

International Day of Persons with Disabilities December 3, 2014

Our faith traditions as a Catholic School Board call us to love, respect, value and accept each individual regardless of their differences.

St. Paul in his writings to the Corinthians, says *"Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it."* (1 Corinthians 2:27)

In his writing to the Romans, he writes: *"Our gifts differ according to the grace given us."* (Roman's 12:6).

These simple passages guide our Catholic beliefs and values when we talk about the dignity of the human person.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board's accessibility policy affirms our commitment to *"providing an environment in all of its facilities that fosters independence, dignity, respect and to providing services that are free of barriers and biases to our students, parents/guardians, the public and our staff."* It goes on to state that *"the Board strives to ensure that the principle of equity of opportunity is reflected and valued in its learning and working environments."*

We want our students, our staff, our parents and any visitors to Board facilities, to feel fully included in our places of learning and our places of work. As we build new schools, and renovate existing facilities, we work towards the creation of buildings that are more accessible and barrier free, learning materials and curriculum are becoming more inclusive and representative of our diverse student and staff population, and our policies are reviewed to ensure that they are fair to everyone, regardless of their exceptionalities or abilities.

December 3rd is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a perfect time to review the Board's policy on accessibility and familiarize ourselves with how this impacts on our own role in the organization, and how we can facilitate the creation of a more caring and welcoming environment for our colleagues and the students who are entrusted to us.

<http://www.tcdsb.org/FORSTUDENTS/AccessibilityPlan/Pages/default.aspx>.

Even more importantly, this is a day to acknowledge the unique and wonderful contribution that each of us makes to our schools and workplaces, regardless of any physical, mental or emotional challenges in our lives. We encourage everyone to do their part in ensuring that every member of our TCDSB community truly feels welcomed, valued and respected for who they are.

Sincerely,

Angela Gauthier
Director of Education

Jo-Ann Davis
Chair of the Board