
Anti-Racism Education in Canada: Best Practices

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Section 1: Summary

This report provides a summary of best practices as well as examples of current initiatives in anti-racism education in Canadian cities. Supplementing previous work of Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic Schools in collaboration with the Centre for Race and Culture (CRC), this report draws from **Canadian school districts from 2000 onward**, interviews with **Canadian experts in anti-racism education**, and anti-racism education initiatives currently taking place in Canada. This report is one aspect of the Advanced Anti-racism in Edmonton Schools (AARES) project initiated by CRC in partnership with Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools and funded by the Alberta Human Rights and Multiculturalism Fund. The project also included work with model schools consisting of equity training for teachers, students and administration.

The report presents **trends in best practices**. CRC:

- held interviews with key experts
- gathered and analysed documents produced by districts
- reviewed academic, community and government research
- utilized advice and expertise provided by the AARES Advisory Committee consisting of academics, local experts, practitioners and community partners

This report provides examples which Edmonton School Districts can draw from as they develop strategic plans for moving from policy to action.

There are more districts with policies in place than there are effective implementation initiatives. That said, districts across Canada have a diverse set of programs, documents and resources; as well as expert staff which **Edmonton schools can use as examples** to move their policies on anti-racism, equitable, and inclusive education forward.

Section 2: Scope of the Project

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In 1998 the Centre for Race and Culture (CRC) began working with individual teachers in Edmonton Schools on equity and anti-racism practices. The increasingly diverse demographics in Edmonton as well as the significant changes that were occurring in Ontario with institutionalizing equity and anti-racism in education created the impetus for the Centre and school districts in Edmonton to partner and move from individual change to systemic change. In 2004 CRC conducted a research study with the Public, Catholic, and Francophone school systems in Edmonton to identify parents', students', and teachers' experiences with racism within their schools. This project was entitled *Equity in Edmonton Schools*.

This study found that there were considerable differences among schools in how each dealt with racial incidents and created inclusive environments. Research revealed that student-student racism existed in both overt and covert forms, where **minority students often felt excluded** from in-class activities and activities outside of the classroom. Importantly, **minority students felt unsafe** in the school because of racial incidents and thus lacked the support to speak out against racism. Further, **minority teachers and parents felt excluded** as they lacked career and school involvement opportunities. Minority parents often felt that mainstream teachers did not understand the context of exclusion in the classroom. Lastly, as with other similar studies, the *Equity in Edmonton Schools* research highlighted the lack of equity and inclusivity in the curriculum (CRC, 2004).

Following this, in 2007, CRC conducted a study with some **minority teachers** to more deeply examine their experiences with racism. This study revealed that these teachers generally **felt excluded within the school culture**, perceived that they were thought to be incompetent, and that they **experienced** teacher-teacher and administration-teacher incidents of **racial discrimination** (both covert and overt) (CRC, 2007).

The AARES project worked with school districts in

Edmonton to address existing issues of systemic racism by building on existing policies and practices in order to create welcoming, safe, and inclusive spaces.

Anti-racism education in schools continues to be necessary work in Edmonton as the racial diversity Edmonton's population continues to grow. For example, in 2005 the largest number of immigrants to Edmonton were born in the People's Republic of China (18%), followed by the Philippines (13.7%), and India (13.5%). Statistical data gathered by the Alberta Human Rights Commission demonstrates that this increase in diversity does not guarantee a decrease in racism. In fact, of the grounds protected in the Alberta Human Rights Act that were cited in files opened by the Commission between April of 2011 and March of 2012, discrimination based on the grounds of *race/colour* and *ethnic/origin* were the fourth and fifth grounds cited out of a total of 12 (Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2012).

OBJECTIVE

CRC worked with the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Districts to strengthening existing educational practices relating to Aboriginal, equity and anti-racism. In this partnership, CRC's goal was to facilitate equity education and strategic planning in a way that appreciates district priorities and individual school culture. CRC provided equity training for students, teachers and administrative staff at select schools. This training facilitated a process for individual schools to become **Equity Action School Sites** - schools that commit to equity through education as well as creating an equity action plan to be implemented as a whole school initiative. The research portion of the project provides a summary of best practices in anti-racism education as well as examples of school district initiatives from Canadian cities that Edmonton schools can draw from to create strategies for implementing anti-racism policies.

Section 3: Research Summary

KEY FINDINGS ON BEST PRACTICES

The information in this section is presented within the themes identified. Further detail is provided in Section 4.

TABLE 1 - SUCCESSFUL ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION INITIATIVES SHOULD:

1 Begin with baseline and Needs assessment research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly diverse populations in urban centres requires that schools collect data to understand their changing demographics Collection of statistical data on demographics of students, district & school staff Survey research on staff and students' experiences with racism Analysis of success of policy implementation Consulting with parents and other community members about their needs
2 Be embedded in a district policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies that establish District's commitment to equity, inclusion and anti-racism education
3 Be led by district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural competency training for all district staff Training and ongoing support for dealing with racism appropriately Assign an individual or a team responsible for anti-racism education across the District
4 Include materials to support policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching materials that help teachers implement policy in the classroom Practical guides for all staff to assist in implementing policy within the school
5 Be a whole school initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural competency training for all staff including administration, teachers, and teacher aids Cultural competency training for students Involve parents and other community members Support for teachers to implement inclusive curricula
6 Address gaps in the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop culturally appropriate assessment tools Assure that students' and teachers' diverse backgrounds are reflected in learning materials
7 Build on current efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on existing research Build on Alberta Education priorities Build on school's priorities and existing diversity policies and initiatives

KEY FINDINGS OF EXISTING RACISM IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

The information in this table is presented by major themes identified in academic research; research conducted by districts across Canada and different levels of government in Canada; and various community organizations.

Further detail on these summarized findings is provided in the literature review in Section 4.

TABLE 2 - RACISM IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

1 Forms of racism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent incidents based on racism occurs between students • Overt and covert forms of racism occur student-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-student, administration-teacher, administration-student, teacher/administration-parent • Graffiti (e.g. symbols & direct comments in bathroom stalls) • Name-calling involving references to race, ethnicity, and heritage • Racially motivated harassment
2 The student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism between students often goes unreported • Racism experienced by students and perpetrated by teachers often goes unreported • Students who experience racism feel alienated and unsafe • Students who experience racism suffer academically
3 The teacher experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism between teachers often goes unreported • Teachers who experience racism often feel alienated • Teachers who experience racism feel unsupported • Teachers are often unable to recognize racism because they have not been trained to do so • Teachers are often reluctant to report racism and talk about it with their students even when they can recognize it
4 Inequity in hiring practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many students and parents do not see themselves represented in the teaching staff, and less so in the administrative staff • Many studies report the lack of visible minority teachers in urban Canadian schools (e.g. Silver & Mallett, 2002)
5 Lack of inclusivity in the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies show that curricula across Canada is Eurocentric • Canadian history textbooks often represent racism as something that happens outside of Canada • Canadian history textbooks often identify race as a biological given rather than a social construct • Many students do not see themselves represented in the curriculum

TABLE 2 - RACISM IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

6 Inequitable school culture

- Covert racism is embedded in everyday conversation through derogatory comments and assumptions based on stereotypes
- Racism is often seen as an individual issue rather than a systemic issue
- Though many Districts have policies in place, there is a lack of follow-through from policy to action
- Studies show that administrators are often reluctant to admit that racism exists and when they do, they often downplay its significance
- Administrators often do not know how to recognize racism
- Students, teachers and parents state that when they do report incidents of racism to administration, their experiences are dismissed
- There is a lack of understanding among White teachers, students and administration that discrimination against White people is not the same as racism

KEY ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN CANADA

The information in this section is separated into three tables:

- Baseline and Needs Assessment Research
- Policy
- Moving Policy to Action

Each of these tables corresponds with the themes summarized in Table 1 and, thus, reflects the ways districts across Canada are making conscious decisions to build racism free schools.

