

It is the policy of the Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations Inc. that a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, culture, national or ethnic origin, religion, colour, sex, age, mental or physical ability or sexual orientation, within the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, in the school, in the workplace and within the community at large be adopted.

It is the policy of the Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations Inc. that a policy of anti-discrimination, actively condemning discrimination on the basis of race, culture, national or ethnic origin, religion, colour, sex, age, mental or physical ability, or sexual orientation, within the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, in the school, in the workplace, and within the community at large be adopted.

These 2 policies were adopted by the members of OFHSA during the Annual General Meeting of 1994. And it was with these 2 policies in mind that our representative participated in this Board's Equity Policy Steering Committee developing the section on Sexual Orientation.

It is our feeling that the proposed policy is fully in line with OFHSA policy; that it was developed in an atmosphere of respect and inclusion; that there was ample opportunity for community review and consultation, and that the revisions made reflected the concerns raised during the consultation phase. We strongly urge the trustees of the HWDSB to vote in favour of accepting this policy tonight.

Home and School, as an organization, supports public education. We believe that there should be one publicly funded school system in the province of Ontario, accessible to all children. All children.

We believe that our school system, from the classroom, the staff and the Board itself should be reflective of the communities they serve.

There is no advantage to segregating children, or shielding them from any aspect of our society and then, tossing them into that society as they leave secondary school. School should prepare them to enter society as caring, respectful and educated citizens.

We believe that all students should feel safe, important and valued.

We believe that teachers should be judged on their ability to reach our young people, to instill in them a love of learning and a desire to achieve their full potential.

We know that parents are important partners in their children's education. We believe that schools should be welcoming to all parents, or guardians or caretakers. These people are our students First Teachers, and should all be respected as such.

It is our understanding that the intent of the Board's equity policy is to ensure that these beliefs are our reality – that no student, staff member or parent is discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

A lot has been made of people being labeled by some of the terms defined in this policy. One of the terms is heterosexist. Truthfully when our rep attended the first meeting and saw the word she thought it was a typo. Had never heard about it. Didn't really understand after the meeting so went home and did what we all do – googled it. And it started to sink in. And she was amazed to find that she, herself, was a heterosexist. And was quick to tell the rest of the H&S executive that they were as well. Not meaning to hurt anyone, or demean anyone, not even deliberately or consciously. But we were. And small wonder. Our generation was taught to read using books telling the glories of Dick and Jane and their mom and their dad. Our TV shows showed 'nuclear families', mom, dad and children. Heck – the Brady Bunch was ground-breaking for us...imagine – a blended family. Never mind that they were all white, middle-class and heterosexual, that was

blended in those days! But with her new awareness she was able to identify a case of heterosexism at her son's school. The permission form for him to play on a team asked for the Father's phone number and the Mother's phone number. Assuming the family had one of each, not just one or the other, or two of each. She was quick to point this out to the principal and the form was immediately pulled from use. This is the power of education. And that is one of the main purposes of this policy and all its various sections: to make all of us more aware of the society in which we live.

It does not ask us to embrace, or convert to another sexual orientation. But to be aware of them, respect them, and ensure that everyone, no matter their sexual orientation, is treated equitably.

Lee Gowers, who represented Home and School on this committee, would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank and commend Bill Torrens and Chuck Reid on their leadership during this process.

We wouldn't be the Home & School if we didn't offer a couple of recommendations.

Recommendation #1: that the HWDSB develop a set of guidelines for those participating on Board committees. These guidelines would include, but not be limited to, what is appropriate for committee members to discuss with their respective groups (is it how far along in the process the committee is or is it details); whether they can share this with their entire group or just the executive members; and a section dealing with conflict of interest – real and perceived.

Recommendation #2: that the HWDSB change the wording of their 'all calls' for representation on Board committees. If the Board is seeking parental input the call to School councils should read 'a parent member of your School Council'. As set out in Reg 612 the school principal, a teaching and non-teaching member of staff and a community rep are all part of the SC.

Technically a school could send any of these members to the committee, yet each of them has a vehicle by which they are represented. Parents are extremely limited in the ways they can be represented and so we think that stressing a Parent Member is a necessity.

We thank you for the opportunity to speak before you tonight and again urge you to vote to accept this policy.