

ESS Report for DEC Ends Policy #3

7 April 2021

Goal 3: Ensure all members of the school community are welcomed, respected, accepted and supported and to address heterosexism and discrimination.

Section 1

Goal 3.1: Develop a strategic plan to promote diversity and anti-racism and to address heterosexism and discrimination by creating affirming cultures.

Strategy 3.1.1: Create a committee of district and school leaders to build and implement, in consultation with community members, a strategic plan to promote diversity and address heterosexism and discrimination in ASD-S culture.

- Desired Outcome 3.1.1a: An advisory committee will be created to ensure the diversity of voices of those facing heterosexism and discrimination will be heard and inform our district plans.
 - Outcome Measure: 3.1.1a1: The advisory committee will be operational by June 2021.

Status: Complete

The ASD-S LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee met for the first time on 23 February 2021 and will meet again before the end of the school year.

ASD-S has done excellent work on LGBTQ+ issues, including professional development for staff, support for middle school GSAs (Gender Sexuality Alliances), and at the high school level support for the Pride in Education (PIE) Conference. This committee will help us as a district identify our next steps.

The committee is chaired by Jennifer Grant, School Counselling Coordinator.

Committee members are:

- District Members
 - Megan MacDonald, Education Support Services Coordinator (Hampton Education Centre)
 - Heather Whittaker, ASD-S School Counselling Lead Teacher
- Teacher Members
 - Christina Barrington, Principal, Rothesay High School
 - Dan Simard, Teacher, St Malachy's Memorial High School
- Student Members
 - Morgan Cooke, Student, Fundy Middle & High School
 - Cameron Rouse, Student, Rothesay High School
 - Mason James, Student, St Malachy's Memorial High School
- Community Members

- Kris Trotter, Counsellor, New Brunswick Community College
- Darci Northrup, TD Insurance
- Kristyn McDermott, TD Insurance

The purpose of the committee is to ensure a diversity of voices informs the district plans. The top three recommendations from the first meeting of this advisory committee are:

1. Review data and policies to identify challenges. The action from this recommendation will have Jennifer Grant and her team reviewing the NB Student Wellness Survey data, reviewing policies in neighbouring provinces, and review recommendations from Egale Canada.
2. Review and promote accessible places in schools for members of the LGBTQ+ community. The action from this recommendation will have Jennifer Grant and her team review our current state regarding gender neutral washrooms and associated concerns such as signage. This will also involve building capacity for safe spaces (e.g., a teacher may have a rainbow sticker in the classroom to indicate it is a safe space, but does the teacher have the skills and training to ensure it is a safe space?).
3. Investigate ways to ensure the psychological safety of staff who are members of the LGBTQ+ community to choose to be themselves in their workplace. Initial action with this will be to gather more information and best practices from sources such as Egale Canada.

In addition, all principals were given a briefing on EECD Policy 713, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. These briefings were conducted over six small group principals meetings by Zoë Watson and Jennifer Grant. School principals have a Power Point presentation developed by EECD to help them deliver this briefing to their staffs before the end of this school year. The content of this policy was not new to our principals, given the awareness sessions offered as per previous District Improvement Plans. Awareness sessions have been offered to all employee groups.

Section 2

Goal 3.1: Develop a strategic plan to promote diversity and anti-racism and to address heterosexism and discrimination by creating affirming cultures.

Strategy 3.1.2: Support curriculum and increase resources that reflect diversity and anti-racism.

- Desired Outcome 3.1.2a: An advisory committee will be created to ensure a diversity of voices that reflects our larger community to inform our district anti-racism plans.
 - Outcome Measure: 3.1.2a1: The advisory committee will be operational by June 2021.

Status: Complete

The ASD-S Antiracism Advisory Committee met for the first time on 17 March 2021 and will meet again before the end of the school year.

First, it is helpful to ensure there is an understanding of what antiracism is and how it is different from and augments our current emphasis on diversity.

To quote Ibram Kendi, author of the 2019 bestseller *How to Be an Antiracist*, “The opposite of racist isn’t *not racist*. It is *antiracist*.” This is very much like what we teach K-5 students when we say the opposite of being a bully is not to be a bystander, it is to be an upstander.

Antiracism calls on us as an organization to investigate actively and intentionally where racism, systemic or otherwise, exists within our organization and take active steps to address it.

