



Guide to Support

Muslim

Students, Staff, and Families

*Committing to Anti-Oppressive Practice,
Challenging Hate and Islamophobia*

October 2025

Land Acknowledgement

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have long standing relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, The Mississauga Peoples and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

This statement was co-created in partnership with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. and the Chippewas of Georgina Island.

Indigenous Rights Statement

The Durham District School Board recognizes Indigenous rights are distinct. In the exercise of those rights, Indigenous staff and students shall not be subjected to actions with the aim or effect of depriving these distinct rights.

Human Rights Statement

The Durham District School Board is committed to providing learning and working environments that centre human rights and equity and are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, accessible, inclusive and free from all forms of discrimination, oppression, harassment and harm.



Purpose of the Guide

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) Guide to Support Muslim Students, Staff and Families reaffirms the board's commitment to combating all forms of racism and discrimination by upholding the rights of Muslim communities. Grounded in anti-oppressive practices and aligned with the DDSB's Human Rights, Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Policy and multi-year strategic plan, the guide promotes learning, connection and well-being.

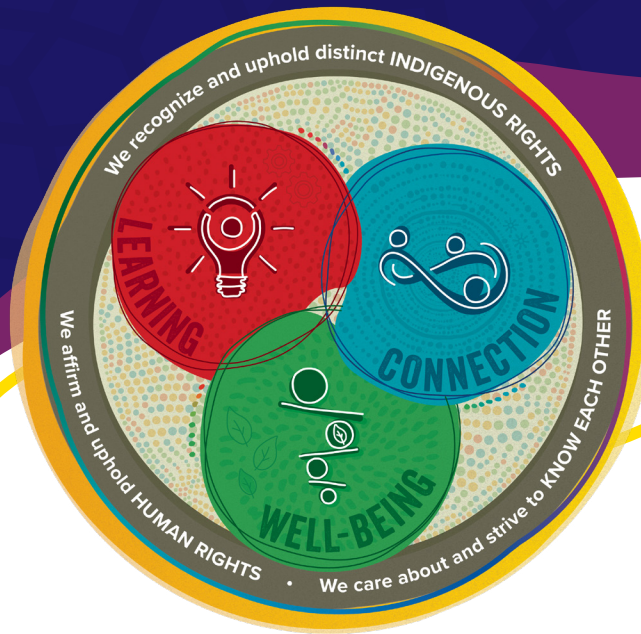
The DDSB acknowledges the diversity and intersectional identities within the Muslim faith worldwide, recognizing the unique lived experiences and global realities of Muslim individuals. This guide aims to create safe, inclusive environments and serves as a guide to recognize, prevent and address Islamophobia while fostering understanding and collaboration. It outlines meaningful goals and actions to enhance the experiences of Muslim students, staff and families across the board.

This guide aims to ensure that all DDSB schools and workplaces are safe and inclusive environments where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. It serves as a critical guide to recognizing, preventing and addressing Islamophobia while fostering understanding and collaboration.



DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Multi-Year Strategic Plan



We promote Meaningful Learning by:

- Providing high-quality teaching and learning for every student and staff member
- Centering students and aligning educational experiences to their interests and goals to prepare them for a changing world
- Recognizing and supporting staff as professionals and collaborators

We promote Connected Communities by:

- Engaging students, families, staff, and community members as valued contributors to our growing community
- Building trust and a shared purpose through listening, communication, and action
- Fostering opportunities to meet, learn from, and inspire one another

We promote Well-Being by:

- Creating safe, caring, and respectful environments where people can thrive
- Supporting the physical and mental health of students and staff
- Honouring every individual's identity and inherent dignity
- The Ignite Learning Multi-Year Strategic Plan sets the direction for the work of the DDSB and guides our collective actions toward ongoing, student-centered improvement and success.

Guiding Principles

The DDSB's Guiding Principles are rooted in anti-oppression, equity, and our responsibilities to uphold Indigenous and human rights for everyone. By truly knowing one another, we better understand the unique experiences and perspectives that enrich our communities. These principles inform our strategic direction, ensuring everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and belonging. These guiding principles help create environments where students, staff and families will flourish through meaningful learning, connected communities, and personal and collective well-being.

We recognize and uphold distinct **INDIGENOUS RIGHTS**

We affirm and uphold **HUMAN RIGHTS**

We care about and strive to **KNOW EACH OTHER**

These Guiding Principles underpin and guide our work and learning together as the DDSB community.

DDSB Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination, and Anti-Racism Policy, Procedure, and Accountability Framework

As outlined in the Durham District School Board's (DDSB) Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, discrimination includes all forms—individual, intersectional and systemic—based on any prohibited grounds. The policy affirms that there is no hierarchy of rights and applies equally to all forms of discrimination, including racism, Islamophobia, ableism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, faithism and classism.

The accompanying procedure focuses on proactive measures to promote, protect and uphold human rights, and to identify, prevent and address discrimination across the DDSB's services, employment and learning environments.

The Human Rights Roles, Responsibilities and Accountability Framework further defines individual and organizational responsibilities in upholding these rights.

This guide aligns with the Human Rights Policy, Procedure and Accountability Framework, and should be read alongside them to support inclusive, respectful environments for all.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the commitments and requirements of the Human Rights policy, procedure, and accountability framework to support inclusive, respectful and equitable environments for all.



