2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee

Meeting Agenda and Minutes

Date:	Wednesday, October 1, 2025 at 6 pm
Chaired by:	Roy Fernandes, Superintendent - Indigenous Education, Equity & Community Relations
Minutes by:	Nimi Jerath, Toronto Minutes
In Attendance:	Aileen Santiago Nicole Richard Brenda Culbert Jamie Lugtu-Pe Rob Bauer Ruben Da Silveira Sarah Luongo
Regrets:	
Guests:	
Notes:	**Meeting Link:https://tcdsb.zoom.us/j/93855921891**

Agenda Item	Presenter	Discussion Summary	Action
Prayer	Father Michael	Roy read prayer at 7:02 p.m. to commence the meeting.	
Land Acknowledgment	Roy	Roy read the land acknowledgment.	
Approval of Agenda	All	*On a **MOTION** moved by Brenda Culbert and seconded by Ruben Da Silveira, the agenda was approved as presented.* ***All voted in favour and motion was carried***	
Approval of Minutes	All	The Committee reviewed a copy of the Minutes of April 28, 2025. *On a **MOTION** moved by Brenda Culbert and seconded by Ruben Da Silveira, the minutes of April 28, 2025, were approved as presented*. **All voted in favour and motion was carried.**	
Introductions and Round Table	All	All members introduced themselves to the committee members. Aileen shared their reflections and experiences from a professional development opportunity she participated in over the summer. The training was specifically designed for Catholic educators and focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion from a Catholic theological perspective. The program aimed to help teachers build confidence in advocating for inclusion while grounding their approach in Catholic teachings. Aileen explained that the session prioritized participation from educators who personally identify as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Out of 50 applicants, only four were selected, which she noted as a strong indicator of growing interest and commitment among	

		educators to better understand and support inclusive practices within Catholic schools. They emphasized that similar initiatives are also being advanced through teacher unions and associations, suggesting a broader, systemic movement toward inclusive education within faith-based environments. Aileen shared that, following the training, they feels more confident articulating inclusion through a theological lens—bridging faith and equity rather than viewing them in opposition.Their goal for the coming year is to strengthen cross-curricular partnerships, particularly with the NCCW (National Catholic Curriculum Writing) Department, to embed inclusive education principles throughout the curriculum. They underscored that equity and inclusion should not be isolated topics limited to specific equity-focused sessions but rather integrated across all subject areas and grade levels. Aileen reiterated that discrimination or exclusion justified on religious grounds has no basis in Catholic doctrine, and that faith should be a foundation for compassion and respect rather than prejudice. Roy thanked Aileen for their insight and encouraged others to contribute.	
Survey discussion	Roy	Roy summarized the findings from the advisory groups' surveys and consultations, noting the wide range of feedback received from communities including the Filipino Advisory, Indigenous families, African Canadian Advisory, and 2SLGBTQ+ parents. He explained that key issues raised included the need for more relevant and inclusive curriculum content, challenges in reconciling polarizing views within communities, and difficulties in fostering a stronger sense of belonging. Roy highlighted that many participants reported a general lack of understanding around human rights, equity, and accommodations, while Indigenous families expressed feeling left behind by programs that often take a one-size-fits-all approach. He also mentioned concerns about the lack of opportunities for Black students and the need for more culturally responsive leadership and curriculum grounded in African philosophies such as Sankofa and Ubuntu. Roy addressed the recurring theme of misalignment between Catholic faith and 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, acknowledging that some community members still believe these teachings	