Table 3 provides examples of how districts are collecting baseline data to identify the issues that need to be addressed through anti-racism education initiatives.

TABLE 3 - BASELINE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

DISTRICTS	EXAMPLES OF BASELINE & NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESEARCH
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Census (survey) to identify changing employee demographics • Results of Census: identify employment needs & develop training and career development opportunities in response • Student Survey to collect information on changing student demographics • Result of Census: improve policies and practices to ensure a welcoming, safe and inclusive learning place for students
Peel District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Parent Census collected demographic information • Results of Census: District will conduct a Teacher Survey in 2012 to establish if the teaching body is reflective of the student body
Toronto District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Parent Census developed in collaboration with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and educational experts • Collected data on demographics (place of birth, racial background and socio-economic status) and student experiences (school climate, school safety, home and school support, extra curricular activities) • Results of Census: identify and better address systemic barriers to student success, better allocate resources to address needs, assess the effectiveness of programs and develop new ones, and advocate for funding from the provincial government

Table 4 outlines the various policies that districts in Canadian cities have to establish their commitment to anti-racism education. These policies vary in how the respective districts define their commitments to anti-racism education. The following is a list of the commitments found in all of the policies listed below:

- address issues of racism and other types of discrimination to ensure student success
- provide support and professional development for school administration and staff
- ensure equity in hiring practices
- address the lack of diverse representation in the curriculum
- establish a process by which discrimination can be reported and addressed

While many districts have policies about how to deal with incidents of discrimination and that state a commitment to address discrimination, those listed refer to issues of race-based discrimination.

TABLE 4 - DISTRICT POLICIES

DISTRICT	DISTRICT POLICIES
Calgary Board of Education	• Anti-racism and Equity Policy
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board	• Equity and Inclusive Education Policy
English Montreal Public School Board	• Multicultural/Multiracial Education Code
Halifax Regional School Board	• Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Learning Policy
New Brunswick District 18	• Multiculturalism and Human Rights Policy
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	• Equity and Inclusive Education Policy
Peel District School Board	• Inclusive Education Policy • Human Rights Policy
Regina Public Schools	• Human Rights Equity Policy
Saskatoon Public Schools	• Human Rights Equity Policy
Toronto District School Board	• Equity Foundation Policy
Vancouver School Board	• Multiculturalism and Anti-racism Policy
York Region District School Board	• Equity and Inclusive Education Policy

Finally, Table 5 includes a list of districts that have actively worked to implement their respective policies through one or all of the following initiatives:

- **developing materials** in support of their policies
- creating a **staff position** (or a team of staff) at the district level responsible for working with teachers, students, support staff, community members, and administration
- implementing policy as a **whole school initiative**
- bridging **gaps in the curriculum**
- building on and improving measures already in place.

TABLE 5 - MOVING POLICY TO ACTION

DISTRICT	MOVING POLICY TO ACTION
Calgary Board of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: is part of the Office of the Chief Superintendent and works to implement diversity and inclusion into the everything the District does • Making this position part of the Office of the Chief Superintendent gives legitimacy to equity work • Intentional effort to hire teachers that reflect the diversity of the student population
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive, Safe and Caring Programs Team: work with teachers and parent communities to promote equity
Peel District Public School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity Officer: provides teacher professional development, works with administration, engages parents, students and other community members • <i>Manifesting Encouraging and Respectful Environments</i>: informational resource with definitions and concepts central to anti-racism education • <i>The Future We Want: Building An Inclusive Curriculum</i>: curriculum resource to be used at all grade levels
Regina Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Act! Anti-racist, Crosscultural Team Development</i>: leadership program for schools to promote equitable relationships at various levels • <i>Anti-racist Education Guide</i>: informational resources with key concepts, definitions, and resources in anti-racism education

TABLE 5 - MOVING POLICY TO ACTION

DISTRICT	MOVING POLICY TO ACTION
Toronto District School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable Schools Resource Team: provide teacher professional development and work with students and parent community as well as provide guidance on implementing an inclusive curriculum • Equity Policy Advisory Committee: advises District on policy implementation • Equitable and Inclusive Schools Newsletter: disseminates information about the work of the Team and initiatives in individual schools • <i>Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity Commitments to Equity Foundation Policy Implementation</i>: detailed report of District commitments to anti-racism education including definitions, concepts, resources and strategies for implementing an inclusive curriculum • <i>Teaching about Human Rights: 9/11 and Beyond: A Resource Package for Educators, Grades 7-12</i> • <i>Exploring Media and Race: Lesson Plan, Grades 2-6</i> • <i>Perceptions of Race and Crime: Lesson Plans, Grades 7-12</i>
Vancouver School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-racism and Diversity Mentor: delivers training to teachers, support staff, administration; facilitates Restorative Justice Circles; advises staff on appropriate responses to racism; liaises with community groups; promotes and supports inclusive curricula • Multiculturalism and Anti-racism Advisory Committee: supports the Mentor and advises the District on policy implementation
York Region School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creating Schools and Classrooms for Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity</i>: resource with strategies to promote whole school initiatives • <i>Ensuring Student Success: Anti-racism Indicators for an Anti-racist School</i>: teacher and administration resource • Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee (EIAC): advises District on matters of equity and inclusion in education and in the workplace • Parent, Family and Community Engagement Advisory Committee: works collaboratively with EIAC • <i>Together We're Better - A Grade 7/8 Student Conference on Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity</i>

Section 4: Literature Review And Ideas For Implementing Policies

ADDRESSING RACISM IN CANADIAN SCHOOLS

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This report is grounded in research on anti-racism education and past work on anti-racism education undertaken by the CRC in collaboration with the Public and Catholic Edmonton School Districts that defines anti-racism as a practical and theoretical framework that “recognizes the dominance of white people and Eurocentric knowledge over people of colour and non-European values and knowledge” (CRC, 2004, p. 30).

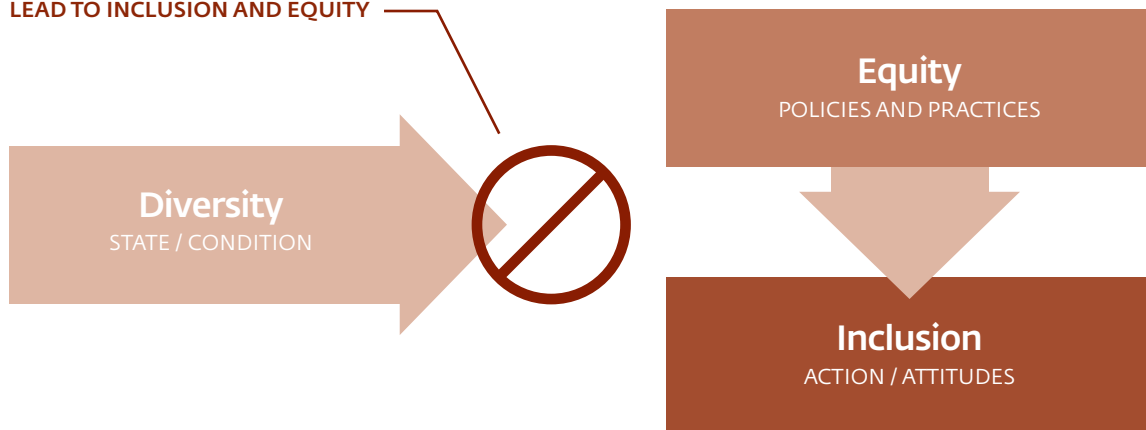
Following this understanding of anti-racism, this literature review is rooted in the following understanding that “**anti-racism education provides knowledge, skills, and strategies for educators to examine racism critically in order to understand its origin and to recognize and challenge it**” (CRC, 2004, p. 31).