Human Rights Policy: Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination

The Human Rights Policy prohibits discrimination and harassment by DDSB community members in the delivery of services, in employment and in DDSB learning and working environments based on the following prohibited grounds:

- **Age**
- **Ancestry** (includes Indigenous ancestry)
- **Citizenship**
- **Colour**
- **Creed** (religion, includes Indigenous spiritual practices)
- **Various abilities, disabilities, and neurodiversity*** (includes mental, physical, developmental and learning disabilities and addictions)
- **Ethnic origin**
- **Family status** (being in a parent-child or equivalent relationship)
- **Gender identity** (which may be the same or different from a person's birth assigned sex)
- **Gender expression** (how a person publicly presents their gender)
- **Marital status** (the status of being married, single, widowed, divorced or separated and includes "common-law relationships")
- **Place of origin**
- **Race**
- **Record of offenses** (in employment only)
- **Sex** (includes pregnancy)
- **Sexual orientation**
- **Socioeconomic status** (for students in DDSB services and learning environments).

** Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the prohibited ground is "disability".*



Who are we?

We live and learn on Indigenous land.

We live in apartments, hotels, shelters, foster homes, group homes and houses.

We are artists, scientists, athletes, linguists, and mathematicians.

We are leaders, makers, influencers, and thinkers.

We are all learners and teachers in our own unique ways and roles.

We teach, learn and work in schools, in the education centre,
at home and in communities.

When we work, learn, and lead together, we appreciate each other.

We make space for each other and thrive in community.

We are connected through care, mutual respect, and support.

We represent many ancestries, generations, ethnicities, abilities,
ways of living, loving and worship.

We are newcomers, settlers or have lived here since time immemorial.

We have individual and shared responsibilities and know that
we are all important.

We define individual paths toward greatness,
while we pursue learning, wellness, growth, and change.

We communicate through many languages, through sign,
touch, words, pictures and in silence.

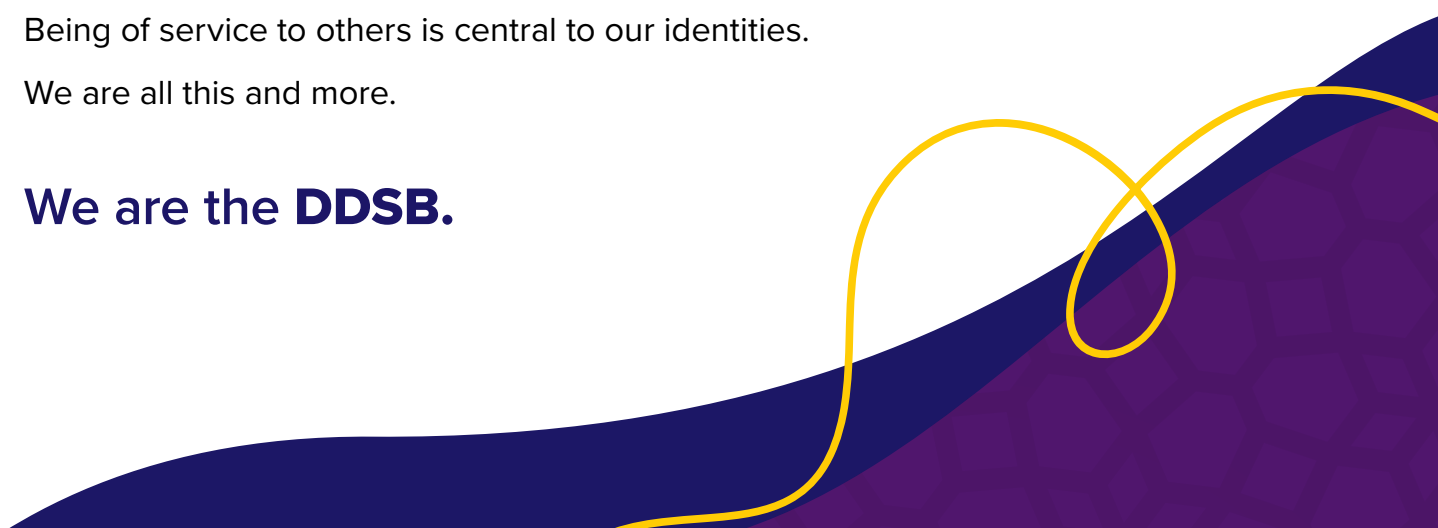
We make mistakes.

We embrace our potential and take responsibility
for who we are becoming.

Being of service to others is central to our identities.

We are all this and more.

We are the **DDSB**.



How do we show up?

Students arrive at school each day with dreams, aspirations, fears, anxieties, joy, hurt and many other layers of their identities. Some of these layers are visible, while other aspects require deeper understanding..

Students show up to be accepted, seen and heard. They come to be treated with dignity and respect—to be loved and recognized for who they are, not who we assume they should be. They show up to learn and thrive in school communities where their voices are valued in decisions that affect them. They show up seeking to make meaningful connections and to be in spaces where they are physically and emotionally safe.

How do we show up? Do our faces light up when we see all students, before and after the bell? Do we celebrate their successes and take responsibility when success has yet been achieved?

Do we show up ready to honour their unique and diverse gifts? Do we create space for our students to dream big, then bigger? Do we show up with care, ready to learn with and for them? Do we show up to let students know we care about and want to learn with them, and for them? Do we take time to know their stories? Are we prepared to let students lead? Do we show them that what matters to them, matters to us? **How do we show up?**

How do we show up? Do we recognize the brilliance in all that students do? Do we advocate for our students when they are not around? Do we show up when it's difficult? Do we remain present even when we feel they aren't showing up for us? Do we honour their abilities by understanding how they learn best? Do we pay attention to what helps and also to what harms? Do we place our students at the heart of everything we do? Do we understand the power and impact we have when we show up for our students?



How do we serve?

