SATE

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
THROUGH EQUITY

"We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

— Dr. Ron Edmonds

Ottawa-Carleton
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

INTRODUCTION:

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is committed to ensuring that all students develop the characteristics and skills needed to be successful global citizens, and recognizes that learning, well-being, and equity are at the core of our work as educators. To achieve this outcome, we endeavour to champion high learning expectations for all students in all programs, promote collaborative environments that foster innovation, creativity, modernize instruction, and advance equity, dignity, and students' well-being in inclusive, caring classrooms.

For many years, students, parents, and community partners have raised concerns that Indigenous, Black, minoritized and racialized students have not always had positive and successful school life experiences. The district-level identity-based data collected during the 2019–2020 year illustrates a disparity in student outcomes (e.g., achievement, program pathways, suspension rates, graduation rates), a disparity in experiences in school (e.g., sense of belonging, safety, etc.) and a disproportionate representation of Indigenous, Black, minoritized, English language learners, students living in poverty, and students in specialized or English program schools, resulting in persistent achievement and opportunity gaps.

A collaborative inquiry was, therefore, initiated by senior staff to address trustee concerns for English program schools. This was focused on strategically closing opportunity and learning gaps in the OCDSB English program schools identified as high on the Resource Allocation Index based on Socioeconomics (RAISE). The inquiry led to studies of outstanding urban schools across Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. It aimed to investigate how some schools have helped groups of students achieve high standards and identify significant common themes for success in raising achievement. It drew lessons from evidence-based research carried out in outstanding inner-city schools and asked the following four overarching questions:

- Why do some schools succeed against the odds?
- Why are they outstanding schools?
- What are the factors contributing to this success?
- What are the implications for school improvement?

The study provided evidence-based answers to these questions, drawing on outstanding schools' practices, experience, and ambitions in challenging circumstances.

A report from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), a non-ministerial department responsible for inspecting educational institutions throughout the United Kingdom, revealed that the outstanding schools succeed for the following reasons:

- They excel at what they do, not just occasionally, but for a high proportion of the time.
- They constantly prove that disadvantage need not be a barrier to achievement; e.g., speaking English as an additional language can support academic success, and schools can be learning communities.
- They put students first, invest in their staff, and nurture their communities.
- They have strong values and high expectations that are applied consistently.
- They fulfil individual potential through providing outstanding teaching, rich opportunities for learning, and encouragement and support for each student.
- They are highly inclusive, having complete regard for every student's educational progress, personal development, and well-being.
- They achieve through highly reflective, carefully planned and implemented strategies that meet the many challenges that obstruct the path to success.
- They are constantly looking for ways to improve further.
- They have outstanding and well-distributed leadership.

Research into successful schools in Canada and the USA has also provided similar insights into common practices in high-performing schools serving high-poverty student populations. For example, educational researcher Dr. Ron Edmonds uses high-performing schools to identify the common characteristics that could be the source of their success.

These outstanding schools act out of a passion for seeing every child achieve their highest potential. They understand that barriers to learning have to be tackled to make learning possible. They are adept at reducing barriers, overcoming emotional and psychological hurdles, and creating the right conditions for learning. These programs implemented practices and pedagogies to increase student success, removed barriers to access and opportunities, and initiated sustained reform.

The documented evidence of program reforms for equity through critical pedagogies and eliminating obstacles to support equitable outcomes for all students informed the creation of the Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Inquiry (see Appendix A). This initiative is a collaborative effort with contributions and assistance from a steering committee that includes a superintendent of instruction, a central administrator, two school administrators, an instructional coach, and a Black graduation coach.