		contradict Catholic values; however, he emphasized that this misconception must be challenged and that inclusion is fully consistent with the Church's principles of compassion and dignity. He supported the idea of involving faith leaders, such as Father Michael, in webinars or educational sessions to help bridge understanding between faith and equity. Roy also shared suggestions from respondents on small but impactful changes, including integrating social-emotional learning and Christian meditation into core courses, using local examples like the Toronto bubble zone bylaws to teach inclusion, and creating visible signs of support such as Pride flags or pins to signal safety and allyship. Additionally, he noted feedback calling for stronger communication with families, as some parent councils and school communities were unaware of the Equity Department's work due to newsletters ending up in junk mail. Roy concluded by recognizing that, although the responses came from only nine participants, the insights were rich and meaningful, offering concrete direction for improving equity, visibility, and engagement across the Catholic school community.	
EAP Townhall	Roy	Roy advised the Equity Action Plan Town Hall is taking place on October 16, 2025, at Cardinal Carter School. Cultural snacks (patties, samosas, Bannock as a start) and will be served at 6 pm followed by our event. He advised he is hoping to see members from every school community in attendance as both our speakers and Q&A will provide some excellent background on what is taking place in our schools to keep your children feeling safe and included. Roy emphasized his personal commitment to improving engagement and encouraged everyone on the committee to help promote the upcoming Equity Action Plan (EAP) Town Hall. He noted that registration had reached about 200 participants, which he considered a good start, but shared his goal of increasing attendance to 300 or more by urging members to share the invitation widely within their networks. Roy explained that at the Town Hall, volunteers would actively engage attendees by asking whether they currently receive the Equity newsletter and offering to add them to the mailing list on the spot. He clarified	

		that the newsletter is distributed to all Parent Council Chairs and school Principals, who are encouraged to forward it to their communities, but acknowledged that gaps in circulation sometimes prevent families from staying informed. Roy reiterated his strong belief in the power of communication to strengthen inclusion and community connection within Catholic schools, thanking members like Jamie for supporting that mission.	
Sept 26 PD Day	Aileen and Roy	Aileen shared a presentation to the Committee present the recent PD session developed under the Ministry's new theme: "Tackling Racism: Creating Discrimination-Free Classrooms." Roy explained that for the first time in three years, the Ministry provided a focused topic, allowing the Equity Department to create meaningful modules centered on culturally responsive teaching and helping students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. He noted that Aileen, Brenda, and the resource team collaborated to produce "bite-sized PD" that incorporated real Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) case studies—documented on the "Blue Pages"—to show practical examples of professional misconduct and the disciplinary measures taken in cases involving homophobia, transphobia, racism, disablism, and ageism. Roy emphasized that these examples illustrated the intersection of human rights law, union guidance from OECTA, and Catholic values, clarifying that being a Catholic educator does not exempt teachers from inclusion; in fact, Catholic principles rooted in Christ-centered compassion require it. He praised the collaboration among the team, with Aileen contextualizing the OCT findings and Brenda connecting them to human rights expectations. Roy acknowledged that while some schools had received the PD positively, others were challenged by its direct approach to confronting bias and misconduct. Following the presentation, Aileen confirmed the main points and invited reactions. Nicole expressed strong appreciation, saying she had been waiting for this	

		kind of resource, and requested the link to the materials. Sarah raised concerns about parental resistance and misinformation, describing how small groups of parents in her school community spread defamatory comments about inclusive education on social media. She emphasized that these attitudes harm teachers and undermine Catholic education by promoting misunderstanding of the faith. Sarah asked how educators could engage parents productively without legitimizing discriminatory rhetoric. Roy agreed, acknowledging the fear among educators of parental backlash. He described ongoing supports through principal meetings and FAQs and mentioned the Equity Action Plan video circulated last year to promote dialogue. He welcomed the resulting parent conversations—even those with objections—stressing his belief, quoting Murray Sinclair, that "education got us into this mess, and education will get us out." Roy encouraged continued communication and urged members to promote the Equity Action Plan Town Hall as an avenue for transparency and community engagement. Nicole proposed creating pamphlets summarizing key points from the Human Rights Code and equity policies to help educate parents on what constitutes discrimination. Roy supported the idea but noted the difficulty in ensuring families actually read distributed materials, sharing an anecdote about parents overlooking newsletters. Brenda added that the Board is developing resources through a dedicated Human Rights and Equity webpage, which currently includes information on discrimination, harassment, and complaint processes. She said the plan is to expand the page with FAQs, case examples, and a formal Human Rights Policy so educators and families can understand both expectations and boundaries. Brenda supported the use of case-based learning, noting that clear examples help staff recognize what constitutes professional misconduct and reflect on	

