



ETFO
ACTION on
ANTI-BLACK
RACISM

Ending Anti-Black Racism in the Public Education System and Beyond

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Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
Fédération des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario

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ETFO represents 83,000 elementary public school teachers, occasional teachers, designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel across the province. Its Building Better Schools education agenda can be viewed at **BuildingBetterSchools.ca**.

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True Equity in Education

Solutions to longstanding institutional problems require significant institutional commitments and sustained financial investments. All stakeholders, including unions, are complicit in the manner in which Anti-Black racism has been embedded into the fabric of the education system. As an organization that attended the roundtable hosted by the OHRC in June, we were excited to share our input on a future of education that doesn't include Anti-Black racism. We were hopeful that the next steps would include concrete and potential funding for the solutions. Having had past partnerships with the OHRC to create curriculum documents that were available within schools, we anticipated the potential to replicate this work. While the request to canvas a much wider range of organizations about Anti Black Racism increases inclusion, we know the work needs to continue soon and look forward to hearing of the financial commitments that will ensure continued equity work can occur.

If there is to be true equity in public education, stakeholders including the Ontario government, school boards, the Ontario College of Teachers, the College of Early Childhood Educators, faculties of education, and unions representing educators and education workers must do what is necessary to end racism and anti-Black racism in the education system.

We are beyond a discussion on whether anti-Black racism exists in education. It does, as evidenced by the poor outcomes for Black students on numerous fronts, and the Ontario Ministry of Education's intervention to address anti-Black racism in various school boards. That is why groups such as Black Lives Matter and others are demanding that systemic and institutional impacts of anti-Black racism be addressed in all aspects of society, including education.

No one practice, policy or law or practice can suffice. ‘Systemic’ discrimination means that all aspects of the public education system – from government directives to training for all stakeholders, school board personnel, school administration, curriculum and resource development – must be rigorously assessed to ensure their impacts on Black students, staff and administrators are positive.

Elementary Educators and ETFO Actions

In 2018, ETFO approved a multi-year strategy to promote the United Nations Decade for Peoples of African Descent and address anti-Black racism. Since that time, the Federation has:

Communicated its goals and strategy to members and staff and produced anti-Black racism posters for schools;

Created a substantive Policy Statement on Anti-Black Racism;

Undertaken an environmental scan that examined and analyzed relevant ETFO studies and reports, programs and resources, and government/partner programs;

Enhanced member self-identification to better support and encourage the participation of Black members in ETFO programs, services and events;

Commenced anti-Black racism training with ETFO’s provincial Executive and staff;

Provided anti-Black racism workshops, conferences and webinars for local leaders and members;

Created and presented Name It. Understanding Anti-Black Racism in Ontario Education, a workshop for members;

Created and presented a three-day workshop for members called Unlearn. Relearn: How Colonization Impacts your Practice.

Inaugurated an annual Taking Action on Anti-Black Racism conference for members;

Developed a Leadership Program for Black Educators; and

Started development of a curriculum resource entitled Race Matters. Teaching Students to Be Race Conscious.

This is in addition to developing professional learning and curriculum resources about anti-Black racism for ETFO members, as well as public advocacy efforts that can be viewed at etfo.ca/link/antiblackracism , and www.buildingbetterschools.ca.

ETFO Objectives

Going forward, ETFO's anti-Black racism strategy objectives are to:

1. Continue systemic change through review of ETFO policies, procedures and practices and seeking guidance from Black ETFO members;
2. Continue training provincial staff, local leaders and stewards so they can proactively support members on anti-Black racism issues;
3. Continue the creation of programs and resources to provide knowledge and tools on anti-Black racism topics, supporting Black members and authentic allyship;
4. Confront anti-Black racism in the education system by advocating for change among government, school boards and teacher education programs; and
5. Confront anti-Black racism in society and institutions with Black community organizations.

The following are ways to confront and dismantle anti-Black racism in the education system, and to confront anti-Black racism in society and institutions.

ADVANCING BLACK EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Target groups:

- Provincial government, Ministry of Education
- Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) and school boards
- Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
- Faculties of education, post-secondary institutions
- Ontario College of Teachers, College of Early Childhood Educators
- Education unions, Ontario Teachers' Federation
- Black educator groups
- Education partners

A 1980s court case involving CN Rail and the Canadian Human Rights Commission determined that CN Rail would need a 'critical mass' of women in its employment to break the continuing cycle and culture of systemic discrimination and harassment of women workers within its organization. This case laid the groundwork for subsequent employment equity laws across Canada.

