

# REALITY

# CHECK:

A Review of key program areas in the BLAC Report for their effectiveness in enhancing the educational opportunities and achievement of African Nova Scotian learners.

Enidlee Consultants Inc.



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TO: All those concerned and invested in the education of African Nova Scotian students

May we first express our thanks to the Department of Education and the Council on African Canadian Education for entrusting us with this inspiring and challenging work! Everywhere we traveled across the length and breadth of this spectacular province we were heartened by the response we received from the intact African Nova Scotian communities we encountered. These communities are deeply rooted yet alive to ideas from afar. They have used this study to refocus on Black learners.

It has now been 15 years since the publication of the BLAC Report in 1994, when the government of Nova Scotia and all political parties signed on to 46 recommendations aimed at transforming generations of injustice into seasons of hope for African Nova Scotian learners.

Some of the outcomes of the programs and initiatives put in place have been embraced and celebrated. Students have won scholarships, teachers have expanded their knowledge base, communities have gained confidence in advocating for their rights and innovative Africentric teaching tools have enriched curricula across the province.

Yet today African Canadian communities still seek precise numerical information on their young learners and reliable data on their progress as a group. All those with the interests of these young learners at heart want to know what compulsory education has done for them. Are the programs of equity and redress put in place for African Nova Scotian learners reaching them, or are they mostly still left standing outside, staring through a window at others enjoying their feast?

This study has demonstrated that transformation on a large scale does not necessarily translate into change on a daily level or touch the lives of those it is intended to serve. Clearly the true value of this report will be the successes and healthy experiences of African Nova Scotian learners in the province's schools.

Enid Lee  
Clem Marshall

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## ABBREVIATIONS & TERMS

ACSD	African Canadian Services Division
ALI	Africentric Learning Institute
ANS	African Nova Scotian
ANSSS	African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship
AUBA	African United Baptist Association
BEA	Black Educators Association
BLAC	Black Learners Advisory Committee
C ACE	Council on African Canadian Education
CAEP	Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program
CLI	Community Learning Initiatives
DOE	Department of Education
ENS	European Nova Scotian
FLI	Family Learning Initiative
HRM	Halifax Regional Municipality
IB	International Baccalaureate
IPP	Individual Program Plan
NSCC	Nova Scotia Community College
RCH	Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights
SSW	Student Support Workers

**Black** In this report, 'Black', 'African Canadian' and 'African Nova Scotian' are used interchangeably.

**Racism:** "The use of institutional power to deny or grant people and groups of people rights, respect representation and resources based on skin color." *Lee 2008*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Unique structures, systems and programs are in place to address racial inequality and empower African Nova Scotian learners. Some of these have helped increase the numbers going on to post-secondary education over the past four years. However, far too often the absence of systematic monitoring and data that reflect the experience of learners from Nova Scotia's Black communities put these programs designed for them out of their reach. It's time for community organizations, parents and educators to do a reality check into what is working and what is not for African Nova Scotian students.

These are some of the findings of a review of key areas of the BLAC (Black Learners Advisory Committee) Report commissioned by The Department of Education of the Province of Nova Scotia, in consultation with the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), in November 2008. Twelve programs and initiatives were selected and reviewed for their effectiveness in enhancing educational opportunities and achievement for the estimated 4,000 African Nova Scotian students in the province.

Conducted over a period of 75 days between October 28, 2008 and November 2009, the review was based on documentary analysis, classroom observations, surveys and interviews at sites in seven regions of the province. The voices of parents, community members, students, teachers, administrators, student support workers, superintendents, consultants and coordinators named a number of realities as they participated in interviews and focus groups.

For example, it was found that the number of African Nova Scotian students attending higher education institutions increased steadily over the past four years—246 in 2004, 378 in 2008. The African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship (ANSSS) Program administered by the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) provided scholarships for these students. In addition, all 20 individuals in a cohort of students in an Africentric Learning Institute project, Masters of Education program graduated in October 2008. The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) organized the cohort.

A curriculum initiative that introduced English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 has had a positive impact on many of the African Nova Scotian students who were able to access them. The number of schools offering this curriculum increases every year. In the current school year 2009-2010, African Canadian Studies 11 is being taught in 96 classes in 44 schools. The ACSD develops the curriculum and provides professional development for the educators who teach these courses.

The Student Support Workers Program (SSW) has also been highly effective in enhancing opportunity and achievement for African Nova Scotian learners. Through this program, student support workers have proved especially effective where the leadership of a school has integrated their services into its structure and systems in ways that utilize the workers' expertise. In several cases, however, it was noted that student support workers were made responsible for too large a caseload of students to provide the follow-up they considered necessary.

What may arguably be the most significant finding of this review is the glaring absence of quantitative data about the performance of African Nova Scotian students in several school boards. This lack of data makes it difficult to determine conclusively the number of African Nova Scotian learners who are impacted by the initiatives implemented to serve them. In addition, it contributes to a circular dialogue about the effectiveness of programs in relation to student achievement.

The question of African Nova Scotian students with an Individual Program Plan (IPP) is related to the issue of statistics. According to the testimonies of parents, students, and other individuals within the education system, an alarming number of learners from African Nova Scotian communities have an Individual Program Plan.

“An IPP is a statement of annual individualized outcome and specific individualized outcomes based on the student's strengths and needs and that is developed and implemented for every student for whom Nova Scotia's public programs curriculum outcomes are not applicable and/ or attainable.”

*The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents, p.5.*

Such plans however, are regarded by many of those interviewed as barriers to academically rigorous programs as well as to accessing the scholarships specifically designated for African Nova Scotian learners by the African Canadian Services Division. These views, however, can be and are challenged, in the absence of official statistics on the placement of students by racial background.

Parents and community members spoke with urgency of the need for frequent two-way communication with the community organizations and agencies that advocate politically on their behalf. The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) was called upon to communicate more frequently and effectively on its activities and to involve the community as it addresses the situation of African Nova Scotian learners P-12. On the other hand, CACE recognized the need for improved communication and shared plans already in place to rectify the situation. Most of the plans have yet to be implemented.

From the stories parents told individually or in groups, as well as careful study of the reports of the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP), the reviewers confirmed that students are provided valuable homework support as well as opportunities to participate in Spelling Bees and cultural programs connected with African History Month. On the whole, this review has concluded that the program requires a sharper focus and more conscious follow-up on its impact in enhancing literacy and numeracy—two of the measures on which achievement is determined. In further reviewing the services provided by the Black Educators Association (BEA), two important areas of advocacy were frequently identified—the organization of Positive Parenting Workshops and attendance at IPP meetings with African Nova Scotian parents. The parents we interviewed repeatedly told us that despite the wide geographic range covered by the BEA regional educators, they provided essential services for the community. There was consensus around these observations across the province. In recognition of the wide range of demands placed upon regional educators BEA has developed a new job description for the position with built-in performance review. BEA reports that it regards this action as an initial step in realigning the Regional Educators Program to fulfill its mandate across the province.

When the BLAC Report was presented in 1994, it was acknowledged by the government that institutional racism was a key factor in limiting opportunity and achievement for African Nova Scotian learners. Today, the concept of institutional racism appears to have slipped out of focus.

In order to uproot the causes of educational failure, there must be an institutional and community commitment to naming racism and wrestling it to the ground in all those educational settings in which it is found. This review recorded numerous accounts of racism that had been experienced in school and, on the testimony of many students and parents involved, not satisfactorily addressed.

In this review, it was found that Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) coordinators have made successful interventions around academic support and behavioural issues on behalf of African Nova Scotian students. It also emerged that the mandate of RCH coordinators is too broad and that the resources available to them are too limited for the challenges they face.

Often it appeared that African Nova Scotian learners were seen as the exclusive responsibility of educators from their community.

A key assumption of this review is that all teachers and administrators in every school, as well as all the officials in every division of the Department of Education, are as responsible for the education of African Nova Scotian students as they are for the education of students of every background.

With an estimated 4,000 African Nova Scotian students across the province, the number is small enough to put our arms around and close enough to take to heart.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

- A. Effective programs and services—such as the African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship Program, the Student Support Worker Program, and the English 12: African Heritage course—which have been put in place by the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) and School Boards for African Nova Scotian students, are making a positive difference to the academic achievements of ANS students**
- B. Some institutional barriers and realities—such as the number of African Nova Scotian students who have an Individual Program Plan (IPP), the caseload of the Student Support Worker, or unaddressed racism—may prevent access and limit achievement for ANS students.**
- C. Programs and Services such as English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11, and the work of the RCH Coordinators, benefit students of all backgrounds by improving the quality of education as a whole.**
- D. The limited official quantitative data available on African Nova Scotian students in terms of their opportunity to learn and their achievement make for inconclusive results.**
- E. There is a pervasive perception and a vigorous claim in African Nova Scotian communities that there is an over-representation of African Nova Scotian students who have an Individual Program Plan (IPP), which is seen by some to restrict access to educational opportunity. The Education System as a whole does not have a response to this claim.**
- F. Major African Nova Scotian community advisory body, Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) makes gains in post-secondary education and dissemination of Africentric education, but is called upon by the community to communicate effectively and frequently with the African Canadian communities it represents.**
- G. Two community-based programs—the Regional Educators Program and the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program—of the Black Educators Association meet important social and cultural needs; however, to enhance the educational achievement of African Nova Scotian students, a need for continued realignment, refocusing and resources is clear.**

Based on our findings and assumptions, we made recommendations in three areas:

- Measurement and Monitoring
- Systemic Review, Realignment and Resourcing
- Communication and Collaboration

## **SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL BOARDS**

It is recommended that:

- (1) **The Department of Education facilitate School Boards in collecting quantitative data on the academic performance of, and the opportunities to learn that are provided to, African Nova Scotian students. –6 months**
- (2) **The School Boards and the Department of Education review the Individual Program Plan of every African Nova Scotian student and make changes in placement where deemed necessary. – 1 year**
- (3) **The Department of Education increase the staff of the African Canadian Services Division, particularly in the area of curriculum, and fill the vacancies immediately to enable the Division to fulfill its mandate. – 1 year**
- (4) **The School Boards increase the number of African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers where appropriate, in consultation with the RCH Coordinator, and that Student Support Workers be integrated into the life of schools to enable them to directly impact the educational experiences of the African Nova Scotian learner. – 1 year**
- (5) **The School Boards elevate the position of Coordinator of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) or its equivalent to enable Coordinators to influence more directly the implementation of RCH policy and procedures at school sites. – 1 year**
- (6) **The Department of Education incorporate the implementation of the Racial Equity Policy and Diversity Management into the Performance Management Review of all Division and Branch Directors. –1 year**

### **AFRICAN CANADIAN SERVICES DIVISION (ACSD)**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The African Canadian Services Division offer workshops in culturally responsive assessments. – *6 months*
- (2) The African Canadian Services Division review its communication strategies and rebrand itself so that the Division can receive appropriate credit for its achievements and ongoing work. – *1 year.*
- (3) The African Canadian Services Division gather and disseminate statistics on completion of college and university education by African Nova Scotian students. – *1 year*
- (4) The African Canadian Services Division annually track the number of African Nova Scotian students participating in English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses each year, and coordinate those figures with data from research into the number of ANS students who have an IPP. – *1 year*
- (5) The African Canadian Services Division, in collaboration with other curriculum specialists, continue the preparation and delivery of African centred resources for students in the Elementary and Junior Grades. – *6 months*
- (6) The African Canadian Services Division provide professional development for teachers of English 12 and African Canadian Studies 11, with a focus on the development of the capacity of teachers to address racism and feelings of isolation of lone African Nova Scotian students in their classes. – *6 months*
- (7) The African Canadian Services Division be designated a partner within the tripartite monitoring structure designed to address the recommendations of this report.  
– *3 months*

### **COUNCIL ON AFRICAN CANADIAN EDUCATION (CACE)**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Council on African Canadian Education ((CACE) organize listening sessions that will give every African Nova Scotian community an opportunity to raise questions and provide feedback on CACE's operations; and that CACE return to the same communities within three months to report on action taken based on the listening sessions.  
– *3 months*
- (2) The Council on African Canadian Education accelerate efforts to have an Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) Board appointed so that CACE might resume its advisory function.  
– *3 months*

- (3) The Council on African Canadian Education and senior education administrators reinstitute or develop a process for quarterly communication around matters concerning the education of African Nova Scotian students. – *3 months*
- (4) The Council on African Canadian Education, the Black Educators Association and the African Canadian Services Division meet with community groups to clarify their specific responsibilities around common areas of service. – *3 months*
- (5) The Council on African Canadian Education arrange for a quarterly reporting structure to the ANS community to enhance transparency around the impact of its work on the lives of African Canadian learners and invite feedback from the field. – *3 months*
- (6) The Council on African Canadian Education give its support to the African Nova Scotian School Board Caucus by convening a joint meeting. – *3 months*
- (7) The Council on African Canadian Education, in its advisory capacity to the Minister of Education, initiate discussions to convene meetings of the provincial ministries which have impact on the education of African Nova Scotians. – *6 months*
- (8) The Board of the Council on African Canadian Education assume responsibility for the completion of the foregoing Recommendations (1) to (7), and provide an update to the African Nova Scotian community on the results of these activities –*6 months*
- (9) The Council on African Canadian Education be designated a partner within the tripartite monitoring structure designed to address the recommendations of this report.  
– *3 months*

#### **AFRICENTRIC LEARNING INSTITUTE (ALI)**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI), the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), the Black Educators Association (BEA), and the African Canadian Services Division (ASCD) begin the process of forming an ALI board with extensive community participation.  
– *3 months*
- (2) The Africentric Learning Institute, as part of the research components of its mandate, collaborate with School Boards, families and the Black Educators Association (BEA) to gather data on the educational status of African Nova Scotian students in terms of opportunity, performance and placement, such as Individual Program Plans (IPPs).  
– *6 months*
- (3) The Africentric Learning Institute, as part of the community development components of its mandate, develop, deliver and evaluate African-centred Leadership Workshops for African Nova Scotian youth to prepare them for leadership roles in the community.  
– *6 months*



**BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Black Educators Association re-establish greater communication with its base across the province through listening sessions, and report back to the groups with which it met in three months on the results of its earlier meeting. – *3 months*
- (2) The Black Educators Association be designated a partner within the tripartite monitoring structure designed to address the recommendations of this report. – *3 months*
- (3) The Black Educators Association fully implement the findings of the 2006 Review of the Regional Educators Program. – *6 months*
- (4) The Black Educators Association review and restructure the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP), where necessary. – *6 months*
- (5) The Black Educators Association increase the professional development opportunities for tutors and site co-coordinators to enable them to program for multi-age groups and to document their students' growth and learning. – *6 months*

# **BACKGROUND AND BEGINNING**

# BACKGROUND AND BEGINNING

## BACKGROUND

This document, **REALITY CHECK**, contains the findings from a review of programs and initiatives designed to make a positive difference in the educational opportunities and achievement of the estimated 4,000 African Nova Scotian students in the province.

In October 2008, Enidlee Consultants was contracted by the Nova Scotian Department of Education, in consultation with the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), to conduct a review “to assess those major program areas [of the BLAC Report] to determine their level of effectiveness in improving the educational opportunities and achievement of African Nova Scotian learners.” The rationale provided for the review was that “self-reflection and program review are critical for ongoing program improvement.” Over the course of the year, a two-person research team spent approximately 75 days conducting the review, developing recommendations, and reporting back to parent and community groups as well as to principals and several other constituencies who had contributed to the review.

The 12 programs selected for review were originally implemented as a result of recommendations made in the *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*. That report, tabled in the Provincial Parliament in Nova Scotia in 1994, reflected the work of the Black Learners Advisory Committee on Education (BLAC). After a racial altercation in one of the province’s high schools in 1989, the Department of Education commissioned BLAC in response to demands by the Black community. BLAC engaged in a comprehensive four-year study of institutional racism and inequity in Nova Scotia’s education system as experienced by African Nova Scotians. The Committee then submitted an extensive report with 46 recommendations directed to redressing inequity and empowering Black learners to the Minister of Education.

This review, **REALITY CHECK**, is directly linked to the historic document, *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*.

The programs identified for the review are administered by four entities:

- A. English-Speaking School Boards in the Province of Nova Scotia.
- B. The African Canadian Services Division (ACSD)—a division in the Public School Branch of the Department of Education.
- C. The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)—an advisory body to the Minister of Education on the education of African Nova Scotian students.
- D. The Black Educators Association (BEA)—a 40-year-old grassroots organization within the African Nova Scotian community.

