## Preface

*The Indigenous Education Department and Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) are “One Family”, commonly referred as the Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi’idiwin (Family) – we support and work together. Throughout this policy “we” means the Indigenous Education Department and the IEC.*

We humbly invite the HWDSB community to engage as co-learners, Treaty Partners and community members with the Indigenous Education Policy. As you read, learn and action the policy in your classrooms and communities, we ask you to remember and center the following:

- The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to cultivate and nurture meaningful relationships between Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and the [Indigenous Education Circle \(IEC\)](#) to action the shared goal of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) in a restorative education system. The policy is also a foundational tool, meant to be a living resource for your own learning and actions.
- This policy was co-developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Circle and first-language speaker, Nokomis Martina Osawamick. The IEC is a Ministry of Education-mandated, community-guided governing body that works in parallel to and in syncretism with HWDSB.. It is a living document that will continue to be shaped as we uncover and reclaim our knowledges, pedagogies, cultures, languages and laws, and continue to center our commitments to accuracy, authenticity, appropriateness and accountability.
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2022-2032 as the decade of Indigenous Languages. This proclamation acknowledges the vital and urgent need to revitalize and promote Indigenous languages around the world. As part of our commitment to Indigenous language reclamation and restoration, we have included Indigenous translations, interpretations and phrases throughout the policy. They are not literal translations. Instead, these translations aim to provide the essence of the meaning of the teaching or concept as we understand it currently. The Indigenous Education Department will continue to refine our understandings and deepen our learnings in consultation with local Host Nations.
- As the Indigenous Education Department continues to learn with and alongside the IEC, Elders, Knowledge Holders and Language Speakers, we acknowledge that some of what we learn is Sacred Ancestral Knowledge meant to be protected and upheld by and for Indigenous Peoples only. Throughout this policy, we offer some teachings that are meant for raising awareness about the principles that guide our work and practice. We share these principles for your awareness in the spirit of friendship. They are not intended to be adopted, appropriated or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

**Our relationships are grounded in our shared [treaty](#) agreement responsibilities.**

By virtue of nation-to-nation and [Indigenous](#)-Crown relationships, symbolized in wampum, every [Treaty Partner](#) has a moral, ethical, and fiduciary responsibility to maintain the spirit and intent of these original agreements.



We recognize our location within the **Gdoonaagidnaa, Sewatokwà:tshera, One Dish wampum [treaty](#)** territory. Informed by the understandings of local Indigenous Knowledge Guardian (Six Nations Polytechnic), Tehahenteh, this [treaty](#) recognizes the responsibility of everyone to harvest only what is needed and to share what is harvested. The agreement conveys that the Earth provides for everyone, so no one should go hungry. It also includes the understanding that anyone who benefits from what the Earth provides has a responsibility to care for and protect “all of the entities on her body” (Doxtater, 2021).

The local [Indigenous Host Nations](#) are the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River. We acknowledge the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy<sup>1</sup> and the guiding [Seven Sacred Teachings](#) of bravery, honesty, humility, love, respect, truth, and wisdom. We also acknowledge the Haudenosaunee Confederacy<sup>2</sup> and the three guiding principles of [The Great Law](#) of a good mind, peace and power.

**Tékeni Niyothatátye Kahswéntha (The Two Row Wampum)**



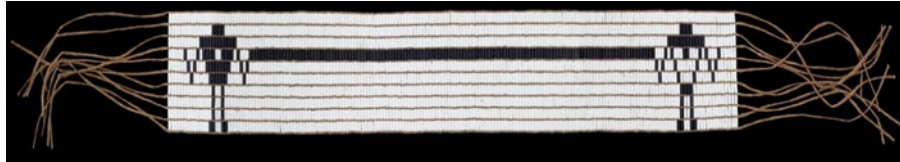
The [treaty](#) agreement represents “the two vessels, they in their ship, and we in our canoe travelling down the river of life. The two purple stripes represent our respective ways of being. Each having our own governance ways, cultures, language, and beliefs. The three white stripes would represent peace,

<sup>1</sup> Three Fires Confederacy includes: Ojibway- Faith Keepers, Odawa- Trade Keepers, and Pottawatomi- Fire Keepers.

<sup>2</sup> The Haudenosaunee Confederacy consists of: Mohawk - People of the Flint; Oneida – People of the Standing Stone; Onondaga- People of the Great Mountain; Cayuga- People of the Pipe; Seneca - People of the Rolling Hills; and; Tuscarora- People of the Shirt.

friendship and equality... We would respect each other and not interfere with each others' ways or try to steer the others vessel. This living document would last forever; "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow. We would be 'brothers' as equals" (Tehahenteh, Knowledge Guardian).

### Silver Covenant Chain<sup>3</sup>



Another agreement symbolizing friendship and [relational accountability](#) was also introduced and it is called **Teyontatenentshónteron (We are connected by our arms)**. Rope would not be used as it would break. Iron would not be used as it would rust, and so silver would be used because when it would tarnish, the two brothers would get together to polish the chain and renew their covenant. It is said when there would be an issue that would arise, one would tug on the chain and request a meeting where they would resolve the issue that came before them.

This became our relationship and our covenant to each other, not just with the Dutch, but all settlers (Tehahenteh, Knowledge Guardian).

### A message from the Indigenous Education Lead

*Wa'tkwanonhwerá:ton, Welcome students, families, educators, staff, and [Treaty Partners](#),*

The Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family opens this policy in deep gratitude and respect. As [Treaty Partners](#), we share an ongoing collective responsibility to honor and uphold our agreements through meaningful action - ensuring daily care, accountability, and relationship-building in all we do. You are not just guests in this process; you are vital participants in safeguarding the well-being and future of [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners and families across our communities.

The HWDSB Indigenous Education Policy arrives at a transformative time in our shared history. We celebrate our Grade 6 students and look forward to 2031, when the first cohort who has *never lived under the threat of Residential Schools* will graduate. This milestone comes ten years after the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) (2015) and marks measurable progress toward justice, healing, and equity in education. We are grateful for HWDSB's ongoing commitment to [reconciliation](#) shown through [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) communities via the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC) and Indigenous Education Department. Your ongoing partnership is essential

<sup>3</sup> The second part of the Two Row Wampum agreement is the Silver Covenant Chain, also widely referred to as the Friendship Belt and both terms are used interchangeably binding newcomers to a promise to protect education, welfare of the people, and ongoing trade, in exchange for living in our homelands.

evidence of intentional steps toward relationships rooted in Kirkness and Barnhardt's [4 'R's: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility](#) (1991).

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UN Declaration, 2007) maintains the conditions for [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) Peoples and affirms inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#). We urge HWDSB to embody these principles daily by engaging meaningfully with [Indigenous](#) communities, respecting [Indigenous](#) leadership, and working together - in [syncretism](#) - as parallel partners with accountability and transparency.

The Ontario College of Teacher's [Ethical Standards](#) (2025) and [Standards of Practice](#) (2025) guide every educator in this system to act with respect, care, trust, integrity, and a commitment to lifelong learning rooted in relationship, reflection, and responsibility.

The Board of Trustee's continued collaboration with the Indigenous Education Department and [Indigenous Education Circle](#) is evidence of its intentional journey toward respectful, ethical, and transformative education. Let this policy serve as a living document, one that calls us not only to [reconciliation](#) but to [revillagize](#), [reclaim](#), [renew](#), [restore](#) and [celebrate](#) a restorative education system.

We are all [Pillars of the Palisade](#), responsible for the care and protection of every student. Together, we will create strength through unity and establish the structural integrity necessary to sustain nurturing and nourishing learning environments. These environments will cultivate intergenerational healing and wellness, [wholism](#), belonging, and thriving success. By upholding [compassion](#), [dignity](#), [trust](#), and [joy](#), we ensure every student is recognized, valued, seen and supported to reach their full potential.

## **PURPOSE:**

Education systems have been built upon [dominant Eurocentric ideologies](#) which have reinforced the intentional erasure of Indigenous Knowledges, languages, cultures, governance systems and beliefs. The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to cultivate and nurture meaningful relationships between Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) and the [Indigenous Education Circle \(IEC\)](#), an Ontario Ministry of Education standard, to action the shared goal of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) in a restorative education system.

As we untangle the legacies of [colonial](#) schooling systems as systems that were implemented under the guise of education (Doxtater, 2021, p. 40), and by understanding how the deprivation of Indigenous Knowledges resulted in a spectrum of contemporary consequences, we approach this work in peace, friendship, and with mutual respect. The Two Row Relationship Framework<sup>4</sup> is rooted in [relational accountability](#). We walk forward together, recognizing our common learning journey: *Every Child Matters*.

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<sup>4</sup> The Two Row Wampum treaty belt is the original relationship framework between the Haudenosaunee and the Europeans, with emphasis on mutual respect and non-interference.

The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)<sup>5</sup> (currently called the UN Declaration formerly called UNDRIP, 2007) maintains the conditions for [ethical engagement](#) and consultation with [Indigenous](#) Peoples and communities (i.e., the [IEC](#)) and respects inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#) as a standard for excellence in service delivery. Thus, HWDSB's meaningful engagement and ethical consultation with the [Indigenous](#) communities through the [IEC](#) and Indigenous Education Department is appreciated, and is evidence of intentional steps towards respectful, reciprocal, and reconciling relations.

### Host Nations

HWDSB is located *between two important rivers*: the Credit River is fed by Lake Ontario at the location now known as the City of Mississauga, which was the original village site of the Mississaugas of the Credit. The Grand River, for the Six Nations community, is the marker for the Haldimand Deed of 1784<sup>6</sup>, which promises to protect six miles deep on each side of the Grand River from the 'mouth to the source', and goes on to say, 'which them and their posterity are to enjoy forever'.

"Between two rivers" translates as:

- *Edooying mijoonoon niizh ziibiin*<sup>7</sup>. Ojibwe
- *Tsi nya'tekyátere ne tekahyónhake*<sup>8</sup>. Mohawk

HWDSB continues to foster an honest understanding of [Indigenous Host Nations'](#) cultures, which includes the traditional role as the original "stewards of these lands". In friendship with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), Six Nations of the Grand River (SNGR), and the [IEC](#), HWDSB will continue to nurture and strengthen this alliance, recognizing everyone has a responsibility as committed [Treaty Partners](#).

HWDSB understands and upholds our shared [Treaty Partner](#) responsibilities to the [Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan's \(IECSAP\)](#) purpose and vision:

*Honouring Our Ancestors: We will [revillagize](#), [reclaim](#), [renew](#), [restore](#), and [celebrate Indigenous](#) ways of knowing, being and doing to foster intergenerational healing and wellness.*

At HWDSB, each Pillar is strengthened through the collective unity of the [Palisade](#). Together, we make a meaningful commitment to [Reinforcing Indigenous Educational Wellness & Reconciliation](#):

*We will honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational*

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Timeline: 2007 Canada voted against the adoption; 2016 Canada fully endorsed and committed to its implementation; and; 2021 it received Royal Assent and came into force in June 21, making UNDRIP law in Canada.