The concept of 'critical mass' is important if the potential of racialized and Black members and staff within the education system is to be realized. They need to see themselves represented in the system as part of a welcoming and inclusive culture.

There must be a concerted effort among all stakeholders to address barriers in recruitment, hiring and retention policies and procedures. This begins but is not limited to the ways in which teacher candidates are sought and the way their education needs to be culturally relevant and student centered. Anti-Black racism training for all education leadership, staff, educators and members is key to achieving institutional and

systemic change, and to creating organizational cultures that are welcoming and inclusive of Black educators and students. The Ministry of Education and other organizations must adequately fund and resource initiatives that address anti-Black racism.

Collection of Race-Based Data

All educational institutions and organizations must collect race-based data as both a benchmark and an ongoing measure of progress in evaluating efforts to end anti-Black racism.

School Boards/Ministry of Education:

- All school boards are now required to collect race-based data as it pertains to students. Data collection should be standardized across school boards.
- For Black students, it is important that the data on expulsions, graduation rates, suspensions and Special Education placements be analyzed to understand how they are disproportionately impacted in the education system.
- For staff, it is critical to track Black educators that are full-time contract, occasional/casual staff, educational assistants, and designated early childhood educators.
- Tracking should also identify race-based data in the hiring process and the leadership/advancement of Black staff members.
- Confidential exit interviews with Black educators should also be conducted to determine the reason they have left the employ of a school board or have left the public education system.

Faculties of Education:

- There appears to be a significant decline in Black teacher candidates.
- Race-based data on candidate applications, program acceptance, graduation, and premature exiting of candidates before degree completion will help determine a benchmark for anti-Black racism initiatives.

Ontario Principals' Council (OPC):

- Tracking the number of Black educators currently in administrative positions will provide a benchmark for anti-Black racism initiatives.
- Tracking should also identify race-based data in the hiring process and the leadership/advancement of Black staff members.

Education Unions:

- Race-based data on the hiring and retention of provincial staff, self-identification of members, and member participation in union conferences, events and workshops will provide benchmarks for assessing where barriers and challenges to union participation and access by Black members exist.

Hiring and Retention of Black Educators/Candidates

A key element of building a critical mass of Black educators in education is to address barriers in recruitment, hiring and retention policies and procedures. Barriers may be a result of unintentional policies and procedures that disadvantage Black candidates or a result of unconscious bias. A thorough assessment of policies and procedures by human resource professionals can assist with this goal.

Hiring practices that foster an environment that attract, retain, and nurture diverse talent in the teaching profession must be a high priority.

Ongoing Training of Administration, Trustees and Others

It takes time to identify and change prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination against Black people.

To achieve institutional and systemic change there needs to be a realization and a cognitive understanding among leaders and administrators of school boards, including trustees and faculties of education, as to what racism and anti-Black racism are and the impact that daily occurrences of racism, including microaggressions, have on relationships, procedures and systems, and one's personal mental health.

That institutional awareness and change must then permeate through all others working in the system, including educators and staff.

Trainers dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-oppression are best equipped to support institutional and systemic change within organizations by designing programs for all tiers of an organization.

As an additional resource, ETFO has produced a video entitled *The Lived Experiences of Racialized Members* featuring interviews with racialized and Black members on their experiences in the public education system.

Recruitment and Retention of Black Educators/Candidates

Recruitment of Black candidates in education is a key element in building a critical mass of Black educators to ensure public education is reflective of the people it serves and provides a better experience for Black youth and adults.

School Boards:

- It is important to address equity and diversity in recruitment and hiring, and foster an environment that attracts, retains and nurtures diverse talent in the teaching profession.
- Hiring practices must create predictable career paths that ensure equity for Black, Indigenous and other racialized teachers/education professionals, with real opportunities to access secure employment.

Faculties of Education:

- In the past some faculties of education, such as those at York University and the University of Toronto, had programs to reach out to racialized members.
- It is vital that faculties of education develop initiatives to attract and retain Black candidates and demonstrate that their organizations are committed to inclusivity and anti-oppression.

- Faculties of education could also explore opportunities for mentorship to attract and retain Black candidates.