Equity, inclusion and diversity are terms that are often used in the research and practice of anti-racism education. When defining equity, there is an important distinction to be made between equity and equality.

While equity may result in equality - fair and equal treatment - unlike equity, equality presupposes that everyone is starting from the same place. Thus, the key distinction between the two is that **equity recognizes that racism exists, that it is systemic, and that policies and practices must take action to address race-based, systemic discrimination** that positions non-white people at a disadvantaged starting point.

In anti-racism education **inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, valued and able to fully participate** in the school and district by both contributing to and benefiting from its continual development. Quite differently, **diversity is a state of the environment that includes people from different racial backgrounds but that is not necessarily inclusive** of these differences. Thus, as the diagram below illustrates, equity can lead to inclusion but diversity does not necessarily lead to equity and inclusion. In other words, **being diverse is not enough to guarantee a racism free environment.**

DIVERSITY DOES NOT NECESSARILY LEAD TO INCLUSION AND EQUITY



EXAMINING RACISM AND ITS CAUSES IN URBAN CANADIAN SCHOOLS: THE VALUE OF BASELINE & NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

The existence of racism in Canadian schools has been widely documented through scholarly research conducted by school districts, community groups, governments and academics (e.g. Harteg & Graeme, 2007; Peel District School Board, 2000; Rivière, 2008; Ryan, 2010). As previous work by CRC (2004) has illustrated, in the 1990s studies revealed that as the proportion of visible minorities in Canadian cities increased, so too did the problem of racism in Canadian schools. Notably, Ryan (2010) explains that this continues to exist:

In Western countries like Canada, the USA, the UK and Australia, students who do not belong to the dominant ethnic (Anglo) group routinely have to overcome significant barriers if they are to succeed in these countries' educational institutions.... While racism has undoubtedly always existed in some form or another in schools, it has become more obvious in recent times, particularly with the increase in diversity in Western countries (Ryan, 2010, p. 149).

Today, the local impact of global issues such as war, violent political turmoil and terrorism is "increased racism directed at immigrants and visible minority communities" in Canada. This increased racism is having an impact within our schools as they too are seeing a rise in intercultural conflict (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre & Calgary Committee on Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding, 2009, p. 1).

Racism in Canadian schools is both overt and covert and occurs between students, between teachers, between teachers and students, between administrative staff and teachers, between administrative staff and students, and between administrative staff/teachers and parents (CRC, 2004; Ryan, 2010). For example, drawing from research with students who report incidents of covert racism we know that this form of racism is manifest in the

exclusion of visible minority students from leading classroom activities and from being picked by their peers to participate in social activities like games at recess (CRC, 2004). Hera and Pidgeon (2011) also identify teachers' low expectations of minority students and policies that limit minority students' academic advancement as covert forms of racism. On the other hand, overt forms of racism are seen through racially based jokes and verbal and physical harassment, (CRC, 2004; Dei, 2006; Donn, 2011; McCaskell, 2005; Ryan, 2010). There are also forms of racism that, while covert, are less visible than most forms of direct and obvious racism. This is the case of graffiti seen in areas of the school that teachers and administration do not often access. For example, Ryan (2010) reports that the symbol most often seen in places such as student bathroom stalls was swastikas - a direct and obvious form of racism that may only be visible to students, who in turn, might feel afraid to report it to the appropriate people.

Stereotypes can also manifest themselves in covert, overt, and less visible overt forms of racism. For example, in a study completed by the Centre for Race and Culture in 2007 a Métis teacher reported being offered a beer by the organizer of the District meeting she was attending rather than the drink she had asked for. Though the organizer had made the gesture as a joke, the teacher was insulted. Thus, **when stereotypes are masked as jokes their racist implications are silenced and deemed insignificant.** Stereotypes, whether they are couched as humour or not, are indeed harmful. Importantly, **"positive stereotypes" are as harmful as negative stereotypes** like the ones seen in the example above. Many researchers have concluded that "positive stereotypes", such as the widely held belief that the greatest achievement of people of Asian descent is their high academic success, function to reduce people to a singular identity ("good at math") (e.g. Cocchiara and Campbell Quick, 2004; Ryan, 2010). In turn, "positive stereotypes" have serious negative effects. **For example, because of the widely held belief that people of Asian descent are "good at math", students of Asian descent who do not perform well academically feel frustrated and ashamed of their inability to meet such**

unrealistically high standards (Ryan, 2010).

Such negative emotional effects of racism, adversely affect students' academic success (Allan, 1999; CRC, 2004). As Dei (2006) writes, "despite its notable success, the public education system fails many students, as evidenced by the disengagement, failure and high drop out rates for Black, Aboriginal, and other minority youth" (p. 27). That visible minority communities are blamed for minority students' lower levels of academic success is also evidence of this failure. However, as Dei explains (2006):

"The blame does not rest entirely with these so-called 'problem students' or their families. We must address both our individual and collective responsibility by asking: What are our responsibilities to each other? How are we to explain the...complicities of our institutions in creating the street culture of youth violence today? What have been the effects of a zero tolerance policy and the associated acts of social exclusion, rising racialized and gendered poverty, and the everydayness of racism that undergirds our communities? Asking these questions does not mean searching for excuses. (p. 27)

Committing ourselves to searching for answers to these questions and thus to create schools where everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute and to succeed must be grounded in the recognition that racism exists in Canadian schools.

In part, racism exists because district staff, administration, teachers, students, and parents are often ill equipped to adequately deal with racism (CRC, 2004; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Rivière, 2008; Ryan, 2010). **This inability to respond appropriately can partly be explained by the lack of adequate data on the demographic make-up of school districts as a whole and of individual schools.** In other words, racism is one form of discrimination that needs to be understood within the context of other forms of discrimination that minority students and teachers will also experience. As the rate of poverty increases among non-white Canadians, experiences of racism are

coupled with class- and gender-based discrimination (Battiste, 2009; Dei, 2006). Thus, research studies that examine the demographic make-up of a particular school district are important because they allow us to begin to identify the many forms of discrimination that our schools may be faced with, and the many possibilities for solutions that exist. In this regard, baseline research about district demographics affords possibilities to develop preventative strategies and not just focus on responsive strategies for dealing with racism (McCaskell, 2005).

In 2006 the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) developed the "Student Parent Census" in collaboration with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and educational experts in order to measure factors within the school system that may inhibit student success. Specifically, the census focuses on factors such as differences in gender, race, first language, income, and place of residence that might limit or enhance student achievement. The census collects two types of data:

1. demographic (e.g. place of birth, racial background and socio-economic status)
2. student experiences (e.g. school climate, school safety, home and school support, extra curricular activities). **Due to concerns about the sensitive nature of some of the questions and about privacy issues, consultations were held with school staff and administration, union and employee groups, parents, and community leaders.** These conscious efforts to build awareness about the importance of the research proved to be successful and TDSB was able to administer the Census with wide support from the community.