Each program identified for review is listed below under the entity to which major responsibility is assigned.

#### **SCHOOL BOARDS**

- 1) Student Support Workers
- 2) Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinators
- 3) Five Schools Project

#### **AFRICAN CANADIAN SERVICES DIVISION (ACSD)**

- 4) English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11—Curriculum Development, Implementation and Professional Development for Teachers
- 5) Scholarship Program
- 6) Parent Outreach Program
- 7) Four Plus Program
- 8) Adult Education and Job Training Program
- 9) ACSD – Advice to Departmental Divisions

#### **COUNCIL ON AFRICAN CANADIAN EDUCATION (CACE)**

- 10) Africentric Learning Institute (ALI)

#### **BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION (BEA)**

- 11) Regional Educators Project
- 12) Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP)

#### **RANGE OF PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES**

The 12 programs and initiatives cover a wide range of human experience and learning. They include in-school curriculum and instructional projects such as English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 and an after-school curriculum project: the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP). Also addressed is The Five Schools Project, a school reform initiative undertaken by the Halifax Regional School Board to close the gap in achievement between African Nova Scotian and other students. This review examines the Student Support Worker Program, which serves African Nova Scotian students, and the effectiveness of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) coordinators, who provide services in English Speaking School Boards.

In addition, other programs reviewed included the Four Plus Program, the Adult Education Program and the Job Training Program, which targeted populations in pre-school and post-secondary institutions. Through the review of the Positive Parenting Workshop Program, this report reflects collaborative learning experiences of ANS parents and the larger community. The work of the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) and its impact on other divisions in the Department of Education offers insights into the dynamics of organizational change. An in-depth exploration of the mandates and roles of the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) and the Black Educators Association (BEA) complete the picture of possibilities for advocacy by organizations working outside of the formal education system.

## EARLIER REVIEWS

Several of the programs and initiatives reviewed in this document have been the subject of other studies. In 2001, the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), in conjunction with the Black Educators Association (BEA) and the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD), organized an education summit on the status of the BLAC Report and its recommendations. The BLAC Implementation Review Committee provided a report on the implementation status of the 46 recommendations of the BLAC Report. In 2005, the ACSD surveyed recipients of the African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship (ANSSS) Program—one of the initiatives reviewed in this document. Two school boards, the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board and the Chignecto-Central Regional Board evaluated their Student Support Workers Program. In 2006, a review of the Regional Educators Program, sponsored by the Black Educators Association, was undertaken. The African Nova Scotian Advisory Committee of the Halifax Regional School Board also examined the implementation status of the BLAC Report and shared their findings with the Halifax Regional School Board.

Other research and reports, such as the study by Robert Upshaw, *Improving the Success of African Nova Scotian Students*, and the Blye Frank study, *An External Review of Cole Harbour District High School*, make direct references to the implementation or lack thereof of recommendations from the BLAC Report. Two theses by Van Tassel (2007) and Bernard (2001) also examine the implementation of the recommendations.

**REALITY CHECK** builds on and extends the findings of existing reviews. This document offers a sample of those experiences that are either enjoyed or endured as a result of the implementation of the recommendations. Readers are invited into schools, community organizations, after-school programs and school boards, across the Province of Nova Scotia as well as the Department of Education and its divisions, to hear the voices and see the visions of those engaged in bringing the recommendations and the programs to life.

This review is one more chapter in the struggle of African Nova Scotians and, indeed, people of African ancestry to ensure quality education for their children. Telling the story of the BLAC Report usually begins with the 1989 snowball fight in a Nova Scotia high school. However, the BLAC Report itself is careful to point out in Volume 2, Section 1, *The History of Black Education in Nova Scotia: An Overview*, that earlier time periods must be re-examined if one is to gain a true perspective on the struggle against institutional racism and for racial equality in education. As early as the 1820s, “residents of Preston [were petitioning] government to establish both a school and church.” (See *Appendix A*). In 1841 Reverend Willis, acting “on behalf of the Black community in Halifax, [petitioned] the government for funds to establish a training school for Black Teachers.” (See *Appendix A*). There are also other examples that show the Black community taking the initiative and funding the schooling of their children. (See *Appendix A* for a fuller historical picture of the long and courageous struggle of African Nova Scotians.) The fatigue of constant struggle is reflected in the following two quotes of parents speaking during one of the focus groups conducted for this review.

A mother:

*We have all attended meetings over the years and now we are saying,  
“Why bother?”*

Her feelings find resonance in the second:

*We watched our family members go through it. We went through it and now  
our kids are going through the same thing.*

But parents and community members expressed much more than just fatigue. They also expressed the hope that this review would lead to action and provide a reality check on how the programs are working. One parent noted:

*We have a tendency to let things get washed under the rug. Don't let that  
happen with this report.*

As reviewers, we share this parent's goal.

## **MEASURES AND METHODOLOGY**

# MEASURES AND METHODOLOGY

*“When are we going to see the light of day and get the education we deserve?”*

Parent/Community Focus Group

The impatience expressed in this question provided the charge to engage in a comprehensive yet speedy review of the programs and initiatives that were designed to enhance the educational opportunities and outcomes of African Nova Scotian learners.

The review was conducted between October 2008 and November 2009 over a period of 75 days. Field research took place between October and April, with most of the analysis and reporting back from May and November. Site visits to communities and schools were conducted during some of Nova Scotia’s unkindest weather, resulting often in school closings and cancellations on the days when visits and community meetings had been scheduled. However, inclement weather also provided the opportunity to witness the determination of African Nova Scotians who braved bad weather to share experiences of their children’s schooling and their efforts to ensure that they receive the education they deserve.

Qualitative data were gathered for this review from a combination of school and classroom observations, interviews, focus groups, surveys and the analysis of documents. (See table below.) Data were gathered through the following methods:

- Literature search
- Documentary analysis
- Survey
- 18 Observations at schools
- 70 Individual Interviews
- 20 Focus Groups

The interview schedules are included in the appendices.

Our goal was to ensure that the findings were grounded in daily experiences, hence the emphasis on visits to school and meetings with communities. Data also record the voices and visions of parents, members of African Canadian community groups, students, executive directors and directors of branches, school board members, administrative assistants, deputy minister, teachers, multicultural consultants, principals, student support workers, superintendents, and race relations, cross cultural understanding and human rights coordinators.



Since the review was intended to be provincial in scope, the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) and the Corporate Policy Branch of the Department of Education identified schools which reflected three types of demographics:

- 1) A school with a largely African Nova Scotian student population.
- 2) A number of schools in the Halifax urban core where African Nova Scotian students comprise about 30-50% of the student body.
- 3) Schools in which there are very few African Nova Scotian students.

### **SCHOOLS VISITED**

<p><b>HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD</b>            Graham Creighton Junior High            Joseph Howe Elementary School            Cole Harbour District High School            Bell Park Academic Centre            Nelson Whynder Elementary School            Charles P. Allen High School            Oxford School            St. Patrick Alexander            Rockingstone Heights            Humber Park Elementary School            Ross Road School</p>
<hr/> <p><b>TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD</b>            Shelburne Regional High School            Digby Elementary School High School            Digby Regional High School</p>
<hr/> <p><b>ANNAPOLIS VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD</b>            Horton High School</p>
<hr/> <p><b>CAPE BRETON VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD</b>            Harbourside Elementary School</p>
<hr/> <p><b>CHIGNECTO-CENTRAL REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD</b>            Temperance Street Elementary School            Cobequid Education Centre</p>

Contacts with community members were made through ACSD and Regional Educators.

#### **COMMUNITY AND PARENT FOCUS GROUPS**

<p>HALIFAX REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD  Parent and Community Focus Group–Halifax  Parent and Community Focus Group–Halifax</p>
<p>TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD  Parent and Community Focus Group–Digby  Parent and Community Focus Group–Shelburne</p>
<p>STRAIT REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD  Parent and Community Focus Group–Upper Big Tracadie</p>
<p>CAPE BRETON VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD  Parent and Community Focus Group–Whitney Pier</p>

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

Community members represented parents, members of education committees, tutors, site coordinators of cultural and academic enrichment programs, tenants associations, African Nova Scotian organizations, students, teachers, regional educators and student support workers serving their community roles and individuals who had participated in on Positive Parenting Workshops. The focus groups were multi-generational in their composition. The presence of so many who had been through the school system at various times offered a rich store of insights on how programs and initiatives were working at different time periods. There was enough critique by attendees of those who had arranged the meetings, as well as differences of opinion between attendees, to persuade the research team that they had not been handpicked and would not simply follow a pre-arranged script.

Two community organizations took the initiative and requested that they be added to the list of focus groups because of their long history with the BLAC Report and the education of African Nova Scotians for decades.

Some of the individuals interviewed were identified by ACSD because of their responsibilities in the Department of Education or a school board and the connection between those responsibilities and the programs reviewed. The researchers selected other individuals for interviews based on their input during a focus group, interaction with them at a school site, or because a focus group member brought them to our attention.

Focus groups with African Nova Scotian students were convened with the assistance of student support workers and RCH coordinators after the request for the school visit was made by the Corporate Policy Branch.

In all schools, students were identified as African Nova Scotian either by community consensus or through self-identification. This process has confirmed the fact that identification by race is no deep mystery to those involved in education.

### **RESEARCHERS' PRESENCE**

The researchers chose this qualitative approach because of their familiarity and ease with school settings. The team brought to this work several decades of teaching, on-site professional development, coaching and community building. From experience, the researchers know that the details of policies take on a life of their own within the halls and playing fields of schools, and that witnessing their effect was a reliable way of observing the effectiveness of these programs.

In addition, most of the programs selected for review take place within the context of school. For example, student support workers provide service within the context of a school and a school board. To fully understand the impact of their work is to see it in context. The methodology chosen allows the research team to do so.

There are also many sides to the story being reviewed, and taking this qualitative approach allowed the researchers to observe, assess and triangulate what was heard and seen.

Guiding Questions (see *Appendix B*) were provided by the Department of Education in consultation with CACE. These questions guided the development of the surveys and focus areas in individual interviews.

A web-based literature search was conducted to retrieve dissertations, studies and reports on the general topic of the status of education of African Nova Scotians using six internet databases: Academic Search Premier, Eric, Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Jstor. Search terms used for all databases included: education of African Nova Scotians; parent outreach programs; cultural academic enrichment programs; regional educators; race relations, cross cultural and human rights coordinators; student support workers; Africentric Learning Centre; Five Schools Project; coupled with African Nova Scotians, African Canadian, and Black Nova Scotians. Bibliographies of retrieved references were also searched.

This review was concerned with achievement and opportunity, and below are the indicators of such achievement and opportunity. The last two items on achievement are added because of the particular demands placed on a people subjected to institutional racism in education.

### **MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT**

- Scholarship results.
- Graduation rates.
- Provincial assessments in mathematical and language literacy.
- Critical Reasoning.
- Development and maintenance of a positive African Nova Scotian identity.
- Knowledge, skill and will to use their education to work for the self-determination of communities of people of African ancestry.

### **MEASURES OF OPPORTUNITY**

- Are students taught by culturally responsive and technically skilled teachers?
- Do they engage in a curriculum in which they see themselves on a regular basis and not just on special days?
- Is the knowledge from home and community brought into their curriculum?
- Is the school environment racially inclusive and equitable?
- Is the approach to discipline fair and seen to be fair?
- Do parents and family members feel at home in the school?
- Do the teachers feel at home in the students' community?
- Do the students see teachers who look like them?

*(Henry 1998, Fine 2004, Ladson Billings 1994, Steele 1992)*

### **FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS—LOCATION AND PROCESS**

Focus group sessions lasted from one to two and a half hours and were conducted in meeting rooms at hotels and in community centres. Meetings with students were held in libraries, cafeterias or classrooms, but always on school property.

Focus group and interview sessions began with members of the group introducing themselves. One member of the research team facilitated the questions while the other captured as many verbatim statements as possible.

In the course of a gathering for Professional Development on October 10, 2008 in Dartmouth, the researchers met and interviewed African Nova Scotian (ANS) student support workers from across the province. This focus group interview lasted approximately three hours. A survey was then distributed to all participants and 28% of those present responded.

### **TREATMENT OF DATA**

After each interview, notes were compared and agreement reached on details of statements that seemed unclear. Interviews and notes from focus groups were also analyzed for themes, and were compared with observations made at the site and with the accounts of other participants involved in the same situations. No personal names have been used and individuals have been instead identified by their roles in the community, in schools, or in the Department of Education.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

### Absence of Data Identifying Race

One of the obvious limitations of this study is the fact that school districts do not officially collect or release performance data based on race. Therefore, it is not possible to say conclusively whether these programs benefit students of African Canadian ancestry.

Our observations confirm that, unofficially, identification by race does not pose a problem. Without hesitation, administrators in every school visited had a ready response when we asked for the percentage of ANS students in their school. However, attempts to acquire that same information through official channels proved futile. It was suggested that that information could not be given without the approval of families and that many African Nova Scotians might be reluctant to identify as such because of the negative experience involved in doing so.

Because of the lack of a student identification system, this review missed the opportunity of examining the experience of 100 African Nova Scotian students in a French Immersion Program. Distinguishing information between ANS students who self-identified as immigrants and other ANS students was also not available, nor was data on socio-economic background.

## REPORTING BACK TO GROUPS

**REALITY CHECK** is the compilation of a series of reports of the research team's preliminary findings which had been shared with those who had commissioned the review, with school principals and, most importantly, with community members. This approach allowed for fact-checking, and the report is an organizing tool with an interactive process. Although commissioned by the Department of Education and the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), this report is also a response to African Nova Scotian parents and communities at large.

As researchers, we went in search of structures and systems that actually work for ANS students so that they might be duplicated in other parts of the system, and we are as frank as we can be about the areas that require change. We offer case studies of both success and challenge. For the most part, the story is told by the voices of those who learn, lead, teach, build and entrust to schools the lives of their children, as well as the hope of their communities and race.

We have tried to the extent possible to let those who live this experience speak for themselves, since it is our conviction that speaking for self is one of the greatest expressions of self-determination.

## **SCHOOL BOARDS**

- **Student Support Worker Program**
- **Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Coordinators**
- **Five Schools Project**

# STUDENT SUPPORT WORKER PROGRAM

*Student support workers can put out the fires  
but they can't save the house from burning down.*

(African Nova Scotian teacher)

It was recommended in the BLAC Report “that school boards provide a support person in the school to whom Black learners can go to share their frustrations and experiences. Schools should respond to issues of loneliness, of feeling different from the majority.”

Another related recommendation is “that school boards provide Black role models by seeking out and hiring Black teachers, guidance counselors and administrators, and whenever necessary, implement an affirmative action program to achieve this objective.”

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 199, p.19*

## BACKGROUND

The Student Support Worker Program was already established in the Halifax District Board when the above recommendation was made in the BLAC Report. The Program was expanded across the province and at present there are 43 student support workers designated to provide assistance to students of African ancestry.

Because of the under-representation of Black teachers and administrators in schools in Nova Scotia, it was proposed by the researchers of the BLAC Report that the presence of at least one adult with whom Black students could identify racially and culturally would improve the quality of the learning environment in schools. Student support workers frequently work in several schools at the same time within their board and are present at each school one or two days a week. They can have a caseload of as many as ten schools. African Nova Scotian students and their parents request the services of student support workers and receive assistance in such areas as monitoring of academic progress, mentoring for social support, resolving disciplinary issues or providing information about available scholarships. Student support workers facilitate connections and work with other members of the staff to establish partnerships between home and school. They also work with teachers and administrators in developing a school environment that is conducive to learning for all.

The Student Support Worker Program is partially funded by school boards and by the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD). Student support workers are supervised by the Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinator in their respective board.

## FINDINGS

Findings on the effectiveness of the Student Support Worker Program on opportunities and outcomes for African Nova Scotian students were based on interviews, observations, analysis of two other studies of the Student Support Worker Program, as well as a survey of student support workers carried out for this review (see at end of chapter).

### A. Students receive vital academic and social support from the student support worker.

From the majority of accounts that were received in the review, this recommendation for student support workers has led to a program that is considered to have had, and continues to have, significant impact on the educational opportunities and achievement of ANS learners. Based on testimonies of students, teachers, administrators, parents and student support workers themselves, the student support worker has often been the deciding factor between a student's falling through academic cracks and/or passing through the door to a successful academic future. There were several accounts of course and grade level completion because of the intervention of the student support worker. Administrators, students and parents alike reported that the workers' tutoring and social support was vital to the success of ANS students in a number of situations.

