



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society

EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE CHAIRS HANDBOOK

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Welcome from the
President
Words of encouragement

Dear ESJ Chairs,

Kudos to you for accepting the important role of Equity and Social Justice Chair in your association. This handbook contains smart, practical resources to help you understand your assignment and support you in your work.

The Society has long advocated for equity and social justice in education. Like you, we recognize the necessity of providing students with safe and inclusive learning environments that respect human diversity. We also know the harmful effects of negative judgments around gender, sexual stereotyping, and sexual orientation/identity.

That's why we are honoured to have passionate people like you step forward to promote the values of equity and social justice that we all cherish.

Together, there's no doubt we'll make a difference.

- Norm Gould, President, The Manitoba Teachers' Society

Local Association Equity and Social Justice Chairpersons

Chairpersons are appointed/elected at each local association. These may be executive positions on the local executive. There may or may not be a budget line to support the work.

Roles and Responsibilities of Local Association Chairpersons

- To support teachers with equity and Social Justice issues related to the profession.
- To meet with the other chairpersons from their region at each of the two-day training sessions and at least once as a stand-alone meeting held in their respective region.

MTS provides three two-day workshops annually which are designed to provide:

- information and resources to support the work of the Chairpersons.
- opportunities to interact with experts on various issues; meet service providers from around Manitoba; receive copies of relevant resources and interact with their counterparts in regional and random groupings.

In addition, these training sessions and meetings are designed to assist chairpersons in meeting the following goals:

- Provide a voice and support for teachers engaging in ESJ work within their association.
- Educate membership of their local association on ESJ issues.
- Influence and educate membership in collective bargaining.
- Provide resources and contact information for local members.
- Organize committees to promote ESJ awareness and action.
- Advocate for training at the local and society level.

Local Association Equity and Social Justice Committees

An ESJ committee may be formed locally to support the work of the ESJ Chair.

Steps to establishing a Committee are:

1. Determine what your ESJ Committee will look like
2. Advocate for support from local association executive
3. Find champions in your local association membership
4. Solicit members to fit committee needs
5. Create a needs assessment tool
6. Develop awareness amongst membership
7. Review existing policies in the local association and school division
8. Introduce strategies and activities to involve the members on specific topics.
9. Network with other local associations
10. Broaden the base of members involved
11. Report to Executive and Membership regularly to build support

Resources and Contacts

MTS offers multiple workshops throughout the year which are available to all members and provide the opportunity to accrue hours towards current certificates offered by Manitoba Education and Training. Registration for these workshops is available through the MTS website. Equity and social justice issues relevant to the Manitoba context are incorporated into these workshops.

The Teacher-Led Learning Team as well as MTS staff are also available to provide workshops on various topics related to diversity, equity and social justice upon request. To request a workshop through MTS, contact Danielle Fullan Kolton. For assistance in contacting suitable presenters on topics not available through MTS, chairs should contact **Brahim Ould Baba for assistance.**

Training sessions for Local Teachers' Association Executives are also available on ESJ topics.

What does Equity and Social Justice Mean in our Context?

Definitions

Equity:

Fairness achieved through proactive measures which results in empowerment for all. Proactive measures could include: developing and enacting policy and legislation, awareness raising, erasing barriers that marginalize, creating space for “other” voices. (as adopted by MTS 2008)

Equity refers to the provision of equitable opportunity, equitable access to programming, services, and resources critical to the achievement of outcomes for all students and the staff who serve them. Equity and equality are not necessarily synonymous, as equity can be achieved through unequal means.

–Manitoba GSA Handbook, 2014



Equity, from MTS perspective, includes the following commitments:

- That “Society members and employees promote an understanding and active inclusion of “equity-seeking groups”, the applicable characteristics of which are specified in the Manitoba Human Rights Code, Section 9(2);
- That the society support all members in providing safe and inclusive learning environments that respect human diversity and prevent

- the expression of negative judgements based on gender bias, sexual stereotyping, sexual orientation and/or gender identity;
- The elimination of all forms of discrimination in the schools and communities of Manitoba, with discrimination being defined by the Manitoba Human Rights Code, Section 9(1);
 - That the Society actively advocate and promote actions that provide plans for prevention of and appropriate responses to discriminatory incidents, develop a climate of respect for diversity, and promote positive interactions among all members of the education community.