Anti-Oppression Strategic Priorities



Students First

At the Durham District School Board (DDSB), we are committed to supporting all students by creating conditions that allow them to fully be themselves. This means recognizing the humanity and interconnectedness of every member of our community. As part of this ongoing journey, we strive to ignite learning, foster belonging and actively challenge all forms of oppression, including Islamophobia.

DID YOU KNOW?

- A 2021, report in Durham found that Muslims are the second largest faith group in the region.
- Based on DDSB's 2023 Student Census, Muslims are the second largest faith group in DDSB.
- Muslims follow the Abrahamic faith called Islam. There are 5 pillars of Islam (Shahada, Prayer, Fasting, Zakat and Hajj).
A basic understanding of the pillars is a helpful way to ensure students and staff are supported in their practice of faith. Students and staff may ask for accommodations for prayer and fasting, for example. Refer to [Human Rights Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#) and the Inclusive Design and Accommodation Procedure.

5 pillars of Islam



DID YOU**KNOW?**

- There are 1.8 million Muslims in Canada and over 80% would identify as being racialized. The Muslim community is made up of many diverse and intersecting communities with rich histories, cultures, practices and languages. A common stereotype about the Muslim community is to assume that the community is monolithic, we need to challenge stereotypes as they negate the diversity of the community. *Shah, S. (2019). Canadian Muslims: Demographics, Discrimination, Religiosity, and Voting (Institute of Islamic Studies Occasional Paper Series 1, No. 1). Institute of Islamic Studies*
- James and Agnes Love immigrated from Scotland and settled in Ontario in 1854. They were among the earliest documented Muslims in Canada. They are believed to have gave birth to the first Muslim born in the territory that was to become Canada.
- Built in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1938, the [Al-Rashid Mosque](#) stands as the first purpose-built mosque in Canada and one of the earliest in North America. Initiated by a group of Muslim women who petitioned the mayor for land, the project was a community-driven effort, funded largely by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants.
- Muslims have played an important role historically and presently in the social, educational, and economic development of the world and continue to impact our daily lives. Did you know, Fatima Al-Firhi from Fez is known to have founded the first university in the world and Ibn Sina's work was integral to modern medicine?

Since 2017, more Muslims have been killed in targeted Islamophobic attacks in Canada than in any other G-7 country.

Please note this timeline is not inclusive of all incidents of Islamophobia and is a snapshot. Senate of Canada. (2023). [Combatting hate: Islamophobia and its impact on Muslims in Canada](#).



Quebec City Mosque Attack, Jan 29 2017.

Jan 29th is nationally recognized as the day to Commemorate the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Challenge Islamophobia. Learn about the [Green Square Campaign](#) to learn and commemorate this day.

International Muslim Association Murder, 2020

London Terrorist Attack, June 6, 2023.

Learn about this tragic incident through the voices of the [Youth Coalition Combatting Islamophobia](#) (YCCI).



Key Dates

Commemorate key dates in the calendar Promoting awareness and literacy around significant dates for Canadian Muslims creates opportunities for learning and creating inclusive practices.

- **October** is **Canadian Islamic History Month** and offers an opportunity to learn about Canadian Muslims. Educational institutions, workplaces, and community groups can support initiatives to affirm and recognize Muslim in Canada.
- **January 29** is the **National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec Mosque Attack** and **Action Against Islamophobia** and creates opportunities for Canadians to collectively mourn the deadly targeting of Canadian Muslims and recommit to standing up to hate.
- **June 6** is the **anniversary of the Islamophobic terrorist attack** on a Canadian Muslim family in London, Ontario.
- **Ramadan** is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting from dawn to sunset, communal prayer, reflection, and community.
- **Eid celebrations**, which occur twice every year, provide opportunities for joy, dialogue, community and education.
 - **Eid Al-Fitr** (festival of breaking fast) is a celebration marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.
 - **Eid Al-Adha** (festival of sacrifice) is a celebration that follows the Hajj pilgrimage and commemorates sacrifice and submission to God.

Islamophobia

Historical Roots of Islamophobia

Understanding Islamophobia requires an intersectional, anti-racist and anti-oppressive approach. Some of the earliest Muslims in Canada were likely of West African descent, brought through the transatlantic slave trade and denied the right to practise Islam. Historians estimate that up to 30 per cent of enslaved Africans may have identified as Muslim. Recognizing the intersection of Black and Muslim identities is essential to addressing the ongoing impacts of both Islamophobia and anti-Black racism. This work is critical to fostering equity, dignity and justice for all.

Defining Islamophobia

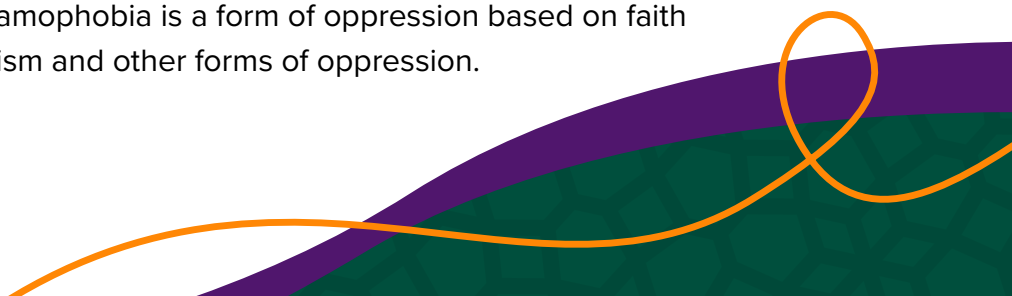
In the Canadian context, a frequently cited definition is the one proposed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in their 2015 report, “Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed.” **The OHRC definition is as follows:**

Islamophobia is a form of religious discrimination that includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic, and societal level. One-sided, sweeping, negative portrayals of Muslim people or Islam in general play a key role in normalizing and reproducing contemporary forms of Islamophobia. These may result in Muslims being treated unequally, evaluated negatively, and being excluded from positions, rights and opportunities in society and its institutions.