#### STUDENT VOICES:

An ANS male student in Grade 10 admits that he was getting in trouble and he would probably still have been in Grade 9 had it not been for hands-on help from his student support worker:

*Sometimes, if I have a test, he helps me to prepare for it.*

Students also explained the mentorship role of the student support worker in terms of shared racial history:

*We're all Black and we have the same problem. Other teachers still don't remember my name.*

Even students who were academically successful and had positive relationships with their teachers said they looked forward to gatherings with their student support workers and ANS peers:

*I don't have any trouble in school. I just like it when we get together.*



The following statement is by a female Grade 10 student who received both academic and social support:

*The student support worker actually explained it ... every question... usually like to two people at a time. It's easier to understand. He's focusing on you. He'll make us work together to find out the same question. We need another support person for severe learning problems.*

PARENT VOICE:

*My son in Grade 4 is the only Black child in the class. The only time he feels comfortable to talk in class is when the student support worker is in the room.*

This and other examples (see findings from the survey at end of this chapter) illustrate the role of the student support workers at all levels of the system.

ADMINISTRATORS' VOICES:

In describing the Student Support Worker Program, a principal observes:

*I don't think it has been communicated as it deserves... The presence of ANS support workers has been a positive thing.*

And another Administrator:

*The student support worker has done role-plays with staff, remedial work, made home visits in order to get glasses for a student. It is a way for the school to support you without someone coming in and making you feel less. That has been positive.* (PR-6)

The words of this principal speak his confidence in the Program:

*We briefly touch base with the student support worker. He [had] a session on team building for trust and [one possible outcome] was that there were no [more] incidents... no sense of tension.*

A superintendent shared her assessment of the work of student support workers in her board:

*They are capable individuals with community connections or a different skill set sometimes... but not a lesser skill set.*

**B. Student support workers are often too overloaded to provide the follow-up they consider necessary.**

Despite success in schools, however, student support workers generally report being overloaded and feeling unable to provide the necessary follow-up when they are assigned to work simultaneously with students with a range of needs in several schools.

## STUDENT SUPPORT WORKERS' VOICES:

According to one student support worker:

*I'm at ground zero at ... It's a high needs school. I have 150 students and it's ridiculous to be there three days a week... a disservice to the students...*

In other settings, student support workers confess to providing a dizzying array of services:

*There's a form in September... I do transition meetings with the elementary school... Emergency, recess, lunch - I'm available... before day begins and after school ... I always do follow-up with a teacher ... I present at every staff meeting ... [so] the program can be made a little different ... I think students know what they want ... I have conversations with students ... I usually set up a meeting and [say] I'm there but I do not speak for you.*

During an on-site visit to their school, the reviewers were able to independently observe and corroborate many of the activities described by student support workers and the information they had shared.

## SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER'S VOICE:

The large number of students in SSW caseloads was recognized by an African Nova Scotian school board member:

*Student support workers – we have four at present. They work closely with families who have kids in the middle school. They can have caseloads of 60-70 students. The numbers don't allow for the follow-up they would like to provide.*

## RCH COORDINATORS VOICES:

RCH Coordinators who supervise student support workers in the boards were surveyed with regard to the ideal number of African Nova Scotian Student Support Workers (SSWs) for their respective boards. They were ready with specific details, as their answers reveal:

*At present, we have eight SSW's. Typically, they cover five schools. One issue is that they are spread way too thin and there are many schools who keep asking for SSW support, but we cannot stretch anyone out more thinly. Eight is really the smallest we should have (no cuts).*

*Our comfortable number would be ten SSWs. That would help reasonably fill in the gaps. If we wanted to do the program in the way students, administrators, parents/guardians and staff would want it, then we would have no more than three schools per SSW (four schools in a couple of low population instances). It would also cut down on lost time travelling between schools. To do that, we would need 12 SSWs. I know that isn't going to happen, so let's go with the number ten. That doesn't guard against overload/burnout, nor does it provide the best support for students, but it does allow us to provide good services in some cases and very bare minimum in other schools.*

All those who responded identified the need for additional workers, and one included the additional cost of operating the program and travel between schools.

**C. Student support workers have a positive influence on the school environment as a whole.**

A European Nova Scotian (ENS) teacher of the English 12: African Heritage course described the student support worker at her school as a resource person who he could call on to make presentations to the whole class. It is clear in this case that the Student Support Worker Program benefits not only African Nova Scotian students but also students of other racial backgrounds within the general school population.

Because student workers come out of racially mixed ANS communities they have also been able to provide insights into areas of interracial relationships from within that experience.

Yet another ENS teacher gave a specific example of the way the support worker's presence mediated the tensions that grew out of name-calling or racist slurs:

*Once a year we have to discuss the "N" word. Sometimes we have to close the door and talk to Black kids individually and encourage them to talk to the ANS worker. He comes in as a support and makes a presentation.*

From observations of student support workers in school, and from the findings of the survey, it is clear that the student support worker is able to influence the environment when (s)he is integrated into all the important systems in the school.

**D. Student support workers feel they are seen as being the only person responsible for the education of African Nova Scotian students.**

Student support workers repeatedly reported feeling that they were treated as the only adults in the school with responsibility for ANS students. Teachers assumed that because the board had employed student support workers to help ANS students specifically, then it was up to the workers to make all school contacts with ANS parents and their communities.

**E. Student support workers are seen as unqualified to counsel students.**

Despite the contributions by student support workers, they are not seen by some to have the qualifications to counsel students about academic issues.

*"They need to go beyond feelings to promoting education",* said one administrator. Missing in this judgment is any consideration of the connection between the way students feel and the will to learn that is made in the BLAC Report's initial recommendation for the Student Support Worker Program. Similar views were only heard when the researchers spoke with staff or community members who had had no opportunity for direct contact with student support workers or had seen them working with students.

In the focus groups, at every level, the researchers encountered a need for more education about distinctions between credentials and competence in relation to student achievement. For example, in several of the boards the formal qualifications for this position include an undergraduate degree or college diploma. In fact, student support workers have a range of credentials that equip them to address the unique needs of African Nova Scotian students.

**F. A small percentage of student support workers experience low status.**

Student support workers report that they experience low status because of the status of the population they are seen to serve.

Teachers are often not aware of the role of student support workers. *“There are days they think I am a taxi driver”*, said one student support worker. Another felt the need to explain repeatedly that she was *“not a bouncer or a baby sitter”*.

In some boards the low status is connected with the low salaries they receive because of their non-union status.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) School boards increase the number of student support workers to meet the unique needs of African Nova Scotian students in the respective boards.**
- (2) School boards negotiate with unions where necessary to align the salaries of student support workers (SSWs) with their responsibilities. Research tends to support that SSW salaries should be adjusted upward.**
- (3) School administrators review the level of integration of the student support worker in the systems and structures of schools to ensure that the worker’s role is clear, that the worker is able to influence the culture of the school as a whole, and that the worker can interact proactively with African Nova Scotian students and their families.**
- (4) The Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Division in each board continue to provide professional development for student support workers to equip them to respond to their wide range of responsibilities.**

## RESULTS OF SURVEY OF AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STUDENT SUPPORT WORKERS

In the course of a gathering for Professional Development on October 10, 2008 held in Dartmouth, the two researchers met and interviewed African Nova Scotian (ANS) student support workers from across the province.

The focus group interview lasted approximately three hours. A survey was then distributed to all participants, to which 28% responded.

Results follow. Answers are arranged in descending order of frequency.

### Question 1: What are the goals of the Student Support Worker Program?

Provide a positive experience for students, families and staff.
Foster conditions for academic success for ANS students.
Provide increased access to schooling for ANS students.
Provide support for students and families.
Be role models for the importance of education.
Be involved in matters of discipline.

### Question 2: How would you assess yourself in terms of meeting the goals of the Program? Please give three examples.

Increased parent involvement and helped families to navigate bureaucracy.
Provided cultural and other relevant information for school staff.
Provided academic help in literacy and with homework.
Reduced the isolation of ANS student.
Provided counseling and scholarship information.
Followed-up on questions of ANS students' school attendance.
Made interventions when racial incidents occurred.
Made a positive impact on curriculum around Africa and Africans.
No assessment possible because of excessive work demands.

### Question 3: What are two specific ways in which your work as a student support worker contributes to the educational opportunities and achievement of African Nova Scotian learners?

Increases learning opportunities for ANS students.
Provides ANS visibility, mentoring and role modeling for ANS students.
Provides support for ANS parents.
Provides scholarship information and career mentors.
Helps ANS students develop skills for coping with racism.

**Question 4: What are the factors contributing to the educational opportunities and achievement of ANS learners, either negatively or positively?**

**Negative Factors:**

Impact of economic forces on ANS communities.
Students dealing with multiple challenges at home.
Students feeling disconnected from schooling.
Too many students with an Individual Program Plan (IPP).
Parents feeling overloaded or being too busy.
Lack of resources (for library, etc.)
Teachers feeling overloaded or not caring.
Teachers buying into negative media stereotypes.
Overuse and bias of psychological testing.
Status of student support workers needs re-evaluation.
Insufficient time to meet all the demands.
Student support workers not qualified to do counseling.

**Positive Factor:**

Positive role models.
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**Question 5: What were the educational opportunities available to the African Nova Scotian learners that you serve before the Student Support Worker Program was initiated?**

**Educational opportunities were inhibited or denied by:**

Black invisibility and few role models in schools.
General courses.
Low expectations.
Vocational education.
Guidance counselors.
ANS students comprising highest percentage of groups dropping out of school.
Only achievers among students being served.
Most ANS students not completing high school.
Mental scars from schooling experience.
Black Incentive Fund being experienced as humiliation.
Nothing specific being in place to address lack of educational opportunity.
Few government initiatives.
Few accessible scholarships.

**Educational opportunities were enhanced by:**

The Black Educators Association.
The Teacher's Assistant Program.
The Community Youth Worker Program.
The International Baccalaureate (IB) Program and Masters Program at Dalhousie.
The Transitional Year Program at university level.
Guidance counselors.
Concerned individuals on staff.

**Question 6: What was the level of academic achievement of the African Nova Scotian learners that you served before the Student Support Worker Program was initiated?**

**ANS learners were identified by:**

Low literacy.
Low graduation.
High dropout numbers.
Academic achievement below that of ENS students.
Percentage entering university lower than that of ENS students.
Inadequate academic skills in: test preparation, studying and organization.

**Question 7: What is working well in the Student Support Worker (SSW) Program?**

Connecting with ANS students.
Being role models and mentoring.
Maintaining positive relations with parents.
SSW advocacy on behalf of ANS learners.
More support for SSW Program from teachers.
Increasing graduation geared to higher education.
Increasing cultural awareness and presence of ANS community in schools.
Tutoring and an increase in students' study skills.
Post-secondary school trips to promote higher education.
Increasing use of positive language by and about ANS students.

**Question 8: What is not working well in the Student Support Worker Program?**

Student support workers are excluded from meetings with parents or often contacted after disciplinary action involving ANS students has been taken.
Racism is often denied and ANS students disbelieved.
Some student support workers serve too many schools and students and their roles are unclear.
Some student workers face severe time constraints in serving students and families.
Remuneration as well as technical support – laptops, cell phones – are inadequately provided.
Within the ANS community, there is sometimes confusion and denial of the gravity of the challenges faced by its own organizations and the SSW Program.
On account of the population it serves, the Program is sometimes not valued or supported.
There is resistance to the Program by some schools or parents and SSW presentations receive a negative reception.
Their role as employees of school boards can pose a conflict for RCH supervisors of the SSW Program.

**Question 9: What are some of the challenges you face implementing the Student Support Worker Program?**

Where there is “polite resistance” by principals or teachers, it imposes the stress of constantly defending the Program.
Skills of some SSW workers are undervalued or underutilized and their roles require clarification, validation and greater respect.
Potential conflict with unions over wages and expenses incurred on the job, e.g., use of personal cell phone.
There is a high turnover of staff or workers in some schools as well as too many students to be served by one worker.
There is often differential treatment of ANS students by staff or the school board and some ANS students experience school as isolation.
There is often a lack of privacy or a designated room for working with ANS students.
There is inadequate support of student support workers from RCH supervisors.
There are insufficient resources for students with special needs whose families face economic crisis.
Student support workers need strategies and assistance in increasing cultural competence among staff members as a whole or working with insensitive teachers or administrators.
There are some students who appear to only identify as ANS in order to qualify for scholarships.
The Minister of Education, Department of Education and RCH Department need to craft a larger vision of the Program.



**Question 10: What influence does the Student Worker Program have on the work of others who are responsible for the education of African Nova Scotian learners?**

ANS Student support workers contribute actively and in an ongoing way to the cultural education of teachers from other communities.
ANS Student support workers do frontline work with students, take preventive action in situations of potential or actual violence and help to bring unaddressed student issues into view.
ANS Student support workers facilitate collaboration between teachers and parents.
When teachers are unable to communicate with ANS students, student support workers provide a bridge by attending meetings.
The presence of ANS student support workers makes other educators more responsive to the concerns of ANS learners.
Although many educators collaborate with student support workers, cooperation does not occur where guidance counselors feel threatened by a worker's connection to students.

**Question 11: What recommendations would you make for increasing the effectiveness of the Student Support Worker Program?**

Increase the number of student support workers so they are able to deliver services as required by all ANS students and families across the province and assign overstretched workers to fewer schools.
Pay student workers more where appropriate so that their remuneration is in keeping with the value of the services that they provide and there is an end to differential remuneration for the same or equivalent credentials or work.
Provide ongoing training and other professional development opportunities for student support workers and upgrade criteria for credentials.
Allot appropriate time and resources to allow student support workers to address prior conditions and challenges that students face outside school.
Provide sensitivity training around issues of diversity for all teachers and expand the accessibility of the African Canadian Studies course for ANS students.
Make administrators accountable for addressing acts of racism and doing so in partnership with student support workers.
Reorganize the student support worker reporting structure to RCH coordinators and boards of education.
Increase collaboration and networking between SS workers and Black organizations and within ANS communities.

**Question 12: Which of these recommendations can you undertake in your role as a student support worker?**

Participate in staff education in spite of resistance around areas of culture and race that have an impact on ANS students.
Take part in and encourage networking opportunities within ANS community.
Try to heighten awareness of issues affecting ANS students among staff and to help the school to anticipate racial events.
Build on my present rapport with students and pay particular attention to new students.
Join a provincial ANS association.
Work to build more respect for ANS support workers.

**Question 13: Which of these recommendations need to be undertaken by other bodies/groups, etc. and who are these?**

Adequate resources and African studies: <i>The ANS community and parents across the province.</i>
Statistics and numbers on school performance: <i>The Department of Education.</i>
Differential wage structures across the province: <i>School boards.</i>
Credentials, increasing access to Student Support Worker Program and opportunities for ANS student support workers to enter teaching: <i>Black educators and provincial unions.</i>
Improving working conditions for ANS student support workers and maximizing use of their skills and connections: <i>School administrators.</i>

**Question 14: What are some of the areas that you would like to see addressed in the review of the BLAC Report on Education?**

Upgrading status and pay of student support workers to make them comparable to guidance counselors and teachers.
Measures for increasing ANS student support workers across province.
Working conditions of student support workers, including opportunities for professional development and tools for doing the job.
More sensitivity training, education sessions targeting non-ANS staff and board members.
Providing quantitative provincial data on what is actually happening to ANS students, including Scholarship Program evaluation and curriculum review.
Involve parents more and hire more Black males.
Address all of the BLAC Report recommendations.

# RACE RELATIONS, CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATORS

*I get key people to publicly articulate the statements they have to live up to so there is an investment in that image. Small little things grow into big structural change.*

Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Coordinator

It was recommended in the BLAC Report “that the Department of Education make cross-cultural and race relations training a mandatory component for all in-service and teacher-training programs, including child care teacher training.”

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994. p.19*

## **Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights Coordinators**

Six of the seven English-speaking school boards have established the position of Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinator. The exception is the Halifax Regional School Board, which does not have a person in this position. School-board officials told the reviewers that the duties and responsibilities of the RCH coordinator have been assigned to two other members of the staff in their capacities as RCH Program Advisor and Coordinator of Diversity Management.