Social Justice (MTS 2008):

A quality achieved in a society when all members of that society are treated equitably and perceive themselves to be physically and psychologically safe and secure.

Diversity:

“Diversity” means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference.

Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Diversity includes knowing how to relate to qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside of the groups to which we

belong. Diversity encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of individuals, as well as respecting their differences. Diversity may include, but is not limited to gender identity, sexual orientation; age; ethnic origin; ancestry, culture; socio-economic status; religion; family status; mental and physical disability.

–Manitoba GSA Handbook, 2014

It is important to acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but can be fluid, that we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.

Human Rights

“Supporting human rights [also] entails recognizing and protecting the inherent dignity of all people at the individual, organizational and public policy levels.”

–Alberta Teachers Association Handbook

History

Unions have been founded in Equity

To quote from *From Demonized to Organized, Building the New Union Movement* (Loreto, 2013, page18):

“Unions formalized cooperation within a workplace and offered workers, regardless of their political stripe, an easy and practical way to work together. Without the coordination that a union brings to a workplace, workers have to negotiate individually for their contracts, their salaries and their working conditions. As a result, many workers across Canada would earn higher wages than their colleagues just because he or she has a closer or better relationship with the company’s managers or owners. The benefits that some received were not often shared among the others.”

This description of the foundational premise of unions highlights the focus on equity for all workers within the employment group. As we bargain collectively through our local associations with our school divisions, we are exercising our right for equitable treatment of all members.

Within The Society, the AGM passed a resolution in 1975 to establish its first specific social justice committee—the *Status of Women in Education Committee* (SOWIE) which was later changed to (SWE). In the late 1980’s, the name and mandate of this committee was changed to *Equality in Education* with racism, child care, elder care and equality in hiring added to its mandate. In the mid 1990’s, the name was again changed to the *Equal Opportunity in Education Committee* (EOE). As a result of the transformative work of this committee, items such as benefits for same sex partners, and parental rights top-up provisions are now included in all teacher collective agreements across Manitoba.

Through resolution at the AGM 2008, the committee was again renamed. The current Equity and Social Justice Standing Committee has a broadened mandate and continues to focus on advancing equity and social justice issues and practices within MTS. The work of this committee is supported by a network of Equity and Social Justice Chairpersons who represent each of the local teachers’ associations within MTS.



ESJ is the umbrella for all of the MTS objectives

As we review the current Constitution of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, we find the following "Objects of society: (MTS Constitution, page 3)

The objects of the society are:

- (a) to promote and advance the cause of education in Manitoba;
- (b) to advance and safeguard the welfare of teachers in Manitoba;
- (c) to enhance the teaching profession in Manitoba;
- (d) to address social issues that affect the teaching profession in Manitoba;
- (e) to cooperate with other organizations in Canada or elsewhere having the same or like aims and objects; and
- (f) to take measures that are not inconsistent with this Act or any Act of the Legislature which the society considers necessary or advisable to give effect to any policy adopted by it with respect to any question directly or indirectly affecting teaching, teachers or education.