<sup>6</sup> [Haldimand Deed](#)

<sup>7</sup> We credit and extend gratitude to Nokomis Martina Osawamick, Ojibwe/Odawa from Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, amik/beaver clan, for this Anishinaabemowin language translation.

<sup>8</sup> We credit and extend gratitude to Tehahenteh, Mohawk, turtle clan from Six Nations of the Grand River for this Kanyen'kéha translation.

*healing and wellness in a restorative education system ([Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#)).*

In a restorative education system, we make meaningful space for our shared, but distinct [Indigenous](#) and [Treaty Partner](#) (Western, Eurocentric) perspectives and approaches to commemoration, education, and healing and wellness<sup>9</sup>. We do this to benefit current students, families, the whole [HWDSB Community](#), and the ‘approaching faces’, also known as the future generations. We carry these truths forward.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

HWDSB approaches the Indigenous Education Policy in friendship with [Indigenous](#) Peoples, and our guiding principles outline the ways HWDSB will implement the commitments to Indigenous Education. Together we make intentional space to first honour, recognize, and affirm the guiding philosophical principles of the host nations and the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC), who, co-determine Indigenous Education Standards at HWDSB, [for-Indigenous-by-Indigenous](#). We acknowledge the enduring legacy of systemic, institutionalized racism and the broader impacts of [colonialism](#), including gender-based violence, [racism](#), [cultural genocide](#), and forced [assimilation](#). These have been perpetuated through legislation, policies, and practices that have deeply [oppressed Indigenous](#) Peoples. We then take our place alongside the [IEC](#) to outline the philosophical principles, based on on-going community consultation that informs our work in-relationship.

### **The Guiding Principles outline the ways HWDSB will implement the commitments to Indigenous Education:**

- We proceed with open minds, a willingness to learn, conscious of the gaps in historic truths.
- We are mindful of the need for sincere engagement, and we commit to our own ongoing learning.
- We are guided in the spirit of educational wellness, and in consultation and collaboration with the Indigenous Education Department as the liaison with local [Indigenous](#) community partners.

We value each learner by actively seeing, hearing, and listening to them and reflecting on and responding to their educational wellness needs. Every Child Matters.

### **Host Nations’ Natural Laws & Guiding Principles**

A shared commonality across many [Indigenous Worldviews](#) is our path to connectedness and interconnectedness, interdependency, and inter-relationship. HWDSB understands the importance of recognizing [Host Nations](#): Mississaugas of the Credit and Six Nations of the Grand River. We honour their distinct and inherent laws, rich cultures, languages, philosophies, traditional governance models, and ways of knowing, being, and doing. This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous Peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

- The Anishinaabe, Three Fires Confederacy and the [Seven Sacred Teachings](#):
  - *Zoongide’ewin* – Bravery
  - *Gwayakwaadiziwin* – Honesty

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<sup>9</sup> Commemoration, Education, Healing, and Wellness are main components of the Federal Indian Day School Class Action Lawsuit.

- *Dabasendiziwin* – Humility
- *Zaagi'idiwin* – Love
- *Manaaji'idiwin* – Respect
- *Debwewin* – Truth
- *Nibwaakaawin* – Wisdom
- Haudenosaunee [Great \(Natural\) Law](#):
  - *Ka'nikonhrí:yo* – The Good Mind
  - *Skén:nen* – Peace (healthy mind, healthy body)
  - *Ka'satsténhsera* – Strength through Unity

### Broader Contextual Policies, Principles, Legislation & Legislative Abuses

In friendship, we offer the following policies, principles, legislation, and legislative abuses to contextualize the historical and ongoing relationship between [Indigenous](#) Peoples and Canada (on behalf of the Crown), and emphasize the call for our individual and collective efforts towards advancing *truth* in [reconciliation](#) in education.

### Global

- 1959 [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- 2007 We are guided by the international [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(the UN Declaration\)](#), as presented to UN members and voted against by Canada, along with Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.
- 2010 We acknowledge Canada's endorsement of the UN Declaration as an aspirational document by reversing its vote; however, it was non-legally binding and did not change Canadian law
- 2016 We acknowledge Canada's official removal of objector status to the UN Declaration
- 2019 We recognize the United Nations [International Year of Indigenous Languages](#)
- 2022-2032 We recognize [United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO) decade of Indigenous Languages

### [Kaná:ta](#) - Canada

- 1794 Jay Treaty
- 1814 Treaty of Ghent
- 1857 [Gradual Civilization Act](#)
- 1869 [Gradual Enfranchisement Act](#)
- 1876 [Indian Act](#) the oldest, racist, and gender-based legislation in Canada that remains active
- 1879 Davin Report, also known as the [Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds](#)
- 1907 Report on [The Indian Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories](#) by Dr. Peter H. Bryce
- 1917 [Canadian Women in Ontario are given the right to vote](#)
- 1922 The Story of a National Crime also known as [The Bryce Report](#), was published

- 1950s Prior, it was illegal for [Indians](#) to own land off reserve, including [War Veterans](#) who volunteered to serve
- 1960 [Indians](#) were given the [right to vote](#) without conditions
- 1967 We recognize [A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Educational Needs and Policies – Part 2 \(The Hawthorn Report\)](#)
- 1972 We are guided by the legacy of Indigenous advocacy of [self-determination](#) in Indigenous Education, such as the [Indian Control of Indian Education Policy Paper](#)
- 1996 Federal government placed a 2% cap on Indigenous elementary and secondary education, which led to longstanding gross disparities between federal and provincial funding models
- 1998 [Address by the Honourable Jane Stewart Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development on the occasion of the unveiling of Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan](#)
- 2006 Indian Residential School Class Action Lawsuit Announcement
- 2007 We are guided by the spirit and intent of Orange Shirt Day, September 30<sup>th</sup>
- 2014 We are encouraged that Indian Residential School was removed from the Indian Act
- 2015 June 2<sup>nd</sup>, We are guided by the [National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's \(TRC\) 94 Calls to Action](#), and make explicit connections to [Education](#) as per calls to Action 62 to 65
- 2015 We are guided by the complete [National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Reports](#), and its Volume 4 of Survivor Accounts outlining *Deaths and Unmarked Graves*
- 2015 We are guided by the TRC's final report, calling for the UN Declaration to be the framework for [reconciliation](#) in Canada and for its adoption at all levels of government.
- 2019 [Indigenous Languages Act](#) received Royal Assent
- 2019 Class Action Lawsuit for Indian Day School Announcement
- 2021 We pause to commemorate the [215 Kamloops Indian Residential School](#)
- 2021 the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#) received Royal Assent, and thereby legally advanced the UN Declaration's implementation; and furthermore;
- 2023 [The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act: Action Plan](#)
- 2022 We are encouraged by the recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30<sup>th</sup>
- 2026 In June, we celebrate the first cohort of Indigenous students who will graduate without the threat of forced attendance at Residential Schools

#### **Ontario:io - Ontario and locally relevant context**

- 1828 The Mohawk Institute opens as a day school for boys
- 1831 Mohawk Institute reopens as the longest running residential school in Canada by the Anglican churches
- 1970 We recognize the closure of the [Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford, ON](#)
- 1989 MCFN and Six Nations held a school [Boycott](#) to ensure safe schools for their children
- 1996 We recognize the closure of Canada's last Residential School whilst the funding formula for Indian Day Schools changed
- 1996 The Ontario College of Teachers was created by the [Ontario College of Teachers Act](#)
- 2007 We are guided by the [Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework](#)

- 2008 The professional designation “Ontario Certified Teacher (OCT)” was introduced
- 2014 We are guided by the [Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework](#)
- 2019 We are guided by the provincial [Ethical Standards & the Standards of Practice of the Teaching Profession \(OCT\)](#)
- 2022 We are guided by provincial [Restorative Journey: Indigenous Educational Wellness \(OCT\)](#)
- 2023 We are encouraged that the Indigenous Education Lead was welcomed as a member of [HWDSB Executive Council](#).

#### **Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) Guiding Principles:**

- The [IEC](#) is guided by the principles of the [Host Nations](#) and broader contexts.
- [Indigenous Education Councils](#) “guide school boards and schools in building stronger relationships with communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices, and enhancing collaborative work to support Host Nation members, First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement and well-being. All school boards must have formal structures, such as IECs to support Indigenous Education in school boards” (Government of Ontario, n.d.).

*“I see it... [engaging with Indigenous Peoples in friendship] ...as initiatives created by Indigenous people for everyone. In that way, we transform the way Indigenous people in this country are perceived from a burden to a resource” (K. Doxtater, 2024).*

#### **INTENDED OUTCOMES:**

##### **Learners**

HWDSB will support and provide guidance to every learner, honouring and practicing peace, friendship, and respect. As [Treaty Partners](#), we each represent a [Pillar in the Palisade](#). We work together with the intent to protect [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners. We value the unique *gifts/strengths*, and distinct cultural identity of each learner and provide them with the tools to:

- Identify their gifts/strengths.
- Nurture their gifts/strengths.
- Value their gifts/strengths.
- Identify, nurture and value their gifts/strengths and their whole selves in relation to their own respective home and/or urban [Indigenous](#) communities, [HWDSB Community](#), and broader community, and global village contexts.
- Co-author an individualized learning and wellness plan with HWDSB supports to reach their full potential.
- Create innovative responses and/or implement appropriate cultural responses and approaches to reflect, and respond to the needs of learners (e.g., Indigenous Critical Incident Response Team - ICIRT).
- Create learning environments conducive to improve well-being, achievement, and friendships among [Indigenous](#) and non-Indigenous learners.

- Promote [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and educational equity of access, opportunity, and outcome for [Indigenous](#) learners in the areas of:
  - Providing [strength-based learning](#) is conducive to promoting self-esteem.
  - Identifying, honouring, and nurturing the gifts that each learner brings to contribute to our village (i.e., classroom, school, HWDSB, and broader community environmental context).
  - Fostering creativity, critical thought, and choice, through an individualized and co-authored learning plan.
  - Upholding [Indigenous](#) epistemologies, methodologies, pedagogies, and wholistic learning opportunities, while ensuring the utilization and application of the [4 'A's: Accuracy, Authenticity, Accountability to all levels of community and Appropriateness](#).
  - Teaching literacy and numeracy.
  - Offering support and guidance to encourage meaningful engagement, successful completion, and retention of students in school.
  - Contributing to increased number of commencement and graduates.
  - Creating opportunities for engagement, and active participation.
  - Supporting advancement to post-secondary studies reflective of all pathways.
  - Understanding the current and historic cultural, experiential, economic, social and political patterns of the urban [Indigenous](#) population, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nations, Six Nations of the Grand River, and home First Nations that reside within the HWDSB community.

