

ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN HWDSB:

STRATEGY FOR BLACK STUDENTS' SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING
2025-2028



HWDSB
BE YOU. BE EXCELLENT.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board acknowledges our presence on ancestral Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Confederacy land as determined by the Dish with One Spoon treaty. The intent of this agreement is for all nations sharing this territory to do so responsibly, respectfully, and sustainably in perpetuity. We respect the longstanding relationships with the local Indigenous communities, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Six Nations of the Grand River.

African Ancestral Acknowledgment

We acknowledge those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's Multi-Year Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2028 is centered on students having a deep and meaningful sense of belonging while experiencing impactful learning outcomes for all.

Vision: Growing Together.

Mission: To ensure every student experiences a sense of belonging and engages in dynamic learning to reach their potential and build their own future.

Values:

Compassion: Leading with peace, friendship and love creates space for compassionate accountability, where we are responsible to one another in creating a culture of care.	Dignity: Reciprocity, anti-racism and anti-oppression lead to a just and equitable learning community, where every person is included, respected and valued.
Trust: Humility and transparency build the trusted relationships, connections and education system necessary for growth, change and evolution.	Joy: Curiosity, play and fun are catalysts for meaningful student learning outcomes and support joyful and enriching experiences.

Strategic Directions:

Upholding Human Rights, Safety & Well-being

We will support all students and staff to feel safe and secure in our classrooms and school communities.

Providing Equitable Quality Education

We will offer equitable quality educational opportunities to improve student engagement, learning and achievement for future-readiness.

Collaborating with Students, Families and Communities

We will build reciprocal relationships and partnerships to enhance access and engagement for students, families, and communities.

Building a Sustainable Education System

We will adapt to a rapidly changing world through responsible fiscal management, investing equitably in accessible and sustainable facilities, and supporting a robust workforce.

Reinforcing Indigenous Educational Wellness and Reconciliation

We will honour our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among Indigenous Peoples and Treaty Partners, and by cultivating intergenerational healing and wellness in a restorative education system.

INTRODUCTION

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) is committed to eliminating systemic anti-Black racism across all learning and working environments. In alignment with this commitment, HWDSB has adopted an [Anti-Black Racism Policy](#) with a vision of creating inclusive, culturally responsive and affirming learning and working environments for Black students, staff and families.

The Policy commits to addressing the historical and current impacts of Anti-Black Racism in the education system. To realize the promises of the Policy, this Strategy, **Addressing Anti-Black Racism in HWDSB: Strategy for Black Students' Success and Well-being**, has been developed in consultation with Black students, staff, families, and community partners. The strategy responds to the urgent need for systemic change, as highlighted in HWDSB's own [Disproportionality Data Report](#) and community reports, including the [Safety & Well-Being for Black Youth in Hamilton Schools Report](#).

The strategy is also informed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission's landmark 2025 report, [Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System](#) and the OHRC's [Anti-Black Racism in Education: Compendium of Recommendations](#).

The Dreams Delayed report outlines clear, actionable steps for school boards and education duty bearers to eliminate anti-Black racism and improve outcomes for Black students and educators. It emphasizes the criticality and urgency to address anti-Black racism in education. Further, the Dreams Delayed report affirms that anti-Black racism is a human rights issue that must be acknowledged, addressed and remedied. The report highlights the disproportionate negative impacts that Black students and educators have experienced, and calls for coordinated action from the Ministry, Trustees, school boards, unions, and other duty bearers emphasizing the need for accountability.

HWDSB has aligned this Strategy - **Addressing Anti-Black Racism in HWDSB: Strategy for Black Students' Success and Well-being**- with these calls to action, as well as with its [Human Rights and Equity Action Plan](#), to ensure a coordinated, integrated and accountable approach.

The Strategy outlines the principles, goals, and priority actions needed to eliminate anti-Black racism and foster environments where Black students **experience a sense of belonging, engage in dynamic learning to reach their potential and build their own future**. It serves as a roadmap grounded in an intersectional human rights-based approach and driven by a shared responsibility to create sustained change.