The OHRC definition is currently the working definition employed in the Government of Canada’s Anti-Racism Strategy, Ontario’s Anti-Racism Directorate, and by the National Council of Canadian Muslims. This is also the definition used in our DDSB Human Rights Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy.

Much like other forms of discrimination and racism, Anti-Muslim racism is grounded in White supremacy and has interpersonal, institutional, and systemic manifestations which intersect and reinforce one another. It targets Muslims, as well as those perceived to be Muslim based on their race, language, or ethnicity. Those targeted are pushed to the margins, excluded, othered, and placed in unsafe conditions.

It is important to note that Islamophobia is a form of oppression based on faith that often intersects with racism and other forms of oppression.



Adopting an Intersectional Approach

The DDSB affirms the intersecting identities of all students, staff, families and community members. Every individual brings a range of social identities, abilities and lived/living experiences. The DDSB is committed to affirming these intersectional identities across all schools and workplaces.

The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how overlapping identities—such as race, religion, gender and ability—can compound experiences of discrimination. Understanding this is essential to addressing Islamophobia, as Muslim communities are not monolithic. Muslims represent a wide range of backgrounds and lived experiences.

By adopting an intersectional approach, the Durham District School Board (DDSB) ensures its strategies are inclusive, comprehensive and responsive to the diverse needs of Muslim students, staff and families.

Anti-Black Islamophobia

Anti-Black Islamophobia is a form of racism that targets Black Muslims—or those perceived to be—who face compounded discrimination based on both race and religion. This results in double marginalization and systemic exclusion.

Gendered Islamophobia

Gendered Islamophobia is a form of racism rooted in Orientalist stereotypes that dehumanize Muslim women as oppressed and in need of saving, while portraying Muslim men as violent and patriarchal. This narrative, especially since 9/11, has been used to justify imperialist actions and disproportionately targets women who wear the hijab, who are the most frequent victims of Islamophobic hate crimes in Canada.



Centering the Voices of Staff and Students at DDSB

Centering the voices of those most impacted by inequity is critical in ongoing anti-oppressive practice. For some, the findings shared may come as a surprise and for others it is an embodied experience. It is important to use an anti-oppressive approach as we reflect on the data shared.

Even a single act of hate or intolerance is too many. This data empowers informed, board-wide action.



More than half of the DDSB student population identifies as racialized.



DDSB 2023 Student Census

- In 2023, 23% of all Kindergarten to Grade 12 students in the DDSB participated in the Student Census (18,883 respondents). 20% of students identified as Muslim.

Community Consultations

A series of community consultations were completed in 2024 where Muslim DDSB staff, students, and families had an opportunity to share their experiences. The sessions were run in collaboration with DDSB, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA), and the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM). Islamophobia remains a significant challenge in educational settings, affecting both educators and students within the DDSB.

What are our Students Telling Us?

“I don’t know any clear measures in place to address islamophobia in my classroom because we never talk about it.”

“Teachers will help if they hear anything specific (about Islamophobia) or if I ask.”

“We make days for Muslim people that make them welcome and happy in school. For example, we can do an art show for Muslim that will show their culture, beliefs and faith through paintings”

“Mental health challenges are real, we are dealing with lots and supports are needed for Muslim students.”

“From my experience, it is common for non-Muslims to make 9/11 jokes. I find these jokes offensive.”

“We have a lot of Muslim students and that is really good. In our school we do have a program called MSA. It's for Muslim people and non-Muslim people are welcome to invite them, and every Friday we do have Friday prayers.”

“I don’t feel that teachers especially help to make everyone feel included at school because they rarely talk about our cultures/religion.”

“If we had more teachers of colour or Muslim teachers, it could lead to feeling more comfortable and confident with our identity.”

What is our Staff Telling Us?

“Seeing Muslim students as whole human beings... I make sure to let them know in small and big ways that I see their full humanity and that is welcome.”

“Connection is key. There is nothing more powerful. You don't have to know everything about Islam. You need to work from a place of curiosity and non-judgement.”

“Assumptions are made about my beliefs; I can be seen having an agenda when I advocate for human rights based on creed.”

“The Muslim Educators Network of Durham has created and provided resources for educators and students over the last few years. We need to ensure such groups are supported.”

“We only deal with it when it arises. We should put things in place to prevent it (Islamophobia).”

“Sometimes during Ramadan (while working) I do not get full accommodations.”

“Coming together to help and heal when global issues occur is needed, our students and staff carry so much with them.”

“My Muslim identity is my faith, and I do keep it private. It is difficult to share in my workspace.”

“I'm a Muslim educator and I'm worried about wearing Hijab at work.”

SNAPSHOT

Staff Experiences

Consultations with staff revealed that Muslim educators face significant challenges related to Islamophobia. These range from microaggressions to overt discriminatory behaviours, which negatively impact their sense of belonging and their relationships with colleagues, families and administrators.

More than half (58%) of surveyed educators reported feeling pressured to downplay or conceal their Muslim identity. One educator expressed concern about wearing a hijab at work and finding time for prayer, underscoring the lack of accommodations for religious practices.