### **Parents, Caregivers, Families and Kinship Relations**

We work together with the intent of nurturing meaningful and trusting relationships with caregivers, parents, families, communities, Host Nations, and Band Membership communities to:

- Honour their inherent rights to [self-determination](#) and [free, prior, and informed consent](#).
- Ensure they are seen, heard, respected, and that their contributions are valued.
- Create meaningful space to actively listen to understand their needs, ideas, and contributions to [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) that is responsive and reflective.
- Practice [ethical engagement](#), consultation, and collaboration in school and system-based initiatives to ensure content and perspectives are locally informed, reflected, and responsive.
- Integrate [accuracy, authenticity, accountability and appropriateness](#) to [Indigenous](#) communities as cultural norms and protocols to working in-relationship with local [Indigenous](#) community members.
- Enable them to inform culturally relevant, responsive and nation-specific approaches to school and system policies, practices, and procedures.

### **[Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partner Relationship](#)**

We work together with the intent to make space to foster respect and reciprocity rooted in [relational accountability](#) between HWDSB's and the [Indigenous Education Council](#) (IEC) Kahwát:sire, Zaagi'idiwin Family Structure (as referenced in the Responsibility section) on Indigenous Education, [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and Truth and Reconciliation by:

- Reaffirming the historic covenant of peace, friendship, and respect as our foundation (The Two Row Wampum and the Silver Covenant Chain, also known as the Friendship belt).
- HWDSB will entrench the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (the UN Declaration, 2007) into these relationships.
- HWDSB will action the Calls to Actions from the 2015 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC).
- HWDSB centers the Host Nations: Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River.
- HWDSB acknowledges [guest](#) First Nations (Status and Non-Status), Métis and Inuit Peoples.
- [Indigenous](#) Peoples, authentic Knowledges and protocols, resources, and contributions are treated with care, protection, [respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility](#).
- During this monumental time of Truth and Reconciliation, HWDSB remains committed to peace, friendship, and respect by including authentic Indigenous Education leadership and voice to ensure accuracy and accountability to the [IEC](#), Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Six Nations of the Grand River [Host Nations](#), as well as local [Indigenous](#) communities of Hamilton and the collective [HWDSB community](#).

## RESPONSIBILITY:

The [Pillars of the Pallisade](#): Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness Framework (see below) is a tool to enable us to consider the [relational accountability](#) between the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC) - Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagídiwin, Family Structure - and HWDSB.



<p><b>The <u>Indigenous Education Circle</u> (IEC) Family Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Indigenous</u> Learners (<a href="#">CC:ROSE</a>, Our Sustenance, and the Indigenous Student Leader, whose role is to amplify the voices of their student community. The title of this role will reflect the home community of the student who holds this role, and, as such, will change over time</li> <li>• Elders, Knowledge Guardians, Language Speakers</li> <li>• Parents, Caregivers, Aunties, Uncles, Families (Kinship)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Ethical Space of Engagement:</u></b></p> <p><i>Is where <u>Indigenous</u> and non-Indigenous Knowledge systems, worldviews, and values respectfully coexist and interact to foster meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding.</i></p> <p><u>Syncretism:</u></p>	<p><b>HWDSB Governance and Leadership Structure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HWDSB’s Board of Trustees are accountable to the Education Act and HWDSB Communities. Director of Education, Secretary to the Board of Trustees</li> <li>• Executive Council</li> <li>• Principals, Vice-Principals, System Leaders</li> <li>• School and System-based Support Staff</li> <li>• Administrators</li> <li>• Education Workers</li> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Parents, Families and Communities</li> </ul>
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<p>relations, extended clan families)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local urban <a href="#">Indigenous</a> community partners</li> <li>• <a href="#">Host Nations</a></li> <li>• Neighbouring Nations</li> <li>• <a href="#">Indigenous</a> Staff employed by HWDSB</li> <li>• Indigenous Education Lead, accountable to the learners, IEC, the Indigenous Education Office (IEO) of the Ministry of Education, and HWDSB</li> </ul>	<p><i>We blend our tools with care as we walk forward together</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students (<a href="#">Indigenous</a> and non-Indigenous Learners)</li> </ul>
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### **ACTION REQUIRED:**

*In their respective areas of influence, as competent and committed [Treaty Partners](#), every individual in each department will practice vigilance in identifying the gaps and areas of [Indigenous](#) omission and work collaboratively with the Indigenous Education Department on restorative solutions for meaningful inclusion and integration of [Indigenous](#) thought, pedagogy, voice, perspectives, and contributions.*

#### **For this, HWDSB will work in syncretism with the Indigenous Education Circle (IEC) to:**

- Maintain and recognize the [Indigenous Education Circle](#) (IEC) as the formal governing structure for Indigenous Education at HWDSB, who will lead the regular review, implementation, monitoring and revising of:
  - The [Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan \(IECSAP\)](#) as the aspirational and reconciliation document outlining short- and long-range plans for Indigenous Education.
  - The Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education, and ensure alignment between HWDSB and Ministry of Education Priorities.
  - The Voluntary, Confidential Self-Identification Policy including student, parent/caregiver/guardian, and community engagement (e.g., IEC) adjacent to Student Census and through the position of data governance and [sovereignty](#).
  - The Indigenous Education Procedures.
  - The Smudging Policy and Procedure to reflect the IECSAP and importance of protecting Sacred Ancestral Knowledges, Ceremonies, Sacred Items, Medicines, etc.
  - An Indigenous Research Methodology Framework.
  - Develop Indigenous Education Standards that are locally relevant and responsive to land/territory, and the worldviews and aspirations of the host nations and the IEC.

Implement and nurture CC:ROSE, or an equivalent Indigenous-student centered, -focused and -led leadership and learning community for students in Grades 7-12. Its purpose is to foster a restorative, supportive, inclusive, and culturally grounded environment for Indigenous learners across HWDSB, tethered to the guiding principles of authenticity, accuracy and accountability to all levels of community. This group represents the Indigenous student body of

HWDSB, and members collectively engage in the governing processes that raise the *Indigenous Student Leader* at HWDSB, responsible for uplifting and amplifying the voices of their community. Inspired by Our Sustenance, also known as the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash; CC:ROSE functions within a shared, interconnected, scaffolding leadership model. This model supports the creation of sustainable systems and structures that respond to the broader educational needs, holistic health, well-being and success of Indigenous Learners throughout HWDSB.

**To further support these initiatives and engage in reciprocal engagement and action:**

- The following documents contain important information to begin to reframe our knowledge and understandings of Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness through local Indigenous community-driven, and community-informed approaches: [Indigenous Education Circle's Strategic Action Plan \(IECSAP\)](#), [Restorative Journey](#), and the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and Calls to Action](#)
- In alignment with the [UN Declaration](#), the Board of Trustee's' meaningful engagement and ethical consultation with the [Indigenous](#) communities through the [IEC](#) and Indigenous Education Department is appreciated and is evidence of intentional steps towards respectful, reciprocal and reconciling relations.
- HWDSB System Leaders will integrate all five Strategic Directions of the [Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#) into their Board Improvement Plans, School Improvement Plans, and department work plans, recognizing that everyone has a responsibility to action this work, and contribute to meaningful change and transformation.
- HWDSB will maintain and continuously evaluate structures of [accountability, accuracy, authenticity, and appropriateness](#) by working collaboratively with and alongside the Indigenous Education Department on curriculum development, course delivery, unique program development (i.e., teacher selection, lesson plans, activities, vetting resources/learning materials), guest speakers, and assessment/evaluation approaches, etc. with the Indigenous Education Department leading as identified.

**We can all:**

- Enable individuals to position themselves in relation to [Indigenous](#) learners, families, communities, along historical and contemporary contexts to build an understanding and appreciation for [Indigenous](#) ways of knowing, being and doing. For example, Staff are invited to access the many tools provided on the [Indigenous Education Sharepoint](#) to support their own personal and professional growth. Students, families and community members are invited to access tools and resources on HWDSB's website.
- Enable individuals to recognize their own gifts/assets to nurture [syncretism](#) to support instructional practice, cross-curricular [Indigenous](#) teaching and learning approaches, and to contribute to [Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness](#).
- Implement system-wide improvement and proficiency on the protection of Indigenous Knowledges and pedagogies, and the care of all students, staff, educators, system leaders,

community partners, and learners on the restorative journey of [Indigenous Educational Wellness](#) and [Reconciliation](#) with Indigenous leadership.

- Generate collaborative and proactive solutions and strategies to practice respectfulness, maintain friendships, and restore the “peace”.

## PROGRESS INDICATORS:

### Preamble

Research involving [Indigenous](#) peoples in Canada has been defined and carried out primarily by non-[Indigenous](#) researchers, and often supported colonial goals. The approaches used have not generally reflected [Indigenous Worldviews](#), and the research has rarely benefited [Indigenous](#) peoples or communities. As a result, [Indigenous](#) peoples continue to regard research, particularly research originating outside their communities, as extractive and exploitative.

In support of autonomous [Indigenous](#) Nations, in an effort to build [trust](#), and to decolonize, [re-villagize](#) and re-Indigenize research, assessment and, more generally, the measurement of progress within HWDSB, the progress indicators listed below aim to reorient indicators to align more closely with the values of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility, as well as an [Indigenous Worldview](#) centered on interdependence, and interconnectedness.

For these reasons, some of the assessment measures listed below will include [Indigenous](#) methodologies and approaches, which may look very different from assessment measures in other HWDSB policies. These progress indicators will be amended as the Indigenous Education Department develops an Indigenous Research Framework.

