	POLICY NO: 2.3
Adopted	2016, 2020, 2023
Projected Review Date	2027
Revisions	2020, 2023, 2025

POLICY: NAMING OF SCHOOLS

Note: The Minister of Education advised Chief Executive Officers and school board Chairs on July 30, 2026, that under s. 174 of the Education Act, naming a new school or changing the name of an existing school is subject to Minister approval. HWDSB will follow this requirement under the Education Act. This policy will be reviewed and revised in the fall of 2026 to ensure alignment to direction of the Ministry of Education.

PURPOSE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) recognizes that naming schools, or sections of the school, provides a unique opportunity to further develop an identity for the school, its students, its community, its staff, and the Board. School or sections of school names represent HWDSB's mission, vision and values, and this policy is committed to the principles of equity and human rights, in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and Ministry of Education PPM 119 and the recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action of Canada.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Names for schools, in whole or part, chosen under this policy will consider the following principles:

- Reflect HWDSB's vision, mission, commitments, and community composition and be suitable for the whole district.
- Reflect values and principles outlined in HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity and Inclusion policies, including anti-racism, anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, and decolonization.
- Reflect the activity, significance, and energy of a place (historical and current). The Land Acknowledgement that HWDSB uses emphasizes the importance of the land we are on, its history, and the responsibility we share to care for it in perpetuity through the Dish with One Spoon wampum.
- Reflect local, provincial, or national diversities with consideration being given to Indigenous communities and local communities that are currently or historically underserved.
- Access and consider the current student body, school council and broader school community's voice to support the naming of school process.
- Work towards sustainable relationships with Indigenous communities through collaboration, listening, transparency, respect, and humility.

- Consult with Indigenous and equity deserving communities, before, during and after the process to build trusting relationships with them.

- Build consensus and listen to others while working towards a suitable decision as an essential element in the decision-making process.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- A name chosen for a school, in whole or in part, is expected to have community acceptance while being suitable for the whole district.

- The process of school naming, in whole or part, considers the relationship and history with the associated land of the school site.

- School names that reflect legacies and histories connected to colonialism, slavery, racism and other systems of oppression and discrimination will not be considered.

- Names of individuals and their associated histories will not be considered. School names, in whole or part, will be inclusive of the larger community and its values and attributes.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Chief Executive Officer

TERMINOLOGY:

Anti-racism: A proactive and consistent process of acknowledging racism; and of seeking to identify, challenge, disrupt and eliminate racism in all its forms (individual, institutional, systemic racism).

Anti-oppression: A proactive and consistent process of acknowledging different forms of oppression (colonialism, racism, ableism, classism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, classism, islamophobia, antisemitism, and other forms); and of seeking to identify, challenge, disrupt and eliminate oppressive ideologies, practices, and outcomes.

Board: Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB).

Closure of one or more schools and consolidation into an existing school: When the Board closes one or more schools because of an accommodation decision and moves the students into an already established school.

Closure of two or more schools and consolidation into a new build on an existing or new site: When the Board closes two or more schools because of an accommodation decision and builds a new school to accommodate all students from the closing schools.

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with *'unsettlers[2]'*, 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 Indigenous peoples. For example, the Indian Act and the Canadian institutions known as Indian Residential "Schools", historic provincial child welfare misapplications, and non-Indigenous peoples' refusal to acknowledge the land and treaty rights of Indigenous people continues to contribute to this legacy.

Consensus: We arrive at consensus by listening to the opinions and concerns of others - everyone works towards a suitable decision. Not everyone may be pleased with the outcome, but they accept it is the best decision for the community.

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 the present.

District: The areas across the City of Hamilton where HWDSB schools are located.

Equity: A condition or state in which access to opportunities and resources are distributed fairly, justly, and equitably. Equity involves treating some people differently or giving them what they need so they may meet the same outcomes as others.

New build due to growth*:* A new school construction to alleviate accommodation pressures in growth areas.

Ontario Human Rights Code**:** A provincial law that gives everyone equal rights and opportunities, without discrimination, in devoted areas such as education, jobs, housing and services. The goal of the Code is to address and prevent discrimination and harassment. (Available at www.ohrc.on.ca)

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.

Replacement school built on an existing or new site: When the Board moves students from an existing school into a newly built school.

School in part: A section of a school which could involve areas such as, but not limited to, the library, auditorium, gymnasium, track, or theatre.

School in whole: The naming/renaming of the entire school.

ACTION REQUIRED:

A naming of schools process ***shall*** begin under the following circumstances:

- A new build due to growth.
- Closure of two or more schools and consolidation into a new build on an existing or new site.
- Board approved motion.

A naming of schools process ***may*** begin under the following circumstances only if the affected schools would like to proceed and with a Board motion:

- Closure of one or more schools and consolidation into an existing school.
- Replacement school built on an existing or new site.
- Naming a school in part.
- Feedback will be collected from the student body, employees, school councils, and Home and School Associations, where they may exist, of the affected schools.

Steps of a naming of school's process in whole or in part:

1. Initiation
2. Consultation
3. Establishment of a School Naming Committee
4. Development of name recommendation(s)
5. Board of Trustees recommendation to the Minister of Education for approval

PROGRESS INDICATORS:

Intended Outcome	Assessment
A school name chosen for a school, in whole or in part, is expected to have community acceptance while being suitable for the whole district.	Staff will collect feedback and survey data through the public consultation process, as well as through discussion with the School Naming Committee and Transition Committees if applicable.
The process of school naming, in whole or part, reflects HWDSB's commitment to equity, Human Rights, anti-colonialism, anti-racism and anti-oppression.	The school Naming Committee will ensure all HWDSB Policies and their guiding principles that are related to Human Rights, Equity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and anti-colonialism are foundational when selecting the school or school in part names.
The process of school naming, in whole or part, considers the relationship and history with the associated land of the school site.	The School Naming Committee will seek Indigenous knowledge about the significance and energy of a place (historical and current) where the school, in whole or in part, being named is located.

REFERENCES:

Government Documents
Education Act, s. 174
Ontario Regulation 244/26: School Names