To respect the community's support, "well before the survey was administered a series of communications and implementation supports were provided. These included a message from the Director to students, parents, teachers and principals, a student-friendly brochure and poster about Student Census Week,

and a Teacher's Guide to the Student Census." (p. 4). Information was also provided on the Board's website and a week prior to administering the survey principals received detailed instructions on how to distribute and collect the Census while teachers received a manual with detailed instructions for administering the survey. The survey was administered in all schools in the Board over a period of one week, Census Week.

This Census was a confidential but not anonymous survey. Student identification numbers were used so that the Census data could be linked to other centrally available data sources - such as the TDSB Student Information System, EQAO [standardized provincial testing], and student report cards - for crosschecking and tracking purposes. To ensure confidentiality for students, teachers were instructed to tell students to use one of the black markers provided to black out their name on the front page prior to placing their completed Census into the return box at the front of the room. When all students had placed their completed form in the box, teachers were instructed to close the box and return it to the school office for delivery to the Research and Information Services department. (ibid)

All of the forms were mailed directly to the Board's research office and are kept in a secure area. Once the data is entered into the database and published in a report for the community to access, it is permanently destroyed.

Using the results of the Census, TDSB was able to identify and better address systemic barriers to student success, better allocate resources to address needs, assess the effectiveness of programs and develop new ones, and advocate for funding from the provincial government. Consequently, TDSB has established itself as a leader in the collection of equity-based demographic data and has been consulted by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, other districts and other organizations working within the education sector. The Census is administered every five years (Yau & O'Reilly, 2007; 2011).

In addition to demographic research, the **Coalition of Equal Access to Education (2009) in Alberta recommends that school districts in the province conduct "system-wide cultural audits with due attention to policies, guidelines, business plans, curriculum, funding allocation, accountability, and professional requirements for staff"** (p.v). This kind of research is necessary for the success of anti-racism education because, while we know that racism exists in all schools in Canada, we need to know how it takes shape in schools in Alberta, and in Edmonton, as well as how it is dealt with so that we can begin to build from our successes and appropriately address the challenges.

Importantly, there are other school districts in the country that are beginning to roll out similar research in order to collect demographic information on their student, teacher, and parent community. For example, the Peel District School Board is currently designing their teacher and student surveys and will begin to administer them next year. Similarly, **the Calgary Board of Education is working on a longitudinal study that will follow students' academic achievement levels from junior high to high school and that will yield the ability to analyze the data by demographic data.** As the Equity Officer in the Peel District explained, **this kind of research is crucial for "understanding the issues that you are dealing with"**.

ADDRESSING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH RACISM THROUGH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS AND STUDENT TRAINING

Undoubtedly, racial discrimination affects a person's overall well-being (Cocchiara & Campbell Quick, 2004). That said, every student will be affected differently by racism. For example, the emotional effects of experiencing racism may be different for new immigrants than it is for minorities who were born in Canada. Specifically, research conducted by CRC (2004) recognizes that while new immigrants often do not expect to be dealing with racism in Canada and are thus confused and shocked by it, Aboriginal people have lived through a legacy of racism that results in different emotional responses such as anger. Importantly, however, racism will have a deep and long-lasting emotional impact on every student regardless of the form of racism perpetrated and the particular effect it has on the individual.

Many studies examining minority students' experiences with racism confirm that racism between students often goes unreported (e.g. CRC, 2004; Hare & Pidgeon, 2011). In some cases this may be because covert racism is more difficult to recognize and articulate both for those students who experience it and for students and teachers who perpetrate it and observe it. For example, Hare & Pidgeon (2011) found that many of the 39 minority students they interviewed spoke of feeling generally unwelcome and disliked, feeling that teachers expected less from them than their peers, and feeling disconnected from the teaching content. However, in many of these cases, students did not directly articulate these issues as those of racist attitudes and behaviours. In other cases, where racism was more direct and visible by students and teachers, students often still chose not to report it. As Hare and Pidgeon (2011) have noted, this might be explained by the finding that often, **when students do report racism to their teachers, they are dismissed or, worse, blamed for the incident. Thus, students have very little support in their school for dealing effectively with racism, both those students who experience racism and those who perpetrate it.**

The inability to report and deal with existing racism in Canadian schools effectively and appropriately has deeply negative impacts. As stated earlier, **racism affects students emotionally - students feel frustrated, ashamed, confused and angry. Further, students who experience racism feel alienated and unsafe. Subsequently, students who live with racism are unable to perform to their full academic potential** (Allan, 1999). Hare and Pidgeon (2011) concluded that the racism that students in their study experienced "had an impact on their educational choices, determining whether they stayed in or left high school, where they attended high school, and ultimately, whether post-secondary education was an option for them" (p. 104). For example, some students who felt generally disliked and unwelcome because teachers showed less interest in their success and expected less from them than other students, chose to drop out of certain classes and not to pursue post-secondary education.

Importantly, issues that students face in reporting racism are grounded in a general lack of awareness and preparedness on the parts of school administration (Ryan, 2010), teachers (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011), and students (CRC, 2004).

In response to the latter, **Regina Public Schools has created ACT! Together We Make A Difference - a cross-cultural youth leadership program for elementary and high school youth in the District.** Some of the most notable objectives of the program are to:

- *Facilitate the development of Youth Leadership to address school-based acts of discrimination through support and positive action*
- *Facilitate the development of Staff Leadership to improve school-based effectiveness of anti-racist and cross-cultural education*
- *Facilitate the implementation of policies for dealing with racism and discrimination system-wide* (Regina Public Schools, 2012)

The program has been running for over a decade and, as such, each school in the district is now equipped with an ACT! Teacher that is responsible for working with students in each school to both empower students to deal with discrimination and to develop a climate of equity in the school. **The first part of the program is a two day retreat for students chosen by the ACT! Teacher in each school.**

The retreat is focused on understanding and being able to appropriately deal with racism. The retreat is coordinated and co-facilitated by the District's ACT! Coordinator and by teachers who have previously worked with students on this program. As the ACT! Coordinator explained, doing the retreat over a two day period in a location outside of the school context is important to creating a safe environment for students to share their experiences with racism and for teachers and students to deal with difficult issue of racism. In the second stage students return to their schools and continue to work with the ACT! Teacher throughout the year to organize events in their school so that other students may also have the opportunity to learn about and appropriately deal with racism. **The students and the teacher also work with a teacher and a number of students in a sister elementary school** to deliver a half day workshop on anti-racism and to equip elementary school students with the tools to address racism in their schools. **The aim is that all schools in the District have an ACT! Team composed of students and teachers that are able to sustain anti-racism programming throughout the year.** Key to the program is that all educational workshops and activities outside of the two day retreat happen within the school day so that students are not required to do additional work outside of school hours and so that teachers are provided with substitute teachers and are not overwhelmed by additional work.

Similar to the work being done in Regina Public Schools, the **Vancouver Board of Education also has a student leadership program in place that empowers students to deal with racism in their schools.** Importantly, this program was created in response to the Board's realization that, **while there were policies in place that addressed racism, these policies were**

missing an action piece. Generally, the program consists of a full day anti-racism workshop that the Board's Anti-racism and Diversity Mentor delivers in classrooms to which she has been invited to speak by the teacher. In this workshop students are taught about the language of anti-racism and how to use this language to address racist incidents. The aim of the program is to support students who experience racism both by empowering them to deal with this racism appropriately and by equipping other students with the tools to become allies and work with those who experience racism to combat it. While this program has been effective in this regard, the Anti-racism and Diversity Mentor explained that, **because not all students receive this training, the program is limited in its ability to function as a whole school initiative.** Further, because the Mentor's work with teachers takes place only through the workshops she delivers to students or when she is called in to a school to deliver a short anti-racism workshop that addresses a specific issue between teachers in the school (because her work with teachers is complaint driven) the ability to construct a racism free school, and a racism free School District, is quite limited.