SELECTION PROCESS FOR SATE INQUIRY SCHOOLS

The Selection Process for SATE Schools
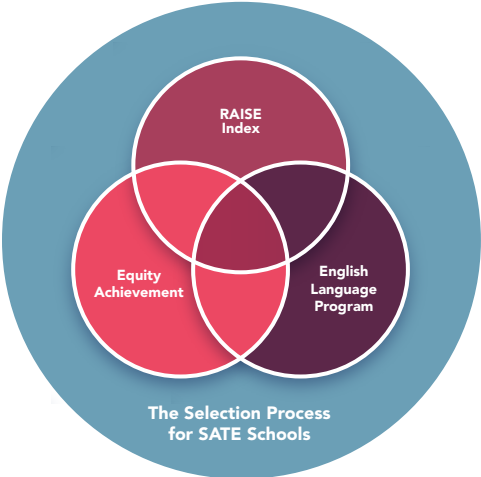
The selection process for SATE Inquiry schools involved careful examination of pertinent provincial, District, school and demographic data (i.e., school programs available, EQAO data, RAISE index). The students who attend the identified SATE Inquiry schools (i.e., the initial eleven elementary schools) face similar challenges and systemic barriers associated with race, ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status. In particular, our data highlighted the discrepancy between students' academic achievement in the English program compared to students in the French Immersion program.

SATE Inquiry Elementary Schools:

Arch Street Public School	Hawthorne Public School	Robert E. Wilson Public School
Carleton Heights Public School	Pinecrest Public School	W.E. Gowling Public School
Carson Grove Public School	Queen Elizabeth Public School	York Street Public School
Charles H. Hulse Public School	Queen Mary Public School	

SATE Inquiry Implementation Plan:

> *"The knowledge and skills to educate all children already exist. There are no pedagogical barriers to teaching and learning when willing people are prepared and made available to children."*
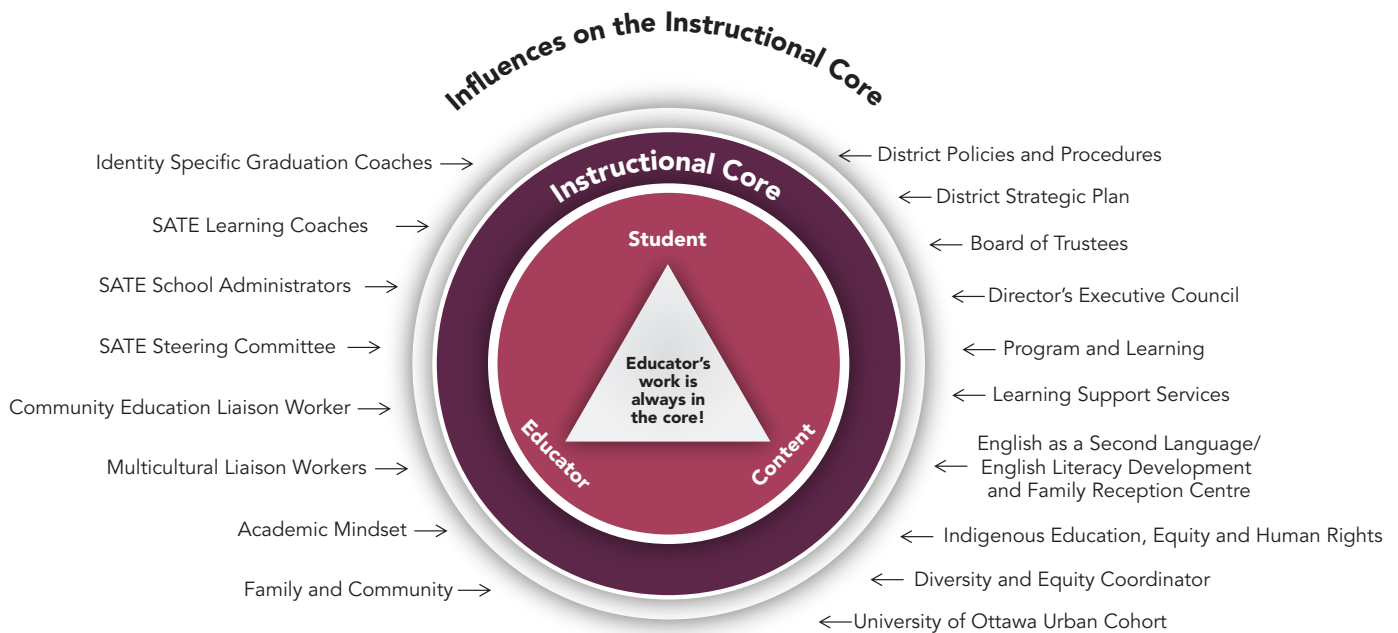>
> — Asa G. Hilliard