Although RCH coordinators or their equivalent serve in every school board across Nova Scotia, each board decides independently on the guidelines that govern their functions. Boards are, therefore, able to allocate their resources according to the needs of the constituency they serve. Where RCH coordinators spend the most time in their work, therefore, depends on the board they serve.

Generally speaking, RCH coordinators are responsible for the functioning of the RCH school advisors who are in place to support the board’s RCH agenda.

In addition, coordinators recommend resources on the issues of human rights, race relations and culture to boards and schools. In some boards they participate in training staff, and in others they also run workshops for students.

RCH school advisors share new information, awareness, and skills with school staff and act as a liaison between the school and the coordinator.

They also assist the administration in ensuring that RCH incidents are documented (using the *RCH Incident Report Form*), and processed according to proper procedures.

## **FINDINGS**

### **A. ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **i) Improving Student Achievement**

The findings of this review yielded data, in which RCH coordinators claimed that their interventions around academic and behavioural issues in specific cases had contributed to increased graduation rates in at least three boards. Many details were shared regarding the impact of RCH coordinators on relationships in schools. RCH coordinators had helped schools to reduce suspensions and dropout rates

An administrator noted that:

*... The RCH coordinators had raised 'race' at the board level for all students ...and also in-serviced guidance counselors... mainly looking at the experience of ANS students.*

RCH coordinators made reference to their work in raising questions around the racial achievement gap in their boards.

The *RCH Progress Report to the Board* in one school board contains hard data on the graduation rate of ANS students.

#### **ii) Developing cultural competence**

RCH coordinators have provided professional development aimed at assisting teachers in understanding race and the impact of racism in education. In some boards they have also been able to influence policies around hiring, resulting in an increase in the number of ANS teachers in the system.

Coordinators and teachers reported that the professional development program had supported teaching through curriculum initiatives, particularly in the areas of African Nova Scotian culture and history. As a result:

*more staff were now aware of the relationship of curriculum to ANS history and ancestry.*

It was also noted that RCH coordinators would sometimes be invited to share strategies for addressing racism with administrators and staff when ANS students brought racist incidents to their attention.

In a training program aimed at building on connections between schools and communities, administrators have been exposed to panels of students who shared their experiences of racism in their schools. One university student said she was so bruised by her school experience that she did not get back her voice until many years after graduation. She had learnt to swallow the racism she dealt with every day.

### iii) **Building organizational capacity**

During the process of this review, we met RCH teacher advisors who described their efforts in learning about their school based roles. There was a tendency to emphasize the aspect of their mandate with which they were most comfortable. A teacher might work more on gender than on race as this was where her greatest strength might be.

RCH coordinators made connections that allowed them to multiply their impact in schools. They reported that they were:

*developing teams... the model they use is highly transferable to other groups such as First Nations...*

### iv) **Strengthening relationships between schools and community**

RCH coordinators reported also that they helped to strengthen the relationship between some schools and school boards and the African Nova Scotian populations they serve. Within the context of linking students, schools and community, RCH coordinators were also assigned responsibilities in directing, developing and often evaluating the work of student support workers. This was sometimes a cause for concern since some boards were said not to allow support workers to go into the community.

## **B. CHALLENGES**

### **i) Broad Mandate**

Despite the broad mandate, RCH Coordinators have had an impact on the educational experiences of African Nova Scotian students and, in certain cases, have had an influence on the culture of their boards.

However, the evidence collected from interviews and focus groups affirms observations from diverse sectors of the education system that the mandate of the RCH coordinators is too broad to provide the focus that is needed for all the equity groups they must address. One of the unfortunate developments of serving many groups with unique needs is criticism which implies that coordinators favour one group over the other:

*Some people feel ANS are in competition with other communities and say things like, "How come they get this and we don't have it?" ... instead of coming together strategically to work together.*

## **ii) Resource Allocation**

Another RCH coordinator compared the resources available for RCH to those given to coordinators in other areas of the education system:

*We have no teams like other coordinators... How is that OK?*

In addition, schools are engaged generally in the early stages of multiracial curriculum integration, thus increasing the challenge that coordinators have in helping schools move to the next level and truly transform the curriculum and the relationships within the school.

## **iii) Need for Data and Evaluation**

Unfortunately, data on the evaluation of the impact of professional development on the experience and achievement of ANS learners are not available. The review also draws attention to the absence of specific data regarding ANS learners in terms of the input they receive from the programs developed to serve their special needs or from programs directed to students at large. Nor was there race-specific data available during the course of this review on whether ANS students experience equal access to learning opportunities, on their placement in programs leading to advanced academic courses and professional training, or on their levels of achievement in school.

## **iv) Need for Institutional Time**

These situations all require time and human resources if they are to be addressed. There is currently a need for adequate institutional time for the preparation of RCH teacher representatives for their responsibilities in regard to race, culture and human rights. Such designated and scheduled time would permit them to improve their skills and also put their knowledge into practice in enhancing the educational experience of ANS learners. Our interviews with a wide range of educators, students and community representatives who had direct experience of schools and/or RCH coordinators revealed that there was an uneven distribution of cultural competence among RCH teacher representatives. Some were struggling with being new to the profession and the responsibilities of the role; others who had participated in workshops to prepare them for the role were trying to apply what they had learned to their school setting. We did encounter RCH advisors who were addressing situations in their schools.

Given the above findings, the RCH coordinators are tasked with too many responsibilities to adequately address issues of institutional racism or how they affect ANS learners overall.

#### v) Unaddressed racism

During the review there were repeated reports of racism encountered, with participants in focus groups telling of feeling dissatisfied with the responses they received from official circles. Within the context of comments about ongoing racial incidents and dissatisfaction with school board responses, representatives of ANS communities complained about the dismantling of the RCH structure in the Halifax Regional Board.

ANS high school students spoke of being harassed, often in classes where African Canadian or global African issues were being studied. For example, a female student shared her story:

*He [a White classmate] kept telling me to shut up... and the teacher did nothing. Suspension was not an option. I never got an apology... The community is very racist. The whole class got mad at me... I felt really cornered.*

Her frustration and resignation were echoed by other students:

*You can't really bring it to the office. You feel trapped.*

*You're going to fight this person? I said, "No. I'm going to take it to the office..." Nothing happened.*

However, when fights did occur, the students agreed, ANS learners were differentially punished.

These experiences were corroborated in an interesting way. The perceptions of administrators about the existence of racism in the schools was in sharp contrast to the perception of students and parents. In almost all cases, school administrators reported that there was no racism in the school or that there were very few incidents between students. It is not difficult to see how this gulf in perception exists. On the days we visited schools, for the most part they seemed to be pleasant, harmonious sites where students were engaged in learning. But in focus groups with students or families and communities at the end of the school day and on the weekends, the pictures were different. There is a definite need to bring these two pictures together as perception does much to shape reality.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (1) RCH coordinators begin to gather race-specific data regarding ANS learners in terms of the input they receive from the programs developed to serve their special needs or from programs directed to all students. – *3 months*
- (2) Principals and RCH coordinators review structures and processes for addressing issues of institutional racism and place more focus on dealing with the racism faced by ANS students. – *3 months*
- (3) Principals allocate adequate institutional time for the preparation of RCH teacher representatives for their responsibilities in regard to race, culture and human rights. – *3 months*
- (4) Principals provide, wherever feasible, both private space and scheduled time for RCH coordinators to address needs and/or challenges specific to ANS learners. – *3 months*
- (5) School boards elevate the position of Coordinator of Race Relations, Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH), or its equivalent, to enable the coordinator to influence more directly the implementation of RCH policies and procedures at school sites. – *3 months*



# FIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT

*We are working hard to close the gap and we are not yet there.*

Superintendent

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that teachers should:

18. Ensure that academic expectations are communicated and reinforced regularly (to students and parents). Recognize praise and reward the students' efforts and achievements.
19. Watch the progress of Black children as early as grade primary and focus on helping every child master the basic skills in reading and mathematics.

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994*

## BACKGROUND

The Five Schools Project is one of the components of a broader plan to improve student achievement in five schools in the Halifax Regional School Board. Initiated in 2005, there was a focus on improving student achievement in literacy in the first year. That first year was regarded as the beginning of a long-term plan to improve student achievement in all areas.

The schools are: Joseph Howe School, Nelson Whynder Elementary School, St. Patrick's-Alexandra School, Rockingstone Heights School and St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay School. All five schools have significant populations of African Nova Scotian students, accounting for as much as 80% of the student body in one instance.

Additional funds for school-based professional development support as well as additional classroom print resources, computer and learning software have been provided for these schools by the Halifax Regional School Board. In addition, the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) has provided funds for one-on-one tutoring to each of the five schools in this project.

As written, the proposal for this project has the authority of being closely connected to research on successful education of Black students and students from low socio-economic (working class) backgrounds. (*Henry, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gaye, 2002; King, 2005*). The proposal reflects a commitment to nurturing the whole child and a recognition that it takes a whole community to close the educational gap. Despite this perspective, the results in several of the schools are disappointing if one were to base effectiveness on the Provincial Early Language Literacy Assessment and Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment of 2008-2009.

### **Effectiveness difficult to measure**

According to the 2008-2009 Early Language Literacy Assessment and Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy Assessment, in two of the schools there was an increase in the percentage of students who met expectations in both reading and writing. Upon closer examination, however, the results of the assessment reveal that the story of student performance is more complex than it appears on the surface. For example, because a significant number of students had an IPP, they were excluded from participation in the tests. In one school, in which there were 14 Grade 6 ANS students, eight had an IPP in English Language Arts. In another, where the Grade 6 class had only three ANS students, one had an IPP in English language arts and did not participate in the assessment.

Given the significant number of students excluded from that assessment and the variability of conditions from school to school under which assessments can be carried out, the effectiveness of the Five Schools Project for African Nova Scotian students remains difficult to measure, if one were to rely exclusively on the results of the provincial assessment.

In the course of this review, four of the five sites were visited. Interviews were held with administrators, teachers and students who, in one delightful instance, turned the tables and interviewed the interviewers in turn. Being interviewed by African Nova Scotian students in one of the five schools gave us, as reviewers, an unexpected opportunity to experience the curiosity and intelligence of the students.

### **“Inhaling the atmosphere”**

The reviewers were received graciously and generally permitted to move freely through a school. As a result, data were gathered through observing classroom routines as well as by getting a sense of the climate of the school. Reviewers analyzed the cumulative message of teacher-student interaction, paid attention to whether ANS students had some presence in the school and how they were celebrated or portrayed in displays, were featured on honour rolls and represented in murals or on bulletin boards.

### **FINDINGS**

In one school it was noted that the link between professional development and student learning was transparent and direct. Arguably, closer monitoring of teacher training and the integration of new knowledge into classrooms may be factors that contribute significantly to student performance in those schools where there is reported improvement. (*Guskey, 2000*).

### A. Classroom instruction and intellectual challenge

During our short visits, we were struck by the interest and enthusiasm of ANS students in the schools. The reviewers wondered about the extent to which the instructional approach built on the learners' interest and contributed to intellectual challenge. In discussion, administrators emphasized the importance they attached to connections between the community, the families and the school. In fact, in one school, the lack of connection between the school and the families was striking.

Some administrators shared their data on the progress of individual students. It is logical that the knowledge of where every ANS student is located in terms of academic performance would help all teachers to bring a sharper focus to improving each student's overall performance. Reliance on a wider range of measures would also bring us closer to an awareness of where African Nova Scotian students are in terms of their learning.

This review affirms that the system and the ANS community need data not only on what students achieve but also on the learning opportunities to which they are exposed that make achievement possible.

### B. Collecting data on learning opportunities

For example, a knowledge bank on learning opportunities would show:

- (a) how often teachers tap into ANS learners' prior knowledge as a part of daily practice in order to stretch their students intellectually (*Delpit, 1995*);
- (b) what initiatives are taken and strategies developed to prepare teachers to engage in differentiating instruction to meet the needs and address the strengths of every learner in the Five Schools Project (*Tomlinson and Demirsky, 2000*); and
- (c) what connections are made with supportive bodies such as the Regional Educators and CAEP tutors in order to link the activities that are engaged in after-school with in-school programs and learning (*Henderson, et al, 2007*).

During interviews for this review, the following explanations were given for what some educators and community members described as the "failure" of the project. Their list of reasons included a high turnover of staff, inexperienced teachers, disinterested parents and students with behaviour challenges.

**C. What the system controls**

There is little argument that all the factors listed above are related to student achievement. However, there are certain ingredients that are directly under the control of the educational system. They include:

- i) Engaging curriculum.
- ii) Effective instruction.
- iii) A positive and culturally-responsive school climate.
- iv) Intentional use of experiences that students bring to every learning environment.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) More administrative attention be paid to the everyday classroom routines and activities, e.g., principals do a walkthrough with a focus on teacher preparedness in instruction and high-level interaction between educators and ANS learners.**
- (2) Teachers engage in action–research so that they become more focused on the impact of their instruction.**
- (3) School administrators share and nurture the vision among all staff that all ANS students can and will succeed under appropriate conditions.**
- (4) Teachers receive support on embedding Africentric content into rigorous curricular framework focused on assisting students in developing numeracy and literacy.**

## **AFRICAN CANADIAN SERVICES DIVISION**

- **English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11**  
—Curriculum Development, Implementation and  
Teacher Professional Development
- **Scholarship Program**
- **Parent Outreach Program**
- **Four Plus Program**
- **Adult Education and Job Training**
- **African Canadian Services Division—Advice to Departmental Divisions**

# ENGLISH 12: AFRICAN HERITAGE AND AFRICAN CANADIAN STUDIES 11

*“I didn’t know I could be in a community of Black people and be high achieving”.*

ANS student in English 12 class.

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that “the Department of Education should develop programs, resources and learning materials which accurately provide knowledge and understanding of Black people: our history, heritage, culture, traditions and our contributions to society as an integral part of the curriculum and make them available to the schools”

*BLAC Report on Education-Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994, p.19*

## BACKGROUND

English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 are two curriculum initiatives undertaken by the African Canadian Services Division to promote understanding of African Canadians and their history.

Not only is course curriculum developed, but professional development and classroom resources are also supplied from the budget of the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD). These courses are offered in the academic stream and have been in place since 2000. The courses are being taught in 96 classes within 44 schools in the 2009-2010 school year.

## FINDINGS

Findings on the effectiveness of English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 on opportunities and outcomes for African Nova Scotian students were based on individual interviews, focus groups, observations, and a close review of textbooks and resources developed and used for the two courses.

The courses reflect a Pan-African history of the world, touching on historical and contemporary topics that bear on the lives of populations of African ancestry. Students spoke of learning about: *rebellions against slavery, the Civil Rights Movement and Africville*. As one student put it:

*When we were little we learned the tradition but we didn’t learn the details, and now we do.*

### **A. Pedagogical approach emphasizes critical thinking and student engagement**

In the course of this review, we observed English 12: African Heritage classes as well as African Canadian Studies 11 classes. The pedagogical approach in the classrooms emphasized critical thinking, high levels of student engagement, and invited creativity on the part of the students. One African Nova Scotian student shared his determination to succeed and to overcome every challenge to his success in the English 12: African Heritage course. He confidently and proudly declared that he had taken the course three times.

The students' responses during the interviews conducted for this review reflected the rigorous intellectual challenge they found in these two courses. For many of them, across race and gender, these courses offered experiences that strengthened a healthy, positive racial identity.

#### **STUDENT VOICES:**

An ENS student also shared what the experience had meant for him in terms of building empathy. He had been encouraged to take one of those courses by an RCH representative at his school, who suspected him of harbouring prejudices against Blacks. What he learned in the course moved him to confess:

*I would never look at someone of colour in the same way again.*

As a result of taking the courses, ANS learners said they not only strengthened family ties but also became proud of their culture and roots. Said one: *My dad's father was from the Caribbean;* while another ANS student revealed: *My parents are from Africa... I got to know why I was born in Europe. Nobody knew.*

Students also explained that having brand-new, colorful books about their culture to read and take home made them feel important and valued. They could also see that the courses made a difference to the adults in their lives. The whole family and community now felt as if their status had risen at school.

### **B. Outstanding professional development**

From the data gathered, considerable time, effort and resources had been invested in the professional development of the educators who taught those courses. Teacher representatives from 25% of the schools where both programs were offered described experiencing outstanding professional development, frequently teacher-led, which built upon the best practices and knowledge of other teachers who had taught those courses. Members of a focus group of those teachers praised the instructional model used and suggested that its methodology would serve well for professional development across other disciplines.