The AARES project has been able to deliver training to students in two schools and to teachers in one of them. While this training has been successful in providing anti-racism training and in providing students with time to reflect on their own experiences with and understanding of racism, this work needs to be extended to all schools and all students. As many anti-racism educators have indicated, **training for all students and teachers is necessary because unless everyone is coming from the same understanding and ability to recognize racism when it happens and to address it immediately, respectfully, and successfully, exclusion will inevitably continue.**

ADDRESSING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF RACISM THROUGH TRAINING AND EQUITABLE HIRING PRACTICES

In a study conducted by CRC in 2007 with minority teachers in six districts across Alberta, participants overwhelmingly felt excluded from the overall school culture. This manifested itself in different ways for different teachers. For example, feelings and perceptions of “not fitting in” are evidenced through teachers’ experiences of being ignored in the staff room and of having their competence consistently questioned by the administration and teacher colleagues. One teacher explained how she was often dismissed as “talking gibberish” whenever she attempted to make a contribution in staff meetings. Another teacher reported that, at staff meetings, she was constantly being asked if she understood the topic at hand with complete disregard for the fact that she, like her colleagues, held a university teaching degree and, in some cases, had more teaching experience.

One of the most troubling findings of the study was an experience shared by a minority teacher that detailed the ways in which she was alienated by other teachers who made race-based jokes about students in her presence. That said, racist comments about minority students made by teachers do not always come in the form of a joke. Indeed one teacher reported an experience in which a new group of minority students who had recently arrived at the school were referred to as *those kids*. While seemingly harmless, such statements have important implications for how students and teachers are treated by the teaching and administrative staff. **Identifying students through a lens of “us” and “them” sets up an inherently divisive frame within which students will interact with each other. In other words, “us” and “them” comments are harmful because they normalize student-student and teacher-student racism.** Further, characterizing minority students as “one of them” inherently alienates minority teachers from belonging to “one of us” as well.

In reviewing research literature that seeks to identify

and provide solutions for individual acts of racism such as those described above, it is important to understand that **there are “larger systemic forces that permit such comments and actions to occur in the first place”** (Rivière, 2008, p. 358). **Systemic racism is most directly noted by the lack of racial diversity within the teaching staff.** Silver and Mallett (2002) write that, in Canada, “most schools are white, middle class institutions, and most teachers are white, middle class people” (p. 15). Importantly, such statements have been corroborated by a study conducted by the Coalition for Equal Access (2009) which found that **65.5% of parent respondents in four Districts across Alberta felt that there was a lack of cultural diversity in their schools’ teaching staff.**

This lack of representation results in students’ and parents’ inability to see themselves reflected in the school culture. Understood within a context of systemic racism that exists within the Canadian school system and that is deeply embedded in Canadian culture as whole, this lack of representation underscores inequitable hiring practices that exist in districts across Canada. While the **administrators** that Ryan (2010) interviewed in 32 Districts across Canada **often dismissed the lack of diversity as a problem with universities that do not admit enough minority teacher candidates, fortunately, at the district level, inequity in hiring is being taken seriously.**

For example, the Calgary Board of Education has established hiring practices that will ensure that the diversity of their teaching staff continues to grow so that minority students are able to see themselves reflected in the teaching body. This is an initiative that the District recently began to implement as part of its move to create a District level position responsible for making anti-racism education part of the work that in, rather than something extra that teachers and other staff have to add to their mounting responsibilities. **The position, Advisor: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; is now within the Office of the Chief Superintendent, thus legitimizing anti-racism education within the District and intentional efforts are made to hire teachers from diverse backgrounds.**

Importantly, the Calgary Board's work to increase the diversity of their teaching staff is not a symbolic act. Rather, it is a significant recognition of the negative impact that a lack of positive role models has on students' educational success.

Indeed, research has demonstrated that minority students who can look to their minority teachers as "symbols of success" perform better academically (Allan, 1999; CRC, 2004). However, equitable hiring practices will only go so far in addressing racism in schools. **Teachers are ill equipped to deal with racism, thus, professional development is equally important.** In this regard, the Peel District School Board (2000a) has stated that its rationale for creating the teacher resource *The FutureWant: Building an Inclusive Curriculum* is the fact that teachers "have been trained to help students attain academic success, but not necessarily in a way that includes their diversity" (p. 5).

Subsequently, the Peel District School Board (PDSB) has provided a professional development workshop series for teachers entitled *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. The program is divided into two sections. Section one, is composed of four workshops that seek to support school teams in developing an inclusive curriculum. "It seeks to raise awareness and challenge participants to adopt a more transformative and social action approach to their teaching strategies. Participants are provided with practical strategies and resources that will help them address the curriculum needs of their school community" (PDSB, 2012b, p. 15). The second section delves deeper into these strategies with a focus on action research and learning the theoretical underpinnings of anti-racism education.

As the Equity Officer at PDSB, as well as other anti-racism educators have stated, anti-racism training for teachers (and the whole district community) cannot act as a simple post-it reminder note or be a one time thing - **the work of equity and inclusion is "the way we [the Board] do everything", rather than "something that we [the Board] do in addition to everything else"** (Advisor: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Calgary Board of Education).

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM: INCLUSIVE RESOURCES AND BEYOND

In schools, systemic racism also "takes form through ethnocentric curriculum and mainstream pedagogies that serve to reinforce the knowledge and experiences of White, middle class learners (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 96). Importantly, as Montgomery (2005) has illustrated through his analysis of Canadian history textbooks, **even when racism is mentioned** the definitions used in these texts privilege an understanding of racial discrimination as something that is **endemic to individuals, rather than something that is systemic.** For example:

In [the textbook] Canadian History, racism is declared to be 'prejudice or discrimination against a person or group because of race, culture, or ethnic difference; can also mean the belief in the superiority of one race over another'... In [the textbook] Continuity and Change, racism is defined in the glossary as 'prejudice or hatred based on race, colour or nationality'...and explained within the text to be... a form of stereotyping. [This text also states that] a racist believes that people of one race or culture differ significantly in intelligence or ability from people of another race or culture. Racist acts occur when people punish other people because of race or culture (p. 342).

One of the primary concerns that Montgomery (2005) has with these kinds of definitions is that, **in defining racism as an anomaly or an extraordinary singular act, the textbooks fail to recognize the way in which racism is deeply ingrained into normalized policies and practices that govern our everyday lives.** "Racism by such accounts is only in the world because it resides in the heads of both racists and racialized groups" (p. 438). **Further, racism is often portrayed as something that happened in the past without an acknowledgement of its continuation in the present.** Thus racism is portrayed as something that could not possibly happen in the more modern times in which we live today.