		their practices. Rob Bauer (TECT) expressed his full union support for the Board's inclusion initiatives and confirming that TECT's bylaws and policies explicitly uphold 2SLGBTQ+ and human rights protections. He offered to help distribute the Equity Action Plan Town Hall invitation through TECT channels and acknowledged that the union faces similar challenges engaging members. Roy thanked Rob, noting that union participation—especially through events like the Pride Parade—sends a strong signal that equity and Catholic identity are not in conflict. Sarah advised a positive observation about the revised exemption letter accompanying the Human Development and Sexual Health curriculum, which now clearly states that students are not exempt from classroom conversations about inclusion. However, she raised concerns about inconsistent messaging regarding guest speaker policies, explaining that some teachers must give advance notice to parents only when speakers address inclusion or 2SLGBTQ+ topics—creating coded discrimination. She called for clear, transparent guidance on when notice is required and how teachers should communicate with parents, as current inconsistencies leave educators feeling unsupported. Roy agreed that the confusion around the guest speaker policy needs clarification. He stressed that notifications should apply universally to all speakers, not selectively for equity or inclusion-related topics, as selective notice would be discriminatory. He committed to reinforcing this point in the next Equity newsletter, reminding schools that guest speaker notifications must be consistent for all classroom visitors. Aileen expanded on this, explaining that the Ministry's policy structure can unintentionally create barriers for equity and representation. **They** stressed the importance of educating parents about their own responsibilities under the Parent Code of Conduct and clarifying that exclusionary or discriminatory actions contradict both Catholic teachings and Board policy. Aileen	

		underscored that faith-based inclusion is not a contradiction but a moral imperative and advocated for parent education sessions to clarify "what the Catholic faith actually says about inclusion."	
Policy Clarifications	Nicole	Nicole provided a PDF for the Committee members to review. She requested that her oral remarks, including references and links, be formally documented and circulated to committee members. Roy Fernandes confirmed that once Nicole sent him her written follow-up, he would distribute it to all members who attended the meeting, ensuring full transparency. Roy asked Nicole to confirm that by "oral submissions," she was referring to her statements made during the meeting, and she affirmed this, noting that her follow-up would also include additional supporting references tied to her inquiry. Roy agreed, assuring her that her submission would be recorded accurately, attached to the official meeting minutes, and shared with the Supervisor and senior staff as part of the committee's documented call for review and accountability. He then opened the floor for any questions or comments from other members in response to Nicole's presentation. Sarah emphasized the harm caused by the Fully Alive curriculum, noting that it still frames family life exclusively through a heterosexual lens. She supported Nicole's earlier example of a Grade 5 student from a same-sex family who might feel discriminated against, stating that such examples should be centered when discussing exemptions. Sarah argued that the Ontario Human Rights Code exists precisely to protect students from these exclusionary narratives. She urged the Board to re-examine how Fully Alive is presented in Catholic schools, highlighting that most educators already avoid using it because of its dated and non-inclusive content. Roy thanked Sarah for her remarks and explained that Nicole's follow-up documentation, including archival references and policy citations, would be circulated to all members for further review and comment before forwarding it to the Supervisor early next week. He welcomed additional feedback to	Roy to circulate Nicole's references, links and documents INQUIRY_ PPM119_OCT-2025.pdf SUBMISSIONS_ PPM119_OCT-2025.pdf

