

DATE: May 11, 2021

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Anti-Racism and Equity

ORIGINATOR: Nancy Petersen, Managing Director, Strategic Division Supports

ISSUE

The Division acknowledges that racism exists in our schools and workplace and is committed to taking intentional and meaningful action towards the elimination of racism across the Division. This action will include the development of a model to support the collection of raced-based data and focusing on actions that promote a culture of respect and equity for all students, staff and families.

BACKGROUND

On June 4, 2020, the Edmonton Public School Board of Trustees released a public [Board Statement on Anti-Racism and Inclusion](#), acknowledging the “existence of racism and discrimination in the Division”, and their commitment, “to being a place where every student and staff person feels they belong”. Additionally, at the September 22, 2020 Board Meeting a [motion](#) was passed requesting that administration develop a model supporting the collection of race-based data.

In the fall of 2020, the Superintendent expressed his commitment to the development of a model to support the collection of race-based data. To help inform this work, an Equity Advisory Committee was established to provide advice and recommendations to the Superintendent around critical factors to be considered prior to the collecting of information that would inform a race-based data set. The opportunity to express interest in sitting on the committee was communicated both internally and with the broader community. The committee was made up of representation from the following stakeholder groups: parents, community members, staff, Student Senators and Trustees. Once established, [committee membership](#) was posted on the Division’s website. The Division contracted Dr. Yvonne Chiu to chair the advisory committee and the committee’s work was grounded in a [terms of reference](#).

The committee met on three occasions: December 1, January 19 and March 2. The following documents provide a summary from each of the three meetings:

- [December 1 meeting summary](#)
- [January 19 meeting summary](#)
- [March 2 meeting summary](#)

On April 12, 2021 the Superintendent received the [Equity Advisory Committee’s recommendation report](#). The report highlighted the importance of moving forward in the collection of race-based data and the anticipated positive outcomes for students as a result of having this data. Included were the following three areas of recommendation:

1. Develop and implement a model to collect race-based data, to inform systemic changes that includes consideration to:

- Establish an internal inter-departmental working group to support the development of the model.
- Research/liaise with other school boards and sectors in society (health, justice, etc.) that have initiated race-based data collection processes, to learn from their findings.
- Conduct a privacy impact assessment, for data security and protection.
- Establish culturally responsive data gathering processes.
- Create a plan to support the use of the data, addressing analysis, reporting and accountability.

2. Create opportunities for ongoing engagement with community, staff, students and families.

- Maintain an Equity Advisory Committee.
- Initiate listening circles and other culturally appropriate methods of engagement.
- Identify the community groups and partners that can support the collection of race-based data.
- Create reciprocal opportunities for critical analysis and feedback throughout various stages of model development.
- Establish an ombudsperson, who can listen, collect data, relay messages and provide anonymity, relative to race-based data collection.

3. Develop a communication plan to support ongoing transparency and communication about the development of a model to collect race-based data.

Additionally, the Equity Advisory Committee provided recommendations for the Superintendent’s consideration around other key actions to support anti-racism and equity across the Division. These additional recommendations included:

- Establishment of a Divisional Anti-Racism and Equity Team of leaders, to help move forward intentional actions in support of sustainable systemic changes.
- Examination of human resource practices and policies to ensure more people of diversity are represented across all staffing roles.
- Collaborating with post-secondary institutions around teacher training.
- Professional learning opportunities for all staff that respond to and informs systemic changes towards equity.
- Guidance to build upon existing relationships and initiatives.

CURRENT SITUATION

The recommendations from the Equity Advisory Committee align or complement other key factors foundational to the Division’s commitment to anti-racism and equity. In thinking about next steps, the Division’s intentional actions will extend beyond the collection of race-based data to other areas where there is the opportunity to make meaningful systemic change. This broader body of work will be informed by the following:

- The direction and intent of the [Board's draft policy](#) in support of anti-racism and equity. The policy has been to the Board for first reading and is currently out for feedback to inform second, third and final reading. This policy, once approved, will serve as the foundation to anti-racism and equity efforts across the Division.
- The voices of stakeholders from within the Division and members of the community. Over the past several months the Superintendent has engaged in a variety of conversations with staff, community members and families that have further informed his plans around next steps for the Division.
- The implications of events continuing to unfold in our community, both those that reinforce the need and importance for change and those events that inspire and set an example for the future.

To confirm the Division's commitment to next steps, a multi-year Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan is currently being finalized. The plan will initially address the collection of race-based data, anti-racism and equity support for schools and the review of human resource practices and procedures, but will have the flexibility to expand to include other key initiatives critical to moving the Division forward. Additionally, targeted resources have been identified to support this work. Along with the allocation of funds in the 2021-2022 operating budget, the Superintendent has identified an internal steering committee whose responsibility will be to provide leadership and support to key areas of the Anti-Racism and Equity Action Plan.

This work will continue to be informed by the voice of staff, students, families and community and the Division commits to ongoing updates regarding this work.

KEY POINTS

- Edmonton Public Schools acknowledges that racism exists in our schools and commits to intentional steps towards anti-racism and equity.
- The Superintendent established an Equity Advisory Committee to help inform the development of a model to support the collection of race-based data.
- The Division's work in support of anti-racism and equity will be informed by the Board of Trustees' revised policy, coming forward for second, third and final reading.
- The Superintendent is developing a multi-year action plan to direct the Division's efforts in support of anti-racism and equity. Targeted resources have been identified to support this work.

DR:np