Through individual and collective commitment to professional learning and development and ongoing capacity-building with respect to [Indigenous](#) Knowledges and ways of knowing, being and doing, and through [ethical engagement](#), cooperation and partnerships with the [Indigenous Education Circle](#): [Indigenous](#) learners, families, communities, host nations and organizations; and the Ministry of Education’s Indigenous Education Office, HWDSB will:

Canoe Assessment	Intended Outcome	Ship Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education</li> <li>• Voluntary Confidential Self-Identification of <a href="#">Indigenous Learners</a></li> <li>• Graduation/Commencement Rates</li> <li>• Credit Accumulation</li> </ul>	Improved <a href="#">Indigenous</a> student achievement and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)</li> <li>• Board Improvement Plan (BIP)</li> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Student Census</li> <li>• Disproportionality Data</li> <li>• School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Health and Peer Relations Survey</li> <li>• School Improvement Data</li> <li>• Power BI data</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education</li> <li>• Voluntary Confidential Self-Identification of <a href="#">Indigenous Learners</a></li> <li>• Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (<a href="#">CC:ROSE</a>); Our Sustenance; and; the Indigenous Student Leader</li> <li>• Graduation/Commencement Rates</li> <li>• Credit Accumulation</li> </ul>	Promote <a href="#">Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness</a> and educational equity of access, opportunity and outcome for <a href="#">Indigenous learners</a> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)</li> <li>• Board Improvement Plan (BIP)</li> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Student Census</li> <li>• Disproportionality Data</li> <li>• School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Health and Peer Relations Survey</li> <li>• School Improvement Data</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Board Action Plan (BAP) on Indigenous Education</li> <li>• Graduation/Commencement Rates</li> <li>• Credit Accumulation</li> <li>• Enrollment in Indigenous Studies Courses</li> </ul>	Improving and expanding knowledge of all students and educators on <a href="#">Indigenous and Host Nations'</a> histories, perspectives, contributions and ways of knowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP)</li> <li>• Board Improvement Plan (BIP)</li> <li>• Indigenous Education Circle Strategic Action Plan (IECSAP)</li> <li>• Student Census</li> <li>• Disproportionality Data</li> <li>• Enrollment in Indigenous Studies Courses</li> <li>• Enhanced system-level supports and planning on Indigenous Education priorities</li> <li>• School Climate Survey</li> <li>• School Improvement Data</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened relationship with <a href="#">Indigenous Education Circle</a> and</li> </ul>	Continued cultivation and nurturing of meaningful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HWDSB Employment Equity Audit</li> </ul>

<p>its Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family Sustainable Structure</li> <li>• Mutual Agreements of Understanding</li> <li>• Third Party Partnerships</li> </ul>	<p>relationships alongside local urban <a href="#">Indigenous</a> community of Hamilton-Wentworth and <a href="#">Host Nations</a>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We All Count</li> <li>• School Climate Survey</li> <li>• Increased understanding of roles and responsibility as <a href="#">Treaty Partners</a>.</li> <li>• Increased individual and collective system-capacity of reconciliatory efforts towards <a href="#">Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness</a>.</li> <li>• Increased appreciation, acceptance and validation of Indigenous Education, Knowledges and ways of knowing, being and doing as beneficial for everyone.</li> </ul>
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## TERMINOLOGY:

### [The 4 'A's – Accuracy, Authenticity, Accountability to Indigenous Communities, and Appropriateness:](#)

Provide HWDSB Staff with a critical lens to eVALUate and select resources, speakers, and mixed media related to Indigenous content. This framework ensures that educational practices uphold Indigenous protocols, foster respectful relationships, and reflect the lived realities and authentic knowledge systems of Indigenous Peoples. Vetting through the 4A's is not only about quality assurance; it is an act of relational responsibility that builds meaningful connections to Indigenous Peoples, places, perspectives, and practices.

**The 4 'R's:** First proposed by [Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt](#) in 1991 as a guide for meaningful and intentional engagement of learners and a way non-Indigenous people can respectfully work alongside Indigenous peoples and communities. They are defined as follows:

- **Respect:** The foundation of the Four 'R's. It means recognizing the inherent value and dignity of all people, including Indigenous peoples and their knowledge. Respect also involves acknowledging and honouring the history and traditions of Indigenous peoples, including their unique ways of knowing, being, and doing. By demonstrating respect, non-Indigenous people can create a safe and welcoming space for Indigenous knowledge to be shared and valued.
- **Relevance:** means recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge and culture in today's world. Indigenous knowledge is grounded in centuries of lived experience and is deeply connected to the land and environment. By recognizing the relevance of Indigenous knowledge, non-Indigenous people can gain a deeper understanding of their own place in the world and their responsibility to care for the environment.
- **Reciprocity:** means recognizing that relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples must be based on mutual respect, understanding, and benefit. Reciprocity involves giving and receiving in equal measure and recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge and

culture in shaping our collective future. By practicing reciprocity, non-Indigenous people can build stronger relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities

- **Responsibility:** means recognizing the role that non-Indigenous people have in creating a more just and equitable society for all. Responsibility involves acknowledging the harms of colonization and working towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. It also means taking action to address the ongoing social, economic, and environmental issues facing Indigenous communities. (Office of Professional Learning, University of British Columbia, n.d.).

**Assimilation:** Policies intended to terminate the cultural, social, economic, and political distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples by absorbing them into mainstream Canadian life and values (Indigenous Foundations, University of British Columbia, 2019).

**Autonomy:** Indigenous Peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing autonomous functions (Indigenous Peoples and Development Branch, Division for Inclusive Social Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). **Celebrate:** Celebrate accuracy, authenticity, accountability and appropriateness to local/host Indigenous communities, by advancing Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness, while reconciling our role as Indigenous Peoples and treaty partners ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

**Collective Rights:** The inherent rights which Indigenous peoples have practiced and enjoyed since time immemorial. Each First Nation historically functioned as a distinct society, so there is no one official overarching ‘Indigenous’ definition. In general, rights to the land, rights to sustenance and subsistence resources and activities, the right to self-determination and self-government/governance, and the right to practice one’s own culture and customs including language, ceremony and/or beliefs. Collective rights are the result of Indigenous peoples’ own occupation of their ancestral home territories as well as ongoing social structures, patterns, political and legal systems. Therefore, collective Indigenous rights are separate and distinct from rights afforded to non-Indigenous citizens under Canadian common law and were to be protected in Indigenous/Crown treaties. It should be noted that inherent rights were entrenched with responsibility. For example, Sewatokwà:tsera/the One Dish treaty agreement outlines the rights to utilize the entities that Mother Earth carries on her body, to share the sustenance and to protect her, to ensure future generations will be able to practice these same rights.

**Colonialism:** The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with ‘*unsettlers*’<sup>10</sup>, and exploiting it economically. In Canada, this historically and currently means that Western European-derived ways of being, believing, knowing, and doing are implicitly or explicitly imposed as the standard or norm. Colonialism remains embedded in the legal, political and economic context of Eurocentric Canada today, and in the lived experience of marginalized and systematically oppressed Indigenous peoples. For example, the 1876 Indian Act and the Canadian institutions known as Indian Residential “Schools”, and “Indian Day Schools”, historic provincial child welfare misapplications commonly known as ‘60’s Scoop’, and non-Indigenous peoples’ refusal to

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<sup>10</sup> Term used in place of “settler” as Indigenous Peoples don’t see colonization as settling anything.

acknowledge the inherent land and foundational treaty rights and agreements made with Indigenous Nations continues to contribute to this legacy.

**Compassion:** Leading with peace, friendship and love creates space for compassionate accountability, where we are responsible to one another in creating a culture of care (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

**Cultivating Community: Reclaiming Our Spaces in Education (CC:ROSE):** is an Indigenous student-centered, -focused and -led leadership and learning community for students in Grades 7-12. Its purpose is to foster a restorative, supportive, inclusive, and culturally grounded environment for Indigenous learners across HWDSB, tethered to the guiding principles of authenticity, accuracy and accountability to all levels of community. CC:ROSE nurtures community through a range of cultural activities and workshops. This includes: cooking, dancing, making traditional clothes, items, and participating in traditional games, as well as listening to teachings, meeting Elders, Knowledge Holders, Language Protectors, and Residential School Survivors. From the Indigenous worldview: CC:ROSE operates from a kinship model and as an extended family structure. Representing the Indigenous student body of HWDSB, CC:ROSE members collectively engage in consensus-based decision making governing processes through an Indigenous Student Leader, whose role is to amplify the voices of their student community. The title of this role will reflect the home community of the student who holds this role, and, as such, will change over time “.Inspired by *Our Sustenance*, also known as the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans and Squash; CC:ROSE functions within a shared, interconnected, scaffolding leadership model. This model supports the creation of sustainable systems and structures that respond to the broader educational needs, holistic health, well-being and success of Indigenous learners throughout HWDSB.

**Cultural genocide:** Is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, and populations are forcibly transferred and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identify from one generation to the next (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, p. 1).

**Decolonization:** In Canada, decolonization is related to Indigenous people reclaiming and restoring their culture, land, language, laws, relationships, knowledge, and a reaffirmation of traditional governance. Decolonization is also associated with other relationships between groups of people within Canada and in other countries and contexts around the world and can be linked to broader principles of inclusion and equity. Canada’s identity as an *‘unsettler’*, colonial state complicates the task of decolonization, since the original colonizers are still here and acts of colonization continue to persist. Graham Smith resists the term to describe transformational change, as the term decolonization is a “reactive notion; it immediately puts the colonizer and the history of colonization back at the “centre”. In moving to transformative politics we need to understand the history of colonization, but the bulk of our work and focus must be on what is it that we want, what [it] is we are about and to “imagine” our future (Cote-Meek, 2020, p. 162).

**Dignity:** Reciprocity, anti-racism and anti-oppression lead to a just and equitable learning community, where every person is included, respected and valued (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

**Dominant group:** The group at the top of the social hierarchy. In any relationship between groups that define each other (men/women, able-bodied/person with disability), the dominant group is valued more highly...Dominant groups set the norms by which the minoritized group is judged. Dominant groups have greater access to the resources of society and benefit from the existence of the inequality (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 223)

**Ethical Space of Engagement:** Refers to the concept and practical framework where Indigenous and non-Indigenous Knowledge systems, worldviews, and values respectfully coexist and interact to foster meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding. It emphasizes creating a shared space that acknowledges historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism, and where relationships are built on principles of respect, humility, reciprocity, and relational accountability (Ermine, 2007). This space is designed to facilitate critical reflection, ethical relationship-building, and respectful decision-making, prioritizing Indigenous leadership and sovereignty. It encourages shared responsibility for both knowledge protection and co-creation, ensuring Indigenous voices and knowledges are validated and not exploited. The core of the ethical space involves ongoing dialogue, transparency, and the recognition of Indigenous concepts of knowing, being, and doing—fostering an environment of trust, cultural safety, and genuine partnership (Ermine, 2007; Indigenous Engagement Institute, 2024; Lindstrom, 2022).

**Eurocentric ideology (Eurocentrism):** Eurocentrism has been defined as an attitude, conceptual apparatus, or set of empirical beliefs that frame Europe as the primary engine and architect of world history, the bearer of universal values and reason, and the pinnacle and therefore model of progress and development. In Eurocentric narratives (ScienceDirect, n.d.), the superiority of Europe is evident in its achievements in economic and political systems, technologies, and the high quality of life enjoyed by its societies (Sundberg, 2009). Honorable Justice Murray Sinclair talks about the twin myths of European superiority and Indigenous inferiority. Verna St. Denis references Ng (1993)'s assertion that the ideology of European superiority was deployed to justify the subordination of Aboriginal People and had material consequences, as it justified the taking of Indigenous land, the confinement of Aboriginal people to reserves, and their subjugation to Christian education (St. Denis, 2007). Other such examples of Eurocentric ideologies include the assertions that Indigenous peoples were uncivil, child-like and dependent upon the paternalistic control of Europeans, and inconsequently justified actions such as assimilative education (Bagshaw, Cherubini & Dockstader, 2022).