Equity of opportunities and outcomes needs to be more than a vision or an aspiration for the future; it needs to be the reality for all of our students, especially those in our English programs. The goal of the SATE Inquiry is to ensure that every student succeeds academically and develops a positive sense of well-being. This goal will be accomplished through intentional and strategic actions grounded in a shared

commitment to an anti-racist, anti-oppression, anti-colonial framework, and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. These strategic actions include the use of, but are not limited to:

- Collaborative inquiry model(s) for professional development/learning
- Professional learning protocols
- Hub collaborative sessions

- Embedded coach model
- 70-20-10 Model
- Inquiry-based learning

To work on closing opportunity and learning gaps for students, we will focus our work solely within the instructional core. Dr. Richard Elmore, research professor of educational leadership, defines the instructional core as "the relationship between the teacher and student in the presence of content." We envision an expanded view of the instructional core that includes the influences, factors, and conditions that impact it, such as the RAISE index, District strategic plan and policies, administrators, parents/caregivers, SATE learning coaches, and community partners, and so on. Our professional learning will be predicated on the understanding that all three components of the instructional core are interconnected, and changing one component must and will change the other two.

Influences on the Instructional Core

Instructional Core

Identity Specific Graduation Coaches →
SATE Learning Coaches →
SATE School Administrators →
SATE Steering Committee →
Community Education Liaison Worker →
Multicultural Liaison Workers →
Academic Mindset →
Family and Community →

Student

Educator

Content

Educator's work is always in the core!

← District Policies and Procedures
← District Strategic Plan
← Board of Trustees
← Director's Executive Council
← Program and Learning
← Learning Support Services
← English as a Second Language/ English Literacy Development and Family Reception Centre
← Indigenous Education, Equity and Human Rights
← Diversity and Equity Coordinator
← University of Ottawa Urban Cohort

Through collaborative inquiry, teachers will make sense of their experiences in the classroom, learn from those experiences, and draw upon their colleagues' knowledge to enhance their teaching and their students' learning. We endeavour to foster professional learning environments that encourage openness to learning exhibited by educator curiosity and intentional instructional practices. The following questions will drive the collaborative inquiry:

- Where are we now (current reality)?
- Where do we wish to be (equity by design)?
- How are we going to get from here to there?
- How will we measure our impact on student achievement and well-being?

The use of collaborative inquiry models in conjunction with professional learning protocols will build collective efficacy amongst participating school teams and build the capacity of school leaders and educators by:

- Measuring their impact through data collection and monitoring the progress of underserved students;
- Using evidence-based research and practices to inform decision making;
- Identifying and disrupting the systemic and structural barriers that exist for underserved students with their schools.
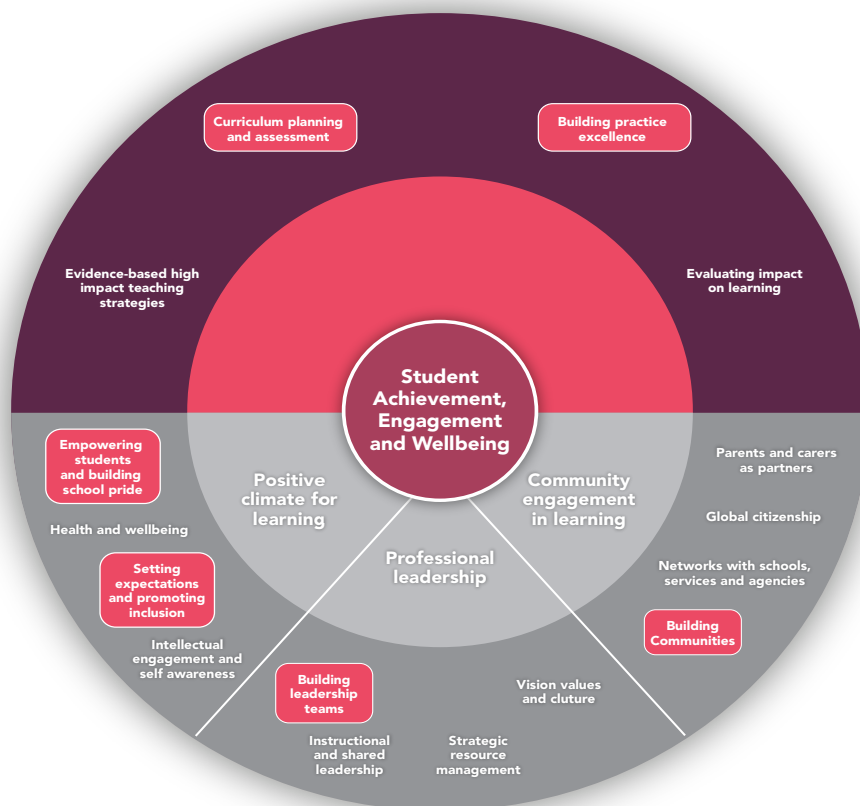
Central to the work of the SATE Inquiry will be supporting school administrators and educators to meaningfully engage students, parents/caregivers, and the community in our work. Students, families, and communities need to be brought together into the educational environment as participants and partners in the learning process, thus centring the school as the "Heart of the Community." Schools need strong, visionary leadership to foster relationships with students, families and the community. Schools need to listen to, value, and amplify the voices and contributions of students, parents/caregivers, and the community. We will utilize the expertise of the Community Education Liaison Worker (CELW) and other community partners to support school administrators and educators to build purposeful relationships with parents and caregivers. The CELW will be an important contributor to our initiative, as they will:

Research
current best evidence

Expertise
skills and knowledge from practice

Evidence-informed approach

Lived Experience
the views of children and families who access services

- Work in conjunction with school principals to establish a network of local agencies, residents and parents/caregivers, and school representatives to provide advice, support, and resources to the identified schools and their community;

- Establish positive relationships with parents/caregivers, school staff, and the community and model effective cross-cultural communication;

- Collaborate with the schools and local agencies to establish community-based programs, which support elementary students' literacy and numeracy skills (e.g., community reading programs, homework clubs, tutoring, computer literacy etc.).

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

> *"To put it as succinctly as possible, if you want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated."*
>
> — Seymour Sarason

To realize our goal of creating more equitable schools requires us to shift the mindsets of educators and critically reimagine the culture of our schools. Establishing a culture of high expectations, anti-racist, anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, equity, inclusion, and excellence in SATE Inquiry schools requires authentic engagement and collaboration with parent/caregiver and community partners to support student achievement and well-being. This culture shift will happen due to the collaborative inquiry learning cycles, professional learning protocols, engagement with the community, and in partnership with the CELW.

We intend to promote courageous spaces that provide the safety needed for educators and school leaders to engage in authentic conversations about personal change and school improvement (e.g., professional learning/unlearning, feeling uncomfortable or vulnerable). The SATE Inquiry initiative will have a lasting impact on the learning of students, educators and administrators. Throughout the school year, data will be collected to identify students' strengths and needs, set goals for educators, and monitor and measure student learning. The SATE steering committee has developed a series of key performance indicators to guide school teams to identify their specific indicators of success. These indicators will support the implementation of the SATE Inquiry and will be used to assess the progress that has been made. The SATE Inquiry key indicators of success will:

- Provide clear expectations for the implementation;
- Identify gaps in knowledge and implementation;
- Assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed;
- Measure the impact on student achievement and staff learning; and
- Ensure transparency and relational accountability to all stakeholders.

EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

> *"To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin."*
>
> — Bell Hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education As The Practice of Freedom*

Monitoring the implementation of the SATE Inquiry should be grounded in the continuous collecting, sharing, and understanding of data, and evidence of student progress and achievement. School-wide transformation requires the disciplined use of evidence-informed practices that integrate teachers' professional expertise with good evidence to improve teaching practice and student learning. To make this shift, teachers have to see it as their role to evaluate their impact on student learning, starting with what students know, determining what a year of growth looks like, and identifying what knowledge, skills, and information are required to support students' learning goals. Thorough documentation of the teaching and learning process will allow educators from across the district to benefit from the SATE Inquiry.

A SATE Inquiry report focused on students' achievement progress will be provided to the Director's Executive Council (DEC) annually. This report will have two distinct sections that will share the learning and perspectives of various stakeholders. The first section of the report will reveal how the SATE Inquiry schools used data to identify underachieving students, track student progress, set targets, and reflect on current teaching practices. In the second section of the report, SATE learning coaches, with the support of the Community Educational Liaison Worker, will document findings from discussions with the Principal, classroom teachers, support staff, parents/caregivers, and students. Information gathered during the inquiry will amplify the voices of parents/caregivers and students to more collaboratively set directives for future school improvement planning. Shared accountability throughout the organization will increase staff's commitment to the work of the SATE Inquiry and foster innovation within school teams and the district to provide a model for effective classroom instruction.

We envision a SATE Inquiry classroom where learning is active: effective and active learning are interdependent. A SATE Inquiry classroom will engage and motivate students by responding to their needs and leveraging their strengths. Students are viewed as agents of change. The learning environment allows students to accept responsibility for their learning, work together to achieve shared goals, listen to others' ideas, and support one another through challenges. The effectiveness of active learning is not limited to the academic or cognitive but extends to each student's social and personal development. To attain the goals of the SATE Inquiry, educators, students, parents/caregivers, district leaders, and the community will work together to create the conditions for all students to be successful learners.

APPENDIX A:
SATE INQUIRY OVERVIEW 2021–2023

Our District's Strategic Plan:	Culture of Innovation:	Culture of Caring:	Culture of Social Responsibility:
	We will build a learning community where innovation and inquiry drive learning.	We will advance equity and a sense of belonging to promote a safe and caring community.	We will strengthen our community through ethical leadership, equitable practice, and responsible stewardship.
Foundational Principles:	**Priorities:**	**Drivers of Change:**	**Goal:**
The beliefs, shared understandings, and mindsets serve as the basis of our collective work.	The key actions that are necessary to achieve our goals.	The strategic actions that we will undertake to address systemic barriers for underserved students. Drivers of change are also the actors: students, families, community, educators, Learning Support Services (LSS), Principal, SATE coaches, Principal Coach, and external partnerships (e.g., University of Ottawa Urban Cohort).	The statement of outcomes that we endeavour to accomplish. **Objectives:** The strategic goals that will be measured and timebound.

SATE Foundational Principles:

1. **All** students have a right to quality education in English and French. High expectations for all students and staff are critical for student achievement.

2. Race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or one's program (e.g., French Immersion or English with Core French) should not predetermine pathways or affect outcomes for student achievement.

3. Regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background or family income, all students should learn in robust and culturally relevant learning environments that respect individual abilities and utilize anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-bias instructional practices.

4. Outstanding schools are adept at reducing barriers, overcoming emotional and psychological hurdles, and creating the right conditions for learning.

5. The work of SATE is grounded in evidence-based research to develop and implement programs, practices, and pedagogies that increase student success, remove barriers to access and opportunities, and initiate sustained reform.

6. Parents/caregivers are critical partners in their child's education. Their perspective and voice are valued.

7. Community partnerships are vital to meeting the needs of **all** students. The school is the **"heart of the community."**

SATE Priorities:

1. Build the capacity of educators to implement innovative, culturally relevant and responsive curricula within an anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive framework.