TERMINOLOGY

The term “Black” is used throughout the rest of this strategy to refer to all people of African ancestry residing in Canada regardless of whether they were born in Canada, arrived in Canada directly from their ancestral homelands on the continent of Africa, from various Caribbean communities or other parts of the world. The term includes all people of African descent residing in Canada regardless of their citizenship status or 0 intersectional identity. Black identities are diverse representing a variety of ethnicities, languages, skin tones, and other physical characteristics. The Black community is a diverse community that has been entrenched in the fabric of Ontario for 250 years. We acknowledge that there is a lack of consensus about terminology among the diverse Black communities in Ontario and across the country.

For more terminology and definition, please refer to the [Anti-Black Racism Policy](#).

BLACK POPULATIONS IN CANADA, ONTARIO AND HAMILTON

Canada’s Black population continues to increase. According to Statistics Canada’s 2021 Census, more than 1.5 million Canadians reported being Black or of African descent, representing 4.3% of the country’s total population and 16.1% of the total racialized population. The majority of Black Canadians live in Ontario (49.7%) and children under 15 years old represent 26% of the Black population. Statistics Canada projections estimate that the Black Canadian population could double in size from 1.5 million in 2021 to over 3.0 million in 2041 (statcan.gc.ca).

The Black population in Hamilton, Ontario has seen significant growth over the years. As of the 2021 Census, there are over 28,000 Black residents in Hamilton. This represents a substantial increase, with the Black population growing by 76% between 2011 and 2021.¹

HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN EDUCATION

The history and heritage of Black people in Canada is both rich and complex dating back more than 400 years. This history is often missing, minimized or misrepresented in historical narratives. Anti-Black racism manifests itself in how Black Canadians are disadvantaged, or marginalized, in society, the economy and politics, and the education system. Black students’ access to education in Canada and Ontario reflects a history of marginalization, exclusion and segregation. When public schools were established in Ontario, racial segregation policies excluded or limited Black students access to schools. When Black children were allowed access to public schools, they were still excluded and segregated, being made to learn and sit separately from their white peers. The establishment of racially segregated schools was codified in the Common Schools Act of 1850 by Superintendent of Schools Egerton Ryerson leading to the further marginalization of Black students in these poorly maintained and underfunded schools. The last racially segregated school in Ontario closed in 1965.²

Black communities have been documenting issues of anti-Black racism and discrimination in education for decades, consistently calling for change. The impacts of this history and the ongoing marginalization of Black students in current educational contexts must be acknowledged and addressed to support their achievement, well-being and success moving forward.³

¹ [Racialized Population in Hamilton 2021 - SPRC Hamilton](#)

² [Racial Segregation of Black Students in Canadian Schools | The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

³ [Policy brief - no 1 may 2019.pdf](#)

“Numerous reports published over the years have shown that far too many Black students are not receiving the support they need to succeed and are experiencing discrimination and harassment within the system. Black educators and education Principal and Vice Principals at all levels are also disproportionately burdened with addressing anti-Black racism and discrimination in schools. They often bear the responsibility to address systemic anti-Black racism and discrimination and are targeted and harassed within and outside their schools. Anti-Black racism and discrimination in the education system constitute a crisis that must be acknowledged and immediately addressed.”

- Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System

DISPROPORTIONALITY AND BLACK STUDENTS IN HWDSB

According to HWDSB's We All Count Student Census conducted in 2022, 8% of the participating students self-identified as Black. According to the Disproportionality Data Report (2023/24), Black students in the HWDSB have faced significant disproportionality in the following areas:

- **Suspensions and Expulsions:** Black students are overrepresented in suspension and expulsion data indicating that Black students are more likely to face disciplinary actions compared to their representation in the overall student population. The report links this to systemic bias and calls for a review of school discipline practices.
- **Academic Achievement:** Black students are underrepresented in higher academic achievement categories. This suggests barriers such as potential bias in assessment and expectations, and lack of culturally responsive pedagogy. The report emphasizes the need for targeted academic support and inclusive curriculum design.
- **Well-Being:** Black students report lower levels of well-being compared to the board average. These findings suggest that Black students may not feel as safe, supported, or connected in their school environments.

These disparities highlight systemic inequities and underscore the need for targeted interventions to support Black students effectively.

ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN HWDSB: STRATEGY FOR BLACK STUDENTS' SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING

PRINCIPLES

Human Rights: The right to education is a human right and indispensable for the realization of other human rights. Fostering and maintaining a culture of human rights at HWDSB requires providing equitable and inclusive services grounded in the principles of equity, inclusive design, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and anti-oppression, as well as identifying and addressing Anti-Black racism, discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that impact Black students and staff. The Board commits to governance and services grounded in a human rights-based approach centered on principles of participation, inclusion, belonging, transparency, and accountability.

