

York Region District School Board

Recommendations from the Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee Regarding Anti-Black Racism

Background:

At the March 9, 2017 Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC) meeting, the EIAC Anti-Black Racism Sub-Committee was created. In January 2018, two community consultations were held. The format for each consultation involved a presentation about what has been done in response to the Ministry's directions to the York Region District School Board. This was followed by breakout sessions in smaller groups to address the following questions:

- What are your thoughts to the proposed responses to the Ministry directions that have been presented today?
- What concerns do you still have based on what has been presented today?
- What do you think needs to happen next after what has been heard from today's presentation?

There were a total of 200 attendees at both sessions.

Rationale:

The Sub-Committee received over 270 pieces of feedback that were summarized and categorized in the areas of:

- Student achievement and wellbeing,
- Leadership
- Parent and Community Engagement.

The summary of all community feedback is included in Appendix A. This information should be used to enrich and inform the following recommendations during the planning and implementation phases.

Professional Development

- 1. Develop and implement comprehensive Human Rights training for all staff:**
 - a) Develop and implement ongoing and meaningful equity training for all staff including Senior Team, managers, teachers, and school office support staff. Topics should include anti-Black racism, the impact of racism on mental health and well-being, racial profiling, understanding systemic racism
 - b) Provide specific professional learning to school office staff to support providing a welcoming environment to the diverse community that enters YRDSB schools
- 2. Develop and deploy professional development accountability measures that examine how equity learning impact schools in areas such as:**
 - a) Black students' academic achievement
 - b) Registration in academic courses
 - c) Black student graduation rates
 - d) Decreased numbers of Black student suspensions/expulsion
 - e) Decreased numbers in Black student representation in Special Education

Curriculum

3. Incorporate Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a means of delivering curriculum

- a) Ensure that curriculum and related resources highlight/acknowledge the achievement of Black people
- b) Actively involve the Black community in the design and development of curriculum
- c) Advocate for the use of all necessary measures to de-stream grade 9
- d) Develop board supports to help Black students who are victims of anti-Black racism
- e) Advocate for the use of other models other than the medical model of exceptionality that pathologies Black students

Data

4. Actively develop a culture of data gathering and sharing

- a) Implement the “Every Student Counts Survey” and place it on a 5 year cycle
- b) Develop a robust system for rolling out School Climate Survey Data to parents and community

Human Resources Practices

5. Develop an intentional, explicit and transparent process to recruit Black staff for all positions within the YRDSB

- a. Develop and implement supports to assist Black staff with navigating the system and report incidents of marginalization without fear of retribution
- b. Build criteria into hiring practices that ask teacher candidates to demonstrate their ability to provide equitable and inclusive pedagogy and manage difficult conversations

Human Rights

6. Develop, operate and effectively communicate/rollout a robust Human Rights system/process that protects confidentiality, ensures accountability, mitigates risk/fear of reprisal

- a) Develop a process for collecting complaints/concerns that are equity related which includes actions/resolutions/monitoring of such complaints

Student/Community Voice and Engagement

7. Develop opportunities for student, parent and community engagement

- a) Where numbers warrant, encourage schools to establish Black Students Associations
- b) Establish a yearly conference for Black students
- c) Provide, and effectively communicate opportunities to Black students, parents and community to have their voices be a part of school activities and initiatives (e.g. town halls, consultations, etc.)
- d) Develop a strategy that enables the support and voices of Black students in care of the CAS
- e) Develop a tangible process that provides opportunities for community to use school spaces

Relationship to Board Priorities:

The recommendations support the priorities as set out in the York Region District School Board Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021, as set out below:

(6.2) Build capacity in staff by developing, offering and supporting professional learning opportunities to all employee groups in the board regarding equity, accessibility and inclusivity. (*YRDSB Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021, page 23*)

(3.1) Use a school-wide approach that values families and community partnerships in order to enhance student engagement and achievement.

