

ESS Report for DEC Ends Policy #4

8 June 2022

Ensure all members of the school and district community are welcomed, respected, accepted, and supported.

Goal 4.1: Develop a strategic plan to promote diversity and antiracism and to address heterosexism and discrimination by creating affirming cultures.

Section 1: Definitions & Explanations

Affirming Environments: “A welcoming and affirming environment feels safe. It is a space where people find themselves represented and reflected, and where they understand that all people are treated with dignity and respect.”¹

Racism is when one racial group is valued, intentionally or unintentionally, over another racial group. **Antiracism** is an active, intentional, and direct effort to identify and change systemic racism.² Antiracism requires organizations to look at their own culture, policies, and practices to identify and reduce systemic racial biases.³

Systemic Racism refers to policies and practices that exist in an organization that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair treatment of others based on race.⁴ Systemic racism may not be intentional or even visible to those within the system.

Diversity includes race, colour, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, marital status, real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, social condition, and political belief and must be respected as part of inclusive public education.⁵

Heterosexism refers to systemic bias in favour of heterosexuality. It may include the presumption that people are heterosexual, valuing heterosexuality above other sexual orientations, or assuming heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation.

LGBTQ+ is the inclusive term we use to refer to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and other sexual orientations or gender identities. It is important to remember there are variations on this term.⁶

¹ Adapted from the New York State Department of Education.

² Adapted from Kendi (2019) *How to Be an Antiracist*.

³ Adapted from the National Juvenile Justice Network

⁴ Adapted from Cambridge Dictionary

⁵ Policy 322

⁶ NB LGBTQ Inclusive Education Resource

Gender Identity is an individual's sense of having a particular gender. It may be male, female, both, neither, or something else entirely. It may or may not correspond to one's biological sex or sex assigned at birth.⁷

Sexual Orientation is a person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are sexually attracted. This may include physical, emotional, or romantic attraction.⁸

Words from Beverly Daniel Tatum to clarify the concept of **systemic racism**:

*I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of White supremacy and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the conveyor belt, see the active racists ahead of them, and choose to turn around, unwilling to go in the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt—unless they are actively antiracist—they will find themselves carried along with the others.*⁹

Words from Beverly Daniel Tatum to clarify the importance of representation in **affirming environments**:

Imagine we're in a meeting and somebody is going to take a group photo. And at the end, we're each going to get a copy of that photo. What's the first thing you're going to do when you get your copy of the photo? You're going to look for yourself, of course. Our learning environments are like that, too. Students enter these environments and they look for themselves. And some students can find themselves easily—they can see themselves in the reading material, they can see themselves in the person standing at the front of the classroom, they can see themselves in the history they're learning. But there will be some students who rarely, if ever, see themselves.

And to take the analogy a little bit further: Once you find yourself in the photo, the next thing you're going to do is consider how you look, right? Are your eyes open? Is your tie straight? In the same way, every student wants to see themselves not just in the picture, but in the picture looking good. So we have to think about who sees themselves in the curriculum and materials we use in the classroom—and how. Who sees themselves on the walls in the school? Who sees themselves in the discussions we're having in class? And if the only time Black kids see themselves is when we're talking about slavery or the ways Blacks were mistreated—during the Jim Crow era, for example—that's a case where, sure, they're in the picture, but they're not looking good. So it's a matter of providing different perspectives. Even if we are teaching about

⁷ Adapted from the OED.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Daniel Tatum (2017) *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

*slavery, are we talking about slave rebellions? Are we talking about resistance? Are we talking about the agency of enslaved people in that narrative?*¹⁰

Section 2: Advisory Committees

Strategy 4.1.1: Consult with the ASD-S anti-racism and LGBTQ2+ advisory committees to implement a strategic plan promoting diversity.

The Antiracism Advisory Committee met twice during this school year (December 16th & April 1st). The committee includes district staff, school staff, community members, and students.

Members of the committee who participated in one or both meetings were:

- Krystle Hanson, Early Learning Centre Advisor
- Amy Marshall, Literacy Coordinator
- Emily Somers, Teacher, St Stephen High School
- Laura Taylor, EAL & First Nations Coordinator
- Therese Trofimencoff, Antiracism & Equity Coach
- Damon Levine, Antiracism Program Coordinator, PRUDE
- Matthew Martin, ED, Black Lives Matter NB
- Isis Chamberlain, Student, Saint John High School
- Hannah Claybourn-Colford, Student, Sussex Regional High School
- Maya Fisher, Student, Kennebecasis Valley High School
- Sam Frits, Student, Sussex Regional High School
- Marion Ojo-Abegunde, Student, Saint John High School

Guests have included Kennebecasis Valley High School teacher Sharon Toner, Saint John High School counsellor Mary Ashton, Sussex Regional High School counsellor Elaine Cameron, and Acting School Counselling Coordinator Heather Whittaker. The committee is chaired by the Director of Education Support Services.

The committee has made numerous recommendations which are being considered for implementation next year. This includes specific professional learning topics for teachers and other staff, review of data to identify trends which may point to problem areas, exploring policy options for addressing systemic racism, and greater voice for students who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour in addressing these issues.