		ensure the submission represents collective committee input. Aileen then asked how religious accommodations and exemption processes are currently being communicated to families and whether there is consistency across schools. Ruben responded that most students are unaware of any exemption processes unless they are directly affected. He shared that the Fully Alive program caused confusion and even internalized homophobia among some students questioning their identities. Ruben suggested that clearer communication about accommodations—particularly around 2SLGBTQ+ topics—would help both students and families understand their rights and options. Sarah added that, at her school, exemption letters are not distributed to parents automatically. Instead, she proactively communicates the curriculum content and learning objectives to prevent misconceptions. She explained that when parents are shown the actual curriculum materials, most recognize their value in teaching consent, safety, and healthy relationships. Sarah cautioned against selective communication that isolates inclusive topics, stressing that consistent transparency about all curriculum strands is the best way to build trust. Jamie provided a parental perspective, recalling that letters about guest speakers for events such as Black History Month or equity presentations sometimes led to students staying home due to misinformation or fear about the content. She stressed that over-compliance with notification policies can unintentionally reinforce stigma and result in students missing valuable learning experiences. Nicole added that an exemption handout originally created for students—not parents—had been removed in past years, limiting awareness of students' rights to request accommodation or support. She noted that this resource's absence further obscures transparency and accountability in how exemptions	

		are applied. Roy acknowledged these gaps and reiterated that Nicole's forthcoming materials would provide helpful historical and legal context on how these processes evolved. Aileen closed the topic by suggesting that Brenda's Human Rights & Equity Advisor webpage could include a section of FAQs clarifying exemption rights, religious accommodation boundaries, and misconceptions about 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion under Catholic teaching. Brenda agreed to explore this idea and invited members to share suggested topics for inclusion.	
Roseneath update	Roy	Roy advised the Roseneath Theatre production would be returning for another school engagement cycle, potentially tied to GSA student participation, and asked Aileen and Ruben to collaborate on planning.	Aileen & Ruben to collaborate on planning
Summer Writing project	Aileen and Roy	Aileen presented the Summer Writing Project, developed to expand culturally and gender-diverse representation in secondary English classrooms. They shared that 35 secondary schools were receiving curated sets of inclusive novels aligned with the Equity Action Plan, including Both Sides Now by Toronto-based trans author Payton Thomas, a Latin-American lesbian YA novel, We Contain Multitudes—an epistolary story about two male students—and This Is How It Always Is, a novel about parenting a trans child. The project, framed as a Reading Clubs initiative, aims to foster culturally responsive pedagogy through small group reading, discussion, and author engagement. Aileen noted that Peyton Thomas had already agreed to participate in a future school visit. Roy praised the initiative, describing it as a natural extension of the Board's ongoing commitment to inclusive, choice-based, and student-centered literacy.	

SMHO Affinity Group Field Test	Aileen	Aileen provided an update on the TCDSB's selection for the School Mental Health Ontario pilot field test, where two schools (Percy Johnson and Loretto Abbey) will have GSA facilitators pilot facilitator modules and deliver at least two student modules by end of April, with SMHO collecting feedback; Aileen will report back. Roy welcomed Sarah's proposal to model "wise practice" classrooms (TLCP-style) to build teacher capacity in inclusive instruction and affirmed that work is "in motion.	
Fantastic Forever Professional Development	Aileen	Aileen affirmed continuation of the Fantastic Forever PD (inclusive HPE/family-life teaching aligned with board obligations), with dates to be confirmed, and emphasized that comprehensive, inclusive sexual-health education is not optional in Catholic schools. Roy confirmed Aileen's coordination with the board mental-health lead to weave identity-affirming practice into upcoming secondary guidance PD (December) and ongoing Grade 7–8 sessions. During discussion, he supported Jamie's suggestion to create a small print bookmark with a QR code to Human Rights/Equity FAQs to reach families who miss emails (despite his preference to limit paper) and agreed to explore it. Rob (TECT) flagged concerns about how the PD Day was received in schools; Roy welcomed an offline debrief and committed to connect the next day, adding that union reach is pivotal for teacher confidence and parent communication.	
EAP Monitoring (standing item)	Roy	EAP Report Back	

		Appendix Sizzle Reel	
Conclusion	All	*On a **MOTION** moved by Ruben Da Silveira and seconded by Nicole Richard, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52pm.* ***All voted in favour and motion was carried***	