ETFO Partnership Initiatives:

Generation Black. You're Next! was a public symposium with Black community organizations and educational stakeholders to address barriers to the recruitment of Black teacher candidates and retention of Black educators in this province. This symposium addressed anti-Black racism in education and discussed outcomes which can improve the representation of Black educators in the teaching profession.

The symposium focused on the following outcomes:

- Identify the barriers for Black students to enter the teaching profession
- Develop strategies to increase representation of Black educators
- Identify the necessary data which will inform advocacy and outreach such as the number of teacher candidates who identify as Black
- Solicit information about the number of teacher education programs which offer course content about anti-Black racism
- Create a plan that outlines the roles and responsibilities of educational stakeholders in recruiting Black teacher candidates

The symposium was open to members and the general public.

The following educational stakeholders and community organizations that partnered with ETFO;

- Federation of Black Canadians
- Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators (ONABSE)
- Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)
- Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
- Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)

Generation Black. You're Next! the campaign, was a pilot project that will serve as a public campaign to support the public symposium to address barriers to the recruitment of Black teacher candidates and the retention of Black educators. This part of the campaign would build on the work and advocacy of Black ETFO members by profiling them and amplifying their calls for more Black teachers in the classroom, discussing the value of their work in the classroom to Black students and all members of future generations. To view the campaign in full visit https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca/generation_black.

Curriculum Reform and Associated Training

ETFO supports calls by the Ontario Black History Society, Black families and others calling on the Ontario government to make Black studies a greater part of the public elementary curriculum.

Racism is a learned behaviour that can be mitigated through education of Ontario's youngest learners.

Explicit learning expectations must be built into the curriculum related to Black history and issues.

- More Black scholars and historians are needed to fill in the gaps and provide a more comprehensive curriculum and resources, including Black Canadian contributions and Black Canadian history.

Curriculum should be presented through an anti-oppressive and anti-racism lens. The Harriet Tubman

Institute at York University and, to a lesser degree, the Ontario Black History Society continue to provide a great deal of historical, intellectual, and human resources for Black programs and resources.

- Educators need access to resources to assist them in delivering teaching from an anti-Black racism perspective as well as resources for the classroom.
- A key issue that must be addressed is how to integrate issues of discrimination and racism into teaching through a critical race lens. The instruction and learning must be ongoing. One-off lessons are not sufficient to bring about the necessary awareness and knowledge of the impacts of anti-Black racism and Black contributions to Canadian society.

Ministry of Education:

- The Ministry of Education must work with the Anti-Racism Secretariat and Black scholars to develop more substantive Black curriculum.

School Boards:

- Boards must deliver professional development for educators on teaching Black history and current issues in an age-appropriate manner, including the effects of anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination on students and the broader society.

Faculties of Education:

- There should be a mandatory program or curriculum overview on Black studies for faculty students that sets out curriculum delivery expectations for teacher candidates.

Removing Barriers for Black Students

Along with having more Black educators, improved Black curriculum expectations and school environments that are free of anti-Black racism and microaggressions, the Ministry of Education, school boards and educators must address the following and take proactive measures to create greater equity for Black students in school communities:

- Address over-representation of Black students in suspension and expulsion rates;
- Address over-representation of Black students pushed out of education, i.e., drop-out rates; and
- Address the lack of Black student involvement in academic and leadership spaces, and over-representation in athletic programs.

Removal of School Resource Officers (SRO)

Data indicates that Black children and youth are being criminalized at a very young age with little or no justification. Ontario school boards must end the practice of having SROs in elementary and secondary schools given their negative impact on racialized students.

The Black Legal Action Centre reports that the perception of the inherent criminality of Black people is reported on a regular basis including:

- “The perception that a Black child who misbehaves in class is menacing or threatening and needs to be excluded from school – rather than being thought of as simply a child misbehaving;
- The perception that a parent who advocates for fairness is a threat and deserving of a trespass order – rather than a parent distraught by seeing their child upset or harmed in any way and trying to get help that is not forthcoming; and

- The perception that a group of young Black boys are threatening to armed and trained police officers and worthy of arrest – rather than just a group of young boys hanging out together and having fun.”

*(<https://www.blacklegalactioncentre.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BLAC-Statement-on-Education-and-the-Peel-Review.pdf>)

Ministry of Education/School Boards:

- The Ministry of Education must remove SROs or variations of the SRO program that places police officers in public elementary and secondary schools.