Respondents emphasized the need for culturally responsive and relevant resources and curriculum that reflect Muslim identities. Many also highlighted the importance of affirming spaces and access to mental health and wellness supports.

Staff stressed the need to create safe spaces for open dialogue about Islamophobia and Muslim identity. This includes building capacity through professional learning and community partnerships to ensure that non-Muslim colleagues are equipped to recognize and challenge Islamophobia.

In addition, students expressed a strong desire for greater representation of Muslim identities among educators. They emphasized the importance of a more diverse teaching staff to foster a sense of belonging and support for Muslim students.



SNAPSHOT

Student Consultations on Islamophobia – Key Findings

Consultations conducted by the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) with Durham District School Board (DDSB) students revealed that Islamophobia significantly affects their learning, well-being and sense of belonging.

Online Islamophobia

79% of students reported encountering Islamophobic content or cyberbullying on social media, contributing to feelings of exclusion both online and at school.

Recognition and Representation

- 58% said their schools acknowledged Islamic holidays such as Eid, while 32% said they did not.
- 43% reported their schools celebrated Islamic Heritage Month, but 50% said they did not.

These inconsistencies highlight the need for more consistent and inclusive cultural recognition.

Impact on Learning and Safety

- 28% of students said Islamophobia affected their academic experience.
- 35% reported experiencing bullying or harassment related to their religion.

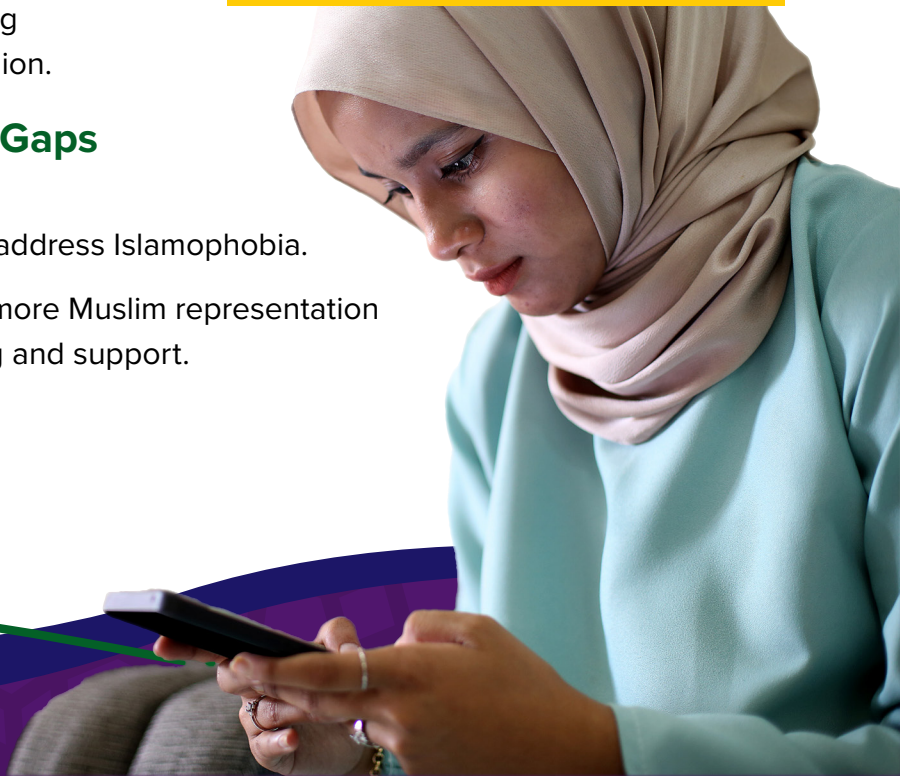
Policy and Representation Gaps

- 61% of students felt their schools lacked clear policies or actions to address Islamophobia.

Many expressed a strong desire for more Muslim representation among educators to foster belonging and support.

35%

of students reported
**experiencing bullying
or harassment** related
to their religion



Anti-Oppression Strategic Priorities



Represent, Affirm and Recognize all Identities



Support Mental Health and Well-Being



Cultivate Safe Learning and Working Environments



Foster Meaningful Connections



Create Accessible Learning Opportunities

10 Goals

in support of Muslim Students, Staff and Families

Represent, Affirm and Recognize all Identities

Goal: Provide opportunities for Muslim students and staff to see themselves reflected in school and board-wide policies, programs and initiatives.

Goal: Equip staff with the tools and training to apply anti-oppressive, anti-Islamophobic practices that remove barriers for Muslim students, staff and families.

Support Mental Health and Well-Being

Goal: Offer culturally responsive mental health professionals and resources to support the well-being of Muslim students and staff.

Goal: Prioritize health, healing and wellbeing of Muslim staff, students and families.

Cultivate Safe Learning and Working Environments

Goal: Support Muslim identities by strengthening staff understanding of religious accommodations and Human Rights obligations.

Goal: Build and facilitate supports for Muslim identifying staff in the DDSB.

Foster Meaningful Connections

Goal: Develop, promote and facilitate dedicated supports for Muslim-identifying staff across the DDSB.

Goal: Develop, strengthen, and demonstrate value of employees across departments and affinity networks.

Create Accessible Learning Opportunities

Goal: Ensure all DDSB staff have the awareness and knowledge to recognize, name, and address Islamophobia.

Goal: Provide accessible information to all DDSB staff, students and families about the guide and its progress.



Represent, Affirm and Recognize all Identities through meaningful and reflective learning opportunities

Goal: Provide opportunities for Muslim students, staff and families to see themselves reflected in school and board-wide policies, programs, and initiatives.

Commitment: All schools are inclusive spaces where Muslim staff, students, and families feel welcomed and valued.