Collective Responsibility: Everyone within HWDSB, at the classroom, school and system levels, has roles and responsibilities in contributing towards achieving the objectives outlined in this strategy with a focus on the elimination of Anti-Black racist systems and practices in HWDSB. This work must occur at every level of the organization in all learning and working environments. Shared responsibility is essential to achieve the commitments laid out in this strategy in alignment with the HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan and the HWDSB Human Rights and Equity Action Plan.

Accountability and Transparency: Accountability and transparency are critical components of ensuring the Board remains committed to improved and equitable outcomes for all Black students and staff. Both organizational and individual accountabilities are required to implement mechanisms to measure progress, review actions, address any issues that arise, and adjust based on input from Black students, staff, families and the broader community. A commitment to a posture of practice and consistent refinement allows all staff to work together towards improvement and address systemic, structural and interpersonal anti-Black racism. All HWDSB staff are responsible for this work. Accountability and transparency ensure that the elimination of Anti-Black Racism is not merely an aspirational goal but a tangible, ongoing commitment that leads to equitable outcomes for Black students and staff.

Targeted Universalism: Targeted universalism, as a principle, recognizes that everyone benefits from targeted removal of systemic barriers faced by the most disadvantaged communities. Addressing anti-Black racism and reducing barriers and the violence that Black students and staff experience will lead to a better, equitable learning and working environment for everyone.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- To eliminate systemic anti-Black racism by identifying, preventing and removing barriers in all HWDSB environments.
- To ensure every HWDSB community member can learn, work and access services and facilities in HWDSB environments without facing anti-Black racism, discrimination or harassment.
- To address disproportionalities reported in academic achievement, disciplinary actions, well-being and other opportunity gaps.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Black students are able to learn in school environments free from racial discrimination and harassment, including anti-Black discrimination.
- Black students have equal opportunities to benefit from the education system, supporting their full potential including:
 - › Positive well-being and a sense of belonging.
 - › Improved academic achievement and outcomes, including higher graduation rates.
 - › Improved relationships between educators, Black students, families, and communities.
- Black educators and staff are able to work in environments free from discrimination and harassment based on race and have equal opportunities to achieve their full professional potential.

PRIORITY AREAS

The priority areas outlined below have been developed with objectives and key actions to support the operationalization of this strategy:

- Creating the Conditions for Learning and Responding to Black Students' Needs
- Enhancing Black Identity-Affirming and Empowering Curriculum and Practices
- Addressing Anti-Black Discrimination and Harassment
- Providing Professional Learning and Leadership Development
- Enhancing Workplace Inclusion, Hiring and Supporting Black Staff
- Enhancing Culturally Responsive Community Engagement
- Ensuring Accountability and Monitoring Progress

PRIORITY: CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING & RESPONDING TO BLACK STUDENTS' NEEDS

OBJECTIVE: To foster culturally responsive, identity-affirming, and inclusive learning environments where Black students feel a strong sense of belonging, are engaged in meaningful learning, and can thrive academically and emotionally.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Cultivate Inclusive and Affirming School Environments

- Create welcoming and inclusive learning environments that reflect and celebrate the diverse identities of Black students.
- Integrate anti-racist strategies and culturally responsive practices into daily teaching and school culture (for e.g., [On The Horizon: Moving Toward More Inclusive and Safer Classrooms](#) and [Guidelines for Programs and Speakers](#) (GPS)).
- Establish and support Black student affinity groups (e.g., Black Student Associations) to build community, amplify student voice and joy, and inform school policies and practices.
- Expand identity-affirming programs that promote student achievement and well-being, including sustained advocacy and investment in the Graduation Coach Program for Black students.
- Collaborate with parents/caregivers of Black students and Student and Family Advocates in developing and implementing culturally responsive support services.
- Ensure that first languages, dialects, and accents are valued and respected within learning and working environments, promoting cultural inclusivity and linguistic diversity.