Diversity, on the other hand, is also a positive endeavour, but one with the focus of helping to ensure students and staff understand that there is diversity in our schools—diversity of race, gender, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity—and all students have a right to belong and learn in a safe, accepting, and affirming environment. This is important to help ensure our students are learning in a safe and healthy environment, but it does not necessarily commit us to examine our practices—intentional and unintentional—so we can identify and address those circumstances which place more value on students of one race over another.

The committee is chaired by Peter T. Smith, Director of Education Support Services.

The Committee Members are:

- District Members
 - Amy Marshall, Middle & High School Literacy Coordinator
 - Tracy Garnett, English as an Additional Language Coach
 - Krystle Hanson, Early Learning Consultant
- Teacher Members
 - Andre Dumas, Vice Principal, Simonds High School
 - Louisa Seales, Teacher, Forest Hills School
 - Emily Somers, Teacher, St Stephen High School
- Student Members
 - Kaida Garzon-Habacon, Student, St Stephen High School
 - Alison Parrell, Student, Kennebecasis Valley High School
- Community Members
 - Dr Timothy Christie, Horizon Health Network
 - Damon Levine, PRUDE (Pride in Race, Unity, and Dignity Through Education)
 - Matthew Martin, Black Lives Matter Saint John

It was clear from all members of the committee that racism exists both in a systemic level and a cultural level within our schools and school staff are not always empowered to recognize and respond to this. Systemic racism may include, for example, language arts teachers choosing resources for students written only by white authors with white protagonists. On a cultural level, for example, there are students who will use racist language on social media.

Two recommendations from the committee were 1) to investigate how other jurisdictions are taking antiracist action and 2) to develop a district policy which sets expectations for staff and protections for students who are Black, Indigenous, and people of colour that is similar to the

policy which currently sets expectations and protections for students who are members of the LGBTQ+ community. We recognize that the journey towards EECED Policy 713 began with building awareness and professional learning for all staff.

Section 3

Goal 3.1: Develop a strategic plan to promote diversity and anti-racism and to address heterosexism and discrimination by creating affirming cultures.

Strategy 3.1.2: Support curriculum and increase resources that reflect diversity and anti-racism.

- Desired Outcome 3.1.2b: District Educational Staff will have the skills and tools to make teachers aware of issues of diversity and anti-racism in a variety of curriculum areas.
 - Outcome Measure: 3.1.2b1: 100% of the District Educational Staff will have the capacity to embed diversity and anti-racism in their practices within their subject area.
 - Outcome Measure: 3.1.2b2: 5% of Requests for Support will promote the embedding of diversity and anti-racism.
 - Outcome Measure: 3.1.2c1: 100% of Administrators will be aware of diversity and anti-racism in their schools.

Status: Complete

The District Management Team, coordinators, and lead teachers/curriculum coaches have completed a two-hour antiracism awareness workshop. Professional learning in education tends to follow a three-step process of building awareness, building capacity, and embedding practice. Specific antiracism concepts which all district educational staff are familiar are systemic racism, white privilege, white fragility, colour-brave vs colour-blind, and microaggressions. Specific actions they are tasked with is to develop self-awareness with regard to bias and antiracism, to use “calling in” rather than “calling out”, and to take action within their own practice.

In addition, the curriculum coordinators and curriculum coaches had a two-hour meeting with Matthew Kay, author of *Not Light, But Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom*. The curriculum coordinators are now doing a book study of this book.

Additionally, Amy Marshall did a one-hour workshop with curriculum coordinators & coaches on the Courageous Conversations model, which is a well-established “protocol for effectively engaging, sustaining, and deepening interracial dialogue.” Amy Marshall is also running a year-long book study with twenty-five middle and high school teachers on Gholdy Muhammed’s *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. Amy Marshall has also provided twenty-one teachers with classroom libraries of fifty books each by diverse authors.

To date, there have been 37 requests for support which involve embedding diversity and/or antiracism out of a total of 251 requests. This puts the percentage of requests at 14.7%. The bulk of these have been in middle and high school English language arts, making up 33% of the

requests for service in this subject area. Another significant subject area is technology, with 16% of requests having an antiracism or diversity component. These figures illustrate we are at the beginning steps of this learning journey.

All principals have received the same two-hour antiracism awareness workshop. This professional development was offered in March 2021, with principals divided into small group clusters to encourage sharing and conversation. The six sessions were two ours in length and feedback was very positive. Six schools have decided to do a book study as admin teams or core leadership teams on either Ibram Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist* or Vernita Mayfield's *Cultural Competence Now: 56 Exercises to Help Educators Understand and Challenge Bias, Racism, and Privilege*. Some teams are doing both.