Accountability

The Ministry of Education and publicly-funded school boards must collect and maintain race-based data, and must use that data to improve conditions and opportunities for Black educators and students. In addition,

- The Ministry of Education must hold school boards accountable for establishing policies and practices to eradicate anti-Black racism in recruitment, hiring and retention practices for Black educators and administrators, as well as training regarding anti-Black racism for trustees, administrators and educators;
- Boards must also be accountable for a decline in anti-Black racism incidents at both the board level and in schools; and
- School boards must adopt anti-bias approaches to progressive discipline that avoid perpetuating negative outcomes for Black students.

It is not enough to provide anti-Black racism training and a revised curriculum that makes Black studies a greater part of the public elementary curriculum.

Ministry of Education:

- The Ministry should examine the *Ontario Safe Schools Act* approach to school discipline through a human rights, anti-racism and anti-Black racism framework. This approach would draw from existing documentation and data that has historically shown the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates that Black students have experienced.
- Adopting an anti-racism and anti-Black racism framework towards school discipline would support educators with their capacity to challenge their personal biases and foster school climates that affirm the identity of Black students and parents.

Ontario College of Teachers:

- Standards of practice with respect to incidents of anti-Black racism must be consistently upheld.

College of Early Childhood Educators:

- Standards of practice with respect to incidents of anti-Black racism must be consistently upheld,

Unions and Affiliates:

- Recognize that systemic racism exists within education and look internally to address and dismantle anti-Black racism at all levels.
- Work with affiliates to actively address and dismantle anti-Black racism in public education.

Ministry of Education

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ADDRESSING ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN THE BROADER SOCIETY

Target groups:

- Black community groups
- Labour community
- Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate

In 2018, ETFO endorsed the Decade for People of African Descent with the statement “The Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario demands that the human rights of people of African descent be protected.”

ETFO recognizes the multiple and systemic ways that anti-Black racism is reproduced and enacted every day including through targeted policing, in our public education system, health care system and in many other institutions.

As a union dedicated to equity and social justice, ETFO’s goal is to empower educators with the tools and resources they need to make schools and classrooms welcoming and inclusive. Addressing and challenging anti-Black racism – while at the same time supporting Black students, educators, parents and community members demands our dedicated efforts if we are to help shape a society where the human rights of every individual are respected.

Working in Partnership with Community Organizations/Labour

To help end anti-Black racism and systemic discrimination in our institutions and broader society, ETFO is committed to the following actions:

- Supporting and amplifying issues raised by Black community organizations and parent organizations in social media and other communications;
- Working in partnership with Black organizations to advance Black lives within the broader community;
- Engaging with Black caucuses and committees of the Canadian Labour Congress, Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Teachers’ Federation, and Ontario New Democratic Party.
- Continuing meetings with the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate to discuss the government’s roadmap for addressing anti-Black racism and improving outcomes for Black communities.

Moving forward, as we continue to work in partnership with Black organizations and education stakeholders, we remain committed to addressing anti-Black racism in education and in the broader society. Possible next steps which could include potential funding solutions can be viewed below.

Financial Commitments for Solutions

Activity	Offered by/ Approximate timing / Numbers	Budget
<i>Faculty of Education: Black Teacher Candidate and Mentorship Conference</i>	Approximate number of participants: 50	\$103,000

	Format: 1 day and 1 evening with accommodations	
<i>Biannual Black Teacher Recruitment Symposium</i> – including representatives from Black community/education organizations, education unions, school boards, faculties of education and the Ministry of Education	Approximate number of participants: 190 Format: 1 evening and 1 full day release with accommodations	\$222,000

“We know that anti-Black racism is operating within education because of the outcomes we see for Black students. Disproportionate streaming into the lowest streams, over-representation in suspension and expulsion rates, lack of representation of Black staff and in the school’s physical environment, lack of curricular inclusion of Black people and Black ways of knowing, over-representation of Black students pushed out of education (otherwise known as the drop-out rate), lack of Black student involvement in academic and leadership spaces, and over-representation in athletic programs... As a result, Black students learn that they are both invisible and hyper-visible at any given time... They question their capabilities and begin to understand education as an unsafe space and experience for them.”¹

Kike Ojo-Thompson, Principal Consultant, Kojo Institute



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