
April 29, 2024

**To: The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education**

Dear Minister Lecce,

I extend my gratitude for taking the time to recently meet with us virtually, in our role as the Black Trustees' Caucus (BTC) of OPSBA. We eagerly anticipate the opportunity for our next meeting to be conducted in person.

At the heart of our concerns lies the need for tangible support and resources to address the challenges faced by Ontario's Black students, who represent a growing demographic throughout the country. It's essential for the Ministry of Education and school boards to recognize the diverse nature of Black communities and tailor interventions and programming accordingly. Having real achievement data for Black students would underscore the urgency of allocating substantial resources to bolster their success in the classroom.

During our recent meeting, several key points were highlighted, which included:

- **Black History Curriculum:** It's of utmost importance that the development of the Black History curriculum accurately reflects the diverse experiences within the Black community. Collaborative consultations with the BTC, educational experts, and community leaders are vital in this process.
- **Expansion of the Graduation Coach Program for Black Students:** We advocate for the provincial expansion of this program, emphasizing that the selection criteria should prioritize individuals with exemplary collaboration, problem-solving skills, and a deep understanding of systemic barriers faced by Black students. Coaches must possess analytical skills to identify barriers, tailor interventions to diverse Black communities, and foster meaningful engagement and mentorship.
- **Effective Accountability Frameworks:** Robust accountability frameworks are essential to drive continuous improvement in Black student achievement. Instituting measurable targets, integrating student well-being surveys to address anti-Black racism, and ensuring data is properly disaggregated, taking into account intersectional identities and socio-economic circumstances, to directly reflect the experiences of Black students are imperative goals.
- **Government Accountability Frameworks:** We propose establishing measurable targets, reporting requirements, and mechanisms for reporting human rights violations related to anti-Black racism. Collaboration between boards, staff, and community groups, coupled with dedicated funding, is crucial in combatting systemic inequities effectively.

- **Partnership Table with Black Education Stakeholders:** Developing engagement pathways, setting clear performance metrics, and fostering community engagement are vital components of establishing a Partnership Table. Flexibility and dedicated funding for anti-racism, anti-Black racism and anti-oppression training as well as all related professional learning are necessary to address institutional practices that marginalize students. We request that the ministry support the Ontario College of Teachers in offering clearer guidance to educators after the release of advisories, especially the Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism. Like the advisory on Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature, we suggest making it mandatory for educators to acknowledge their acumen as part of the certification maintenance requirement. Supporting the delivery of the Anti-Black Racism Additional Qualification (AQ) across the province will require specific dedication.
- **Data Collection:** Clear guidelines and timelines regarding data collection and communication support accountability and equity is extremely important. Transparency in data sharing is essential to address equity concerns effectively.

We must acknowledge that certain remarks made during the meeting regarding educational programs facilitated by our school boards may not fully consider the profound impact of systemic racism on individuals working and learning within the education system. While challenges persist, it's crucial to not overlook the significant strides made by boards in narrowing opportunity and achievement gaps. Now more than ever, it's essential to listen and learn from the firsthand experiences of those most affected by systemic issues in education.

Our member boards are working diligently to address inequities and anti-Black racism and hate, but without ongoing public support from provincial leadership, students will suffer the consequences of setbacks in the work that must be done. A robust ministry statement supporting Human Rights and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policies and actions would greatly enhance confidence in our public education system. However, sustained underfunding threatens the success of these initiatives. Additional funding is indispensable to achieve our shared educational goals.

We look forward to continued collaboration and dialogue to ensure the equitable advancement of all students in Ontario. We welcome your attendance at a future BTC meeting and are happy to work with your team to find a mutually acceptable date.

Sincerely,



Kathy McDonald
Chair, Black Trustees' Caucus of OPSBA



CC: Dasha Androusenkov, Director, Stakeholder Relations, Minister's Office
Kate Manson-Smith, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education