## TEACHER VOICES:

Most teachers were positive in their comments. One hoped aloud that the initiatives would multiply: *I would like to see the course not as a singleton but at all three levels.*

During the focus group of ANS teachers, they made links between positive experiences with the new courses or materials and their ability to encourage ANS students to learn:

*The positive impact of a teacher helps our students to feel validated.*

## ADMINISTRATOR VOICES:

When interviewed, administrators were often candid, admitting that the English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 curriculum initiatives represented unique opportunities for them to build positive working relationships with the African Canadian Services Division.

Several administrators also considered these curriculum materials especially significant additions to the resources they offered their students.

Within the scope of this review, areas in the course were identified for reinforcement or for expansion of the historical or contemporary information base, especially as it pertains to African Nova Scotians and Canadians of African ancestry.

In the final analysis, however, it is the position of this review that there was not enough hard data or passage of time to draw firm conclusions about what students are learning around race, culture, history and self-determination for peoples of African ancestry as a result of the two curriculum initiatives.

**C. No firm conclusions possible about student learning**

On a cautionary note, it would appear from responses received in focus groups, as well as in-class observations, that students have inferred that while the struggle for racial equality has been a harsh reality for Black populations in the United States, in Canada racial justice has, by and large, been realized. *(Walker, 1985; Wilmot, 2005)*

**D. Impact of expanded information base.**

The observations informing this review suggest that more details of historical atrocities specific to African Nova Scotian and African Canadian populations and the community's response to them would allow students to develop a fuller picture of the African presence in Canada.



MORE TEACHER VOICES:

In the view of one of the teachers offering these courses:

*Little Black Schoolhouse [film] by Sylvia Hamilton was well done. The more we can make it Canadian, the more engagement from the students.*

Once again, the significant issues of access to higher education and the opportunity to learn are related to the number of African Nova Scotian students who have an IPP. It is highly unlikely that students who have an IPP would take the new courses offered, since they are taught at an academic level. ANS students who have an IPP are not usually found in academic courses, noted an ANS educator:

*Our Black learners aren't getting to Grade 10 to access the Grade 11 cultural program.*

It is ironic that courses, which have among their goals the promotion of awareness of group history and the nurturing of a positive ancestral identity are unlikely to be taken by African Nova Scotian students who could most benefit from them. This observation is not an invitation to offer the course at a lower level. It speaks to an urgent need to examine the claim that many African Nova Scotian students have an IPP and are, therefore, not likely to benefit from these culturally rich courses.

Without exception, in other words with 100% unanimity, the students taking the English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 classes who were interviewed wished that they had been exposed to similar course material at a much earlier grade. Virtually echoing each other, the African Nova Scotian learners were unequivocal in wanting decision-makers to know that they felt they had been cheated and made to wait too long to learn important truths about themselves.

MORE STUDENT VOICES:

One frustrated student put it this way:

*All you learned was about slavery every single year. They think you should know everything. They ask questions and look at you. A lot of my classes, I'm the only Black person.*

Although materials about the African Canadian and ANS experience were sent to schools for the junior and elementary students, these may not have found their way into the hands of the older students we interviewed. In several of the schools that were visited during the process of the review, there was evidence of this material. In some classrooms students were reading books supplied by ACSD (see *Appendix I*) and were eager to display what they had learnt.

In community-based focus groups where adult family members were often accompanied by relatives still in school, students described feeling isolation or embarrassment, especially in classes where there were no other ANS students. They spoke of being objects of belittling stares or racist comments. None of the students who spoke up said they were satisfied that those incidents of feeling humiliated on account of their ancestry had been adequately addressed by their ENS teachers. Instead, students reported that the adults present would advise them in a variety of ways to treat those incidents as moments where they could learn to deal, in a socially acceptable way, with ENS peers who were not “aware” that their behaviour was inappropriate.

*I took African Canadian Studies. Most people didn't want to be there. They made racist comments. Nothing direct. With Amistad, they thought it was funny.*

With an audible note of passion, the mother of an ANS student shared her story:

*My daughter got into an argument with her teacher about what she was teaching about slavery. She basically said, “You sold your own.” But my daughter knew her history. She learned it in the after-school cultural program. She was able to say what she knew.*

The after-school cultural program referred to in the above quote was the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP) sponsored by BEA and reviewed in a later segment of this document.

#### **E. Selection process.**

Both ANS teachers and students commented on the selection process for the two courses. Students reported that, because they were Black, guidance counselors directed them to those courses. Other well-meaning teachers discouraged them, saying the courses were not academic or rigorous enough. They spoke of being subjected to comments such as: *It's not a real English course.*

ANS students also described teachers who advised them to take a course because they would “relate better” because they were Black. Racially visible students who did not identify as ANS said they felt offended when the courses were recommended to them as “bird” courses with the implication that taking them was a shortcut for lazy learners to get easy credits.

**F. Small number of ANS teachers offering courses.**

ANS parents and teacher were equally concerned that far too few ANS teachers offered the new courses. At the same time, both groups said they were aware that there were few African Nova Scotian teachers ready to fill available positions. Adding to the complexity of the situation, Black teachers said that they want to be free to choose the courses they teach, just as their White peers are.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**In light of the realities outlined, it is recommended that:**

- (1) English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses continue to be developed and made available to more schools.**
- (2) The staff and resources be provided to develop curriculum for students in the earlier grades.**
- (3) Best practices be shared and that new initiatives in professional development take into account the development of the capacity of teachers to address racism and feelings of isolation of lone African Nova Scotian students.**
- (4) Guidance counselors be included in appropriate professional development training programs along with teachers being prepared to teach English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses.**
- (5) The numbers of African Nova Scotian students participating in the English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses each year be tracked and those figures coordinated with data from research into the number of students who have an IPP.**
- (6) More African Canadian and African Nova Scotian content be added to the English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses.**
- (7) Students' experience with the English 12: African Heritage and African Canadian Studies 11 courses be shared across the province with guidance counselors, administrators and African Nova Scotian communities.**
- (8) The school board intensify its efforts to recruit more ANS teachers.**

# AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP (ANSSS) PROGRAM

*The money provided me has had a large impact on the accessibility to post-secondary education; but, more importantly, it is a constant reminder of the martyrs of our past.*

Scholarship recipient of the ANSSS Program.

The BLAC Report provides an in-depth rationale for the development of the African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship Program in the case study of the Black Incentive Fund and documents the loss of dignity and respect often experienced by those receiving money from the Fund. Focus group members who participated in this review recall their sense of shame and embarrassment by the call from the school office over the PA system for Black students to go to the library where they would make arrangements for receiving money from the Fund.

The Fund, it has been argued by some, was the government's attempt to provide compensation for the years of discrimination felt by the Black community. In recognition of the economic and racial barriers that African Nova Scotians have faced in gaining access to higher education, the BLAC Learners Advisory Committee recommended that:

The Nova Scotia Government should:

- 12a. Provide scholarships and financial assistance to Black learners in recognition of achievement and need. Extend the Incentive Fund to cover all Black students in post-secondary institutions, and increase the amount to matching the escalating university fees.
- 12b. Provide scholarships for Black students who wish to enter professional programs from which Blacks have been traditionally excluded such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, computer science and Engineering.

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequality—Empowering Black Learners, 1994, p.27*

These recommendations were accepted by the government and the Scholarship Program was started in 1996-1997.

In 2004, the Department of Education conducted a survey of scholarship holders of the ANSSS Program which had grown out of recommendation 12a and 12b of the BLAC Report. The results of that survey showed that the ANSSS had helped some of the respondents to the survey to achieve their educational, career and professional objectives. Most respondents had either completed their program of study or were working towards its completion.

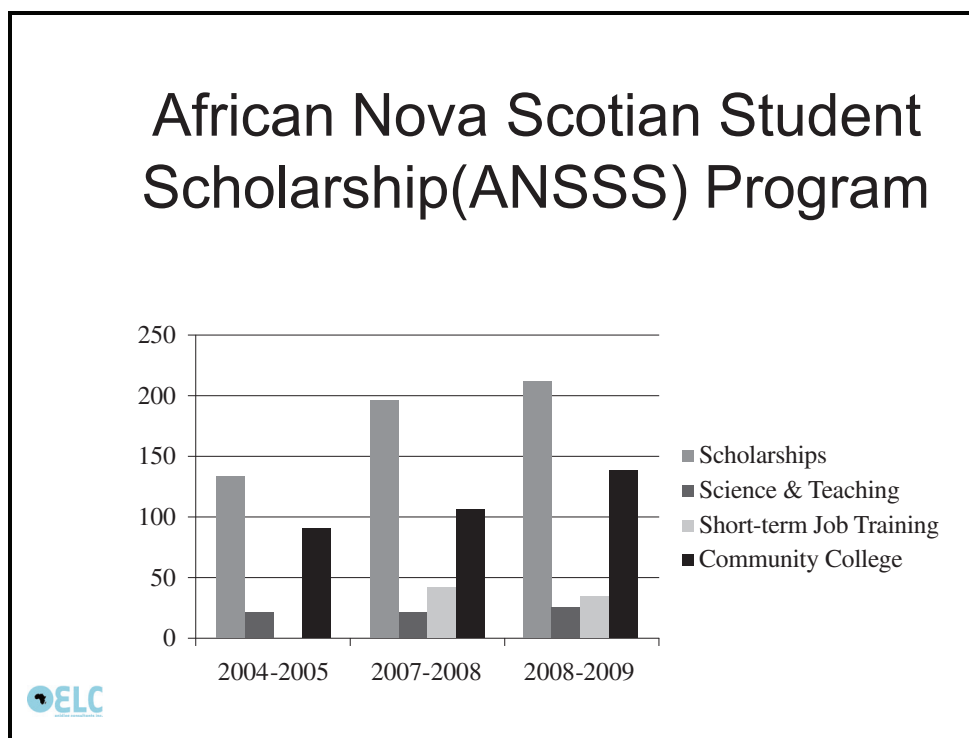
The ANSSS is available for students who have completed Grade 12 in a Nova Scotian public school and who are enrolled full-time in a post-secondary program having an entrance requirement of Grade 12. The scholarships to university have been increased from two to three years and to community college for one year.

## FINDINGS

### A. The number of African Nova Scotian students attending higher education institutions through scholarship programs increases each year.

Statistics provided by the African Canadian Services Division (ASCD) confirm that there has been a steady increase in the number of African Canadian students who received scholarships to attend higher education institutes. There were 246 scholarships in 2004, and in 2008 there were 378. The number also increased for community college, and short-term job-training grants have been added to the list.

The chart below demonstrates the growth and the emphasis on science and teaching reflected in the choices of scholarship recipients:



One can infer from this that the graduation rate among African Nova Scotian students is increasing each year, since there is a steady annual increase in the number of students who are eligible for scholarships.

**B. Because significant numbers of African Nova Scotian learners have an Individual Program Plan (IPP) they may be ineligible for the scholarships.**

It is the finding of this review that the Scholarship Program continues to be a hopeful indicator of the effective implementation of some recommendations of the BLAC Report. The statistics quoted above, however, do not reveal the number of African Nova Scotian students who are not eligible for scholarships by virtue of having an IPP. In one focus group meeting, a parent offered the following observation:

*“Don’t matter how many scholarships you have, if you are on IPP you can’t get any.”*

Others around the table showed surprise when she provided that information.

**C. Perception about award winners needs to be examined.**

A review done of scholarships awarded between 1996-2004 showed that there were 26 recipients of the Science Professions Scholarships and, by last name, 17 were indigenous African Nova Scotians and nine (9) were children of first generation African Nova Scotians. However, for the Teacher Educations Scholarship, during the same period, there were 78 recipients and, based on last names, 75 were indigenous African Nova Scotians while three (3) were first generation African Nova Scotians.

**D. Information regarding developments in the Scholarship Program needs to be constantly updated and disseminated.**

In a parent/community focus group session, when discussing access to scholarships, one individual remarked, *“Scholarships are not for trades.”* The speaker did not appear to know that there are short-term training funds, and that these grant funds can be used to train African Nova Scotian Students for jobs in the trades and skills sectors.

The communities interviewed showed evidence of limited knowledge about the duration of the scholarships. The university scholarship has increased from two to three years, the teacher education scholarship is for two years, and there is a science scholarship for three years. The community college scholarship is for one year, and there is now a seat at a community college for students who have an IPP beginning this year.

Qualifications and, therefore, scholarships have not been evenly distributed by region over the period of operation (see *Appendix H*). Consequently, there is risk of a suspicion of bias against regions with few scholarship holders or none at all.

**E. The ANSSS is regarded by recipients as an investment in the African Canadian Community as a whole and links to one's past and history.**

Letters of appreciation offer insight into the significance of the scholarship for some recipients and the impact it has made on their lives. An example of this impact was directed to the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) in the form of the following e-mail in June 2009:

*Dear whomever it may concern,*

*I was awarded the Post-Secondary African Nova Scotian Students Award back in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. I have since graduated with my Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology from Dalhousie University and am currently working as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of the best microbiologists in the world at the University of British Columbia.*

*I wanted to send a quick note just to extend my appreciation for being awarded this scholarship, and how fundamental it was to my success during university. I am happy to see that this program is still being provided to African Nova Scotian students.*

*Best wishes,*

*(Name withheld)*

Another letter received by the African Canadian Services Division from a Scholarship recipient writing in July 2009, stated:

*I want to express sincere gratitude for your choice to invest in the African Nova Scotian community in such a manner. The money provided to me has had a large impact on the accessibility of my post secondary education, but more importantly, it is a constant reminder of the martyrs of our past."*

One scholarship recipient expresses his excitement at going to "Acadia University to continue expanding [my] knowledge, so I can then help the community as an Athletic Therapist."

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI):**
  - (a) gather and disseminate statistics on completion of college and university education by African Nova Scotian students;**
  - (b) survey students who have an IPP in order to assess whether they have a desire to pursue higher education;**
  - (c) invite scholarship winners to connect with and mentor younger members of the African Nova Scotian community; and**
  - (d) investigate the local conditions that contribute to limited applications from an area.**
- (2) The African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) intensify efforts to encourage those outside of the Halifax Region to apply for scholarships under the African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship (ANSSS) Program.**



# PARENT OUTREACH PROGRAM

*My daughter was on an IPP. I thought I had no control. I learned I had control ...  
The second Positive Parenting [Workshop] helped me.*

(Participant in Positive Parenting Workshop)

It was recommended in the BLAC Report “that educators must develop a model of parent education and advocacy which empowers both the parent and the student. The main objective of the model should be developing the parents’ confidence in providing home education support to their children and to talk with teachers and administrators about educational matters”.

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994, p.21*

## BACKGROUND

The African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) delivers approximately 15 parenting sessions to the ANS community each year, with the participation of approximately 20 parents per session. The attendance at some sessions has been as high as 35, while there were sessions held for as few as ten parents.

Titles of workshops have included, "Supporting Your Child in the Home and in the School", "Raising a Resilient African Nova Scotian Child", and "Supporting Your Child as a Developing Reader". The Division, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College also develops and delivers “Parents as Career Coaches.” All three of these programs are currently being delivered to communities in the 2009-2010 school year. ACSD reports that a fifth program entitled, "Supporting Your Child who has been Identified as Having a Learning Disability" will be ready for delivery in the spring of this school year.

ACSD’s goal is 12 modules developed and ready for delivery over the next four years. Successful modules are identified by the parents’ feedback during sessions. At present there are requests for a repeat of "Supporting African Nova Scotian Children in the Home and in the School.” This program is offered either as a refresher or for new members, every three years.

## FINDINGS

The workshop "Supporting Your Child in the Home and in the School" has been the basis of maintaining positive contact with parents across the province, and a practical method of outreach and building a network across scattered ANS communities.

### A. Positive Response to Parenting Workshops

Over the course of this review, seven focus groups of parents and community members were held across the province. Without exception, they had high praise for the parenting workshops organized by the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD). Mothers and grandmothers made specific reference to feeling more empowered as they became more aware of how the education system worked.

*I asked for homework. They (school officials) said, "We don't do that." When I go to Parent Teacher night they talk about what a good boy he is and how pleasant he is. I don't want to think. They are not pushing him. He's doing a good job for a Black kid.*

Parents repeatedly spoke of how the confidence they gained helped them to intervene effectively in cases where their children had an IPP. By speaking to teachers, student support workers, administrators and parents, this review was able to establish a pattern of successful ANS community intervention in schools following participation in ACSD workshops.

