

Inclusive Education

THE CALL TO VALUE BLACK STUDENTS' LIVES, SO THEY CAN FULFILL THEIR PROMISE AND POTENTIAL

The disturbing images on television and social media chronicling the brutal death of Mr. George Floyd expose the ongoing anti-Black racism that exists within society and its systems of care. Juxtaposed to this sanctioned violence is the collective response of protestors around the globe and thousands within Nova Scotia who march, stand, and kneel in solidarity to demand justice, respect, and the valuing of Black lives.



As individuals in communities utilize their power to draw attention to the injustices and crimes against Black lives, Nova Scotia's Inclusive Education Policy compels us to utilize our privilege to provoke meaningful change. Four hundred years of advocacy and restraint by African Nova Scotian/Black citizens and their allies is more than enough to compel our will to act in accordance with what we know we are capable of doing.

Racism and racist practices in schools negatively impact the achievement and well-being of Black students and create differential achievement outcomes and opportunities for success.

All staff are called by the Inclusive Education Policy to use their power and privilege to support Black students in feeling safe, accepted, and valued so they can best learn and succeed during their time in school. When we actually address inequity, we are ALL compelled to change the system. This is what will disrupt existing power structures and move our system forward towards its commitment and support of students in being "known as they are known":

- Acknowledge that anti-Black racism exists and that it is manifested through cultures of power, privilege, and silence. Become educated in anti-Black racism not only globally or within the United States, but here in Canada as well.
- Recognize that anti-Black racism can be subtle and exist in covert acts that are difficult to detect. These acts are also referred to as micro-aggressions and can be unintentional and intentional interactions and behaviours. Micro-aggressions are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership (e.g., race, gender, culture, religion, social class, sexual orientation, etc.). These daily, common manifestations of aggression leave many people feeling vulnerable, targeted, angry, and afraid."¹ Racism and discrimination based on body type is also prevalent.
- Monitor and support the well-being of Black students in your care.

1 Gina C. Torino, David P. Rivera, Christina M. Capodilupo, Kevin L. Nadal, and Derald Wing Sue. 2019. *Microaggression Theory: Influence and Implications*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Familiarize yourself with information on African Nova Scotian history available at the following sites:

African Nova Scotian Affairs: <https://ansa.novascotia.ca/>

Africentric Heritage Park:

www.newglasgow.ca/index.php/plan-your-visit/heritage/heritage-sites/38-visitors/heritage-sites/199-africentric-heritage-park

Africville Museum: <https://africvillemuseum.org/>

Afrikan Canadian Heritage and Friendship Centre:

https://ansd.ca/custom/domain_1/extra_files/attach_217.pdf?1592150856

Black Cultural Centre: <http://web1.bccnsweb.com/>

Black Educators Association: www.theblackeducators.ca/

Black Loyalist Heritage Centre: <https://blackloyalist.novascotia.ca>

CACE (Agencies, Boards, and Commissions):

www.ednet.ns.ca/inside-department/agencies-boards-and-commissions

Delmore “Buddy” Daye Learning Institute: <https://dbdli.ca>

Glace Bay Universal Negro Improvement Association Cultural Museum:

www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=9179

Imhotep’s Legacy Academy: www.dal.ca/faculty/science/imhotep.html

- Tell students the truth about the richness of their heritage. Speak to the wisdom of their ancestors and elders’ creativity, intelligence, and leadership that exists within their communities.
- Recognize that spirituality is integral to the wellness, resiliency, and experience of many Black learners. Use this knowledge to affirm students’ identities and build linkages to the institutions and organizations that nurture their sense of purpose and well-being.
- Recognize and address your own privilege and White privilege in particular. Read “What is White Privilege, Really?”² Recognize that White privilege exists as, “*the power of normal*,” “*the power of the benefit of the doubt*,” and “*the power of accumulated power*.”

2 Cory Collins. 2018. “What is White Privilege, Really?” *Teaching Tolerance*. Retrieved from www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really.

- When acts of anti-Black racism are brought to your attention using your privilege means you³
 - do not take it personally or use discomfort as an excuse to disengage
 - learn when to listen and know when to speak up
 - educate yourself
 - educate fellow White people
 - risk your unearned benefits to benefit others
- Read *White Fragility: Why Is It So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*.⁴
- Stop reframing solutions to fit your paradigm. When Black professional⁵ staff identify solutions to address racism and inequities, receive them and work to implement recommendations because they are not only provided with the same insight and professional expertise as non-Black staff, they are more often grounded in research and communal knowledge.
- The following questions were adapted from “What is Privilege? 35 questions.”⁶ Ask yourself:
 - Can you go anywhere in the country, and easily find the kinds of hair products you need and/or cosmetics that match your skin color?
 - Have you ever been the only person of your race/skin colour in a classroom or workplace setting?
 - Have you ever felt like there was *not* adequate or accurate representation of your racial group on television and in movies?
 - Did you study the history of your cultural ancestors in elementary school?
 - Would you think twice about calling the police when trouble occurs?
 - Have you ever felt the need to change your speech or mannerisms to gain credibility at your workplace?
 - Have you ever felt uncomfortable about a joke or a statement you overheard related to your race but felt unsafe to confront the situation?
- Seek to understand and eliminate the existence of disparities in your school or system. Disproportionalities around achievement, discipline, program planning, and course selection are created by system inequities and are not inherent to Black students. Put a SMART plan in place to eliminate these opportunity gaps—communicate your expectations and build a supportive system of accountability. Talk to administrators who are pioneering the way forward and have evidence that speaks to the increased achievement of Black learners.



3 Ibid.

4 Robin DiAngelo. 2018. *White Fragility: Why Is It So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. Canada: Beacon Press.