2. Address Disproportionalities in Progressive Discipline Practices and Outcomes

- Continue to analyze disaggregated data on suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to identify patterns of disproportionality.
- Conduct equity audits of safe schools and progressive discipline policies, procedures and practices using anti-racist and human rights frameworks to eliminate racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions.
- Evaluate the fairness of disciplinary decisions using the Human Rights Impact Assessment Tool (HRIAT) and other strategies to reduce bias and eliminate discriminatory practices.
- Implement culturally appropriate restorative and preventative trauma informed approaches that focus on accountability, healing and relationship building.
- Use early intervention systems to identify and support students before behaviours escalate.

3. Provide Culturally Responsive Mental Health and Well-being Supports

- Evaluate and adapt mental health and well-being strategies to reflect the specific impacts of anti-Black racism on students and staff.
- Provide culturally appropriate and trauma-informed mental health and well-being early intervention and supports, including counseling services.
- Evaluate and adapt student attendance and engagement strategies to reflect the specific impacts of systemic anti-Black racism on students and staff.

IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Creating the conditions for learning and responding to Black students' needs in schools might look like:

- School leaders and staff foster inclusive classrooms and learning spaces by displaying affirming visuals and resources, celebrating Black heritages, and integrating culturally responsive practices and anti-racist strategies in daily teaching and lesson planning within and across subject areas.
- School leaders and staff foster strong, respectful relationships with Black students and their families, and develop understanding of cultural norms and values that influence communication and learning styles.
- Schools create and actively support identity-affirming spaces for Black students to create community, amplify student voice and joy, and enhance student leadership (examples: Black Student Councils and affinity spaces).
- Graduation Coaches and community-based Student & Family Advocates collaborate with educators, Black students and families to support academic and emotional well-being.
- School staff use restorative approaches to discipline and regularly review suspension data to address disproportionality and remove racial bias in the progressive discipline process.
- Schools facilitate access to culturally appropriate mental health and well-being early intervention and supports, using the framework: Creating the conditions, Identity-affirming care, and Responding to student needs (CIR).



"Education as the practice of freedom affirms healthy self-esteem in students as it promotes their capacity to be aware and live consciously. It teaches them to reflect and act in ways that further self-actualization, rather than conformity to the status quo."

**-bell hooks, Teaching Community:
A Pedagogy of Hope**

PRIORITY: ENHANCING BLACK IDENTITY-AFFIRMING AND EMPOWERING CURRICULUM AND PRACTICES

OBJECTIVE: To embed Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogies (CRRP) that affirm Black students' identities, increase racial literacy among all learners, and equip students and staff to recognize, disrupt, and dismantle anti-Black racism in education.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Develop and Integrate Inclusive Curriculum

- Create and implement curriculum resources grounded in Culturally Relevant Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). (e.g. Integration of CRRP, DI and UDL in literacy and numeracy student achievement plans and goals.)
- Ensure integration and representation of diverse Black identities, histories, cultures, and contributions across all grade levels and subject areas.
- Provide access to supplementary materials and tools that educators can use to enhance classroom discussions on intersectionality and diversity (e.g., [Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild](#) and [Reimagining Wellness](#)).

2. Promote human rights education to build racial literacy among all learners

- Provide opportunities for all students to learn about human rights and critically examine issues of exclusion, bias, and systemic oppression- including anti-Black racism.
- Educate all students about their rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code and HWDSB's Human Rights policy.
- Highlight and celebrate the achievements and contributions of Black students, staff, and community members through school-wide initiatives and communications.

3. Address Systemic Barriers in Programming and Assessment

- Review existing programming and assessment practices (e.g., special education identification, informal and formal streaming (K-12), pathways and guidance, French immersion) to identify and remove racial bias.
- Regularly review resources, including curriculum materials, policies, and practices, to ensure alignment with the anti-Black racism policy using anti-racist audit tools and review methods. (e.g., [A Toolkit for Selecting Relevant and Responsive Learning Resources, K- 12](#))
- Critically examine resources that perpetuate or reinforce anti-Black racism or anti-Black stereotypes to remove and replace with culturally responsive and inclusive alternatives.
- Collaborate with students, families and communities to establish multi-modal and multilingual approaches to targeted communications about programs (e.g., grade 8 to 9 and post-secondary pathways and progression).
- Support educators in using differentiated instruction and assessment strategies to meet varied academic needs and diverse learning styles.
- Monitor and review de-streaming practices to eliminate disproportionate outcomes and ensure access to all pathway choices for Black students.
- Disaggregate data to examine experiences of Black students and overrepresentation (e.g., safe schools and caring programs) or underrepresentation of Black students in Special Education programs. (i.e., Gifted Programs).

IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Enhancing Black identity-affirming and empowering curriculum and practices in schools might look like:

- Educators embed Black experiences, histories, cultures, and contributions across subjects- not just during Black History Month. Curriculum materials are reviewed to remove biased content and include diverse Black perspectives.
- Students learn about human rights, systemic oppression, and anti-Black racism through classroom discussions, projects, and school-wide initiatives. Assemblies and events promote racial literacy and celebrate Black heritage, history and culture.
- Educators integrate lesson plans from Learn. Disrupt. Rebuild and Reimagining Wellness resources to engage students in learning about human rights, anti-Black racism and related topics.
- Schools review streaming practices, special education referrals, and pathway guidance to eliminate racial bias. Guidance departments ensure Black students have equitable access to all programs, including academic, applied, and French immersion.
- Educators acknowledge and examine the existence of implicit bias in assessing learning skills and use strategies to reduce the impact of bias.
- Educators apply [Culturally Relevant Responsive Pedagogy \(CRRP\)](#), [Differentiated Instruction \(DI\)](#), [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) to meet diverse learning needs.
- Lessons reflect students lived experiences and diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Schools collaborate with Black families and Black-led and Black serving community organizations to co-design communication strategies and ensure curriculum is responsive and reflects community values and languages (see: [Guidelines for Programs and Speakers \(GPS\)](#)).

"In culturally responsive teaching, rapport is connected to the idea of affirmation. Affirmation simply means that we acknowledge the personhood of our students through words and actions that say to them, "I care about you."

-Zaretta L. Hammond, Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students



PRIORITY: ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

OBJECTIVE: Enhance learning and working environments to be free from anti-Black racism, hate, and discrimination by identifying, addressing and challenging systems of oppression and racism.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Build Capacity to Identify and Address Anti-Black Racism

- Provide ongoing training and resources to staff to recognize, interrupt, and respond to anti-Black racism, hate, and discrimination.
- Implement and communicate HWDSB's protocols on [Responding to Hate, Bias and Prejudice](#) and the Human Rights Policy and Procedures.
- Use the Human Rights and Hate Incident Response mechanism to track and analyze trends in reported incidents of anti-Black racism.
- Ensure all teaching staff are informed about the [Ontario College of Teacher's Professional Advisory](#) on Anti-Black Racism and [Addressing Hate and Discrimination](#), including during annual training and new employee onboarding sessions.

2. Strengthen Reporting and Accountability Mechanism

- Ensure all students, staff, and families are aware of their right to report incidents of anti-Black racism without fear of reprisal using reporting structures in schools and/or the HWDSB Human Rights Office.
- Ensure all students, staff, and families are aware of and can access the services of the HWDSB Human Rights Office (HRO) to address concerns of anti-Black discrimination.
- Inform all staff, students and families on how to access and utilize the Human Rights Policy and the Human Rights Complaints Resolution Procedure.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of complaint processes and adjust based on feedback from students, families, and staff.
- Develop and implement an Early Intervention System (EIS) to prevent racial and other Code-based discrimination and harassment by staff.

3. Support Affected Students and Staff

- Provide culturally responsive and trauma-informed supports for Black students and staff who experience or witness racism, including access to trained social workers and psychologists.
- Develop tailored strategies to support Black students and families to navigate the education system in culturally responsive ways, including supporting HWDSB's System Navigator program and collaborating with Student and Family Advocates (SFAs), (e.g., Empowerment Squared, Parents of Black Children, and Afro Canadian Caribbean Association).
- Create opportunities for student voice and feedback, especially from those most impacted by anti-Black racism, to inform school and system-level decisions

IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Addressing anti-Black racism and discrimination in schools might look like:

- School staff receive ongoing training to recognize and respond to anti-Black racism. Staff use HWDSB protocols to address hate, bias, and discrimination. Educators are familiar with professional advisories on anti-Black racism and integrate this knowledge into classroom practices.
- Educators facilitate classroom discussions on human rights, anti-racism, using age-appropriate materials that center Black voices and experiences, creating classroom norms and agreements that explicitly address respect, inclusion, and anti-racism; and integrating anti-racism learning across subject areas.
- Students and families are informed about their rights and how to report incidents of racism. Schools promote access to both school-based and the Human Rights Office reporting mechanisms and ensure complaint procedures are transparent and accessible. Feedback loops are established to improve reporting systems.
- School principals and vice principals investigate and address Anti-Black racism incidents in schools fairly and in a timely manner, following the Human Rights Complaints Resolution Procedure. They document and report incidents using the Human rights and Hate-Based Incident Response reporting form.
- Schools provide culturally responsive supports for Black students and staff, who experience or witness racism, including using restorative approaches and access to additional supports (e.g., school social worker, community supports, etc).
- Schools collaborate with HWDSB's System Navigator and other community-based Student and Family Advocates (SFAs) to help Black students and families navigate the school system.
- School principals and vice principals use school specific data and feedback and leverage specific supports (e.g., Graduation Coaches, community groups, Black student affinity groups, etc.) to identify patterns and intervene proactively.



"Black students and their families continue to face obstacles, barriers, disadvantages and reduced potential because of discrimination. Education is meant to foster growth, creativity and innovation – to prepare students to contribute to society. When the education system fails Black students, it fails all Ontarians in missing out on the maximum economic, political and social contributions of this important segment of society."

- OHRC: Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System

PRIORITY: PROVIDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE: To build the racial literacy and leadership capacity of all HWDSB staff through continuous professional learning and development rooted in anti-racism, equity, and human rights principles.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Deliver Ongoing Professional Learning

- Provide role-specific training for system leaders and staff to deepen understanding of anti-Black racism and its impact on education.
- Focus learning on:
 - › Racial literacy and the historical and contemporary realities of anti-Black racism.
 - › Culturally Relevant Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
 - › Anti-racism, anti-oppression, cultural humility, and intersectional approaches to equity.
 - › Legal responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code, including responding to bias, prejudice, and hate.
 - › Inclusive and bias-free hiring practices and employment equity.
 - › Data literacy for identifying and addressing racial disparities in school improvement planning.
 - › Critically Conscious Practitioner Inquiry (CCPI) to support reflective practice and sustainable change.

2. Embed Equity in Leadership Development and Accountability

- Integrate human rights and equity competencies into leadership frameworks, training programs, and job descriptions.
- Ensure performance evaluations and appraisal processes include indicators related to equity leadership and anti-racism accountability.



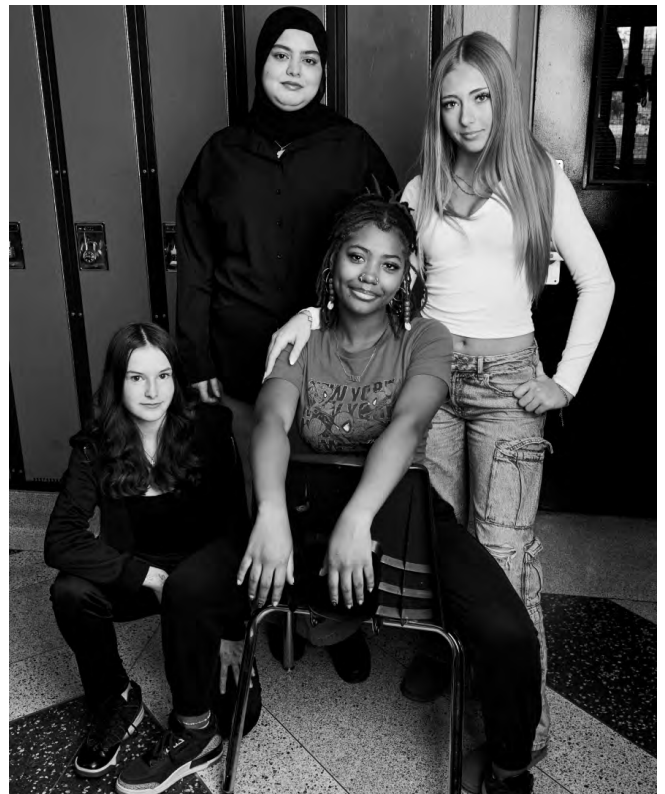
IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Providing Professional Learning and Leadership Development in schools might look like:

- Staff participate in role-specific training focused on anti-Black racism, racial literacy, and culturally responsive pedagogy. PD days and staff meetings include sessions on Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), Indigenous Pedagogies and legal responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Educators engage in job-embedded learning to build a posture of practice in applying Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) in lesson planning and classroom interactions.
- Staff reflect on their practices using Critically Conscious Practitioner Inquiry (CCPI) to identify and address bias.
- School leaders encourage peer-led learning or co-learning by creating opportunities for staff to share best practices in culturally responsive pedagogy and racial literacy.
- School leaders and teams use disaggregated data to identify racial disparities in achievement, discipline, and engagement. Data informs school improvement planning and targeted interventions.
- Leadership development for school staff includes equity competencies and accountability measures.
- Staff evaluations include indicators related to equity leadership, anti-racism, and inclusive practices. Equity goals are embedded in professional growth plans.

“Teachers’ fear of uncomfortable conversations leads to a lack of discussion about Black history and experiences. Students expressed that teachers often avoid discussing topics related to Black history or experiences due to the fear of saying the wrong thing. Students feel the burden of constantly initiating conversations and advocating for themselves. Black students suggested that teachers can overcome this fear by being open to learning and engaging in dialogue.

-OHRC: What We Heard Report: Anti-Black Racism in Education Roundtables



PRIORITY: ENHANCING WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

OBJECTIVE: To create and sustain an inclusive, equitable, and supportive workplace that is free from anti-Black racism, where Black educators and staff are hired, retained, and empowered to thrive professionally.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Promote Equitable Hiring and Advancement

- Review and revise recruitment, selection, training, and promotion practices to eliminate racial bias and ensure fairness.
- Develop targeted outreach and recruitment strategies to attract and retain Black educators, education workers, and staff.
- Ensure interviewers are trained in equitable hiring practices, including recognizing and reducing bias.
- Establish mentorship, professional development, and leadership pathways to support the advancement of Black staff, including school and system leadership roles.
- Implement fair and transparent performance appraisal and promotion processes that are free from bias.

2. Foster Inclusive Workplace Culture

- Create opportunities for Black staff to share their lived experiences and inform policy development and system practice through structured feedback mechanisms.
- Establish and support Black staff affinity groups to build community, connection, and professional support.
- Develop responsive strategies to address concerns of discrimination and harassment raised by Black staff.

3. Monitor and Report on Workplace Equity

- Conduct regular staff census and climate surveys, disaggregated by race and other identity markers, to assess workplace inclusion and equity.
- Publicly report on workforce diversity outcomes and use findings to inform continuous improvement in employment equity.

IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Enhancing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in schools might look like:

- School leaders continuously revise hiring practices at the school level to eliminate racial bias and ensure fairness.
- School leaders create welcoming environments during the hiring process and engage in learning to reduce bias and promote equitable hiring.
- Black educators are actively recruited into a variety of positions and supported through mentorship and leadership development programs.
- Schools create safe spaces for Black staff and connect them with system affinity groups, community partners and professional networks.
- Principal and Vice Principals respond promptly and effectively to concerns or reports of anti-Black racism discrimination and harassment that occur in the workplace



“Black educators expressed to the OHRC that they experience exclusion from informal or formal networks, denial of mentoring or developmental opportunities, such as secondments and training that are available to others, and disproportionate blame for incidents within the workplace. Black educators also stated that they are often assigned less desirable positions and subjected to excessive monitoring, differential management practices, and deviation from written policies and standard practices. For example, Black educators may be labeled as rude or aggressive or characterized as confrontational or insubordinate if involved in differences of opinion with non-Black educators. These characterizations may be made based on racist stereotypes about Black people.”

-- OHRC: Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System

PRIORITY: ENHANCING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE: Develop culturally responsive engagement and communication strategies to build trusting relationships between schools, Black families and Black community partners.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Strengthen Relationships with Black Families and Communities

- Develop tailored strategies to support Black families when navigating the education system in collaboration with internal and external system navigators.
- Build partnerships with Black-led, Black-focused, and Black-serving community organizations, cultural groups, mental health and well-being professionals to enhance supports for Black students and staff.

2. Create Inclusive Structures for Engagement

- Support the establishment of advisory groups (e.g., Black Parent Advisory Councils) and working committees that include Black students, families, staff, and community members to guide the implementation of this strategy at the system and school level as applicable.
- Promote the inclusion of Black community members on school councils, board committees, advisories and other decision-making bodies (e.g., Parent involvement Committee, Special Education Advisory Council, etc.).