Action: Host affirming events and invite Muslim-identifying speakers, professionals and artists throughout the year (e.g., paint nights with local Muslim artists, community Eid celebrations).

Considerations:

- How are Muslim students, staff, and families engaged within the process of identifying, planning and facilitating identity-affirming events?
- How is community input gathered to ensure a diverse range of Muslim presenters?
- How are planned events reflective of the plurality of the Muslim community and responsive to intersectional identities?

Action: Expand mentorship opportunities and provide resources to support Muslim student affinity groups, such as Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) and other intersectional groups.

Considerations:

- How are Muslim student voices actively engaged and supported?
- What supports exist for MSAs and similar spaces? What barriers exist, and how are they addressed?
- How is bias or discrimination against MSAs handled, and what accountability measures ensure inclusive, rights-based environments?

Action: Maintain ongoing engagement between school and system leaders and Muslim staff affinity groups to ensure responsive and affirming actions, policies and communications (e.g., co-creating Ramadan resources in collaboration with MEND).

Considerations:

- How do leaders demonstrate their support and commitment to affirming Muslim identities?
- What intentional actions have been taken in response to feedback from Muslim staff?

Action: Integrate identity-affirming resources and learning about Muslim identities and contributions across K–12 curricula (e.g., math, science, history, arts).

Considerations:

- What K–12 resources and learning opportunities affirm Muslim identities?
- How are Muslim students, staff and families involved in identifying affirming and anti-Islamophobia content?
- Whose voices shape the selection of these resources and experiences?

Goal: Build staff capacity to apply anti-oppressive and anti-Islamophobic practices to remove barriers for Muslim students, staff, and families.

Commitment: Staff, students and families at DDSB are empowered to challenge Islamophobia.

Action: Build student and staff understanding of Islamophobia and its links to other forms of oppression.

Considerations:

- How are policies (e.g., Human Rights, Indigenous Education, Safe Workplace, Anti-Oppression) applied in daily practice?
- What professional learning opportunities support intersectional understanding of Islamophobia?

Action: Create learning opportunities for staff and students to critically examine and challenge Islamophobia in literature, media and everyday contexts.

Considerations:

- What is the staff’s capacity to identify and address Islamophobia and its intersections?
- How are Muslim identities meaningfully integrated across the curriculum?
- What resources and professional learning support this capacity-building?
- How do educators use age-appropriate, critical approaches to help students recognize and discuss Islamophobia?

Spread inclusivity in the curriculum and talk more about things happening around the world that involve Muslims.

- Staff Consultation

Support Mental Health and Well-Being of all students, staff and families

Goal: Provide culturally responsive mental health professionals and resources to support the well-being of Muslim students, staff and families.

Commitment: Provide resources, training and connection opportunities to support Muslim students, staff and families.

Action: Develop ongoing training opportunities through multiple parent/guardian/caregiver engagement channels (e.g. School Community Councils, Parent Involvement Committees).

Considerations:

- Are community resources readily available for students, staff and families?
- How can staff better understand the mental health impacts of geopolitical and intersectional realities on Muslim communities?

Goal: Prioritize the health, healing, and wellbeing of Muslim staff, students, and families.

Commitment: Develop a culture where mental health and wellness are essential to success.

Action: Create ongoing spaces for Muslim students and staff to share emotions, joys and experiences (e.g., listening circles, art nights). Provide targeted mental health support during incidents of Islamophobia and on key dates (e.g., Jan. 29 – National Day of Remembrance and Action Against Islamophobia).

Considerations:

- What do these supportive spaces look like, and how is privacy ensured?
- How do these spaces reflect the diversity within the Muslim community?
- How can access to identity-affirming mental health professionals be improved?
- What processes will guide responsive actions based on shared concerns?

Action: Provide targeted mental health and wellness support during incidents of Islamophobia and on key dates (e.g., Jan. 29 – National Day of Remembrance and Action Against Islamophobia).

Considerations:

- How are DDSB dates of significance used to uplift and affirm Muslim identities?
- What supports are in place for Muslim staff affected by societal Islamophobia?
- How can staff deepen their understanding of the mental health impacts of geopolitical and intersectional realities on Muslim communities?
- How can access to identity-affirming mental health professionals and resources be improved?

Mental health challenges are real, we are dealing with lots and supports are needed for Muslim students.

- DDSB Student

Action: Expand and sustain affinity spaces for Muslim students, including Muslim Student Associations (MSAs), across all schools.

Considerations:

- How are Muslim students connected to Muslim staff and community mentors?
- What system-wide initiatives affirm Muslim student identities, and how can they be made consistent and sustainable?
- How do educators and leaders collaborate with MSAs and engage broader Muslim student voices in shaping these opportunities?



Cultivate Safe Learning and Working Environments that center joy and intentionally disrupt oppression

Goal: Support Muslim identities by strengthening staff understanding of religious accommodations and human rights obligations.

Action: Ensure faith-based accommodations are available and accessible to all Muslim staff and students.

Provide private and accessible prayer rooms at every school.

- DDSB Student

Considerations:

- Who has been consulted to understand the accommodation needs of Muslim students and staff?
- How have Muslim students, staff and families contributed to this process, and how is their diversity reflected?
- Is there a designated, accessible prayer or contemplation space in every school and worksite?
- How is the availability of accommodations communicated to students, staff and families?

Goal: Build and facilitate supports for Muslim identifying staff in DDSB

Commitment: Empower all DDSB staff to foster inclusive and supportive working environments for Muslim colleagues.

Action: Support the hiring, professional development, and advancement of Muslim staff.

