

9 December 2019

Sue Barnett
Chair, Board of Trustees
District School Board of Niagara
191 Carlton Street
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7P4

Dear Ms. Barnett,

OUTniagara, which unifies Niagara's sexual- and gender-diverse community, welcomes the unveiling of the diversity flag that will fly all year at DSBN schools in Niagara. The flag reflects the Trustees' commitment to its Equity and Inclusive Education Policy to improve the student learning experience "regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and other historical forms of marginalization."

While the diversity flag is a welcome and important addition, OUTniagara respectfully and strongly requests that each June, DSBN continue to fly the rainbow flag at all elementary and secondary schools, either with the new diversity flag, or on its own. It is important that students, including their loved ones, DSBN staff and volunteers, who are marginalized because of their sexual and gender identity, see themselves as entering a safe, inclusive and supportive space that celebrates their authenticity. This is particularly critical after the physical assault and emotional bullying this year on a young, female DSBN student who had just come out as gay.

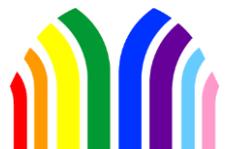
What must accompany the flags, of course, is a board-wide culture of respect and acceptance of diversity in all areas of human lives, including sexual and gender identity. This culture, consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code, should apply to all areas of the school community, including teaching, learning and administrative.

OUTniagara is available to discuss this issue with the board and/or representatives of DSBN and would greatly appreciate confirmation that the rainbow flag will continue to be raised every June going forward.

Respectfully,



Brian Scriver
Chair, OUTniagara



C.C.

Kate Baggott, Trustee, St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake

Nancy Beamer, Trustee, Thorold/Pelham

Alex Bradnam, Trustee, St. Catharines/ Niagara-on-the-Lake

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Dave Schaubel, Vice-Chair of the Board and Trustees, Fort Erie/Port Colborne

Warren Hoshizaki, Director of Education, DSBN and Secretary of the Board