3. Solicit Ongoing Feedback, Collaboration and Co-Design

- Gather feedback from Black families and community partners to inform continuous improvement.
- Invite and involve Black parents, caregivers, and community organizations in the review, monitoring, and updating of this strategy to ensure it remains responsive and relevant.



IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Enhancing culturally responsive community engagement in schools might look like:

- Schools collaborate with internal and external system navigators to support Black students and families in accessing and navigating the school system.
- Schools establish Black parents' advisory councils and Black families are actively engaged through school councils, culturally responsive communication, and co-designed initiatives.
- Engage Black families and students to collaborate on identifying challenges and co-develop solutions in support of student achievement and well-being.
- Schools commit to addressing Anti-Black racism incidents and issues in schools proactively.
- Schools provide translation and cultural interpretation services to ensure all Black families can access information and participate meaningfully in school life.
- Invite and integrate Black professionals, historians, artists and elders (etc.,) into the school to support learning objectives via mentoring and/or through the sharing of lived experiences

"Parents, guardians, and communities have a right to be informed. Educators, administrators, and other education staff must communicate with parents or guardians about discrimination within schools and how they address it. School boards and schools must create trauma-informed and community-oriented approaches to communicate with students, parents, guardians, and communities.School boards and schools must build partnerships with Black parents, guardians, and community organizations that involve dialogue on existing disparities and disproportions and how to address them."

- OHRC: Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System



PRIORITY: ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING PROGRESS

OBJECTIVE: To ensure transparency, continuous improvement, and community trust by regularly assessing progress, reporting outcomes, and integrating feedback into the ongoing implementation of the Strategy.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Establish Transparent Reporting Mechanisms

- Publicly report on the implementation and outcomes of this strategy as part of HWDSB's Human Rights and Equity Action Plan.
- Ensure a clear alignment of this strategy with the Board Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans. Disaggregate data by Code-protected grounds (e.g., race, gender, disability) to monitor progress on:
 - › Academic achievement
 - › Student well-being
 - › Literacy, numeracy, and graduation rates
 - › Discipline, suspension, expulsion, and exclusion rates
 - › Human rights-related complaints and resolutions
- Establish and clearly communicate the roles, responsibilities and legal obligations of duty bearers under the Ontario Human Rights Code and The Human Rights Policy.

2. Center Community Voice in Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regularly seek input from Black students, staff, families, and community partners to inform planning, implementation, and refinement of the Strategy.
- Use a variety of feedback tools (e.g., surveys, focus groups, student voice structures) to ensure inclusive and representative engagement.
- Maintain and strengthen partnerships with Black-led organizations and community experts to support accountability and co-leadership.
- Provide language translation and cultural interpretive services to remove barriers to access communication

IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

Ensuring accountability and monitoring progress in schools might look like:

- School leaders and teams share equity goals and progress during staff meetings, School Council meetings and through other school communication methods.
- School leaders showcase clear alignment with the Board Improvement Plan and their School Improvement Plans by embedding key priority areas in this Strategy.
- Educators share classroom-level data and observation to inform school improvement priorities and ensure that classroom practices reflect key action in this strategy such as differentiated instruction and identity-affirming curriculum and pedagogy.
- School leaders engage educators in data collection and analysis to reflect on trends and co-create responsive strategies to address disproportionalities and disparities.
- Schools seek input from Black students, families, and community partners through focus groups, and student voice structures. Feedback is used to refine practices and improve outcomes.

RELATED HWDSB POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- [HWDSB: Anti-Black Racism Policy](#)
- [HWDSB: Human Rights Policy](#)
- [HWDSB: Human Rights Complaints Resolution Procedure](#)
- [HWDSB: Human Rights Accountability Procedure](#)

REFERENCES

- [Anti-Black Racism in Ontario Schools: A Historical Perspective](#)
- [OCT: Anti-Black Racism - Professional Advisory](#)
- [OCT: Addressing Hate and Discrimination- Professional Advisory](#)
- [OHRC: Anti-Black Racism in Education: Compendium of Recommendations](#)
- [OHRC: Dreams Delayed: Addressing Systemic Anti-Black Racism and Discrimination in Ontario's Public Education System](#)
- [Safety & Well-Being for Black Youth in Hamilton Schools Report](#)