Considerations:

- How are leaders, managers and administrators made aware of equitable and inclusive hiring practices, including recruitment, postings and interviews?
- Are hiring and promotion processes regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code?

Increase Muslim representation among teaching staff and support Muslim Employee Resource groups and mentorship.

- Staff DDSB



Foster Meaningful Connections for all identities

Goal: Build intentional and collaborative relationships with Muslim students, staff, and families.

Commitment: Cultivate spaces where Muslim students, staff, and families are key partners in education.

Action: Foster respectful, two-way relationships with Muslim families and communities.

Considerations:

- How do newcomer families access school information and navigate the system?
- How are Muslim families engaged and heard as educational partners?

Goal: Develop, promote and facilitate dedicated supports for Muslim-identifying staff across the DDSB.

Commitment: Gather and honour authentic voices through meaningful engagement with Muslim students, staff, families and communities.

Action: Conduct ongoing consultations to inform district and school initiatives.

Considerations:

- How are the voices of Muslim students, staff, families gathered and honoured?
- How is the DDSB building and sustaining trust with the Muslim community?
- What safe, inclusive spaces exist for connection and collaboration?

Connection is key. There is nothing more powerful.
You don't have to know everything about Islam. You need
to work from a place of curiosity and non-judgement

- Staff Consultation

Commitment: Recognize and support staff expertise in addressing Islamophobia and affirming Muslim identities.

Action: Support staff with expertise in anti-Islamophobia education to lead professional learning, mentor peers and develop inclusive curriculum.

Considerations:

- How are Muslim needs integrated into system-wide capacity building?
- What initial resources (e.g., time, budget) are being provided to support this work?
- How is allyship being developed and sustained across all staff roles?

Create Accessible Learning Opportunities by identifying and eliminating barriers for all identities

Goal: Ensure all DDSB staff have the awareness and knowledge to recognize, name, and address Islamophobia.

Commitment: All DDSB staff and students are equipped with the tools and resources to understand and challenge Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination.

Action: Enhance staff capacity through professional learning focused on equity, human rights, anti-oppression, anti-racism and Islamophobia, its impact on Muslim students, staff and communities, and how to prevent and respond to incidents.

Considerations:

- Do learning opportunities teach staff how to identify, address and prevent Islamophobia?
- Is there a focus on the intersectional and diverse experiences of Muslim identities?
- What accountability measures ensure staff apply this learning?
- How is student climate and census data used to inform school and system planning?
- Are key Muslim events (e.g., Islamic Heritage Month, Quebec Mosque Remembrance Day, Ramadan, Eid) integrated into learning?

Goal: Ensure all DDSB staff, students and families are provided with accessible information about the guide and its progress.

Commitment: Gather and use lived experiences and feedback to inform district and school initiatives.

Action: Establish transparent, regular public reporting on guide goals and actions.

Considerations:

- How is progress—including challenges and updates—shared with Muslim communities?
- How is community feedback gathered and used?
- What metrics are used to assess success?
- How are all stakeholders kept informed about goals and their impact on daily practice?

“

I don't know any clear measures in place to address islamophobia in my classroom because we never talk about it.

- DDSB Student

”



Resources and Connections

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list of resources, but a helpful start.

Muslim Educators Network of Durham (MEND)

The Muslim Educators' Network of Durham (MEND) was formed in April of 2017 and is comprised of Durham District School Board employees, including, but not limited to Superintendents, Administrators, Teachers, Educational Assistants, DECEs, and Employee Services personnel. Both allies and identifying educators work together actively with students and parents to create leadership opportunities and responsive structures that support inclusive spaces for all.

MEND believes in bringing diverse communities together by empowering parents and activating community voice. As a network, MEND is a proud partner of the Durham District School Board in its work to support the development of healthy and thriving learning environments where student achievement and well-being are valued.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)

[The National Council of Canadian Muslims \(NCCM\)](#) is an independent, non-profit, human rights organization that works to build understanding and challenge Islamophobia.

NCCM is committed to supporting educators, administrators and school board staff with capacity building and resources to counter Islamophobia within educational spaces. We are certain that creating inclusive spaces through education strengthens school communities

NCCM's Reporting Tool

If you believe you have been the victim or witness of discrimination, harassment, or hate crime, please fill out and submit the Incident Report Form found on our [website](#).

National Muslim Educators Network

Over the past few years, we've built a vibrant network of Muslim educators from across Canada, fostering collaboration and the exchange of ideas. This platform enables educators to share experiences, brainstorm solutions, and address issues that matter most to our communities.

If you're a Muslim educator looking to connect with like-minded professionals and be part of this growing network, please reach out to us at edu@nccm.ca.

Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)

[The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians \(CASSA\)](#) is an umbrella organization of agencies, groups, and individuals that provide services to the South Asian Community. We envision and strive for a Canada free of all forms of discrimination in which all communities are free from marginalization and are fully empowered to participate in defining Canada's political, economic, social and cultural future.

Naseeha Mental Health

[Naseeha](#) provides the Muslim community with the tools needed to address mental health. With our confidential helpline, our youth receives immediate, anonymous, and confidential support over the phone 24/7. With our educational programs, we raise awareness within the community to address the stigma around mental health.

Our services are open to everyone, regardless of age, gender, or background. We are committed to providing a safe and non-judgmental environment where individuals can discuss their concerns without fear of stigma or discrimination.

Employee and Family Assistance Program

If you feel that you need some personal support and, assistance, please access your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24/7 by phone, web or app.

www.workhealthlife.com, by phone, at 1 844 880 9142 (TTY 1 877 338 0275), or Download MY EAP app now at your device app store.