Parents reported that, as soon as the day following one of the workshops, they would go to their child's school to ask detailed questions about an IPP. This assertion of parental rights has not escaped the attention of administrators. Principals confirmed noticing a surge in parental interest on Monday morning and wondering whether there had been some discussion around students who had an IPP in the community over the weekend.

A young father was also able to describe some of the specific skills and approaches he had learned, through ACSD workshops, for working with and supporting his son in school.

### B. Requests for additional and more frequent workshops

*Good, but too far between. Hard to remember what we did.*

Parents were unanimous in requesting that the workshops be held more frequently. Mothers who had not been able to attend the parenting workshop that modeled advocacy in schools over the past two years said that they felt it was time for a refresher course.

Not only were more workshops requested but also different ones. Behavioural issues and medication surfaced as one potential area for a new parenting workshop. In two of the focus group sessions, families spoke of their struggle with schools when it came to medicating their children. A grandmother of a 10-year-old recalled the number of times her grandson was suspended for his behaviour and wondered how he would *"get his learning if he gets sent home every day. On top of that, they wanted to put him on Ritalin."*

This comment led another member of the group to say:

*"Seems every Black kid is ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] and they want to give them this Ritalin. A lot of parents just don't have energy to go against them. If this is going to work, I guess you just have to do it, but it's hard... The medication you need to keep you in your seat. That's what they call it."*

One finding was that participants sometimes were not aware of the sponsors of the workshop and there appeared to be some overlap between workshops organized by the Regional Educators Program and the African Canadian Services Division.

Although workshop follow-up occurs, this review could not say with certainty what factors in the process make the difference in parent engagement and student achievement or whether changes do, in fact, endure.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**It recommended that:**

- (1) All Positive Parent Workshops be evaluated for effectiveness in terms of the difference that parent engagement makes to student achievement.– 3 months**
- (2) Administrators and other school officials become familiar with the workshops to ensure that they are able to work in partnership with empowered parents. – 6 months**
- (3) Parenting Workshops be expanded to include topics such as the medicating of young ANS boys or girls because of Attention Deficit Disorder. – 6 months**

## FOUR PLUS PROGRAM

*The testimonials given of the enormous value of the program by parents and grandparents at the Graduation Ceremony certainly brings credit to the program.*

*New Glasgow Four Plus Program Report, 2008*

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that “the Department of Education should provide quality preschool educational opportunities such as Four-Plus for all African Canadian children. Priority should be given to children in rural areas and the inner city. Early intervention support strategies which had success elsewhere should be evaluated to consider those appropriate for use in Nova Scotia.”

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity–Empowering Black Learners, 1994, p.20*

The above testimonial is connected to one of the two Four Plus Programs that have received funding from the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD). The report on the program states that eight (8) of the 16 students in this program are African Nova Scotian.

There is insufficient evidence available to assess the effectiveness of the program referenced in the opening quote.

This commentary does not refer to the Four Plus Programs in the Halifax area as they were not identified for review.

# ADULT EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING

*We took down oral histories and turned them into a book.*

Mother and daughter Workshop participants.

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that “agencies responsible for Adult Education and Upgrading should link upgrading and job skills training to employment by targeting jobs. Make the job re-entry programs more effective and relevant by incorporating work placement with prospective employers for at least a year. Offer colleges and university extension courses in the community.”

*Recommendation 20a*

*BLAC Report on Education-Redressing Inequity-Empowering Black Learners, 1994, p.23*

## BACKGROUND

Where funding is available and an identified need exists, the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) provides the services of an education officer to support adult training opportunities across the province. For example, there has been collaboration with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Police Department as well as its Firefighters. Generally, by working with institutions like Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), the education officer is able to identify clients within the ANS community and help them to gain entry into specific programs.

In addition, the education officer has been involved in community-based programs, with a focus of bringing African Nova Scotian learners back into the education system by building up their skills within a community setting, such as the Family Learning Initiative (FLI), Community Learning Initiatives (CLI) as well as community-based tutoring programs. Other workshops have also been offered around literacy training, leading to certification, upgrading and the development of action plans. Where communities required it and logistics made it feasible, the education officer also facilitated regional education workshops across the province or arranged round tables on issues pertinent to local communities.

The infrastructure to provide ongoing support for these initiatives remains a work-in-progress that is constantly subject to change. Experience suggests that, as stability increases, the programming undertaken in meeting adult education needs within the ANS community will not only be able to widen its focus but also to build upon its present foundation.

The present ACSD strategy around these issues is to focus on education that is linked to opportunities for employment. The department has also decided to strengthen the links between related programs, improve coordination, and create greater access for community members whose skills need upgrading for them to access these programs. By way of example, the division has collaborated in RCMP recruitment and training as well as a part-time B.Ed. program. ACSD also contributes to Job Training through its Scholarship Program.

## FINDINGS

Members of education committees participated in focus groups for various communities and their input provided useful insight into adult education opportunities across the province. From the data gathered, these community-based ANS advocates seemed to function not only as primary sources in providing information about adult education and other community needs, but also to shoulder responsibilities for adult literacy or job training when professionals were not available.

In analyzing the regular monthly reports from regional educators over the last two years the researchers encountered frequent references to literacy workshops. Numerous written reports on initiatives in literacy were also available. However, from the data provided it was not possible to measure the effectiveness of the programs offered on adult learners. It proved even more difficult to infer what indirect impact they might have had on the achievement of learners who were still attending school.

### A. Picking up binders, getting ready to learn

As outlined above, there is a curriculum on Family Learning that brings together parents and children as well as older students with younger ones. Numerous stories shared during focus groups held across the province affirmed that families felt that they had reaped concrete benefits from those workshops. Young mothers spoke of getting important lessons in discipline and communication that turned out to be especially useful when they tried to help their children, especially boys, cope with school.

One of the interviewees with direct experience of the Family Learning Initiatives reported observing immediate and positive change in the behaviour of a younger student who was inspired by the image of an older student he admired.

Another's story, told as evidence of the positive impact the family workshops had on participants, described how a student who had cultivated *the image of a pimp daddy with baggy pants... by the end of the session... was carrying a binder and pulling up his pants.*

In one of the smaller communities, literacy morphed into literature as a mother and daughter teamed up, went into the community and began *taking down oral histories* that *they turned into a book.*

**B. Building bridges, strengthening bonds**

There is ongoing collaboration between the Family Learning Initiative and the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP). Parents and facilitators reported that there was a level of comfort in the way members of their communities shared roles and tasks, applying their learning from one program in another to create a climate of co-operation and easy movement between different programs.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**It is recommended that the Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) conduct research that measures the effectiveness of the programs offered on adult learners and their impact or influence on the academic achievement of younger students. – 6 months**

# **AFRICAN CANADIAN SERVICES DIVISION – ADVICE TO DEPARTMENTAL DIVISIONS**

The African Canadian Services Division was established as a result of the following recommendations from the BLAC Report on Education:

- 2a. The Minister of Education establish a Branch in the Department to deal specifically with African Canadian Education.
- 2b. The Minister of Education appoint to the staff of his Department an Executive Director–African Canadian Education who would be a member of the Senior Management Committee of the Department of Education and who would have general responsibility for the direction and coordination of African Canadian education programs provided by the Department.

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity–Empowering Black Learners, 1994*

## **M A N D A T E**

### **AFRICAN CANADIAN SERVICES DIVISION**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

- Develop, promote and deliver programs, resources and services for African Nova Scotian students.
- Encompass all levels of education.
- Advise and guide other divisions of the Public School Branch, and Department of Education, regarding African Canadian Education.
- Promote understanding of African Canadians and their history, heritage, culture, traditions and contributions to society, recognizing their origins as Africans.
- Ensure African Canadian students have greater access to post-secondary institutions.
- Work with staff in the branch and across departments to address systemic racism and discrimination, by facilitating implementation of the Racial Equity Policy.



It follows from Recommendation 2b of the BLAC Report that the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD), one of 11 divisions in the Public Schools Branch of the Department of Education, must collaborate with the Public Schools Branch and other branches of the Department of Education in order to carry out its “responsibility for the direction and coordination of African Canadian education programs provided by the Department [of Education]”. Further, ACSD is specifically mandated to work with staff in the Public Schools Branch and across departments “to address systemic racism and discrimination, by facilitating implementation of the Racial Equity Policy”. In addition, all branches and divisions of the Department have a role to play in educating all African Canadian students and in educating all students about African Canadians; hence the need for collaboration.

From interviews with senior administrators in the Department of Education, staff from ACSD and other divisions in the Public Schools branches, other branches of the Department of Education and a range of individuals working at all levels in school boards across the province, we identified areas of collaboration which have begun to be developed between ACSD and the rest of the Department of Education. Also identified are areas that require significant attention.

The following are our findings with respect to the advice provided by the African Canadian Services Division to divisions and branches within the Department of Education.

## **FINDINGS**

### **A. The African Canadian Services Division collaborates with the Student Services Division and Mi’kmaq Liaison Office in province-wide training of Guidance Counselors.**

The professional learning opportunity entitled, *Cultural Competencies for Guidance Counselors In-Service*, sponsored by ACSD, Student Services Division and the Mi’kmaq Liaison Office, was referenced by staff in ACSD and the Student Services Division as an area of collaboration. Beyond the training sessions there are on-going discussions between staff in ACSD and Student Services Division around the connections between Guidance Counselors and Student Support Workers and the distinct but related roles they play in assisting African Nova Scotian students in course selection and in gaining access to relevant and rigorous courses. It became clear that this area of collaboration is vital since ACSD also supports and provides professional development for Student Support Workers, and from its particular vantage point it is able to bring into the open some of the possible tensions around the roles of Guidance Counselors and Student Support Workers that surfaced in a small number of interviews. In addition, during our interviews with students, community group members and teachers of the English 12: African Heritage course, there are several references to the Guidance Counselor as the source of information about the English 12: African Heritage course developed by ACSD. Students described how the information presented by Guidance Counselors served either to encourage or dissuade them from participating in the course. This area of collaboration between Guidance Counselors and the African Canadian Services Division is fruitful and ought to be continued.

**B. The choice of curriculum materials used in classrooms is influenced by advice and input from ACSD.**

During school visits, teachers identified Africentric poetry books and novels on African American and African Canadian literature as items in the curriculum offerings made available to schools by the English Services Program. The presence of these curriculum items is in part due to input from ACSD to the English Program Services. It is reported that gradually the provision of materials on African Canadian heritage is no longer regarded as the exclusive responsibility of ACSD. It was also noted, however, that the English 12: African Heritage course on occasion was referred to as “the course from the African Canadian Studies Division” or that it was described as not “a real English course”.

ACSD reports that one of the ways in which it engages with other divisions is through its attempt to examine for racial and cultural bias all new learning resources and curriculum initiatives introduced by the 25 curriculum specialists. ACSD recognizes its limitation in this activity because of the lack of staff for this type of undertaking.

**C. More collaboration between ACSD and other divisions is desirable and was expressly stated.**

While members of other divisions and branches acknowledged their collaborative relationships with ACSD, all those interviewed expressed the desire for increased sharing of information between ACSD and themselves. At present, the Director of ACSD provides input into policy initiatives in a variety of contexts such as the Senior Management Committee, the meetings of Directors of the Public School Branch and the School Directors’ Forum. In addition, many personal connections are possible in these contexts, making it possible for the Director of ACSD to intervene on behalf of Black students.

As reviewers, we received copies of a response prepared by the Director of ACSD to the findings of one of the few studies providing a glimpse into the academic performance of African Nova Scotian students. However, the overall sentiment of those outside of ACSD was that the interaction needed to be increased. A variety of reasons was offered for the existing situation. They include what two interviewees respectively referred to as the “*independence of each division*” and the “*silo approach*” that characterizes the Department of Education. The result of these approaches is that “*our energy is spent in maneuvering around political matters*”. Another offering was that ACSD tended to champion the change itself but that it needed to support others in taking up the issues. ACSD reports that it provides support in informal ways, “*integrating materials in existing curriculum and sponsoring programs avoiding backlash*”, but sometimes “*not getting the credit*”.

**D. The issue of the Racial Equity Policy needs to be addressed within the Department of Education itself.**

Student Services Division has responsibility for the Racial Equity Policy and ACSD is reported to have supported Student Services Division in providing training around the Racial Equity Policy. However, a number of challenges were identified in facilitating this policy implementation.

**Challenges:**

- (i) It was noted by several of the interviewees that the Racial Equity Policy came out of the BLAC Report; however, now that the policy covers every equity group, little attention is paid to the concerns of African Nova Scotian learners. This sentiment is reflected in the view of a community member who observed:

*In order to get alliances they broaden the scope, but lose sight of the target.*

She recommended that one way of redirecting the Racial Equity Policy would be to ask those responsible for implementing the policy to estimate the percentage of their time that is used for matters concerning African Nova Scotian students.

- (ii) In our review, we were unable to identify a set forum for discussion around the Racial Equity Policy within the Department.
- (iii) When discussing Racial Equity at school sites, the role of the Department of Education in addressing racial equity and racism within its own structures was raised. Interviewees from school boards questioned whether the Department of Education was itself addressing racism.
- (iv) It was pointed out that the advisory role of the ACSD in terms of implementing the Racial Equity Policy means that other divisions were free to accept or reject their input since ACSD was acting merely in an advisory capacity. Community members and parents on the whole felt that the Racial Equity Policy requires more teeth if it is to make a difference. According to an individual in a community forum:

*"The Education Act should be changed so that when people who work in school boards act in a racist way, there should be consequences."*

An administrator in one of the school boards speaks of the relationship between mandates and change:

*"If the superintendents of the province are not mandated by the Department of Education to engage in enlightenment for social justice, it is not going to happen."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, it is recommended that:

1. African Canadian Services Division, Student Services Division and the Mi'kmaq Office, which are collaborating around the training in cultural competence, establish a regular forum and process for deciding how collaboration can be continued and expanded to include other divisions and branches. – *3 months*
2. Each division and branch of the Department of Education identify how it can invite input from ACSD. – *3 months*
3. Each division and branch of the Department of Education identify how it will share the activities it undertakes in the process of fulfilling its own mandate to support African Nova Scotian learners. – *6 months*
4. The Department of Education increase the staff of the African Canadian Services Division to enable the fulfillment of its mandate. – *6 months*
5. Student Services Division, in collaboration with ACSD and the Mi'kmaq Office, continue to offer in-service workshops in cultural competence and anti-racist education; and that the evaluation and follow-up of those workshops address the ways in which the training makes a difference to students' experience. – *6 months*
6. Department of Education incorporate the implementation of the Racial Equity Policy and Diversity Management into the Performance Management Review of all Division and Branch Directors. – *1 year*

## **COUNCIL ON AFRICAN CANADIAN EDUCATION (CACE)**

- **Africentric Learning Institute (ALI)**

# COUNCIL ON AFRICAN CANADIAN EDUCATION (CACE)

*We need to have organizations that are accountable to the community.*

ANS community elder)

## BACKGROUND

The first recommendation in the BLAC Report is that the Minister of Education “elevate the BLAC Advisory Committee to a Council on African Canadian Education to monitor and continually analyze the policies of the Department of Education with respect to the needs of Black learners and educators, to develop a partnership with senior education administrators; and as a mechanism for enhancing the status and functions of the BLAC vis-a-vis local school boards and post-secondary educational institutions.”

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners. 1994. p. 17)*

Following upon the Government’s acceptance of that recommendation, it elevated the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) and through legislation under the Education Act transformed it into a permanent body to advise the Minister on African Canadian Education. The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) was, therefore, fully established in 1996 as the permanent body to serve in the advisory capacity outlined.

## THE CACE MANDATE

CACE is mandated “to provide advice and guidance to the Minister of Education with respect to the development, implementation, evaluation and funding of educational programs and services for African Nova Scotian learners.”

The 2003 Implementation Review of the recommendations of the BLAC Report described CACE in the following operational terms: “CACE has regular meetings with the Minister and continues to play a key role in the education system.” (p.4).

Since that status report in 2003, CACE has produced nine publications on topics ranging from “The Economic Impact of the BLAC Report”, to “The ALI Leadership and Management Summer Institute Report” and “The Times of African Nova Scotians”, an interactive study book celebrating history, culture and traditions of African Nova Scotians. CACE has also been involved in the review of the Black Educators Association Regional Educators Program, which led to an increase in resources for staffing and programming.