**For-Indigenous-By-Indigenous:** Refers to an approach in which programs, policies, and solutions are created and led by Indigenous Peoples, specifically for the benefit of Indigenous communities. This framework centers Indigenous voices, upholds the principle of self-determination, and ensures that initiatives are culturally grounded and community driven. It empowers Indigenous Nations to lead the work of the People, for the People, in ways that reflect their values, knowledge systems, and priorities.

**Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC):** Emphasizes the importance of recognizing and upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples and ensuring that there is effective and meaningful participation of Indigenous peoples in decisions that affect them, their communities and territories. More specifically, FPIC describes processes that are *free* from manipulation or coercion, *informed* by adequate and timely information, and occur sufficiently *prior* to a decision so that Indigenous rights and interests can be

incorporated or addressed effectively as part of the decision-making process - all as part of meaningfully aiming to secure the consent of affected Indigenous peoples (Department of Justice Canada, n.d.).

**Genocide:** Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948).

**The Great Law:** Teachings of Peace, Good mind and Equity – the foundations of being Haudenosaunee as shared by the Peacemaker (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2022). As *translated by Tehahenteh as Ka’nikonhrí:yo* - The Good Mind, *Skén:nen* - Peace (healthy mind, healthy body), and *Ka’satsténhsera* - Strength through Unity. This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

**Guest Nation members:** Indigenous peoples who are guests and/or visitors to this territory.

**Hegemony:** “The imposition of dominant group ideology onto everyone in society. Hegemony makes it difficult to escape or to resist believing in this dominant ideology, thus social control is achieved through conditioning rather than physical force or intimidation” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

**HWDSB Community:** Students, staff, parents, guardians, caregivers, trustees, community advisory committee members, school council members, permit holders, vendors, service providers, contractors, volunteers, visitors, all other persons who are invited to, access or provide services, or attend Board and school events and any person or entity who enters into an agreement or uses school board property.

**HWDSB Executive Council:** Refers to the senior leadership team who are responsible for directing school board operations and implementing policies across the system. Together, they support student achievement and ensure compliance with the Ontario Education Act.

**Ideology:** “The big, shared ideas of a society that are reinforced throughout all of the institutions and thus are very hard to avoid believing. These ideas include the stories, myths, representations, explanations, definitions, and rationalizations that are used to justify inequality in society. Individualism and Meritocracy are examples of ideology” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p.224).

**Indian:** The legal definition of "Indian" in the [Indian Act](#) (Government of Canada, 1985) refers to a person who is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an. This legal identity, known as "Indian status," is determined by the government-maintained Indian Register based on criteria outlined in Section 6 of the Act, not solely on ancestry.

**Indigenous:** A Latin term meaning “born of the land” or “springs from the land”. When you create

something from an Indigenous perspective, you are creating it from that environment, from that land that it sits on. Indigenous peoples' traditions and customs are shaped by the environment, the land, their relationship; their spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to that land. It speaks to them; it gives them their responsibility to stewardship (Wilson, 2020, p.88). Currently the preferred collective name for the original people within Canada and their descendants. This includes First Nation (Status and Non-status), Métis and Inuit peoples.

**Indigenous Education Circle (IEC):** Is also referred to as the Indigenous Education Kahwà:tsire, Zaagi'idiwin, Family and is a structure that recognizes all of our kinship relations that we are accountable to. It is inclusive of participation of host nations (Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee) and local urban Indigenous community of Hamilton, Indigenous students, families as well as extended community support networks ranging from Indigenous community service agencies to Elders/Knowledge Guardians to cross-sector representation in the fields such as Health, Justice, and higher Education.

**Indigenous Education Councils:** Guide school boards and schools in building stronger relationships with communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices and enhancing collaborative work to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit student achievement and well-being. All school boards must have formal structures such as IECs to support Indigenous Education in school boards (Government of Ontario, (n.d.).

**Indigenous Worldviews:** "A worldview can pertain to an individual, group, or society. Overall, a worldview is a set of beliefs and values that are honoured and withheld by a number of people. A worldview includes how the person or group interacts with the world around them, including land, animals, and people. Every person and society has a worldview. Many societies pass on their worldview to their children to ensure worldview continuity. As people interact and learn from one another, it is not uncommon for them to acquire the beliefs of other worldviews. Worldviews evolve as people and societies evolve" (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2022).

**Joy:** Curiosity, play and fun are catalysts for meaningful student learning outcomes and support joyful and enriching experiences (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

**Kaná:ta:** Mohawk term for "Village", commonly known as "Canada".

**Local Host Nations/Communities:** Refers to the responsibility of ethical engagement with the local Anishinaabe community, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the local Haudenosaunee community, Six Nations of the Grand River, and local urban Indigenous communities that call Hamilton-Wentworth home.

**Ontarí:io:** Huron term for "beautiful lake", commonly known as "Ontario"

**Oppression:** The combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called "target groups") and benefits other groups (often called "dominant groups"). Examples of these systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. These systems enable dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing ([HWDSB Social Work](#)).

**Palisade Model:** Our message to learners is that we each represent *a pillar in the palisade* that surrounds our ancient village. Even though we do not live in the ancient villages anymore, we can understand they are homelands where we can still carry ourselves with the dignity of our ancestors. We are responsible for individual contributions to protecting what our ancestors placed in that canoe as part of the Two Row Wampum treaty of eternal peace and friendship: language, culture, ceremony, governance, and territory. We are also responsible for fulfilling the original instruction “to help the people” (Doxtater, 2021).

**Protected Knowledge:** Refers to respecting and honouring the collective knowledge of all Indigenous nations and communities passed on by Elders/Knowledge Holders/Traditional Teachers, storytellers, artists, musicians, architects, botanists, astronomers, scientists, law makers, traditional governance keepers etc. from generation to generation in the areas of Ancestral Knowledge, wisdom, traditional teachings and cultural practices. Local Elders typically share information when the recipient is considered ready and willing.

**Racism:** A set of erroneous assumptions, opinions and actions stemming from the belief that one race is inherently superior to another. Racism may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

**Reclaim:** Displace intergenerational shame, fear and trauma with our inherent intergenerational wellness as we reclaim our knowledges, pedagogies, culture(s), language(s), and laws ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

**Reconciliation:** In Canada, the term was used by the federal government when it was required to establish the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) as part of the [Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement](#). It has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples. Reconciliation also refers to efforts made to address the harms caused by various policies and programs of colonization. For some, the word represents an opportunity to reflect on the past, to heal and to make right. For others, however, current gestures of reconciliation are merely performative, and lack meaningful action to address the harms done by colonization. Ideally, reconciliation is something that both parties would agree to, as opposed to having it announced, ordered, or proclaimed.

**Relational Accountability:** Being accountable to your relations means that the researcher has a vested interest in the integrity of the methodology (*respectful*) and the usefulness of the results if they are to be of any use in the Indigenous community (*reciprocity*) (Wilson, 2020, p.77). The methodology needs to be based in a community context (*be relational*) and has to demonstrate respect, reciprocity and responsibility (be accountable as it is put into action) (Wilson, 2020, p. 99).

**Renew:** Renew respectful relationships with treaty partners, reaffirming that our shared roles and responsibilities continue ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

**Restore:** Restore our original instructions to provide guidance and support to every learner to protect Mother Earth and to help the people ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

**Restorative Indigenous Education:** We celebrate Indigenous Knowledge, pedagogies, ways of knowing,

ways of celebrating, ways of expressing, and applying that knowledge while no longer living in fear from reprimand or punishment. This restorative education model offers a tempered learning environment that reflects true reconciliatory actions, and the re-emergence of Indigenous Knowledge and pedagogies that communities were deprived of for so long ([Doxtater, 2021](#)).

**Restorative Indigenous Educational Wellness:** This monumental time of truth and reconciliation affords us the opportunity to work as Treaty Partners and create models that honestly strengthen our relationships. We are at a place in history where we can reframe the discourse to commemorate the past, educate the present, and contribute to the wellness of the current and future generations of all treaty partners ([Doxtater, 2021](#)). In the HWDSB context, we reconcile the consequences of Eurocentrism in schooling and reinforce the DIRE need of restoring Ancestral Knowledge systems through engaging in processes of Decolonizing, Indigenizing, and Revillagizing for *total* Educational Wellness, benefitting both Indigenous Peoples and all Treaty Partners. Together, we will “honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational healing and wellness in a restorative education system” ([Multi-Year Strategic Plan](#)).

**Revillagize:** Displace decolonize and is the next step toward healing. The people will have the frame of mind our ancestors had when living in the ancient villages ([IECSAP](#), Pillar).

**Self-determination:** The right of Indigenous Peoples to manage their affairs, provide stewardship over the land, maintain a cultural and political community, and uphold government-to-government relations with all other nations, including present-day nation states. The criteria for maintaining nationhood status, language, culture, ceremony, governance, and territory, must be honored.

**Settler colonialism:** A structure that assumes the assimilation of Indigenous Peoples into mainstream society (Allan & Hackett, 2022, p. 41).

**Seven Sacred Teachings:** “A set of Anishinaabe guiding principles passed down from generation to generation to guide the Anishinaabe in living a good life in peace and without conflict” (Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021). This is sacred knowledge for Indigenous peoples only, and is not intended to be adopted or co-opted into teaching and learning spaces without responsible considerations, ethical engagement and consultation with the Indigenous Education Department.

- Zoongide’ewin: Zoongi =solid, strong; De’e = a form of heart; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live with a solid, strong heart.” Commonly summarized as *Bravery*.
- Gwayakwaadiziwin: Gwayak = correctly, straightly, and rightly; Aadizi = he/she lives; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live correctly and with virtue.” Commonly summarized as *Honesty*.
- Dabasendiziwin: Dabas = low or lower; End = pertaining to thought; Izi = state or condition; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated as “to think lower of oneself in relation to all that sustains us.” Commonly summarized as *Humility*.
- Zaagi’idiwin: Zaag = to emerge, come out of flow out; Idi = in a reciprocal way; Win = a way it is

done. Approximately translated to “unconditional love between one another including all of Creation, humans and non-humans.” Commonly summarized as *Love*.

- Manaaji’idiwin: Manaaji = to go easy on someone; Idi = in a reciprocal way; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to go easy on one another and all of Creation.” Commonly summarized as *Respect*.
- Nibwaakaawin: Ni = the soul within; Waa = pertaining to sight; Kaa = an abundance; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated to “to live with vision.” Commonly summarized as *Wisdom*.
- Debwewin: Deb = to a certain extent; We = sound through speech; Win = a way it is done. Approximately translated as “to speak only to the extent, we have lived of experienced”. Commonly summarized as *Truth* (Seven Generations Education Institute, 2021).

**Sovereignty:** Indigenous peoples maintain a distinct identity as the only group who have nation-to-nation agreements with the Crown. Treaty and other rights and freedoms entrenched in [The Royal Proclamation of 1763](#) (Government of Canada, n.d.). and the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#) (Department of Justice Canada, 2025). related to land resources and protections, as well as the right to deal directly with the Crown. The preferred term is *autonomy*.