The limited discussion of racism found in textbooks across Canada, and the Eurocentric curriculum as a

whole, has serious implications for minority students' ability to feel that they are valued and respected members of the school. Research conducted in major districts in **Alberta has found that only 27.5 percent of students feel that cultural diversity is integrated into the curriculum and 29.3 percent see cultural diversity integrated into extra-curricular activities** (Coalition for Equal Access to Education, 2009). In other words, close to three quarters of students in this study felt excluded from the school culture. Within this context of exclusion, it is often the minority students who do not identify with the mainstream curriculum that are expected to change in order to meet the curriculum demands. However, as the literature cited in this review has illustrated, it is the schools, the teachers, the staff, the administration - the district as a whole - that is responsible for including the experiences and knowledge of those who are consistently excluded from the curriculum. As Silver and Mallet (2005) write:

It is not minority students who need to change to fit the still very Eurocentric...educational system. It is the educational system that needs to change to reflect the realities of, and to meet the educational needs of minority students. This is a big challenge. But it can be done. And it should be done. (p. 5)

In her study focusing on integrating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum in schools across Saskatchewan, Battiste (2009) writes about "Two Eyed Seeing" which means "to normalize Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum so that both Indigenous and conventional perspectives will be available - not just for Aboriginal people, but for all people" (p. 17). In other words, "Two Eyed Seeing" does not mean including Indigenous knowledge solely for the benefit of Indigenous people, but rather for the benefit of everyone. The definition of this concept of "Two Eyed Seeing" is very useful to those of us working to build inclusive and equitable schools because it reminds us that **supplementing curriculum requirements with materials that reflect the lives of minority students is not only necessary for the academic success of said students but also for the well-being of all students.**

Addressing racism in the curriculum is both about teachers and students "learning new ways of knowing, valuing others...and making equity and inclusion foundations for all learners" as well as about teachers and students "unlearning...racism" (p. 18).

The Peel District School Board developed a teacher resource in order to support their teachers in creating an inclusive curriculum by providing them with classroom activities and curriculum links for each activity for K-12. This document, *The Future We Want: Building an Inclusive Curriculum* (2000a), along with the accompanying *Manifesting Encouraging and Respectful Environments* (2000c) were created in response to school administrators' concerns about racial and sexual harassment that was occurring in their schools. "The Superintendent of School Services and Staff Development created the Diversity Initiative Work Team, with teacher, vice-principal, principal and superintendent representatives, as well as staff from Program Services, Special Education Program Services, School Services and Staff Development, and Human Resources" to work collaboratively on these documents (PDSB, 2000c, p. v). **The work team held regular meetings for three years during the creation of this document and also created the "Diversity and Social Justice workshop series" which consisted of a two part program offered to all District staff over the course of three years** (ibid).

In their teacher resource *The Future We Want: Building an Inclusive Curriculum*, Peel District School Board (2000a, p. 9) outlines four approaches to an inclusive curriculum:

1. **Contributions:** *adding diverse hero/ines to the curriculum*
2. **Addition:** *adding a variety of content, concepts, themes and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure*
3. **Transformation:** *changing the actual structure of the curriculum to help students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from perspectives of diverse groups*

4. **Social Action:** *allowing students to make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them*

As this resource clearly explains, these four approaches “work as four levels on a continuum”. For example, the ‘contributions’ approach offers a starting point, but can also be used as a way of moving on to other more intellectually challenging approaches, such as the ‘transformation’ and the ‘social action’ approaches. **Similarly, this document provides teachers with four dimensions of an inclusive curriculum** (p. 10):

1. **Content integration:** *using examples, data and information from a variety of groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in particular subject areas or disciplines*
2. **Knowledge Construction:** *understanding how people create knowledge and how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases influence the ways that knowledge is constructed within a discipline*
3. **Prejudice Reduction:** *using characteristics of prejudicial attitudes and strategies to help individuals develop more democratic attitudes and values*
4. **Equity Pedagogy:** *using techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse groups*
5. **Empowering School Culture:** *restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse groups will experience educational equity and societal empowerment*

This resource was created by the PDSB with sufficient information for teachers of all grade levels to implement an inclusive curriculum in their classroom that still meets the requirements of the Ontario government’s mandated school curriculum and that allows teachers to choose the approach and dimension with which they want to begin to move forward.

In Alberta, the **Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (CLRC) and the Calgary Committee on Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding worked with teachers in the Calgary Board of Education to help guide them and support them through a process of learning anti-racism and unlearning racism.** Specifically, the CLRC and the Calgary Committee worked with teachers to implement classroom activities that teach students how to recognize racism. **The majority of this work can be found in the “Anti-Racism Resource Kit”** produced by the CLRC and the Calgary Committee which provides five pages of possible activities that teachers can do with their students that facilitates teaching and learning about how racism exists in the world around them. **These activities are meant to supplement the Alberta curriculum and can be used with any grade level and any subject matter for which the teacher is able to adapt the activities.**

The Anti-Racism Resource Kit also includes a list of books for K-12 teachers to use in their classroom to complement the curriculum mandated material and to assist teachers in bringing conversations about how to appropriately deal with racism in the classroom. This list is quite extensive and includes suggestions for how to make grade relevant curriculum links. In addition to this list of books, the Kit also offers a list of useful websites from which teachers can gather more useful materials for teaching students about how to recognize and deal with racism. As with the list of books, this list of website resources also comes with suggestions for grade relevant curriculum links, decreasing the amount of work that teachers have to put into lesson planning and overall preparation.

While the Anti-Racism Kit provides solutions for making curriculum content more inclusive, there are other resources that recommend a broader understanding of what curriculum is and, thus, developing broader ideas for creating inclusive schools.

The Dufferin Peel District School Board in Ontario defines curriculum in the following way:

Curriculum includes textbooks and storybooks; pictures displayed; classroom seating plans; group work; posters; music; announcements; prayers and readings; languages spoken in the school; food served in the cafeteria; visitors invited to the classrooms; reception offered to parents in the office; racial makeup of the office staff, the custodial staff, teachers and administration; displays of student work; makeup of school teams; sports played; clubs; school logo or emblem; field trips; assignments and projects; facial expressions and body language; clothes worn,...in short, the whole environment. (Peel District School Board, 2000a)

If we define **curriculum** as being **“the whole school environment”**, we need to draw from research that examines the cultural competency of schools to understand how to make appropriate changes. For example, **the Coalition for Equal Access to Education (2009)** conducted a study with **four major school districts in Alberta** that revealed that **while the school environment was generally welcoming with respect to “multicultural/multilingual signs and notices, photographs, and book selection, one in five parent respondents reported that there was nothing in their schools that tells them about different cultures”** (p. v). Further, less than half of the parents stated that “schools have involved them in developing services for ethnocultural learners (30.9 per cent)...creating a plan to communicate with ethnocultural families (32.5 per cent), and developing school based services to support ethnocultural families to deal with difficult situations” (p. v). Similarly, only 33.9 per cent of student respondents “indicated that their schools had involved them in developing a plan to promote cultures” (p. v).