## **FINDINGS**

CACE has organized five province-wide education summits and four province-wide parent summits. These are described as workshops and forums in the community on the education of African Nova Scotian students.

### **A. Communication gap between CACE and community**

CACE is also associated with the Africentric Learning Institute Master of Education cohort at Mount St. Vincent University. All 20 students who enrolled have graduated from that cohort.

This review has found that although initiatives in providing opportunities for higher learning were well-known in circles of African Nova Scotian educators, they were not nearly as well-known among ANS parents or ANS communities at large. We will return to this question of communication.

### **B. Preparing a teacher pool**

Close questioning about the emphasis CACE had placed on post-secondary education revealed that CACE felt it necessary to create a pool of teachers who would be able to educate young African Nova Scotians in an African-centred way.

At the present time, according to the information CACE provided, there is an insufficient number of African Nova Scotians who are ready to fill the positions directly relating to ANS learners in education.

School districts with equity positions are unable to fill them because they are unable to find African Nova Scotians with appropriate credentials. CACE points out that historic institutional racism in education has left the Black community unprepared or underprepared to assume such positions.

### **C. Africentric Learning Institute**

Over the past five years, CACE has made the development of the Africentric Learning Institute its priority. Most of its publications since the last review focus on Africentric education. The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) is considered to be the fourth plank in the organizational structure that is intended to serve the needs and interests of African Nova Scotian learners.

The Africentric Learning Institute, which is not yet fully functional, has as its mandate a focus on excellence in Africentric educational research and practice. Its mission is “to advance academic achievement of African Canadian learners and educators.”

CACE’s immediate preoccupation with the ALI appears to have diverted attention away from the Council’s mandated obligation to remain in touch with its constituency in order to reflect its concerns in CACE’s advice to the Minister of Education.

In the process of this review, many of the testimonies given during focus group sessions echoed the frustrations of community members who felt estranged from their official community representatives. Some of those present included accounts of phone calls not returned and lack of information about the work carried out by community organizations.

#### **D. Corrective Action**

It was found that within the ANS community there was often confusion about the specific mandate and responsibilities of CACE, the Black Educators Association (BEA) and ACSD. This led to frequent charges against one or the other during community focus group interviews for failing to deliver services that were often beyond their authority or capacities.

A strong demand came from the community that CACE facilitate a two-way communication event with the community where it could bring transparency to the processes it follows in giving accurate advice and guidance to the government on behalf of African Nova Scotian learners, especially students in P-12 classrooms.

Internal conflicts within CACE have hampered its ability to fulfill its mandate and adequately discharge all of the functions entrusted to it. In CACE's "Final Report of a Strategic Plan, January 2008", a breakdown in communication was identified as one of its weaknesses. The report notes that there were concerns about "communication with clients and from clients" as well as "communication concerns in the geographical regions".

Having weathered a period of internal conflict and disruption of its lines of contact with their constituency, the CACE board and staff are engaged in ongoing reorganization.

Community leaders were not alone in voicing their concerns over aspects of CACE's operations. Senior education administrators also raised questions around adequate communication with the designated and funded community organizations.

As one of the partners in commissioning this review, both outgoing and newly appointed CACE boards were eager to hear the preliminary findings of the review with respect to CACE and recognized the lapse in communication with the community. As noted above, the Executive Director submitted plans that have been instituted to address the lapse in the flow of communication between ANS communities across the province, CACE and the Department of Education.

As an ANS community elder noted gravely:

*We need to have organizations that are accountable to the community.*

In concrete terms, in addressing the present situation, CACE has hired an interim Communications Officer and is in the process of arranging to bring a permanent Communications Director on board. The work of the recently installed CACE board is being closely watched by community members who were interviewed for this review.



**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) organize listening sessions that will give every African Nova Scotian community an opportunity to raise questions and provide feedback on CACE's operations; and that CACE return to the same communities within three months to report on action taken based on the listening sessions.  
– *3 months*
- (2) The Council on African Canadian Education, in its advisory capacity to the Minister of Education, initiate discussions to convene meetings of the provincial ministries which have impact on the education of African Nova Scotians. – *6 months*
- (3) The Council on African Canadian Education be designated a partner within the tripartite monitoring structure designed to address the recommendations of this report.  
– *3 months*
- (4) The Council on African Canadian Education give its support to the African Nova Scotian School Board Caucus by convening a meeting. – *3 months*
- (5) The Council on African Canadian Education accelerate efforts to have an ALI Board appointed so that CACE might resume its advisory function. - *3 months*
- (6) The Council on African Canadian Education and senior education administrators reinstitute or develop a process for quarterly communication around matters concerning the education of African Nova Scotian students. – *3 months*
- (7) The Council on African Canadian Education, BEA and ACSD meet together with community groups to clarify their specific responsibilities around common areas of service. – *3 months*
- (8) The Council on African Canadian Education arrange for a quarterly reporting structure to the ANS community and enhance transparency around the impact of its work on the lives of African Canadian learners and invite feedback from the field. – *3 months*
- (9) The Council on African Canadian Education refocus on its advisory capacity and resume regular meetings with the Minister of Education. – *3 months*
- (10) The Council on African Canadian Education establish regular communication with its base. – *3 months*
- (11) The Board of The Council on African Canadian Education assume responsibility for the completion of the above and provide an update to the African Nova Scotian community on the results of these activities – *6 months*

# AFRICENTRIC LEARNING INSTITUTE

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that the Department of Education “establish an Afrocentric Learning Institute to assist in curriculum development and conduct ongoing research on issues impacting on Black learners in Nova Scotia.”

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994. p.18)*

## BACKGROUND

The mandate of the Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) is to focus on excellence in Africentric educational research and practice, while its mission is to advance the academic achievement of African Canadian learners and educators. “The ALI is a cornerstone of the four-part overarching educational infrastructure designed to implement the recommendations of the BLAC Report (CACE/ASCD/REP & BEA/ALI)”. The document, *The Africentric Learning Institute*, notes that one-third of all the recommendations in the BLAC Report are directly tied to the Africentric Learning Institute (ALI).

The program for the Africentric Learning Institute is in the development process. A report dated September 26, 2008 provides the following data on program completion status: 16% completed, 27% not initiated, and 57% partial in progress.

Among its program Development Initiatives, ALI lists the following:

### RESEARCH

- Educator in Residence
- Research Framework by Dr. Hamilton
- Times of African Nova Scotia

### POLICY

- Support to African Nova Scotian School Board Members Caucus

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Mount Saint Vincent Cohort Masters of Education Degree in Africentric Leadership

### COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Launch of ALI Youth Programs
- Launch of ALI Parent Summits

Of all the groups interviewed, African Nova Scotian teachers were the people most familiar with ALI initiatives. The teachers in the Mount Saint Vincent Cohort Masters of Education Degree in Africentric Leadership were among those most informed and appreciative of the program.

Other interviewees did not distinguish between CACE and ALI and used the names interchangeably. Although they may have used one of the publications co-sponsored by CACE and ALI, they did not connect the work with CACE.

In the review, it was found that those who made a distinction between the mandate of CACE and the mandate of ALI expressed great hope that ALI would be devoted to researching the educational experiences of African Nova Scotians P-12 and collecting quantitative data on their placements and other aspects of their schooling, and that these data would be available to the communities concerned.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI), the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), the Black Educators Association (BEA), and the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) begin the process of forming an ALI board, with extensive community participation.  
– 3 months**
- (2) The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI), as part of the research components of its mandate, collaborate with school boards, families and the Black Educators Association (BEA) to gather data on the educational status of African Nova Scotian students in terms of opportunity and placement, such as Individual Program Plans (IPPs) – 6 months**
- (3) The Africentric Learning Institute (ALI). as part of the community development components of its mandate, develop, deliver and evaluate African-centred Leadership Workshops for African Nova Scotian youth to prepare them for leadership roles in the community. – 6 months**

## **BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION (BEA)**

- **Regional Educators Project**
- **Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP)**

# BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION (BEA)

*“Once a year we have a strategic planning retreat with all the partners at the table and a scorecard.”*

Board Member of Black Educators Association

The Black Educators Association (BEA) is a volunteer, non-profit organization which has been engaged in the struggle for equality in education in Nova Scotia’s Black Community for the last 40 years. It is referenced in the BLAC Report’s Case Study: Black Incentive Fund for its leadership in the 1970’s in challenging the negative impact of the Black Incentive Fund on the dignity of the Black Learner. Over the years the organization has provided the educational system with teachers and administrators who have been grounded in community realities through their work with BEA as Regional Educators. The BEA is one of four organizational pillars of a structure, along with the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) and Africentric Learning Institute (ALI) that work towards quality education for African Nova Scotian Learners. BEA is the community-based advocacy part of that structure.

The mandate of the Black Educators Association is to

- Serve as a watchdog for African Nova Scotian students
- Advocate on behalf of Black educators
- Liaise with partners
- Support parents in engagement with school
- Educate the community about the working of the school system

Two of the programs through which it fulfills its mandate are the Regional Educators Program and the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program.

The BEA receives a grant from the Department of Education for managing and monitoring the work of seven regional educators and 23 Cultural and Academic Enrichment Programs.

The BEA also runs a weeklong summer math camp. It surveyed participants who had attended the camp between 1991 and 2007. Of those who responded to the survey, about 30% had gone on to study science/math or related fields at the university level.

In the review of these two programs through focus groups sessions with parents and community members the following findings about the organization emerged:

**FINDINGS:**

**A. BEA is identified as an organization that assists parents in addressing the issue of racism in schools.**

In two of the parent/community focus groups BEA was referred to as the organization that worked with families to address difficult issues of racism between schools and families:

*When everyone else was too busy, BEA came in to help us deal with the racism. It's still not resolved but at least they tried.*

Parent Focus Group

**B. BEA is meeting the needs in terms of tutoring in some communities.**

*We had tutoring with BEA. There was a cultural component. It's good, open to everyone, not just Black children*

There were reports of tutoring taking place in the community. However, only a few administrators who were interviewed had knowledge of the tutoring and/or the potential for connecting it with the work of the school to enhance student learning.

There is a need for alignment between school and community efforts so that the impact of the tutoring at the community level will be recognized and extended by the school.

**C. BEA as an organization needs to improve communication with the Black community.**

While some had praise for particular programs, other members of the focus groups gave accounts of not being able to connect with the organization in past years. BEA acknowledges these lapses in communication and attributes them in part to the time when the organization was without an executive director. This breakdown in communication has an impact on the programs that are designed to enhance the education of African Nova Scotian Learners.

The opening quotation reflects the current desire of the organization to re-establish links with partners and to focus on communication with its base. In the process of the review, BEA was able to identify steps it had put in place to improve its general functioning and communication. Among these steps is the hiring of a new executive director. BEA has also updated its Performance Management Review to address employee related issues.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- (1) The Black Educators Association re-establish greater communication with its base across the Province. – 3 months**
- (2) The Black Educators Association fully implement the findings of the 2006 Review of the Regional Educators Program. – 3 months**
- (3) The Black Educators Association be designated a partner within the tripartite monitoring structure designed to address the recommendations of this report. – 3 months**
- (4) The Black Educators Association seek funding to document and disseminate its work with African Nova Scotian Learners and families – 6 months**

# REGIONAL EDUCATORS PROGRAM

*Everyone is everywhere, doing more with less.*

Regional Educator

The Regional Educators Program was introduced by the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) and it was recommended that the Nova Scotia Government should “continue to support the Regional Educators Program as part of the community outreach to encourage parental involvement in the education process.”

*Recommendation 13a*

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994*

The Black Educators Association (BEA) manages and monitors the work of the seven regional educators and the Department of Education provides a grant to fund this work.

The Regional Educators Program provides support to individual families, organizing parent groups and education committees. Regional educators advocate for students around educational and social needs. They assist students in addressing health and social service needs and collaborate with student support workers to access resources for students to address educational challenges. They facilitate 11 Education Committees across the province and facilitate some of the Positive Parenting Workshops and Parents as Career Coaches in African Nova Scotian communities.

From interviews with regional educators, the Black Educators Association, school administrators, focus group meetings with parents and communities as well as an in-depth study of Regional Educators’ monthly reports, the following themes emerged:

**A. Regional Educators provide a much-needed service in African Nova Scotian communities in terms of assisting parents in navigating the school system.**

In community focus groups, parents spoke of the Regional Educators in Positive Parenting Workshops and of their help in resolving contentious issues in the community. Regional Educators’ monthly reports contained an array of meetings where they accompanied parents to schools for matters ranging from students who had an IPP to dealing with racist incidents.



**B. There is a need for clarification of roles and focus.**

According to one Regional Educator:

*“Everyone is everywhere, doing more with less.”*

She then went on to describe the range of activities in which she engages on any given day.

Her day as a regional educator might begin with a phone call at 7.00 a.m. from a parent calling about her child having been suspended from school. The parent asks for support in going to the school to have the situation resolved.

Later in the day, a college student might come in to ask for support around scholarships.

For the remainder of the day she might move on to one or two of the eight or nine committees on which she serves. Her committee work might lead her to advocate for jobs or engage her in organizing African Heritage Month.

**C. Regional Educators attempt to meet needs in a community with many needs.**

In areas where there are no Black social workers, for example, because of their historical experience of discrimination, the ANS community may invest very little trust in social service agencies. In such situations, the regional educator is often called upon to help in any way (s)he can.

**D. Current geographic region too large.**

Current geographic regions are too large for one individual to manage effectively. As a result, regional educators are spread too thinly.

One administrator described the regional educator as having little presence in the school because of the size of the community she served.

According to another administrator, because there was no way that one person could manage all that the job demanded, the regional educator in his area:

*Had been set up for failure and just did not deliver.*

Since the start of this review, the BEA has established a Performance Management Structure and updated its job description for regional educators.

### **E. Advocacy and Adversarial Roles**

As reviewers we observed that the regional educator's role as frontline advocate for an under-served and uniquely vulnerable community risked creating an adversarial relationship with administrators, teachers and school boards. That potential becomes, in itself, one of the stressors regional educators confront in doing their job.

In focus groups, as well as interviews with parents, staff and community organizations, questions were raised around the credentials, qualifications and skills of regional educators. As researchers we did not find this surprising since their tasks are so wide-ranging and often unfocused.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) The Black Educators Association (BEA) continue to implement the recommendations of the Program Review of Regional Educators Program, February 2006. – 3 months**
- (2) The Department of Education provide funding for another Regional Educator for the most geographically challenged area. – 3 months**
- (3) The Black Educators Association (BEA) continue to review and restructure its program to maximize the use of its personnel, assets and resources. – 6 months**
- (4) The Black Educators Association (BEA) evaluate the Parenting Workshops to gather more concrete data on their impact on parent involvement in their child's education and their performance. – 6 months**
- (5) The Black Educators Association (BEA) provide more regular and detailed accounts to the Department of Education on the work of regional educators and the relationship of that work to ANS students. – Ongoing**

# CULTURAL ACADEMIC AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

*These programs help our children stand a little taller.*

Site coordinator, Cultural Academic and Enrichment Program

It was recommended in the BLAC Report that The Department of Education in partnership with BLAC and BEA develop a plan to set up learning centres in the communities to provide academic (reading and math) and cultural and enrichment programs for Black students after school and/or on Saturday mornings.

*Recommendation 14a*

*BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners, 1994*

## **BACKGROUND**

The Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program is managed and monitored by the Black Educators Association. (BEA), and the Department of Education provides funding for the program.

Data about the program were gathered mainly from interviews with peer tutors, adult tutors, site co-coordinators of the program, and from reading the program reports of site coordinators submitted to the regional educators. In some parent and community focus groups, participants referred to their experience with the Cultural and Academic Awareness Programs. Administrators and teachers were asked about their knowledge of students who had attended these after-school programs.

In the school year 2008-2009, there were 23 sites with 194 students and 55 staff registered in the program. In 2009-2010, BEA is predicting 29 sites involving 61 staff members.

In classes, there is a ratio of six students to one tutor. Tutors include peer tutors who may be high school students, adult tutors and site coordinators. Attendance can range from five to 25 students, and students from Primary to Grade 6 participate in the program. Classes are sometimes held in school buildings after school but are more likely to be held in community centres.

The major purpose of this program is to link academic excellence and cultural excellence by providing homework and tutoring support and activities that develop cultural awareness and knowledge among African Nova Scotian students. The curriculum for the program varies. Some programs emphasize homework support, while others focus on culture. The goal of the program is to combine these two aspects of the students' lives. It was found that core elements of the program include activities around African History Month, Kwanzaa, preparation for Spelling Bees and tutoring in homework, particularly in the areas of numeracy and literacy.