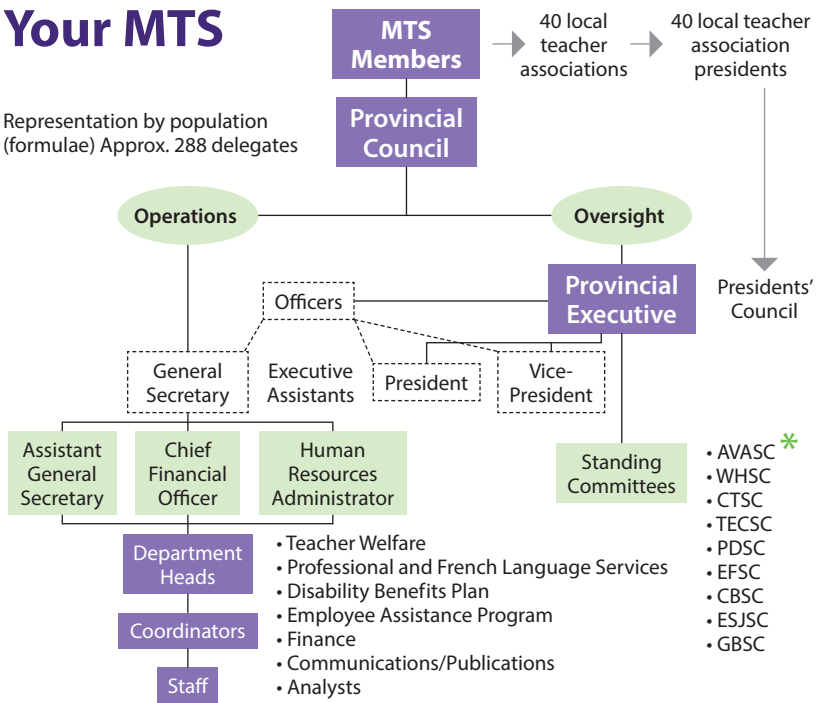
The work of ESJ is particularly relevant to (d) as there are a myriad of social issues that affect our lives outside of school, our professional roles within the schools and the lives of the children and youth that we teach. This includes multiple forms of oppression and expressions of power that minoritize or marginalize individual students and/or groups of students. Many students need extra support to be on an

equal footing with others. It is this foundation of unions and public education that confirms the importance of equity and social justice within The Society.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has grants available for teachers initiating Equity and Social Justice projects. These projects may take the form of action, research, study groups or activities and events.

Your MTS

Representation by population (formulae) Approx. 288 delegates



* Standing Committees

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (a) Aboriginal Voice and Action | (f) Group Benefits |
| (b) Collective Bargaining | (g) Professional Development |
| (c) Curriculum and Teaching | (h) Teacher Education and Certification |
| (d) Education Finance | (i) Workplace Safety and Health |
| (e) Equity and Social Justice | |

Standing Committee Legal Definition:

Committees which have a continued existence; that are not related to the accomplishment of a specific, once-only task as are ad hoc or special committees.

Policy II – Part VI, page 101

Equity and Social Justice Standing Committee

6.1 Statement of Beliefs

The Society believes that:

- a. all forms of discrimination, harassment and stereotyping in teaching and within Manitoba schools and communities, should be eliminated in accordance with provincial, federal and international human rights legislation and declarations;
- b. all curricula and programs produced by Manitoba Education and Training should be reviewed and monitored for any type of bias, stereotypes and/or generalizations that could promote or induce discriminatory behaviour and attitudes;
- c. advertising, distribution and promotion of materials and programs which undermine an equitable and just society should be opposed;
- d. parents or guardians have the right to have their children educated in the official language of their choice;
- e. it should provide supports for all Members so that they can practice the profession of teaching in a safe and inclusive learning environment that respects human diversity and prevents the expression of negative judgments based on gender bias, sexual stereotyping, sexual orientation including Members who identify themselves as GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning);
- f. all Members should have equal access to employment and educational opportunities regardless of race, nationality, religion, colour, sex, age, marital status, pregnancy, physical or mental handicap, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs, family status or sexual orientation;

- g. staff selection committees should publicize the criteria to be used for assessing candidates;
- h. affirmative action programs should be established for groups that are under-represented in educational leadership positions; and
- i. Members should not lose their positions as a consequence of the implementation of any affirmative action initiative or employment equity program.

Regional Facilitators

There are six Regional Facilitators appointed to the Equity and Social Justice Standing Committee to assist Chairpersons at the local level.

The role of the Regional Facilitator includes:

- Chair regional ESJ meetings four times per year (at training seminars and at least one other)
- Attend standing committee meetings at least four times per year
- Attend workshops to support ESJ professional learning
- Provide resources to ESJ chairs
- Act as a contact person for ESJ chairs in their respective regions
- Advocate for MTS seminars on ESJ issues to support teachers' professional learning
- Liaise with MTS Staff and PX Chairperson regarding issues arising within the respective region.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society has grants available for teachers initiating Aboriginal Issues projects. These projects may take the form of action, research, study groups or activities and events.