DDSB Supporting Documents

Indigenous Education Policy

**Human Rights Anti-Discrimination
and Anti-Racism Policy**

**Safe and Respectful Workplace and
Harassment Prevention Policy**

Accessibility Policy

**Complaint Procedure – Human Rights, Safe
and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention**

Resource Selection Tool

Accommodating Creed in Schools



Terms and Definitions

Please note. Terminology evolves. For the most up to date terms and definitions, please refer to the DDSB Anti-Oppression page.

Accommodation: adjusting services, environments, programs and practices or making other arrangements to remove barriers and better respond to or address individual Human Rights Code related needs so that individuals with Human Rights Code related needs do not experience adverse effects. The duty to accommodate (see definition below) refers to DDSB’s legal obligation under the Human Rights Code to make these adjustments. Accommodations must respect the individual’s dignity and maximize inclusion, integration, participation and independence.

Barrier: anything that prevents a person from fully taking part in any aspect of DDSB services, employment or learning and working environments based on a Human Rights Code ground(s) and can include policies, procedures and practices, and physical, architectural, information or communications, attitudinal, and technological barriers. Barriers can be overt or subtle, intended or unintended, and systemic or specific to an individual or group. Barriers prevent or limit access to opportunities, benefits, services or advantages that are available to others. See also “systemic barrier” below.

Discrimination: any practice or behaviour, whether intentional or not, which results in a person or group experiencing differential or inequitable treatment (or where they are denied opportunities or benefits) based on one or more of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Human Rights Code (except where the conduct is permitted under the Human Rights Code). It is treating someone unfairly because of Human Rights Code-related grounds by imposing a burden or denying a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others.

Discrimination may also be due to treatment which though applied equally has an unequal effect on an individual or group protected from discrimination under the Human Rights Code. This is often based on stereotypes, assumptions or negative attitudes about a group of people based on a Human Rights Code identity(ies), and from not considering individual Human Rights Code-related needs and circumstances.

An action, inaction, policy, practice or behaviour can intentionally or unintentionally have a discriminatory effect on individuals or groups (see also “adverse effect” and “systemic discrimination”).

Duty to accommodate: DDSB has a legal obligation under the Human Rights Code to accommodate students’ and employees’ Human Rights Code related needs, to the point of undue hardship (see definition below). The duty includes procedural and substantive elements to collaboratively identify accommodation options and solutions, and to provide accommodation that most respects the individual’s dignity and needs, and that maximizes integration, independence and participation.

Faithism: negative treatment and discrimination directed towards people based on creed. Faithism includes any ideology that ascribes to people values, beliefs and behaviours, and constructs people as fundamentally different and unequal, or deserving or undeserving of respect and dignity, based on their religion or belief. Faithism creates and reproduces a consistent, distorted, negative and stereotypical view of individuals and groups based on their creed, faith, beliefs or associated characteristics.

Hate Incident: is non-criminal conduct that is motivated in whole or in part by hatred against an individual or group on the basis of a protected ground. A hate incident can encompass situations in which the conduct is directed against people associated with individuals or groups identified with the protected grounds. The conduct can be verbal (hate speech), nonverbal or written, and may manifest itself in the form of slurs, insults, harassment, abusive gestures, taunting, display of offensive materials or hate symbols, or other acts which may intimidate, degrade and/or marginalize the targeted individual or group.

Hate crime: a criminal offence that is committed against a person or property, and which is motivated in whole or in part by hatred or bias based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, creed, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. This includes, but is not limited to, hate-motivated violence, incitement to hate motivated violence, and/or the display of symbols or other representations identified with groups promoting hate and violence. It also includes such crimes committed against a person who is associated, or perceived to be associated, with individuals or groups identified with one of the Human Rights Code protected grounds.

Intersectional discrimination/intersectionality: discrimination based on the overlap between or combination of two or more Human Rights Code related characteristics. Often it is the result of identities that intersect in a socially significant way. It refers to discrimination that occurs based on two or more Human Rights Code grounds that produces a unique and distinct form and experience of discrimination, and recognizes that people's lives involve multiple overlapping identities, and that marginalization, exclusion and discrimination may be further exacerbated because of how these identities interact or "intersect".

Islamophobia: includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level.

Systemic discrimination: where systems, rules, policies, patterns of behaviour or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures or cultures of an organization (whether intentionally or unintentionally, and even if they may appear neutral) have a discriminatory impact on particular people or groups based on Human Rights Code grounds, or that create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for groups identified under the Human Rights Code.

Undue hardship: a legal test to describe the extent to which an organization must accommodate Human Rights Code related needs. It is a high standard and must be supported by objective, real and direct evidence, and can only be based on three factors: health and safety risks that cannot be mitigated, costs and outside sources of funding.

Universal Design for Learning: a teaching approach that focuses on using teaching strategies or pedagogical materials designed to meet individual needs to enhance learning for all students.

White supremacy: a racist ideology based on the belief that white identity is the norm, standard and ideal. “It does not refer to extreme hate groups or far right extremists. It is not about good and bad people. It is about the accumulation of social, cultural and institutional power that has and continues to advantage a group of people” (from Addressing Anti-Asian Racism: A Resource for Educator, TDSB and ETFO). It refers to the “pervasiveness, magnitude, and normalcy of white privilege, dominance, and assumed superiority in society” (from Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education, Ozlem Sensoy, Robin DiAngelo).

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The Durham District School Board is committed to providing accessible information and communications as outlined under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). If you require this communication in an alternative format, please contact communications.department@ddsb.ca.

