

Exemplary Strategies/Programs/Practices to Support Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights in School Boards



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

School Board: Grand Erie District School Board

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:

<https://vimeo.com/atomicspark/review/698178081/d4497b2f74>

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The focus is on exemplary strategies/programs that increase student confidence, achievement, engagement and retention and reduce systemic barriers. In the brief description below please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

The Safe and Inclusive Schools Department of Grand Erie has developed a series of five short videos focusing on Anti-Racism. The first video is in the link above.

The video series complements the work of our new multi-year plan, with one of the pillars being “belonging-We build a culture of belonging to support an equitable, inclusive and responsive environment for every learner”.

Racism is a barrier to this vision, and needs to be named in order to be changed. It is our belief that we have to help all staff understand how racism operates so that they can be part of the change.

This video series features the voices of leaders, students, and parents and was produced to help support open and genuine conversations about the existence of racism in schools and highlight the important role that every staff member has to ensure that spaces in schools are safe, free from harassment and discrimination.

The video series builds on a Student voice project that Safe and Inclusive Schools initiated in June 2021, that identified key themes in answer to the question “what is something the school could do to make it a place where all students belong?” and highlights student perceptions and experiences.

The intention of the video series is to amplify student voice, and for staff to have an opportunity to hear about the experiences that students are having in Grand Erie schools as a call to action to do better.

Our intention is to use the video series initially for professional development with staff teams. The plan is for Administrators and leaders to use these videos in staff meetings, as part of professional development opportunities, school improvement planning, and with leadership teams to get staff thinking about individual and systemic racism. The goal is that upon viewing

the videos, people will be motivated to consider their role in the institution of the school system, and take seriously their responsibility to respond to and interrupt racism on both an individual and system level.

While most Board-produced videos focus on success and positive outcomes for students, these videos intentionally tell a different story. We wanted to ensure that student voices are heard and not only appeal to the minds of our staff, but also to their hearts. Our Grand Erie community is changing and becoming more racially diverse. Hearing first hand the experiences that some of our students are having in our system will debunk the myth that “it doesn’t happen here”.

What has been the impact on student learning, retention and engagement? Please share any data to support impact.

As the videos were only just recently finalized, we have planned a preview/launch event for next week featuring all of the participants in the video. Once that has happened, the series will be shared with our schools and our school community. There will be three departments supporting the roll out of the videos, including Safe and Inclusive Schools, the Program Department and Equity Coach, and Mental Health and Well-Being. All three departments work together to support the work of equity and inclusivity in Grand Erie.

The hope is that along with using the videos for staff development, that we will also be using them in the classroom to support student learning. A series of reflective questions and lessons will be provided to elementary and secondary schools along with the video series.

We believe that through centering student voice in these videos, it will validate many of our student's experiences. Seeing the videos will create opportunity to increase student engagement in important conversations about racism, and other barriers that get in the way of student's success socially, emotionally, and academically. It will help student's reflect on their own actions, and whether or not their actions are hurtful or helpful to others. Having the voices of their peers speaking out in this public forum will hopefully make it feel safer for other students to speak up and out against racism and other behaviours that make school spaces unsafe.

Certainly for the students who have been involved in both the Student Voice Project and this video series, we saw a direct impact on their confidence and leadership skills.