One initiative which came from these conversations was the High School Systemic Racism Survey, which was completed by 4004 high school students in Anglophone South last month.

¹⁰ Daniel Tatum (2017) *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

This data will be reviewed and analyzed and high school principals will have access to the information for their schools to use in their school improvement planning for 2022-2023.

The LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee met twice during this school year (November 21st & May 31st). The committee includes district staff, school staff, community members, and students.

Members of the committee who participated in one or both meetings were:

- Christina Barrington, Principal, Rothesay High School
- Jennifer Grant, Acting Learning Specialist, Education & Early Childhood Development
- Kenton Pennington, Teacher, Fundy Middle & High School
- Dan Simard, Teacher, St Malachy's Memorial High School
- Kristyn McDermott, Senior Analyst, TD Insurance
- Darci Northrup, Manager, TD Insurance
- Kris Trotter, Counsellor, New Brunswick Community College
- Kaylee Cooper, Student, Fundy Middle & High School
- Mason James, Student, St Malachy's Memorial High School
- Isabelle Wilcox, Student, Fundy Middle & High School

The committee is chaired by Heather Whittaker, Acting School Counselling Coordinator.

The committee made recommendations including exploring the SOGI 123 resources from the ARC Foundation, reinforcing the importance of staff understanding policy 713, for activities for the Middle School GSA Day.

Section 3: Curriculum & Resources

Strategy 4.1.2: Support curriculum and increase resources that reflect diversity and anti-racism.

Strategy 4.1.2 focused on continuing to bolster resources in classrooms to ensure greater diversity of texts for teacher and student use and providing district coaches with professional learning on how to have more courageous conversations about race.

Actions:

Cultivating Genius Book Study: Nine participants, three sessions, and ongoing collaboration as follow up.

Diverse Texts for High Schools: Twelve high schools participated. Funding supported to diversify texts in high school English Language Arts classrooms using EECD text selection guidelines.

Courageous Conversations Training: Completed by 6-12 Literacy Coaches. Learning will be used to guide coaching work next year and beyond.

Elementary-High Race Conversations: Collaboration between an elementary school and high school. High school students will read and discuss culturally diverse texts with grade four students. Pilot has been developed and will be implemented next school year.

Section 4: Equity

Strategy 4.1.3: Ensure equity of instruction for vulnerable, culturally, and/or linguistically diverse students.

- **Vulnerable Students** are those students who require extra support with their education, whether it is for a short or long period of time. ¹¹
- **Culturally diversity** refers to a variety of cultural or ethnic groups. ¹²
- **Linguistic diversity** refers to students who comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken.

A major initiative for ASD-S this past year has been the appointment of an Antiracism & Equity Coach. Therese Trofimenoff has presented multiple workshops to teaching staff. She has also worked directly with students during classroom presentations, but alongside school staff so as to build the capacity of school staff to conduct this work themselves. Therese has worked with individual teachers and Professional Learning Communities of teachers to co-plan lessons on antiracism and to review their planning and resource choice from an antiracism perspective. She has been an invaluable resource to school administrators who trying to resolve issues with racism in their schools. She has been researching and sharing best practices. Most importantly, she has been participating in school and community events. Examples include a panel discussion at Saint John High School for the student body led by Therese, Matthew Martin of Black Lives Matter NB, and several students, and participating in the work of the New Brunswick Commissioner of Systemic Racism with her podcast “Talking Racism”

Therese also completed antiracism PL for school administrators in March, together with the Director of Education Support Services, on the topics on recognizing systemic racism and understanding racial identity. They also completed an in-service for Education Child & Youth Team members on antiracism on June 3rd.

EAL Initiatives

EAL and First Nation initiatives this year focused on offering professional learning to schools and districts leaders to create welcoming environments, provide culturally responsive teaching, and ensuring equity of instruction and student/teacher resources.

¹¹ Adapted from Academy 21.

¹² Diversity adapted from OED

Actions:

Welcoming Schools Initiative: Nine ASD-S schools.

Ongoing Professional learning: English Language Teaching, Culturally and Linguistically Inclusive Schools, Tech Tools for Language Learners, Newcomer Support Transition Plan, Experiential Learning, and Language Learning Through Board Games.

Cultural Professional Learning: The Hijabi Project, Chinese New Year, and Black History and Culture PL.

School Learning Series: Hannukah Presentations, Kwanzaa Presentation, Bill Riley, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Professional Learning for EAL Mentors: The Building Blocks of Reading and Bridging Cultural Diversity Training.

Diversity Resource Project: Compilation of resources, lessons, and activities by subject area made available as part of an EAL District Library that can be accessed by teachers.

Book Studies: Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain and Homes.

Bridging Cultures Grant: Eight schools were successful grant applicants.

First Nation Initiatives

First Nation Book Studies: Over 200 teacher participants studying six resources.

Indigenizing the Curriculum PLC: Included 35 K-5 teachers attending monthly PL sessions.

Educational Opportunities: Butterfly Quilt Art, World of Wisdom presentation, and the Moose Hide Campaign.

Professional Learning Opportunities: Flag Teachings with Ron Tremblay and Virtual Author Visits with Christy Jordan-Fenton (over 100 classrooms).