Glossary of Related Terms

Discrimination:

The Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits unreasonable discrimination, whether or not that discrimination is intentional. Discrimination often involves treating someone differently on the basis of a protected characteristic, such as ancestry. Failure to reasonably accommodate a special need based on a protected characteristic is also discriminatory.

Discrimination has the effect of denying equality of opportunity to a person or group on the basis of a protected characteristic. It may impose burdens or disadvantages on individuals or groups, which are not imposed upon others, or limit access to opportunities, benefits and advantages that are available to others.

Discrimination often offends the individual worth and dignity of a person. It may be based on stereotypes or have the effect of promoting the view that the person or group is less capable or worthy of recognition or value as a member of society.

Discrimination can be systemic. This happens when a mix of rules or practices that do not seem discriminatory when looked at one by one but together result in discrimination.

–Manitoba Human Rights Code

Bias:

An opinion, preference or inclination formed without reasonable justification.

–Manitoba Human Rights Code

An attitude that favours one person or group over another; an attitude that usually leads to discrimination.

–Sections from GSA Handbook

Prejudice:

An unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought or reason.

–Manitoba Human Rights Code

Privilege:

Special rights, advantages, or immunity granted to, or assumed by, certain groups and considered by them as their right.

–Sections from GSA Handbook

Sexual orientation:

A person's capacity for profound emotional and sexual attraction to another person based on their sex and/or gender.

–Egale Canada

Gender identity:

A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender—their internal sense of being man, woman or another gendered being entirely.

A person's gender may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

–Egale Canada

Resources

Community Services

- Child and Family Services: www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/
- Children's Advocate: www.childrensadvocate.mb.ca
- Anxiety Disorders of MB: www.adam.mb.ca
- Manitoba food banks:
winnipegharvest.org/Manitoba-association-of-food-banks-mafb/
- Kids help phone: www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Teen touch: 204-945-5467
- Teen talk: www.teentalk.ca
- Immigrant Women Association of MB: www.iwamanitoba.org
- Rainbow Resource Centre: www.rainbowresourcecentre.org
- Sexuality Education Resource Centre: www.sec.mb.ca
- EGALE Canada: www.egale.ca
- My GSA Handbook:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/mygsa/index.html

MB Education and Training

- School wide programming:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/3-4.html
- Partners and services:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k-12/safe_schools/3-1.html
- Publications: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k-12/safe_schools/3-2.html
- Links: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k-12/safe_schools/3-3.html
- Aboriginal Education Directorate:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aed/

Legislation Relevant to Teachers' Responsibilities

While completing your duties as an ESJ Chair there may be times where you will need support to help you as you advocate for equality, equity, and the rights of your members and students. The following is a list of relevant legislation and then a section of key excerpts to some of the main legislative documents that can help support you on as you complete your role in Equity and Social Justice:

List of ESJ Relevant Legislation and Web Links

1. Manitoba Human Rights
www.manitobahumanrights.ca/index.html
2. The Human Rights Code (Manitoba)
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/h175e.php>
3. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html#h-39>
4. Employee Standards Code
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/e110e.php>
http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=E110
5. The Public Schools Act
 - a. Safe Schools Regulation
http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=77/2005
 - b. Appropriate Education Programming
http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=155/2005
 - c. The Safe Schools Charter
<https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/38-2/b030e.php>
 - d. Cyber-Bullying and Electronic Devices (PSA Amendment)
<https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/39-2/b024e.php>

6. Education Administration Act
 - a. School Admin Handbook
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/admin/school_admin.pdf
7. The Workplace Safety & Health Act (Manitoba)
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/w210e.php>
8. FIPPA: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/f175e.php>
9. PHIA: Personal Health Information Act
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p033-5e.php>
10. LRA: Labour Relations Act (Manitoba)
<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/l010e.php>
11. Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba
www.trcm.ca

Social Justice, a quality achieved in a society when all members of that society are treated equitably and perceive themselves to be physically and psychologically safe and secure.





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