To address concerns about racism in schools as a whole school and whole district approach, **Saskatoon Public Schools (2008) developed a project to create culturally responsive schools. Saskatoon Public Schools drew mostly from a similar project conducted by the Alaskan Native Knowledge Network with the support of the Alaskan Department of Education.** Generally, the guidelines and standards for culturally responsive schools include the following:

- “Included cultural leaders in school events and consulted with them on a regular basis on preventative best practices and on dealing with issues as they arose. As the writers of the research report explained, “it is these individuals who become a strong support for students, their families and staff. They have the skills to help guide teachings...and reveal the knowledge of the culture that for the most part is not in public domain” (p. 12)
- Ensure that family and community are both consulted in the planning and execution of school events
- Include cultural aspects in the physical space of the school (e.g. art)
- “Culturally responsive schools must be grounded in a deep belief that strengthening student identity through pride in culture...will improve learning and achievement” and that appropriate staffing measures would address the diversity of the community’s needs” (p. 12)

The project that the District in Saskatoon has undertaken to begin to implement these guidelines and standards has been extensive. There are several first steps that the **Saskatoon Board** committed itself to completing. It began with **research in two school sites** in Saskatoon that had committed to implementing the guidelines as well as a **quantitative study examining the success of similar initiatives in schools across Canada, consultations with experts in Alaska and consultations with a Community Advisory Committee in Saskatoon.** A resulting outcome of these consultations was the Board’s commitment to creating a strategic plan for implementing these guidelines as a whole school board initiative. This strategic plan was not only necessary for creating a roadmap with outcomes and measures aimed at the success of creating culturally responsive schools, it was also necessary to motivate teachers, administrators, students and their families to continue. Additionally, **along with teacher professional development for culturally responsive schools, the Board has committed to providing each school with its own staffed position that is actively working on building**

a culturally responsive environment and that can mediate conflict and facilitate ongoing workshops and professional development. Lastly, the Saskatoon Public Board (2008) has moved forward with this initiative through its understanding that “cultural responsiveness cannot happen in isolation” (p. 15) For this model of culturally responsive schools to be a success, all levels of school and Board staff, students, and community members (including parents and the wider community) must be included in the process.

Often, creating an inclusive curriculum can seem like an impossible task to teachers of younger students because of the fear that young children are not prepared to talk about such conceptually and emotionally difficult concepts and experiences relating to racism. However, in writing about his 40 years of experience working with the Toronto District School Board Tim McCaskell (2005) explains that “while much of the work with older students could take place in more independent, ‘extracurricular’ student groups [such as the example of the student leadership program in Regina Public Schools], work with younger students... [tends]...to be more classroom-based (p. 125). **Experienced educators who are provided with the appropriate training and support from their district have been able to address issues regarding anti-racism education in classrooms with younger students** (as has been the case in Regina Public Schools). For example, McCaskell (2005) writes about a teacher who explained how she created a safe environment for students to express their pain around name-calling. “The class talked about fairy tales and why they didn’t include all cultures to be more representative....about self image and how important it is to see oneself reflected in print [and they]...discussed the validity and pride of knowing that others can read about [their]... experiences” (ibid).

CONCLUSIONS: THE BENEFITS OF ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION AS A WHOLE DISTRICT INITIATIVE

While many school districts have taken steps to remedy the problem of racism in Canadian schools, **racism continues to exist because schools continue to be inadequately prepared to challenge and resolve issues of race-based discrimination.** For example, Rivière (2008) found that **White teachers were uncomfortable talking about racism with their students and using anti-racist pedagogies.** As Rivière (2008) explains, this is largely because White teachers are often unaware of their own racism. Similarly, Ryan (2010) found that school administrators in 32 school districts across Canada were also reluctant to talk about racist incidents in their schools. Quite differently however, Ryan’s (2010) findings revealed that this reluctance was grounded in the guilt these administrators felt about admitting that racism existed in their schools, rather than an inability to recognize race-based discrimination. Additionally, Ryan (2010) found that administrators often equate racism with individual acts committed by people whom they identify as “evil” or “bad” people. Thus, there is a lack of understanding and/or a reluctance to acknowledge that, while racism can be an individual act, such individual acts exist within a context of systemic racism. Such circumstances create a culture of silence within schools. That is, **because teachers, administrative staff, and students are unable to recognize their own racism, there is no talk of its existence** which subsequently results in the **silencing of those who experience racism in the school.**

There have been initiatives across Canada, such as those outlined in previous sections, as well as multicultural education, safe schools/anti-bullying programs and character education programs that have sought to break this culture of silence. However, **research has noted that anti-racism education is quite different from multicultural education, safe schools/anti-bullying initiatives, and character education initiatives.** Specifically, this research has warned that these initiatives have serious limitations for the construction of racism free schools.

In 2003, Harteg and Graeme (2007) followed 36 pre-service teachers as they completed their last year in a special cohort developed by the University of British Columbia for teachers who had expressed an interest “in becoming more inclusive and responsive toward diverse multicultural populations” (p. 552). At the end of their training and their practicum placements, the researchers found that the participants were able to better recognize the limitations of multicultural education (p. 559). For example, Harteg and Graeme (2007) write that many of the participants stated that the idea of multicultural education “is a step in the right direction, but [that]...a teacher needs to do more” (p. 559). More specifically, one teacher explained:

I don't think the term “*multicultural education*” cuts it anymore ... multicultural education is about valuing the diversity in one's classroom - diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, beliefs, spirituality, gender, sexual orientation and identity, family make-up, family background, ability, and (dis)ability and integrating the whole student into the classroom. It is about valuing children as people who enter the school system and the classroom with a rich knowledge base and a different, but equally valid lived experience. ... I don't have an alternative term, ...[but] ‘multicultural education’ ... is not the appropriation of art and culture, nor is it about foods and festivals and superficial acknowledgements of the various cultures in our classrooms.” (ibid)

Importantly, the excerpt above highlights the dangers of doing anti-racism education within a lens of multicultural education, which often stops at celebrating surface level culture - foods, dress, holidays - and does not challenge students to move beyond celebrating culture to understanding the complexities of the many cultures that make up their schools and to understanding how culture influences identity. Further, the excerpt above, and Harteg and Graeme (2007) point to the possibilities that training in cultural competency and anti-racism education can provide teachers for coming to understand diversity as a complex term and a lived experience and, in turn, “for integrating the whole school into the classroom”.

The training develops understanding of racism as a systemic issue and anti-racism as work that must be undertaken by the entire district.

As many school districts that have put resources into anti-racism education have noted, making equity a whole district initiative needs to be clearly grounded in a definition of equity that draws from research on best practices. That said, Donn's (2011) study of the implementation of the Toronto District School Board's equity policy within the Ontario mandated “**Safe Schools Act**” revealed that **when equity in education is understood within the context of safety, the emphasis is often on surveillance rather than on inclusiveness**. For example, one of the many students he interviewed in 10 Toronto high schools stated the following:

At this school, safety is framed as an issue of control, not equity. Security guards, surveillance cameras, always talking about crime and the dress code. The dress code forbids hats so that our faces are not obscured for the security cameras. Baggy pants and anything to do with hip hop culture is out. There's a toxic environment at this school. It's not safe for students because we don't see safety in the same way the school does. (p. 7)

The excerpt above highlights two key points that must be taken into account in anti-racism education:

- students, and in fact the entire school community, needs to be consulted and brought into the process of creating equitable schools
- antiracism education can make for safe schools, if the concept of safety is grounded in a critical understanding of inclusion and equity.

That said, **during a time when much of the work of creating safe schools is being centred on anti-bullying initiatives, we need to understand the varying forms of bullying**. More specifically, **we need to be able to recognize when bullying is race-based** (and discriminatory in any other way) because if racism continues to be an “undiscussable issue”, anti-bullying initiatives will not be effective (Twemlow

& Sacco, 2008). Without research examining the demographic make-up of our schools' student, teacher, administration, and parent community and into the challenges that schools are facing around racism as well as how they are dealing with them, anti-bullying and safe schools initiatives will not suffice to make schools truly safe for everyone.