**Strength-based learning:** To nurture, acknowledge and empower Indigenous learners to develop their own gifts/talents based on their individual strengths through differentiated teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

**Syncretism:** The blending of our best tools as we walk forward together.

**Systemic barrier:** A barrier embedded in the social or administrative structures of an organization, including the physical accessibility of an organization, organizational policies, practices and decision-making processes, or the culture of an organization. These may appear neutral on the surface but exclude members of groups protected by the Human Rights Code ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

**Systemic discrimination:** Patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage, advantage, or privilege for people of certain for groups ([HWDSB Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)).

**Treaty:** A legally-binding, nation-to-nation agreement. These treaties were expressed as promises and conveyed in wampum (purple and white beads of quahog shell) between peoples. They are sacred and are to be honored forever – “as long as the sun shines, as long as the grass grows, as long as the rivers flow”.

**Treaty Partner:** Everyone has a role and a responsibility as a treaty partner as we take this restorative journey towards Indigenous Educational Wellness together.

**Trust:** Humility and transparency build the trusted relationships, connections and education system necessary for growth, change and evolution (HWDSB [MYSP](#), Value).

**Wholism:** “The coming together of the four elements in life to form one single whole human entity encompassing the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements of wellbeing as reflected in the Medicine Wheel.... The term *wholistic* is more culturally safe and relevant, and may better reflect

Indigenous perspectives, traditions and cultural practices versus the term *holistic*” (Bredin, Kaufman, Warburton, 2023).

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## Educational Excursions

### POL. 6.4

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#### PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) believes that an equitable quality education includes the opportunity for all students to participate in educational excursions. HWDSB values the connection between educational excursions and the curriculum in extending and enriching the educational experience to assist students in their learning.

HWDSB further affirms that educational excursions must prioritize student well-being and safety, including both physical and emotional safety, through proactive planning and clear communication.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Every student is provided with an opportunity to participate in educational excursions as appropriate.
- Every educational excursion should provide the opportunity to explore diverse cultures, the local community and beyond.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that equitable inclusion is incorporated in the planning and execution of all excursions in accordance with the *HWDSB Human Rights Policy 1.1* and *Equity and Inclusion Policy 5.4*.
- Educational excursions recognize the central role of local context, including access to land-based learning and cultural experiences that promote Indigenous Educational Wellness and Reconciliation.
- Every educational excursion is age-appropriate, and meets Board policies, procedures, Ontario curriculum expectations and adheres to safety guidelines.
- Clear, timely, and transparent communication with parents, guardians, and caregivers is an essential component of all educational excursions.

#### INTENDED OUTCOMES:

The implementation of the Educational Excursions Policy together with specific related procedures will:

- Ensure that educational excursions are accessible to all students, with barriers identified and addressed through intentional planning and system supports.
- Promote consistency and equity of opportunity for educational excursions across classrooms and schools.
- Ensure educational excursions are directly aligned with Ontario curriculum expectations and HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.
- Strengthen student well-being by ensuring excursions are planned and supported to protect physical safety and emotional safety through anticipatory planning and communication.

#### RESPONSIBILITY:

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council  
Principals and Vice-Principals

## Educational Excursions

**POL. 6.4**

### TERMINOLOGY:

*Educational excursion:* A structured learning experience that occurs within and outside the school building and is intentionally designed to enhance and enrich the overall learning experience for students while linked to the curriculum and/or HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

### ACTION REQUIRED:

The Board shall establish and maintain a procedure for educational excursions that outlines roles and responsibilities, communication requirements, planning expectations, consent processes, and measures to support student safety, well-being, equity, and inclusion.

Educational excursions must demonstrate clear educational purpose and curriculum alignment, with transparent communication to students and families.

- Students must receive age-appropriate pre-excursion learning and preparation.
- Written informed consent from parents/guardians/caregivers is required for all excursions.

Excursions must be planned using approved Board processes and tools that address risk management, safety, accessibility, supervision, transportation, funding, and contingency planning.

- Planning must proactively identify and address barriers to participation, ensuring equitable access for all students.

The Board will implement monitoring and continuous improvement processes including feedback from staff to evaluate excursion planning, approval, and implementation.

### PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
Ensure all educational excursions are accessible to every student and staff and directly aligned to Ontario curriculum expectations and/or HWDSB's Multi-Year Strategic Plan.	Principals will confirm, as part of the excursion approval process, that each proposed excursion demonstrates clear alignment to Ontario curriculum expectations and/or the HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Alignment will be documented using Board-approved planning and approval tools. Principals, and where appropriate superintendents, will review accessibility and inclusion requirements of Educational Excursions during the approval process of each excursion.

## Educational Excursions

### POL. 6.4

<p>Promote consistency and equity of opportunity for educational excursions across classrooms and schools.</p>	<p>Principals will provide oversight to ensure schools take a coordinated, school-wide approach to educational excursions, and that approval practices are applied consistently across classrooms. Superintendents will periodically review excursion patterns and approvals to monitor equity of opportunity across schools.</p>
<p>Ensure that educational excursions are accessible to all students, with barriers identified and addressed through intentional planning and system supports.</p>	<p>Principals, supported by superintendents, will review excursion plans during the approval process to confirm that barriers to participation have been identified and addressed through planning, accommodation, or system supports. Evidence of this review will be documented through established approval and planning tools.</p>
<p>Strengthen student well-being by ensuring excursions are planned and supported to protect physical safety and emotional safety through anticipatory planning and communication.</p>	<p>Principals will verify that excursion plans include documented risk management strategies, proactive communication with families, and appropriate student preparation to support physical safety and emotional well-being. Superintendents will periodically review a sample of approved excursions to monitor consistency and identify areas for improvement.</p>

#### REFERENCES:

##### **Government Documents**

Education Act—Part VI BOARDS, Duties & Powers

Education Act Regulation 298 OPERATION OF SCHOOLS – GENERAL

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools (Ministry of Education – 2010)

Ontario Human Rights Code

Ontario Curriculum

Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations (OFSAA) Regulations Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) Guidelines Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE)

Highway Traffic Act - Section 32 – Licensing

**PURPOSE:**

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to fostering a culture of staff engagement that advances student success, well-being, belonging, and excellence. It is understood that meaningful staff engagement is essential to creating the conditions for impactful learning, identity-affirming practices, and responsive systems that support every learner and every staff member in shaping an inclusive and supportive workplace.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

- Involve, respect, recognize and value staff members as partners in student success and well-being ensuring identity-affirming and inclusive workplaces where staff feel a sense of belonging.
- Foster trustful, respectful, and collaborative relationships across schools, departments, and roles, reflecting the interconnected nature of our work.
- Promote transparent, two-way communication and intentionally gather, respond to, and act on staff voice to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.
- Develop and sustain a professional workforce that reflects the diversity of the Hamilton-Wentworth community and aligns with HWDSB's commitment to Indigenous educational wellness and human rights, equity, and anti-oppressive practice.

**INTENDED OUTCOMES:**

- Provide all staff with opportunities for professional learning, leadership development and performance management to support continuous improvement and engagement for all employee groups.
- Engage staff in collaborative learning teams that create the conditions for student learning, support identity-affirming and culturally responsive practices, and honour Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing across schools and departments.
- Gather staff voice regularly to demonstrate our commitment to gathering input and to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

Director of Education  
Members of Executive Council  
Principals, Vice-Principals, Managers

**TERMINOLOGY:**

**Staff:** All individuals employed by HWDSB on a full-time, part-time or occasional basis, for a specified or indeterminate period, who contribute to the achievement of Board priorities.

**Staff Engagement:** The extent to which staff feel valued, heard, supported, and connected to their work, colleagues, and the shared purpose of HWDSB, as informed by ongoing staff voice and census data.

**Professional Learning:** A comprehensive, continuous, and strategic approach to developing staff capacity, well-being, and leadership in alignment with Board priorities and evidence-informed practice.

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

This policy will support the way staff are motivated and encouraged to complete their work with commitment, satisfaction, pride and support for HWDSB’s Multi-Year Strategic Plan.

**PROGRESS INDICATORS:**

<b>Intended Outcome</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Provide all staff with opportunities for professional learning, leadership development and performance management to support continuous improvement and engagement for all employee groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of accessible professional learning, leadership development, and performance management opportunities offered across employee groups and roles.</li> <li>• Participation data reflects equitable access and engagement across staff groups, disaggregated where appropriate.</li> <li>• Staff feedback indicates increased relevance, usefulness, and alignment of professional learning with Board priorities and individual growth needs.</li> <li>• Documentation demonstrates alignment between professional learning opportunities and HWDSB Strategic Directions and improvement priorities.</li> <li>• Staff survey data reflects increased confidence, engagement, and sense of professional growth over time.</li> </ul>
Engage staff in collaborative learning teams that create the conditions for student learning, support identity-affirming and culturally responsive practices, and honour Indigenous ways of knowing, learning and doing across schools and departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of regular staff participation in collaborative learning teams within and across schools and departments.</li> </ul>

<p>Gather staff voice regularly to demonstrate our commitment to gathering input and to strengthen HWDSB as a learning organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular staff voice surveys and engagement processes are implemented, with participation rates tracked and trends monitored over time.</li><li>• Survey data and feedback are analyzed and, where appropriate, disaggregated to identify patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement.</li><li>• Evidence that staff input informs decision-making, planning, and continuous improvement at the school, department, and system levels.</li><li>• Staff report feeling heard, respected, and informed about how their feedback is used through follow-up communications and reporting.</li></ul>
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**REFERENCES**

**Government Documents**

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act  
Ontario Human Rights Code

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

Presented to: Board

Date of Meeting: March 30, 2026

From: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: March 10, 2026

The committee held a hybrid meeting on March 10, 2026, at 6:00pm with Trustee Dawn Danko presiding.

Members: Trustees Dawn Danko, Paul Tut <sup>(R)</sup> and Todd White\*. External Members: Angela Zehr\* and John Larotta \*

\* Electronic participation, <sup>(R)</sup> Regrets

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**MONITORING ITEMS**

**A. External Member Recruitment**

Committee welcomed John Larotta to the role of External Audit Committee member. His term commenced on March 10, 2026.

**B. Regional Internal Audit Team (RIAT) Status Report**

Andrea Eltherington provided a staffing update to the committee. RIAT welcomed Brad Sisson to the team on January 19, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dawn Danko, Chair of the Committee

Reference: [Committee Package](#) and [Recording](#)

## Committee Report

Presented to: Board

Meeting date: March 30, 2026

From: Parent Involvement Committee

Meeting date: March 10, 2026

The committee held a PIC meeting on March 10, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:29 p.m. with Amanda Lloyd presiding.