2. Improve academic achievement and well-being for underserved students through early targeted intervention and support.

3. Foster collective teacher efficacy by rigorously using data to inform teaching and learning.

4. Cultivate courageous, innovative, visionary, empowering, and inclusive school leaders who are passionate and committed to the achievement and well-being of all students.

5. Create welcoming and inclusive classroom and school environments that amplify student and parent/caregiver voices.

6. Establish strong school-parent/caregiver partnerships.

7. Recognize, value, integrate, and celebrate the diversity of the classroom, school, and community.

SATE Drivers of Change:

Actions:

- Collaborative Inquiry Model
- Use of Professional Learning Protocols
- Hub Collaborative Sessions
- 70-20-10 Model
- Inquiry-Based Learning
- Anti-racist/Anti-Oppressive Frameworks
- Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy
- Response to Intervention Protocols

Actors:

- SATE Learning Coaches
- SATE Community Education Liaison Worker
- SATE Principal Coach
- SATE Supervisor
- Black and Indigenous Graduation Coaches
- Principals
- Educators/School Staff
- Students
- Families/Parents
- Caregivers
- Community Partners
- Senior Staff
- LSS
- Social Workers
- Program and Learning (PAL)
- English as a Second Language(ESL)/English Literacy Development (ELD),
- Indigenous Education Team
- Equity Team
- Human Resources
- University of Ottawa - Faculty of Education
- External partners

Overall SATE Goal:

Ensure that every student succeeds academically and develops a positive sense of well-being.

Key Objectives:

1. Use evidence-based research and practices to inform decision-making.

2. Collect data, measure and monitor the progress of students.

3. Enhance the capacity of school leaders and educators to address the academic needs of underserved students.

4. Identify the systemic and structural barriers that exist for underserved students.

5. Create a culture of high expectations, anti-oppression, equity, inclusion, and excellence in OCDSB schools.

6. Engage and collaborate with parents/caregivers and community partners to support student achievement and well-being.

REFERENCES

Edmonds, Ronald R. (1979). Exective schools for the urban poor. Educational Leadership, 37, 15–27.

Edmonds, Ronald R. "A Theory and Design of Social Service Reform." Social Policy 15.2 Fall 1984: 57-64.

Gorski, P.C. (2012). Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling: Deconstructing the class stereotypes that mis-shape education practice and policy. Equity & Excellence in Education, 45, 302–319.

Hattie, John. (2012). Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning. London; New York: Routledge.

Låftman, S. B., Östberg, V., & Modin, B. (2017b). School climate and exposure to bullying: A multilevel study. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 28, 153–164.

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). How leadership influences student learning – Review of research. Learning from Leadership Project.

Lezotte, Lawrence W. (1984). "School Effective Research: A Tribute to Ron Edmonds. One Perspective on an Effective Schools Research Agenda." ERIC.

Ofsted (2009a) The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2008/9. London: The Stationery Office

Ofsted (2009b) Twelve Outstanding Secondary Schools – Excelling Against the Odds. London: Ofsted

Ofsted (2009) Twenty Outstanding Elementary Schools – Excelling Against the Odds. London: Ofsted

Ofsted (July 2019) Analysis of OfSTED Good and Outstanding Schools. London: Ofsted

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). Leading the instructional core: An interview with Richard Elmore. In Conversations, Summer, Volume 11, Issue 3.

Seaburn, Bonnie and Robert E. Sudlow (1985). "Staff Development Implications of an Effective Schools Project." ERIC.

Shah, Vidya (2016). "Urban District Reform for Equity: The Case of the Model Schools for Inner Cities Program in the Toronto District School Board." University of Toronto.

Tunley, Faluv (1997). "An Examination of Ronald Edmonds' Effective Schools Theory Applied to Various Grades in Two Demographically Different Oklahoma City Elementary Schools." McCabe Thesis Collection. Paper 21.