Character education is also an increasingly popular method used to teach students across Canada about tolerance and acceptance. Specifically, Alberta Education (2005) has stated that character education is necessary for teaching students "to respect the cultural diversity and common values of Canada" (p. 1). Importantly, it is the value-laden framework in which character education is rooted that is of concern to many researchers. For example, Carr (2006) writes that **"the values-focus of character education leads to questions about whose values"**. Given research that has illustrated the ways in which curriculum across Canada is exclusive and Eurocentric (e.g. Hare & Pidgeon, 2011; Silver & Mallett 2005), **there is reason to be concerned that character education across the country will be grounded in Eurocentric values that exclude non-white students, teachers, staff and parents.** Similar to Carr (2006), Lang (2004) also calls on educators to ask "whose values are we teaching?" through character education programs. However, Lang (2004) explicitly names this questioning a political issue in so far as value-laden education initiatives such as character education are also moral-laden.

As long as...racism and social inequality affects people's lives, the question of "whose values?" takes on the utmost importance. Stopping this inquiry inevitably rejects the complexity of moral life and denies the political nature of character education. Character education...must be examined within a larger political framework. Teachers must be aware of the ideological orientations of any moral education efforts in schools and recognize the nature of politicization they might reinforce through character education programs. (p. 3).

That said, **anti-racism education is also political**

because it affects everyone in our society, White and non-white. The students who experience racism are often faced with insurmountable barriers to academic success, the teachers who experience racism are not afforded the same possibilities as their White counterparts, and the entire district community suffers not only because there is a lack of knowledge about the diversity of cultures that constitute the society in which we live, but also because when the histories and experiences of non-white students and teachers are not included, the possibility of breaking down racial barriers becomes "that much harder, if not impossible" (McCaskell, 2005, p. 25).

As Meyers (2006) explains: **"Unless we can articulate mistakes and their repercussions, we can never redirect practice or redress injustices in any meaningful way. Such is the case in Canada regarding a lack of follow-through from equity policies to practice"** (p. 34). Racism is as complex and multifaceted an issue as the societies and institutions within which they occur. Thus, **the creation of racism free schools requires complex and multifaceted solutions that, while seemingly difficult and arduous, are "not as difficult as [they] seem. It is about sharing worldviews and seeing yourself in the circle... I have been in your world, come into my world"** (Elder, Saskatoon Public Schools, 2008, p. 15).

Section 5: Key Terms

KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS IN ANTI-RACISM EDUCATION

The following are a list of definitions and concepts in which anti-racism education is grounded. This section draws from academic literature, publications by community experts, government resources and many of the documents listed in Table 4.

Anti-racism: A process that recognizes the existence of various forms of racism in our society and aims to identify as well as challenge racism for the betterment of all in society (Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Culture: The ideas, beliefs, values and norms that groups or individuals use to identify themselves and distinguish themselves from others. Culture also includes identity markers such as shared historical experiences, shared place of birth and/or residency, religious affiliations, and shared language (Abboud, et. al., 2002; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Curriculum: "Includes textbooks and storybooks; pictures displayed; classroom seating plans; group work; posters; music; announcements; prayers and readings; languages spoken in the school; food served in the cafeteria; visitors invited to the classrooms; reception offered to parents in the office; racial makeup of the office staff, the custodial staff, teachers and administration, displays of student work; makeup of school teams; sports played; clubs; school logo or emblem; field trips; assignments and projects; facial expressions and body language; clothes worn,...in short, the whole environment" (Peel District School Board, 2000).

Discrimination: Unfavourable treatment of groups or individuals because of their personal characteristics (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, citizenship, race, etc.) (Abboud, et. al., 2002; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Equity versus Equality: There is an important distinction between these two terms. Equality refers to the idea that everyone should be treated

the same. In contrast, equity recognizes the way in which people are treated differently in our society due to factors such as race, religion and gender (among others), and takes these differences into consideration (Peel District School Board, 2000; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Ethnicity/Ethnic Group: People can belong to more than one ethnicity. Generally, ethnic group refers to a group of people having a common heritage, ancestry, culture, language or religion (Peel District School Board, 2010; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Minority Group/Visible Minority Group: This is a term widely used to describe groups or individuals who are not White. Thus, it is a term that refers to race rather than other physical characteristics of a person that may identify them as "other" to mainstream society (e.g. physical disability) (Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Multiculturalism: Since 1971 this term has been federally endorsed and institutionalized as promoting and implementing equality within different sectors of our society. Supporters argue that multiculturalism assists the integration of immigrants and visible minorities and critics maintain that it overly emphasizes difference and promotes ghettoization (Kimlycka, 2010; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Power: "That which allows one group to name and classify subordinate groups and to subject them to differential treatment" (Racism Free Edmonton, 2011). Generally, in our society, those who are deemed to have power are able to identify with certain privileged identity markers such as White, male, and straight. While the combination of a number of identity markers positions people as more or less powerful depending on the social context, power defines what is normal and what is abnormal (Peel District School Board, 2000).

Prejudice: Prejudice is what happens when one acts based on stereotypes that they believe to be true. It means literally to "pre-judge" (Peel District School Board, 2000; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Privilege: “The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded members of the dominant group in a society or in a given context, usually unrecognized and taken for granted by members of the majority group” (Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Race: Importantly, race is a social construct. That is, the notion of race is something socially constructed and does not exist in any meaningful scientific way. It is a concept of dominance that distinguishes people based on physical characteristics such as skin colour. Race is often confused with ethnicity (Peel District School Board, 2000; Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, n.d.; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011)

Racism: “Racism is characterized by hatred and power: the hate people express for other racial groups and the relative power they possess to turn that hatred into palpable discrimination or material advantage” (Jackson, 2008, p. 4).

Systemic Racism (or, Institutional Racism): Systemic racism is entrenched within the whole of the system (e.g. educational system, legal system) and thus includes policies, practices, and indirect and direct racism. Systemic racism limits access to services and accesses to opportunities on the basis of race (Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, n.d.; Peel District School Board, 2000; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Stereotypes: A set of generalized, unfounded images that unfavourably characterise a group or individual based on identity markers such as race, gender, religious affiliation, political affiliation, sexual orientation, etc. (among others) (Abboud, et. al., 2002; Peel District School Board, 2000; Racism Free Edmonton, 2011).

Section 6: Research Methodology

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is grounded in qualitative research methodology consisting of open-ended interviews and document analysis. Given that the purpose of this research is to examine best practices in anti-racism education in Canada, notably anti-racism education initiatives in school districts in major cities across Canada, qualitative methodologies are appropriate because they provide us with detailed and descriptive information.

PARTICIPANTS

In 2012 we conducted phone interviews with 8 participants. These participants were educational experts in the field of anti-racism education in Canada, many of whom are currently working in school districts in their role as leads in anti-racism education (e.g. Equity Officers, Diversity Managers). We also consulted with the Advanced Anti-racism in Edmonton Schools Advisory Committee which consisted of 10 members with expertise in the matter (e.g. academics, practitioners, community members). The Advisory Committee met five times in 2012.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The interviews were guided by open-ended questions which sought to collect information on participants' experiences as leaders of anti-racism education initiatives in their respective districts (e.g. successes and challenges), the content of anti-racism education initiatives as well as their legal grounding, the history of anti-racism education in the respective district, and resources from which Edmonton districts can draw to build on their existing policies and practices.

The documents collected are primarily those created and published by school districts in major cities across Canada. This includes curriculum resources, teacher training materials, and resource/informational documents. The academic literature from which this study draws is not considered data (i.e. documents on which analysis was conducted).

The interview data and notes from the meetings with the Advisory Committee, as well as the documents gathered, were analysed using a theme analysis. Themes were not predetermined but rather identified throughout the analysis process using such thematic analysis tools as word and phrase repetition.

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