**Members Present:** Adriana Baker, Kristina Collier, Kailey Crowther, Andrea Hamilton-Coulson, Mohamed Khamis, Heather Lambert-Hillen, Amanda Levesque, Amanda Lloyd, Tim Louks, Amanda Neale-Robinson, Heidi Oglesby, Meghana Oza, Vanessa Ozer, Mike Palma, Michele Quinn, Christine Sandor, Leora Sas Van Der Linden, Danielle Schwalm, Meagan Shanahan, Emma Simpson, Cindy Stranak, Lisa Veloce, and Terry-Ann Virtue. Trustees Kathy Archer, Amanda Fehrman and Abby Zaitley.

**Regrets:** Matthew Adams, Mani Bhandari, Kruti Desai, Cheryl Hue, Sue-Anne MacQuarrie, Leigh Ann Sutherland, and Damian Kalu Ude.

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### MONITORING ITEMS:

#### A. Presentations

##### Overview of AI Guidelines

Jennifer Burleigh - System Principal, Program, Equity and Innovation outlined the Board's AI approach—grounded in ECNO's framework, modern learning policies, and commitments to human rights, equity, and Indigenous wellness—while emphasizing privacy obligations under new provincial legislation and explaining the differences between Copilot for staff and Copilot 13+ for students. She highlighted AI's role in supporting learning, shared guidelines and grade-specific access expectations, reinforced the importance of keeping humans in the loop, and walked through the evolving HWDSB AI framework and classroom implementation roadmap.

##### Overview of Mental Health in HWDSB

David Hoy - Manager of Social Work Services and Mental Health Lead explained that PPM 169's multitiered system of support—ranging from universal mental health promotion to targeted interventions and intensive community-connected services—ensures students receive support based on their level of need. He also highlighted the We Help strategy's focus on belonging, the 2025–2026 Action Plan priorities, and the range of Social Work Services available to address mental health concerns, relationship challenges, discrimination-related harm, school disengagement, and crises.

#### B. Business Arising from the Minutes

The Chair shared the following updates:

- Bylaw Review Subcommittee - The Chair proposed forming a subcommittee to review the bylaws and encouraged members to participate.
- Membership Committee Formation - The Committee is looking to establish a Membership Committee, with membership applications scheduled to be released to the community in April.
- Reapplication Requirement - Members entering their second year will be required to reapply to serve on the Membership Subcommittee.

#### C. Trustees Report

Trustee Fehrman and Trustee Zaitley shared the following with PIC:

- School Calendar 2026-2027 - The School Calendar was approved at the last Board meeting and has been submitted to the Ministry for final approval.

- Program Strategy - The Program Strategy continues to move forward, with guiding principles approved at the last Board meeting. Those interested in reviewing the strategy may contact their local Trustee or the Program Committee.
- Budget Consultation 2026-2027 - The Budget Consultation is now available on the Engage website for community feedback.
- Binbrook II Boundary Review -The Board of Trustees approved the Binbrook II Boundary Review at the last Board meeting.
- New School Opening- September 2027 - Preparations are underway for a Transition Committee to support the opening of the new school scheduled for September 2027.

#### **D. Representative Committee Report**

##### Hamilton-Wentworth Council of Home & School Associations:

Heather Lambert-Hillen shared the following with PIC:

- Budget Priorities Meeting - The President reported that the Associations met and received a presentation on budget priorities from Associate Director Matthew Gerard.
- Budget Priority Session Attendance - The President attended the Budget Priority Meeting held at Sir Winston Churchill School and encouraged all members to complete the 2026–2027 Budget Consultation Survey to provide feedback. Also, the President expressed appreciation for the participation and feedback shared across nine sessions, noting that the Members felt heard in the discussions from representatives, including elementary teachers, local members, and OSSTF District 21.
- Upcoming Meeting – April 9, 2026, noting Superintendent Smith will attend the next meeting to speak about Safe and Secure Schools.
- Ontario Associations Awards – Nominations are open until April 1, 2026, for several awards, including:
  - Student Citizenship Awards (Grades 5–12)
  - Educator Awards
  - Memorial Awards
  - Community Awards

Respectfully submitted,  
Amanda Lloyd, Chair

## Committee Report

Presented to: Board

Meeting Date: Monday, March 30, 2026

From: Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 25, 2026

The Committee held a meeting in room 308, Education Centre on Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 5:30 pm, ending at 7:37 pm, with Chair Judy Colantino presiding.

### **Present**

Dawn Danko, Trustee Ward 7, Judy Colantino, Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton, SEAC Chair, Lindsay Bray, McMaster Children's Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio, SEAC Vice Chair, Melanie Roberts, Association for Bright Children of Ontario, Nancy Silva Khan, Autism Ontario (Central West Chapter), Samantha Sweet, Centre for Diverse Learners, Sarah Pennington, Community Living Hamilton, Susi Owen, CNIB Hamilton and Niagara, Vanessa Doslea, Lynwood Charlton Centre

### **Regrets**

Danielle Dion-Broadley, FASD Parent & Caregiver Support Group

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## **MONITORING ITEMS**

### **A. Budget Priorities**

Matthew Gerard, Associate Director, Business Services and Treasurer of the Board, Jagoda Kirilo, Senior Manager, Business Services, Wenqi Zhou, Budget Manager, presented an overview of the 2026-2027 budget development process

- Budget development objectives include:
  - Supporting the Board's Mission, Values, Strategic Directions and Board Improvement Plan
  - Focusing on serving students in the most effective way possible
  - Alignment of Resources to Ministry of Education priorities
  - Collective Agreement requirements
  - Capital Plan
  - Enveloping of funds
  - Transparency and accountability
  - Fiscal responsibility (Balanced Budget)
- Some of the funding pressures include:
  - Unplanned Absences
  - School Operations
  - WSIB
  - Learning Materials
  - Special Education
- Budget consultations are taking place with Board committees - a survey will be conducted on the Board's Engage website, and a link will be provided to Committee members for feedback
- Moved by Judy Colantino, seconded by Vanessa Doslea, that the Committee write a letter to the HWDSB Board of Trustees requesting continued prioritization and commitment from the 2026-27 budget to be allocated to Special Education
 

**CARRIED.**
- Moved by Judy Colantino, seconded by Susi Owen, that the Committee write a letter to the Minister of Education copied to all SEACs and HWDSB Trustees, requesting additional funding for Special Education and highlighting the historic and ongoing underfunding of Special Education
 

**CARRIED.**

## **B. REALISE – Recreation and Leisure in Special Education-Realize your Joy! Realize your Friends! Realize your Potential!**

- Natalie Spain, Occupational Therapist, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity, Brian Mason, Manager, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity
- An overview of the REALISE (Recreation and Leisure in Special Education) program for secondary students, designed to foster social connections, meaningful engagement, health and well-being, through activities like cooking, drumming, physical games, puzzles etc.,
- The program is intended to promote joy in learning for students and staff, using play as a foundation for learning, skill development, exploration of interests, and increased opportunities that support belonging
- Schools have partnered with Jay's Care Challenger Baseball adaptive baseball program, delivered in partnership with Little League Canada and Baseball Canada, specifically designed to empower children, youth and adults living with physical and/or cognitive disabilities – students receive a large kit of baseball equipment, team shirts & ribbons
- All secondary schools have received Boccia sets to support and introduce in classes, with plans for inter-school tournaments
- The process for loan and implementation of REALISE kits is a request form – an introductory email to classroom teacher, REALISE kit distribution & introductory lesson including pre-survey, lesson plan, then a 2 week check in – the final session includes a post survey, adaptive rec & leisure guide and an interest checklist

## **C. MEMBERS' UPDATE**

### Trustee Update

#### **Dawn Danko, Trustee, Ward 7**

- The Board of Trustees approved the 2026–2027 school year calendar. The calendar includes two PA days prior to Labour Day, resulting in the first day of school for students being the Tuesday following Labour Day - as a result, there will be fewer PA days scheduled in the fall

### Association Update

#### **Judy Colantino, Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton**

- March 21 is World Down Syndrome Day, an internationally recognized day to raise awareness and promote inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome - schools will participate in the Rock Your Socks campaign, encouraging students and staff to wear colourful or mismatched socks to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and belonging

### Superintendent Update

#### **Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion & Equity**

- An in person Entry to School event was held, with ten families in attendance - appreciation extended to Lindsay Bray for representing both the Ron Joyce Centre and SEAC
- Planning has begun for staffing for the upcoming school year
- The Ministry of Education conducted SIP/SEA monitoring visits at Glenwood and Mount Albion - feedback highlighted strong alignment between school practices and Ministry expectations, the thoroughness of documentation, and the consistency of system processes
- The four part professional learning series for learning resource teachers and special education class teachers is ongoing, along with sessions for new ASD teachers - outcomes will be shared at the end of the school year
- The Gifted Review process will begin in September, focusing on effectiveness, and potential recommended changes
- System IPRCs are underway for the upcoming school year, with approximately 150 students anticipated to come forward
- John Manzin will be retiring at the end of March - planning is underway to appoint a temporary retired principal through to the end of June

Respectfully submitted by  
Judy Colantino, SEAC Chair

## Committee Report

Presented to: Board

Meeting date: March 30, 2026

From: French as a Second Language Advisory Committee

Meeting date: February 26, 2026

The committee held a meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2026, from 6:00 to 7:30 pm, chaired by Jeremy Galea

Members present were: Anais Cho, Keya Dudhwala, Ellen Syracopoulos, Lauren Amedo, Avery Downton, Aaron Thompson, Jeremy Galea. Trustee Graeme Noble

Regrets: Katharine Muis, Sabrina Varghese

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### MONITORING ITEMS:

#### **A. Grade I FI Applications**

Staff provided an overview of HWDSB's Grade I French Immersion application timeline. 762 applications were received for Grade I FI for 2026-2027.

#### **B. French Immersion Enrollment data**

Staff shared approximate FI enrollment data from 2019-2020 to 2024-2025 academic years. Staff explained that this data was obtained from consultant Malatest as part of the Program Strategy Review process that was recently conducted. The final report concluded that enrolment in French Immersion has remained relatively consistent since 2019, ranging from approximately 9-10% of the Board's elementary student population, and from 6-7% of the Board's secondary student population (see Table 16). Up until the most recent academic year (2024-2025), the number of Grade I students waitlisted for French Immersion has remained consistent and relatively small, suggesting that demand for the program has remained relatively consistent in the Board as well.

#### **C. French Educators Recruitment, Placement and Retention**

Recruitment and retention of French teachers continues to be a challenge for Boards provincially and across the country. Staff presented an outline of the strategy used for the recruitment of French teachers to HWDSB. Recently, 20 French occasional teachers have been hired and onboarded. Staff also shared the variety of professional development and resources delivered to French Immersion and Core-French teachers.

#### **D. DELF**

Staff explained what DELF is and the benefits to students in both FI and Core French. DELF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française) is an official diploma awarded by the French Ministry of Education to certify the French language competency of candidates outside of France. The exam is offered to HWDSB students enrolled in a Grade 12 French language course and is held at Mohawk College. There are 45 elementary and secondary teachers in HWDSB available to support the DELF exams. Upcoming exam dates were shared. In 2025, 400 students wrote the DELF.