(3.1h.) *Ensure students, families and staff have access to supportive community resources as appropriate for use in schools and workplaces.*

(3.2) Ensure the perspectives of various individuals and groups in the school community and the broader community are included and expand community outreach efforts to foster new partnerships.

(3.2c.) *Develop and support a process to review existing community partnerships within their schools and departments to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the broader community and are in line with Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (i.e., inclusive of all identities) (YRDSB Equity Strategic Plan, 2017-2021, page 15)*

Estimated Cost:

To be determined

Timeline:

As determined by the Board.

Recommendations:

That the York Region District School Board approve the following recommendations

- 1) That the recommendations from the Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee regarding Anti-Black Racism be received for information.**
- 2) That staff be authorized to:**
 - a) Review all the recommendations and feedback provided by the community in Appendix A in order to understand the community's voice and expectations in order to inform planning and implementation process.**
 - b) Create a work plan that includes timelines and recommended actions for consideration by the Board of Trustees within six months.**
 - c) Develop a communication to outline the Board response to the community recommendations to be shared with respondents.**

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Communications Implementation Plan:

Coordinating Council of Superintendents
EIAC meeting
Board Standing Committee meeting

May 2, 2018
May 8, 2018
May 15, 2018

Immediate and ongoing to consider recommendations and determine next steps.

Respectfully submitted

May 15, 2018

For further information, please contact M. Bowe, Chair of the Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee Anti-Black Racism Sub-Committee.

Appendix A - Community Feedback

Student Achievement and Well-being

School

- Provide professional development opportunities to office staff to ensure they are approachable and reflective of the diversity in each school
- End the practice of redirecting Black students into certain occupations by guidance (students must be told that they are capable; a culture of high expectations must be set)
- Develop more effective ways to address the mental health and wellness of students who are experiencing psychological effects from discriminatory behaviours and profiling
- Increase the number of guidance counsellors and resources to adequate levels to help students/parents navigate the system

Student Voice & Support

- Establish Black Student Associations to empower students
- Actively invite Black student representatives to the Town Halls and other meetings
- Establish a yearly conference for Black secondary school students
- Install a mechanism for students to report incidents of discrimination (e.g. a hotline, social media based resources as well as clarify and create awareness with regards to the existing compliant process)
- Stop using a medical model of disability diagnosis that pathologizes students with Black identities
- Enhance the role of Equity Student Chair to include mandatory membership on Student Council
- Develop Board supports to help Black, racialized and inter-racial students who are victims of racism to help them feel safe: counselling, school supports, open door/safe spaces
- Develop a sustainable strategy for students living in the care of the Society that considers their needs with much gravity and communicate with guardians on a regular basis
- Create a communication strategy that clarifies who the advocates are for high school students and provide consistent staffing (e.g. a consistent person, etc.)

Curriculum Design

- Incorporate curriculum and related resources that highlight/acknowledge Black accomplishments/achievements such that Black students develop positive images of themselves and their futures
- Actively involve the Black community in curriculum design and evaluation and ensure that there is a strong representation of Blackness ("Afrocentrism") within the curriculum content
- Develop effective culturally relevant teaching approaches

Streaming, Expulsions & Suspensions

- Employ all necessary measures to de-stream Grades 9 and 10
- Deploy a communication plan to ensure that parents are fully aware of the Alternative Classroom and Counselling for Expelled and Suspended Students (ACCESS)

Data

- Actively develop a culture of data gathering, analysis and sharing
- Implementation of the "Every Student Counts Survey" immediately and place it on a 5-year cycle
- Develop a robust system for rolling out School Climate Survey data to parents and community
- Collect demographic suspension and expulsion data

Advocacy, Equity Planning, Resources and Support

- We recommend that the role of equity designates in schools include supporting students
- We also recommend that schools establish an equity team