Tutors and site co-coordinators also described situations in which they helped students to deal with experiences of racism they had faced in school.

### **FINDINGS:**

It was found that

#### **A. CAEP provides opportunities for developing a positive cultural and academic sense of self among ANS students.**

Students increased their awareness of African and African Canadian/Nova Scotian history and culture. They also benefited from establishing links with either an older or younger African Nova Scotian student as a reading buddy.

An ANS site coordinator who had been a peer tutor in the program when she was a high school student and who is presently site coordinator described the impact of the program:

*"It makes a difference to kids' lives. Here at these classes they learn about Kings and Queens of Africa and the leaders in the Black community. At school, they often hear about slavery. You see them get smaller and smaller in their seats. These after-school programs help them stand a little taller."*

A student compared the experience and activities of a CAEP class with what took place in her class at school:

*"[At school] I never get to go up and read my poem. I never get to draw Black people. Here, we learn about ourselves."*

A parent noticed that her son seemed to enjoy doing his math after he got one-on-one tutoring at CAEP.

**B. CAEP faces a number of challenges as a program.**

- (i) There are different levels of literacy and numeracy among students and that increases the challenge tutors face in programming for multi-age groups in an after-school program.
- (ii) Student attendance fluctuates and may be related to availability of transportation for students in rural areas.
- (iii) The high turnover of staff and low salaries impact the program.
- (iv) Schools have little information about the program and there is minimal connection between the learning that takes place between the after-school program and during the school day.
- (v) The program requires a sharper focus and there is a need for follow-up on the impact of the learning activities, especially as they relate to literacy and numeracy.

**C. CAEP tutors and staff have important assets and commitment to the students and the program, and these need to be recognized and developed further.**

In-depth interviews with two site coordinators showed the countless hours of work that they had put into preparing for the program, their knowledge of the students and the tremendous potential they possess as teachers if provided with mentoring and opportunity. Professional development in a number of related areas would be beneficial to tutors in the program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**It is recommended that:**

- (1) The Black Educators Association review and restructure the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program, where necessary.**
- (2) The Black Educators Association increase the professional development opportunities for tutors and site co-coordinators to enable them to program for multi-age groups and to document their students' growth and learning.**
- (3) School administrators, teachers and families establish links between schools and the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program.**
- (4) The Africentric Learning Institute conduct follow-up research on the impact of the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program on the development of numeracy, literacy and positive cultural identity.**

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### EXAMPLES OF BLACK COMMUNITY EFFORTS TO OBTAIN EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN

- 1820 Residents of Preston petition government to establish both a church and school.
- 1825 Residents of Preston petition for funds to maintain a teacher.
- 1837 Black families in Dartmouth request aid for their school.
- 1839 Black families at Salmon River, Yarmouth County, request provincial aid to erect a school.
- 1841 Reverend Robert Willis, on behalf of the Black community of Halifax, petitions government for funds to establish a training school for Black learners.
- 1844 Black families at Salmon River, Yarmouth County, request aid for their school.
- 1845-49 Residents of Three Mile Plains, Windsor, petition seeking financing to establish a school and maintain a teacher.
- 1852 Parents of children attending the African School in Halifax petition the School Commissioners regarding treatment accorded the students by the school master. Not satisfied with the solutions to their problems, these parents start their own school with a teacher and facility financed through their own funds.
- 1859 Inglewood residents request provincial aid to complete school.
- 1860 Residents of Africville finance construction of a school and then petition government for financing to maintain the school.
- 1860 Nine Black Halifax families petition government for aid to support a school for their children.
- 1881 Black families in Halifax submit petitions opposing separate schools stating that 1883-4 the Black schools are "an inferior grade in which students do not receive equal advantages with children attending common schools."

*SOURCE: BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners. Vol. 2, p.17. Card catalogue files at Public Archives of Nova Scotia, under heading 'Black Education'.*

## APPENDIX B

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

The Department of Education and the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) provided the following items as guiding questions for the Review of the BLAC Report:

- 1) What progress has been made on access to programs and services? Where is the evidence?
- 2) What programs are effective or working in terms of increasing educational opportunities or improving educational achievement? Where is the evidence?
- 3) Are there gaps in services or programs by the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD)? What improvements need to be made?
- 4) What changes has the Department made in policies and processes? How are these changes monitored, reported or evaluated?
- 5) How has the Public School Branch changed its policies/practices to ensure success for African Nova Scotian students? For example, how many African Nova Scotian learners are receiving Reading Recovery or Tuition Support?
- 6) How have the school boards changed their policies, processes and practices (school and classroom) to ensure the academic success of African Nova Scotian learners?
- 7) What needs to be done to increase the effectiveness of the current initiatives?
- 8) What type of data on student performance is needed? What is available and how is it being used?
- 9) What new resources and strategies are needed by ACSD or by School Boards to optimize the educational success of African Nova Scotian students and contribute directly to closing the education achievement gap?
- 10) How effective have the following organizations been in implementing the recommendations of the BLAC report within their role, mandate, programs, implementation schedule and resources:
  - a) African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) of the Department of Education
  - b) Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)
  - c) Black Educators Association (BEA)
  - d) School Boards
- 11) Have other initiatives been put in place that were not specifically articulated in the BLAC report, and have they been successful in meeting their intended objectives and provided enhanced accessibility on a province-wide scale for African Nova Scotian learners?
- 12) What can be done to improve the implementation of BLAC recommendations by various stakeholders?



## APPENDIX C

### SURVEY OF STUDENT SUPPORT WORKERS FOR AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN LEARNERS

- 1) What are the goals of the Student Support Workers Program?
- 2) How would you assess yourself in terms of meeting the goals of the program? Give three (3) examples that support your assessment.
- 3) What are two (2) specific ways in which your work as a Student Support Worker contributes to the educational opportunities and achievement of African Nova Scotian learners?
- 4) What are the factors contributing to the educational opportunities and achievement of Nova Scotian learners, either negatively or positively?
- 5) What were the educational opportunities available to the African Nova Scotian learners that you serve before the Student Support Workers Program was initiated?
- 6) What was the level of academic achievement of the African Nova Scotian learners that you serve before the Student Support Workers Program was initiated?
- 7) What is working well in the Student Support Workers Program? Give specific examples
- 8) What is not working well in the Student Support Workers Program? Give specific examples.
- 9) What are some of the challenges you face in implementing the Student Support Workers Program?
- 10) What influence does the Student Support Workers Program have on the work of others who are responsible for the education of African Nova Scotian learners?
- 11) What recommendations would you make for increasing the effectiveness of the Student Support Workers Program?
- 12) Which of these recommendations can you undertake in your role as a Student Support Worker?
- 13) Which of these recommendations need to be undertaken by other bodies/groups, etc. and who are these?
- 14) What are some of the areas that you would like to see addressed in this review of the BLAC Report on Education?

## APPENDIX D

### FOCUS GROUP WITH BLACK EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION (BEA)

- 1) Invite each person to introduce herself/himself:
  - a) Position with the organization
  - b) Length of time with the organization
- 2) Tell us about the mandate of the organization:
  - a) What is your main purpose?
- 3) Tell us about the Regional Educators Program
- 4) What is the impact of the Regional Educators Program on African Nova Scotian Learners?
- 5) Give us some examples.
- 6) What are some of the challenges you face in running the Regional Educators Program?
- 7) What does it cost to run this program?
- 8) Tell us about the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program.
- 9) How many classes are there in this program across the province?
- 10) What is the impact of this program on the education of African Nova Scotian students?
- 11) What are some of the challenges you face in running this program?
- 12) What does it cost to run this program?
- 13) How would you assess the educational outcomes for African Nova Scotian Learners?
- 14) What difference has your program made to the educational outcomes for African Nova Scotian Learners?
- 15) What are the ways in which your programs are connected to the work of the African Canadian Services Division (ACSD) and Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)?
- 16) What arrangements exist that help you to link your work with the work of CACE and ACSD?
- 17) What recommendations would you make for increasing the impact of your program on African Nova Scotian Learners?

# APPENDIX E

## FOCUS AREAS FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

- 1) The educational status of African Nova Scotian students
- 2) The particular conditions of African Nova Scotian students that gave rise to the BLAC Report
- 3) The Five Schools Project
- 4) The Student Support Workers Program
- 5) Race Relations, Cross Cultural and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinators
- 6) Black Educators Association (BEA)
- 7) Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)
- 8) Regional Educators Program
- 9) Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program
- 10) The African Canadian Services Division (CACE) and its impact on School Board Policy and Practice
- 11) Initiatives undertaken by the School Board to address the recommendations of the BLAC Report
- 12) Next Steps

## APPENDIX F

### FOCUS GROUP WITHAFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN TEACHERS

- 1) How long have you been teaching?
  - a) 10 years
  - b) 5 years
  - c) 2 years
- 2) What do you know about the BLAC Report?
- 3) How did you get that information?
- 4) What are the goals of the BLAC Report?
- 5) How many people agree that those are the goals?
- 6) Does anyone have any other goals to add?
- 7) How has the BLAC Report supported you in your professional life?
- 8) What difference has the BLAC Report made in the lives of African Nova Scotian students and their families?
- 9) How has the BLAC Report influenced educational institutions?
- 10) What is your knowledge and assessment of
  - a) Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)
  - b) African Canadian Services Division (ACSD)
  - c) Black Educators Association (BEA)
  - d) The Student Support Workers (SSW) Program
  - e) Race Relations, Cross Cultural and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinators
  - f) Regional Educators Program
  - g) Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP)
- 11) What would you change or modify in any of these programs?
- 12) What would you keep or reinforce with any of these programs?

## APPENDIX G

### FOCUS GROUP WITH PARENTS OF AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN STUDENTS

- 1) Invite each person to introduce herself/himself.
- 2) In which Board does your child attend school?
- 3) Which schools have you been connected with?
- 4) What do you know about the BLAC Report?
- 5) How did you get your information about it?
- 6) Have you or your family been connected with:
  - a) African Canadian Services Division (ACSD)
  - b) Parent Outreach Program
  - c) Student Support Workers (SSW)
  - d) Race Relations, Cross Cultural and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinators
  - e) Black Educators Association (BEA)
  - f) Regional Educators
  - g) Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program (CAEP)
  - h) Four Plus Program
  - i) African Nova Scotian Student Scholarship (ANSSS) Program
  - j) English 12: African Heritage
  - k) African Canadian Studies 11
- 7) What has been your experience with any of these programs?
- 8) What difference has the BLAC Report made in the life of African Nova Scotian students and families?
- 9) What has your experience been with the schools:
  - a) Guidance Counselors?
  - b) Principals and Assistant Principals?
  - c) Teachers?
- 10) What would make things better for African Nova Scotian students?

## APPENDIX H

### AFRICAN NOVA SCOTIAN SCHOLARSHIP STATISTICS

REGION	2004	2008
Cape Breton	0	3
Strait	1	6
Central	1	4
Halifax/Dartmouth	19	58
Valley	2	4
South Shore	0	0
Tri-County	1	0
Outside Nova Scotia (NWT/ONT)	2	
Outside Nova Scotia (AB/QUE/USA)		3

## APPENDIX I

ORDER NUMBER:145740  
ORDER DATE:04/02/09

NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL BOOK BUREAU 10 ACADIA STREET  
054327D DARTMOUTH, NS  
REF:054327D B2Y 4H3

Bin	Lin	Stock	Description	Text	Qty	Qty	Amount
C	No.	Code			Ord	Shpd	
	041801	3 91926	AMAZING GRACE	9780590460095	2	2	0.00
	041804	5 91927	OMA'S GUILT	9781553376255	2	2	0.00
	042818	1 91925	FOR EVERY CHILD	9780099408659	2	2	0.00
	043403	33 91941	THE COLORS OF US	0605071636	2		0.00
	060115	29 91939	THE LADY IN THE BOX	9781890515010	2	2	0.00
	090602	35 91942	N IS FOR WORLD: A ROUND-THE-WORLD ABC	1845073142	2	2	0.00
	090605	21 91935	ALL FAMILIES ARE SPECIAL	007521752	2	2	0.00
	091518	11 91930	CANADA 123 (PAPERBACK)	9781554532353	2	2	0.00
	091601	15 91932	ELIZABETI'S SCHOOL (PAPERBACK)	1600602347	2	2	0.00
	101321	31 91940	HOPE YOU'RE HAPPY	9780921156628	2	2	0.00
	101601	13 91931	ELIZABETI'S DOLL	1584300817	2	2	0.00
	101603	17 91933	MAMA ELIZABETI	1584302364	2		0.00
	101604	7 91928	SUKI'S KIMONO	9781553377528	2	2	0.00
	101615	23 91936	ALPHABET CITY (PAPERBACK)	9780140559040	2	2	0.00
	101617	25 91937	SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL	0440412102	2	2	0.00
	101618	27 91938	ALL KINDS OF CHILDREN	0807502812	2	2	0.00
	121801	19 91934	RAINBOW JOE AND ME	9781584300502	2	2	0.00
	144524	9 91929	ABC OF CANADA	9781553376059	2	2	0.00

SHIP VIA  
DATE  
WEIGHT  
\* OF CARTONS : \_\_\_\_\_  
WAY BILL 4 :

~j SHIP

TOTAL COST OF SHIPPED ITEMS: 0.00

## APPENDIX J

### PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

This checklist is dedicated to the principal who said:

*"I'd like a checklist for the BLAC Report I can pull out and start using on Monday morning."*

- Collect quantitative data with regard to African Nova Scotian learners in terms of placement; instructional and curriculum opportunities; access to culturally responsive services; experience with equitable school environment; participation in school activities and academic achievement. *(Reeves, 2009)*
- Educate students and families about the data gathering process with the assistance of those who are already connected to the community. *(Henderson et al, 2007)*
- Provide resources to permit the Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) teams to discharge all their responsibilities. *(Fullan, 2007)*
- Ensure that evaluation of professional development on cultural competence is connected to the impact on the learning of African Nova Scotian learners. *(Guskey, 2000)*
- Review the Individual Program Plan status of all African Nova Scotian learners in terms of instruction, curriculum, assessment and climate to which the students are exposed in order to determine, review or change status of students.
- Plan to work strategically with Regional Educators to enhance outreach to families of African Nova Scotian learners.
- Encourage staff to make connections with site coordinators of the Cultural and Academic Enrichment Program and complement their efforts in the After School Program to build literacy among African Nova Scotian students. *(Foster, 2004)*
- Ensure that your school acquires and uses the African-centred resources made available by the African Canadian Services Division and monitor the impact on students. *(Hillard, 2003; Marshall, 1993)*
- Ensure that the student support worker in your school has adequate space for working with African Nova Scotian students; is integrated into the important structures and systems of the school and able to take a proactive role in the educational experience of African Nova Scotian students in such areas as course selection. *(Lee, 1999)*
- Track students' experience and achievement by race, especially African Nova Scotian students with an Individual Program Plan.
- Track International Baccalaureate, student of the week, literacy and numeracy scores, instances of school leadership, suspensions.
- Integrate equity support team (student support workers and RCH coordinators) into the structure of the school.
- Address all charges of racism and continually review school structures and climate from an anti-racist perspective.
- Connect with families from an assets-based point-of-view.
- Examine the extent to which African Nova Scotian students have access to technically-skilled instruction and a culturally-responsive curriculum.



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Halifax Region: April-Nov 2007  
Feb•Mar•Jun, 2008

Northern Region: Feb•Mar•Oct•Dec 2007  
Jan-Mar•May-July•Sept•Nov 2008  
Jan 2009

Strait Region: Oct 2008

Antigonish/Guysborough:  
Monthly Staff Report Jan-Jun•Dec 2007  
Jan•Feb 2008

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT REPORT

## SITE COORDINATORS REPORTS:

Weymouth

Lucasville

Antigonish

Wallace/ Lucas Centre: Oct-Dec 2007  
Jan•May•Oct•Nov 2008

Valley: Feb-Apr•Jun•Dec 2007  
Jan-Mar•Jun-Dec 2008  
Jan 2009

Digby: Oct•Nov 2008

Yarmouth: Nov 2007  
Feb 2008

Kentville: Mar-May 2008

Glace Bay: Nov 2007  
Feb 2008

New Glasgow: Jan•Feb 2008

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