### **E. French Resources**

Canadian Parents for French shared some community announcements regarding upcoming French speaking focused events and resources, including:

- French cultural opportunities in the community
- CPF is partnering with Hamilton Public Library (HPL) by making a donation of French books to HPL's Summer Reading Program and sponsoring an interactive event with a French author/illustrator.

### **F. Trustee Update**

Trustee Noble informed committee members that the Board has submitted for approval to the Ministry, the school year calendar for 2026-2027, along with the Board Improvement Plan. Committee members were invited to view the SYC and BIP on HWDSB's website.

Trustee Noble also shared that the Program Committee is currently reviewing the Guiding Principles developed by staff to support consideration of the recommendations from the Program Strategy Review Report produced by Malatest.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeremy Galea, Chair

## Committee Report

Presented to: Board

Meeting date: March 30, 2026

From: Human Rights & Equity Community Advisory  
Committee

Meeting date: February 26, 2026

The committee held a meeting on February 26, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. with Co-Chairs Sumayyah Satia and Mesum Ali presiding.

Members present: Mesum Ali, Sumayyah Satia, Grey Sandilands, Tehreem Zafar, Penny McAndrews, Jordan Fudge, Salma Yesufu, Abdullateef Abdul, Rebecca Morikawa and Trustee Abby Zaitley.

Regrets: Liav Yakov, Hina Ahmed, Gurjass Kaur, and Aimee Eppel.

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### INFORMATION ITEMS:

#### A. Business Services Department – Budget Presentation

Jagoda Kirilo, Senior Manager, Business Services and Wenqi Zhou, Manager, Budget, attended this month's meeting and shared a Budget Development presentation for 2026-2027 with the Committee. Key areas outlined were the budget development process, enrolment trends, core education funding, funding pressures, and budget consultation survey. Budget timelines were outlined for the upcoming school year, and a brief explanation of each budget area was shared. On March 4, 2026, there will be a public information session at Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School. As well, the Budget Consultation 2026-27 is now open on the Board's website for the public to provide suggestions. The link to the public consultation will be shared with members.

#### B. Staff Update

Yohana Otite, Human Rights and Equity Advisor, shared a staff update on the Human Rights Office, including:

- Human Rights Information Sessions for parents and students were conducted in December. The virtual sessions are now available on the website.
- The HRO is working with Human Resources and the Equity Department to update the Religious Accommodation procedures, and this item will come to the committee for feedback.

#### C. Trustee Update

Trustee Zaitley provided the monthly Trustee Update and shared that the budget consultation process is now open. The School Year Calendar for 2026-27 has been approved and is now waiting for Ministry approval. The Program Strategy Review process has been completed with decisions being made based on the suggested recommendations for the 2027 school year.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sumayyah Satia and Mesum Ali, Co-Chairs

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

Presented to: Board

Date of Meeting: March 30, 2026

From: Standing Committee

Date of Meeting: March 9, 2026

The committee held a hybrid meeting on March 9, 2026, at 11:32 pm with Trustee Tut presiding.

Members: Trustees Kathy Archer\*, Becky Buck, Sabreina Dahab, Dawn Danko<sup>(R)</sup>, Amanda Fehrman, Maria Felix Miller, Graeme Noble, Paul Tut, Todd White, Elizabeth Wong<sup>(R)</sup>, Abby Zaitley.

Student Trustees: Sanad Bizanti, and Evelyn Watson<sup>(R)</sup>. Shakowennakara:tats: Daunte Hillen.

\*electronic participation, <sup>(R)</sup>regrets

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**1. Call to Order**

Vice Chair Tut called the meeting to order at 11:32 pm.

**2. Approval of Agenda**

On the motion of Trustee Buck, the Standing Committee **RECOMMENDS** that the agenda be approved.

**CONSENT**

Student Trustees Bizanti, and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen also in consent.

**Reports from Staff:**

**3. Trustee Distribution & Determination - 2026**

Staff presented the reporting noting, the Trustee Determination and Distribution process, required under Ontario Regulation 412/00, guides how school boards establish both the number of trustees and their geographic representation for each municipal election cycle.

For 2026, this process relies on Population Electoral Group (PEG) data from MPAC, which identifies eligible voters and serves as the foundation for the calculations. The updated 2026 PEG data confirms an electoral population of 351,926, supporting a total of 11 trustees. No changes have been made to the provincial regulatory framework since 2022, and population data did not indicate a need for redistribution, so staff applied the 2022 guide as the most current resource in completing the 2026 review.

On the motion of Trustee Miller/Buck, the Standing Committee **RECOMMENDS** the following to be approved:

- That pursuant to O. Reg 412/00, the Board does not designate any municipality within the Board’s area of jurisdiction as a low population Municipality.
- And that pursuant to O. Reg 412/00, and based on the completed Trustee Determination and Distribution calculations, the Board confirm a total of 11 Trustees for the 2026 HVDSB Election, and approve the following geographic distribution:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Trustees</b>
Ward 1	1.0
Ward 2	1.0
Ward 3	1.0
Ward 4	1.0
Wards 5 & 10	1.0
Wards 6 & 9	1.0
Ward 7	1.0
Wards 8 & 14	1.0
Wards 11 & 12	1.0
Ward 13	1.0
Ward 15	1.0

**CARRIED**

Student Trustees Bizanti, and Shakowennakara:tats Hillen voted in favour.

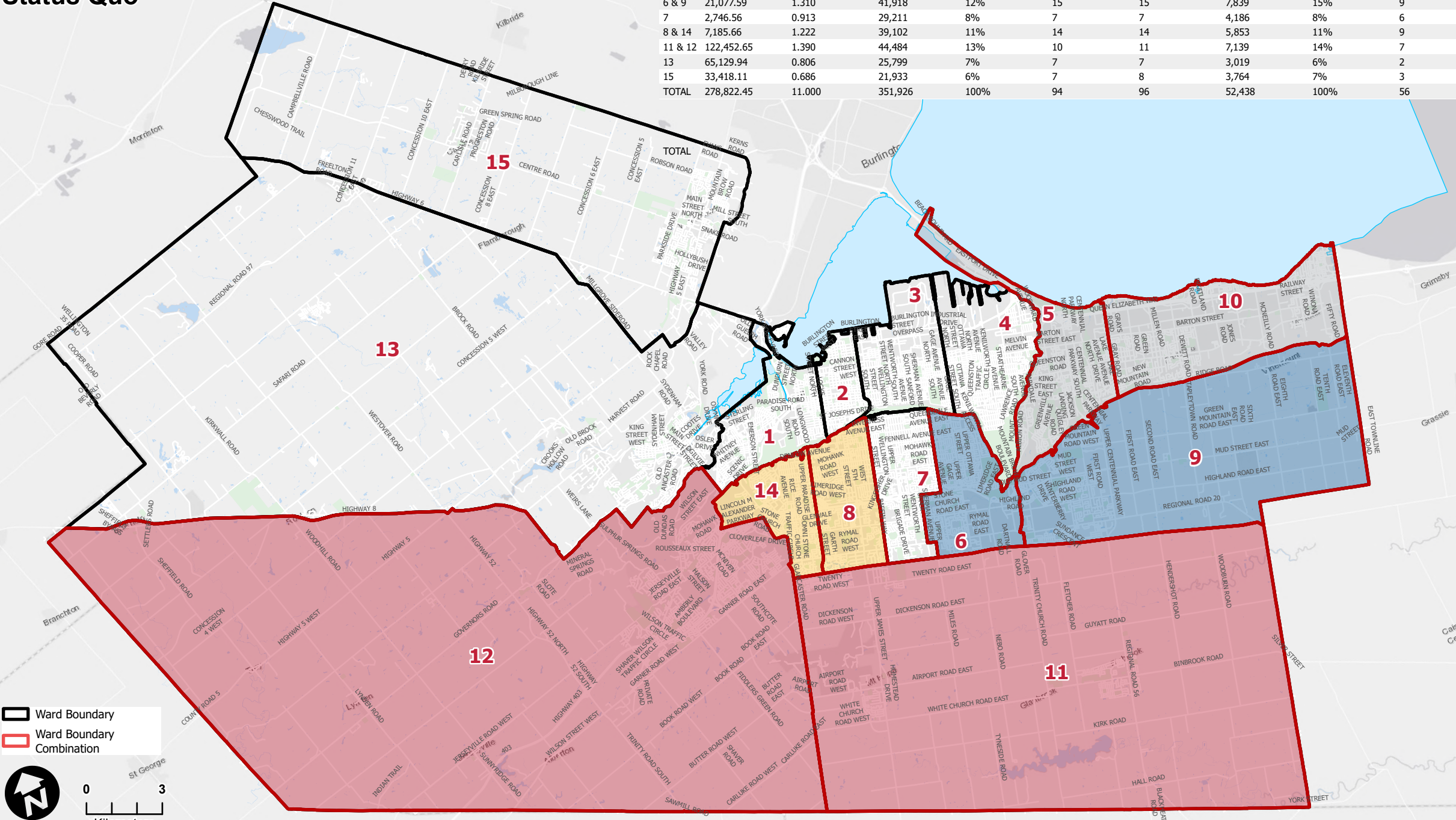
Respectfully submitted,  
Trustee Tut, Chair of the Committee

Reference: [Meeting Package](#) and [Recording](#)



# Hamilton-Wentworth Ward Boundaries Status Quo

Ward	Area (Acres)	Electoral Quotient	English Support	% English Public Support	Number of HWDSB Schools 2025	Future Number of HWDSB Schools	Number of HWDSB Students 2025	% HWDSB Students October 2025	Number of HWCSDB Schools
<b>16A-3</b>									
1	3,781.36	0.760	24,301	7%	7	7	2,821	5%	3
2	1,467.50	0.801	25,622	7%	5	5	2,430	5%	1
3	3,744.96	0.826	26,425	8%	5	5	3,943	8%	4
4	4,998.61	0.797	25,509	7%	8	8	4,047	8%	2
5 & 10	12,819.51	1.489	47,622	14%	9	9	7,397	14%	10
6 & 9	21,077.59	1.310	41,918	12%	15	15	7,839	15%	9
7	2,746.56	0.913	29,211	8%	7	7	4,186	8%	6
8 & 14	7,185.66	1.222	39,102	11%	14	14	5,853	11%	9
11 & 12	122,452.65	1.390	44,484	13%	10	11	7,139	14%	7
13	65,129.94	0.806	25,799	7%	7	7	3,019	6%	2
15	33,418.11	0.686	21,933	6%	7	8	3,764	7%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>278,822.45</b>	<b>11.000</b>	<b>351,926</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>52,438</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>56</b>



Ward Boundary  
 Ward Boundary Combination

0 3  
Kilometers