Leadership

Board

- Develop and offer opportunities to increase parent and community input on Board level committees
- Provide opportunities to enhance the connection and communication between the Board and schools and in turn parents
- Develop ways to increase transparency with regards to Board policies and partnerships
- Demonstrate to community---a recognition that the Board and Senior Leadership Team is aware of the historical trauma and violence of racism that has occurred at YRDSB
- Provide ongoing education and participation in future anti-Black racism town halls by senior leaders

Human Rights Commissioner's Office (HRCO)

- Develop and deploy a comprehensive on-going Human Rights training plan for administrators and teaching staff that is delivered by trained professionals
- Develop, operate and effectively communicate/roll-out a robust human rights system/process that protects confidentiality, ensures accountability, mitigate risk/fear of reprisals with an appeal process towards equitable outcomes
- Develop a process to collect complaints/concerns that are equity related which includes actions/ resolutions/monitoring of such complaints

Human Resource Practices, Staffing & Ongoing Professional Development

- Human Resources: Recruitment
 - a. Develop an intentional, explicit, and transparent process to recruit diverse Black staff for all positions within the board (especially leadership positions)
 - b. Develop and put into place accessible system supports to assist diverse Black staff with navigating the system as well as to provide opportunities for them to report their experiences (without the fear of retribution) pertaining to additional gaps and existing barriers
 - c. Build criteria into hiring practices that ask teachers to demonstrate their ability to provide equitable and inclusive pedagogy and manage difficult conversations
- Human Resources: Professional Development, Training
 - a. Develop and deploy mandatory, ongoing, and meaningful equity training that infuses anti-Black racism with continuous subsequent training that builds on each

session moving beyond the traditional “one-off/checkbox” approach for all board administrators, teachers, office staff, the Director, and trustees

Accountability, Measurement & Timelines

- **Cross Systemic Accountability:**
Develop a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the Board's partnerships with unions such that the Board, trustees, staff, and unions are working closely together to manage and ensure equity is prioritized and training is integrated into daily practice throughout the Board and within all schools
- **Board Accountability:**
Develop and incorporate a robust performance appraisal/review process examining how equity and anti-Black racism is embedded at the Board/system level with every faucet of learning (regardless of position) and must include educators, support staff, Special Education assessors (e.g. psychologists), social workers, etc.
- **School Accountability:**
Develop and deploy professional development accountability measures that examine how schools are incorporating equity such that our Black youth are being positively impacted and it is evidence based towards significant improvement with regards to:
 - a. Their academic achievement
 - b. Increased representation in the academic courses
 - c. Increased graduation rate
 - d. Increased access to post-secondary opportunities
 - e. Decreased representation in their number of suspensions and expulsions
 - f. Decreased over-representation of special education identification based on subjective perceptions and testing that occurs as early as JK to Grade 2.
- **Individual Accountability:**
Develop or strengthen all accountability policies and procedures to hold all educators and trustees accountable for their intentional or unintentional racist actions using consistent guidelines across the Board with some learning pieces related to anti-Black-racism.
- **Measurement**
 - a. Create measurement indicators and associated timelines that examine what strategies are used by educators to support Black students, and share feedback to the system with regards to their effectiveness related to the elimination of barriers

Parent and Community Engagement

Parent Voice, Support & Engagement

- Create more avenues for parent voice and support (e.g. more African Caribbean Liaisons) to address trauma, impact and the sense of hopelessness
- Actively engage parents in YRDSB's responses to the Ministry's YRDSB directives
- Create and deploy an effective communicate plan that informs parents of what resources are available at the board and school levels (e.g. Teacher Liaison, Community and Partnership Developer, Human Rights Office) and how they can access them (e.g. outlining a step-by-step process with descriptions of acronyms in the newsletters to parents)

Community Engagement

- Develop a process/mechanism to build trust as well increase engagement with the community beyond parents
- Create a more effective communication mechanism to communicate school activities and initiatives to the wider community
- Hold more, and more effectively advertised Town Hall meetings (e.g. newspaper such as Share).
- Develop a tangible process that provides opportunities for community to use school space
- Develop programs to bring community together (e.g. community issues-based forums)