5 Professional—in this context we refer to African Nova Scotian/Black staff who are employed within the RCEs/CSAP and/or department.

6 Southwest Local Health Integration Network. “What is Privilege? 35 Questions.” Retrieved from www.google.com/search?q=What+is+white+privilege+35+questions&rlz=1C1CHBF_enCA871CA871&oq=What+is+white+privilege+35+questions&aqs=chrome..69i57j33.8135j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

- Consult with Black staff to understand and address inequities concerning how they are included/excluded from decision making and equitable access to resources and supports.
- Care for those students who have been victimized by naming racist incidents as racism when they are reported to you by appropriately consequencing offending students, and by supporting and restoring the individuals who have been victimized.
- Provide a safe space for youth to gather and speak. Support them in voicing their concerns and expressing themselves freely.
- Provide African Nova Scotian/Black students with access to African Nova Scotian school counsellors and school counsellors that operate from, and are informed by, an anti-racist scope of practice.
- Value and support African Nova Scotian educational endeavors, professional learning, and Africentric education as integral to addressing racism in all of its forms.
- If you are a system leader and/or administrator, intentionally seek out and develop hiring practices that enable qualified Black citizens to successfully gain and retain employment across all staffing levels within your school and system. Ask Black teachers, administrators, and staff how such practices as equity and preferential hires can be changed to make a difference. Listen to the answers with the intention of using your power, with meaningful actions, to make the necessary changes to align the commitment to recruit and retain Black staff members.
- Have meaningful conversations about race and privilege with your children, families, and friends.
- Confront oppression when it is pointed out to you—don't be a bystander.
- Be vulnerable—don't feel like you have to have all the answers.
- Access community members and/or student support workers to help you understand how to inspire and engage Black students.
- Seek and share the truth about systemic racism, trauma, and how it impacts our Black students and their communities.
- Refuse to let negative activity label African Nova Scotian communities.
- Collect, analyze, and utilize data in support of youth and community responsive change.
- Utilize inclusive and participatory approaches that are grounded in culturally responsive and trauma-informed practice.
- Realize that practicing “culturally responsive pedagogy” (CRP) is not a guarantee one is practicing “anti-racism education.” Though there are many benefits of CRP, anti-racism education should be more focused and deliberate. We should be practicing both, rather than having an expectation that CRP will resolve systemic issues that are more appropriately addressed through anti-racism education.
- Ensure efforts are grounded in empathy and the desire to create equity for others—not pity. Perceiving others as “less fortunate” (and providing support under such perceptions) reinforces existing, sometimes unspoken, power structures. It does not address the root causes of inequity.


EFFECTING SYSTEM CHANGE

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) has consulted with African Nova Scotian staff, community stakeholders, and parents and families in the creation of the Inclusive Education Policy.

There is more work that must be done to effect system change and eliminate the anti-Black racism and marginalization of Black students. We are now

- requiring all schools to examine disaggregated student data to identify and address disproportional impacts with respect to discipline and achievement
- developing and building on the resources that reflect the experiences and cultures of African Nova Scotians and making their usage a requirement within public schools
- changing how job descriptions look by issuing wording for postings within the regional centres for education and CSAP that intentionally invites and welcomes African Nova Scotian/Black candidates to apply for positions; recommendations have also been provided for connecting with community organizations around distributing postings and how the employment issues impact community
- developing a provincial network of support for Black staff beginning with an inaugural meeting during the Summer Learning Academy 2020
- developing a team of professionals to address the interests and unique needs of Black learners
- hosting a Summer Learning Academy for teachers of African Canadian Studies 11 and African Heritage Literature 12
- offering a Summer Learning Academy on the new African Nova Scotian Education Framework
- revising the African Canadian Studies 11 and African Heritage Literature course
- developing a mandatory anti-racism and discrimination leadership module to support aspiring and current school administrators and leaders
- highlighting and underscoring the significance of Africentric education and practice
- developing a return to school wellness plan that is responsive to, and supportive of, the interests and needs of African Nova Scotian/Black students
- exploring options around a technology plan to address the disparities in access to technology for Black students
- expecting that educational staff utilize culturally responsive pedagogy to address the learning interests and needs of Black students will move instruction and planning from a deficit approach that questions the inherent potential of Black students towards professional practices that affirm their identities as scholars and learners
- increasing resources for restorative justice
- incorporating the learnings from the Restorative Inquiry on the Home for Coloured Children
- continuing to develop a branch within EECD specific to the needs of African Nova Scotian students



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- hiring more staff, such as student support workers and African Nova Scotian Facilitators
 - moving to implement an Inclusive Education Policy
 - focusing on culturally responsive practices
 - selecting learning resources that inspire and enhance learning
 - contributing to “Count Us In: Nova Scotia’s Action Plan in Response to the International Decade for People of African Descent”
 - promoting self-identification in regional centres for education and CSAP
 - providing grants to schools to develop schools as culturally safe spaces
 - developing and distributing a STEM posters series featuring African Nova Scotian youth
 - establishing an e-learning parent resource site for African Nova Scotian/Black parents and parents of Black children
 - partnering with African Nova Scotian educational organizations on the development of Summer Fun Flyer activities for students
 - identifying and addressing systemic structures that limit the active and meaningful involvement of African Nova Scotian staff within systems of education

The Inclusive Education Policy calls on everyone in Nova Scotia schools to use their power and privilege to positively, humbly, and openly engage with community to identify and address systemic barriers and to provide meaningful supports that will allow Black students to reach their full potential in a safe, welcoming and caring environment.

All students matter—therefore, Black students’ lives matter in education.